Ed Brog

1/28/03, T1, S1

ES: This in an interview with Ed Brog on Tuesday, January 28th, 2003 at his home in La Grande. Please give me your full name.
EB: Edward Wayne Brog.
ES: That's b-r-o-g?
EB: Yes.
ES: And you were not born in La Grande. Where?
EB: No. I was born in Michigan out on a farm outside of a little town called Wayland.
ES: Wayland? W-a-y-l-a-n-d?
EB: Yes.
ES: What year were you born?
EB: 1912.
ES: 1912. Before the First World War.
EB: Yes. I remember the First World War.
ES: You would've been about the age when you would know about it.
EB: About five or six. Most families had uncles, cousins and so on…
ES: I suppose you went to school, elementary and secondary school there?
EB: Yeah.
ES: Graduated from high school?
EB: Graduated high school in Kalamazoo, Michigan.
ES: You'd left the farm?
EB: My dad was killed when I was only two and my mother never remarried so we stayed on the farm for several years. But the way farming was in those days they didn't have…weren't mechanized and didn't have all this labor-saving machinery. It was hard work. My mother worked…harnessed the horses and worked the fields, plowed and harrowed and sowed and harvested.
ES: Were you the only child?
EB: No, I had a sister twelve years older than I.
ES: When you graduated from high school, let's see, that would've been…?
EB: 1930.
ES: 1930. The Depression was getting more severe at that time. I suppose the job prospects around there looked a little bleak.
EB: If people… Michigan was right in the center of the Depression, so to speak. I found out after I got out here these people talked about the Depression they really didn't know what it was. People froze to death. People starved to death. Employment lines a mile long were the norm rather than the unusual.
ES: Were you and your mother suffering?
EB: No, that is as far as food and heat, no. We maybe didn't have what we wanted, but, no, we never suffered.
ES: What was she telling you about what she'd like to see you do with your life?
EB: During that time most people…you're born, you're raised, when you got old enough probably you – depending on how many children in the family – some of

them continued on with the farm. People didn't…they didn't get very far away from where they were born and raised.

ES: By 1930 you'd left the farm. You were in Kalamazoo.

EB: We had that probably…my father having been killed changed my life in that way. We moved off the farm.

ES: How did you learn that there was such a place as La Grande, Oregon?

EB: Just like I mentioned a little bit ago, there was an ad in the newspaper wanting a driver to take a truck from South Bend, Indiana, to La Grande, Oregon.

ES: And you were eighteen years old at that time?

EB: Get a car… Have a car loaded on it.

ES: Were you eighteen years old when you read that ad?

EB: No, I was…I was about twenty, twenty-one.

ES: You said goodbye to mom, I'm leaving?

EB: Yeah.

ES: What did she say?

EB: Packed a suitcase and my mother put up a boxed lunch that lasted us for four or five days.

ES: You went with another guy?

EB: Done this all by myself.

ES: What kind of a truck was it?

EB: It was a 'baker truck.

ES: A truck that somebody had purchased from a plant in Michigan?

EB: No. South Bend, Indiana, was only about eighty miles from Kalamazoo. That was home of Studebaker automobiles and trucks. We went to South Bend, hitchhiked and…

ES: This was a brand new truck just off the line?

EB: Yes.

ES: Who was it in La Grande – did you find out – that had put the ad in?

EB: Goss. M.J. Goss, yeah.

ES: You'd never heard that name before.

EB: No.

ES: Did you realize he was a car dealer?

EB: No. We had… You say you've never heard of that name before. His brother had a furniture store and so the name wasn't entirely unfamiliar. Yes, I learned from his brother that M.J. Goss was a car dealer here.

ES: Was the initial understanding that you were just going to pick up the truck and have this other man go with you and you'd then return to Kalamazoo?

EB: No, we went to South Bend and picked up the truck and also picked up a car, went to an Edwards Machinery Company and they had a hoist and they loaded the car on the back of the truck. We knew we were coming out west with the… Of course in those days you're hopeful you could find employment somewhere.

ES: But there was no promise that you'd be employed?

EB: No.

ES: How long did it take you then to get from South Bend to La Grande?

EB: About six days.

ES: Sleeping in the truck?

EB: Sleeping in the truck…
ES: What season of the year?
EB: …or any other place you could find. That was early spring.
ES: Not too bad for weather.
EB: No. Commencing to warm up.
ES: Can you remember when you first saw La Grande?
EB: I can remember quite a little bit about that trip.
ES: __ tell me the whole story, but when you got close to La Grande?
EB: The old highway came down Pyles Canyon through Union. I remember Hot Lake, it went right past Hot Lake of course. Oh, I think the…Michigan had been a flat country, no mountains, some hills, but no mountains. I think I was impressed by the mountains more than anything else.
ES: Now if you were twenty or twenty-one this was at least 1932 or '33 when you got here.
EB: '34.
ES: '34, okay.
EB: We stayed around La Grande. Goss Motor Company had moved into that building where they are now not too long before we…before 1934. I don't remember for sure, but I think they had probably moved into that building within a year or so. Among other things they used some big window sash and frames that they got from the roundhouse, railroad roundhouse. They built partitions out of those to make offices and divide the showroom from the parts department and so on. Those windows, the glass in those window sash they were…cinders were just burned right into them where they'd been used in the roundhouse.
ES: Had they been upgrading the roundhouse is that why they got rid of them?
EB: I don't know how come they got rid of them. Anyway, so we got a job with a razor blade and lacquer thinner scraping those windows, cleaning 'em up. We worked several days, probably maybe four or five days.
ES: Where did you find to live while you were doing that?
EB: There was in the showroom…mind you businesses were just as hardpressed for money as individuals were. There was an old wicker two-seater in the showroom.
ES: A couch kind of thing?
EB: Yes. Then there was another old davenport that springs were in the cushions were loose. We slept in the showroom.
ES: Did they give you a blanket or two?
EB: No, they didn't give us any blanket or anything. The shop was open, the lube service part of the shop was open all night because people didn't leave their cars out on the streets at night in those days.
ES: Why?
EB: Just wanted to take better care of them, I guess.
ES: I see. They didn't want to leave 'em out in the…
EB: And of course the hotel, the Sacagawea Hotel, was where the U.S. Bank now is. In those days business wholesale houses had salesmen on the road calling on people, almost any kind of business. These salesmen…these traveling salesmen would fill that hotel pretty much every night. They had… They wanted a place to put their car so storage for a car overnight was thirty-five cents. You could

have your car serviced if you wanted it washed, lube service and oil change, that sort of thing. So really the salesroom wasn't open or the parts room, but this fellow and I each one slept on these two old pieces of furniture, one on one and the other one took the other one. You had to…on that setee you had to curl up because it wasn't very long and it wasn't very comfortable. It was still cold. I remember we'd been here a few days and we wanted to wash out some clothes. We found a few pieces of rope and tied 'em together and tied 'em between the handles of the cars in the showroom and hung 'em up to dry. But the janitor came about three o'clock in the morning to sweep, clean up and so that put an end to our sleep. Our rest period was pretty short from the time the showroom closed at eleven and the janitor came about three.

ES: Where were you eating during that time?

EB: I'll diversify just a little bit here. We bummed around and hitchhiked and rode the freight train all that year around, or most of that year, around the Northwest. So where'd we eat? We would eat maybe one meal a day at a restaurant. In those days you could get a roast beef or roast pork dinner with meat and potatoes and gravy and bread and a drink and some dessert for fifteen cents. If you had one of those meals a day then… We used to go to bakeries and they would have they called it day-old bread, but it was more like six or seven or eight days old. But you could… You could get a big grocery sack of that for ten cents. You could live on that sack of day-old bread for…supplement that one meal you had you could live on that sack of bread for ten days.

ES: Is that what you did?

EB: That's what we did. You asked me a while ago about sleeping. We slept in the car. I've slept just about any place you can name, in culverts and hotel lobbies.

ES: Like a bum.

EB: A bum, that's right.

ES: Is that what it felt like?

EB: Yep.

ES: I'll bet. So it sounds as though after you'd done these…the odd jobs around M.J. Goss they didn't want to give you a full-time job?

EB: No.

ES: So is that why you struck out and started traveling on trains, freight trains?

EB: We knew that… We never planned on a job when we got there with the truck. After we'd been around and worked several days, as I recall, you'd earn seventy-five cents or a dollar for a day's work.

ES: Probably not enough for a hotel room.

EB: Oh no. When I said hotel we slept in the lobby.

ES: Yes.

EB: We didn't spend any money on hotel room. Once or twice we…they had what they called flop houses in those days. There was just a big bare room like maybe upstairs in some place of business or something and they had some cots in there and for five or ten cents you could get one of those cots. No blankets, no pillows.

ES: Could you find at least one of those in La Grande?

EB: Pardon?

ES: Could you find at least one of those in La Grande?

EB: No. We never…
ES: Larger places?
EB: Never spent any money on sleeping.
ES: Oh, I see. Couldn't even afford that much.
EB: No.
ES: Were there flop houses in La Grande, do you think?
EB: I think there might have been.
ES: Maybe sponsored by a church or Salvation Army?
EB: No, I don't know.
ES: Were there a lot of other guys around La Grande in your condition at that time?
EB: Not that I know of. Of course the freight train there were always some bums on the freight train. In the West they didn't bother you too much riding the freight train. I mentioned the fact that we…that's a longer story that we…I went south that winter and the other fella didn't go with me. Down south when you rode freight train if you got caught you'd probably wind up in the chain gang. But out here they were…the railroad didn't object too much as long as you stayed out of the yard while they were makin' up the train because that's where people get in the way and get killed.
ES: Did you look for an empty boxcar as it was leaving and try to hop on that?
EB: Yep. I remember the first train I hopped was in Harletown, Montana. It didn't… The freight train didn't stop there it was such a little town and we caught it on the fly. You learned by doing. We did like you said, we caught a gondola – do you know what a gondola?
ES: Yes.
EB: We caught a gondola right behind the engine and tender. In those days they fired with coal by hand. Goin' up those grades red hot cinders came right over the top of that boxcar in front of us. After that we learned to get a little farther back where those cinders would cool a little before they landed on your shirt collar.
ES: You said you got on the first time in Montana. Why didn't you hop a freight from La Grande?
EB: We knew that we were all through working and so we were gonna hitchhike to Portland and we were gonna go to Alaska. We heard there were lots of opportunities in Alaska. So they told us that they had a repossessed car that belonged to a finance company in Portland and that we could drive that to Portland, they wanted it brought out.
ES: From La Grande?
EB: Yeah. So we…it was an old 1929 or '30 Buick coupe. I remember down the other side of Pendleton it kept missing and so we decided to turn the switch off and on, maybe it'd backfire and blow carbon out of there that was causing it to miss. We did that, but it was only a very short time, a matter of a mile or two, and we felt heat around our feet. We found out the holes that the clutch pedal and the brake pedal went through were about that big around and the rod went through there, we saw flames. So we pulled over and stopped and there was a lot of sand alongside the road, that's sagebrush and desert down there, and we put the fire out. But then we had to… It had melted part of the carburetor. We got towed into Hermiston and went the junk yard and found a carburetor that fit and replaced

it and we went on to Portland with that old Buick, delivered it to the finance company down there. You asked me how we got up to Harletown. We intended to go to…get on a ship and go to Alaska. So we went down around the docks in Portland and they had a longshoremen strike in 1934 and it was a pretty nasty thing. I kind of think, I'm not sure, the rumor was that they had killed a couple longshoremen in the violence in kind of the outcome. We weren't… We were a couple of young punks, we didn't know much, but we knew enough not to hang around there. So we said, well, instead of going to Alaska let's go up into Montana, kind of been fascinated with the hills of Montana. So we headed up the Columbia River then and headed for…

ES: Hitchhiking?

EB: Yeah. And headed for Montana. I remember we…you mentioned places to sleep. We got up around Rufus. Do you know where Rufus is?

ES: Yes.

EB: And the wind…you know how the wind is in the Gorge and cold and damp. So we…it was getting dusk so we walked out to the edge of town and of course there's no town in Rufus in 1934, but what there was there was no… Anyway, we crawled into a culvert, but the animals, the squirrels and the snakes, had the same idea. So we crawled out of there about as fast as we went in. We walked back toward the little old town and there was what was in those days the forerunner of the motel, they called them tourist cabins. These were pretty dilapidated and old, but we went up and they had stoves in 'em, sheet metal stoves, and we offered to split wood if they'd let us sleep in one room. There was the bedspring, but no mattress, no covers, no nothing. I remember we took two of the window shades down to cover up with. That's…we proceeded on and went up through Walla Walla, Dayton, Colefax, Lewiston, Spokane…to Spokane and east of Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and Montana and Butte, Livingstone, Bowsman, Billings. We hitchhiked all that way and that's where Roundup Montana we hopped that freight on the fly.

ES: By the way, was hitchhiking fairly easy there? Did a lot of people pick you up?

EB: Yeah.

ES: Did you have to wait very long?

EB: Sometimes we did and that's how come we… We got a ride from Billings to Roundup, Montana, it was about fifty miles as I recall. And we tried for I think it was two or three days to get out of that town and… You must remember that there wasn't traffic like there is now. You couldn't go out on a highway and stand for fifteen minutes without a car coming by.

ES: Or less.

EB: Yeah. But up there, as I say, we spent about three days trying to catch a ride.

ES: For most of the rides you got was the person who was driving friendly or were there some scary experiences that you had?

EB: No. It was a different age. Number one, we carried…we had suitcases. We kept ourselves fairly clean. The ordinary hobo is probably pretty full of fleas and dirt.

ES: Probably hadn't shaved for several months or had a hair cut and washed.

EB: No. That's why we, when we could, we preferred to hitchhike because it was a lot cleaner. You worried a little bit on the freight trains about somebody

knocking you over. If you were careful and kept your eyes open and took the normal precautions.

ES: Let's get you back to La Grande. After this wandering around on freight trains and hitchhiking what brought you back to La Grande?

EB: We were headed for Florida and we got near Michigan, our ride just took us…as long as you were going the general direction it didn't make any difference whether you were going right wherever you wanted to. We got pretty close to Michigan and it was Thanksgiving time. The fellow that I was with said "let's go home for Thanksgiving." We did and then I wanted to leave right after that to go south because I'd been told that the tourist business in Florida in the wintertime they had lots of jobs. It wasn't true, but I had to try that. He decided not to go so I went. Then along March or April I'd been out about a year on the road so I… I was going to go back… I'd worked some in Glacier Park and I was gonna go back. The Great Northern Railway furnished…owned hotel concessions and they hired all their people out of St. Paul but they deducted your transportation from your pay. I was hitchhiking and the freight trains were a good option so I was gonna go out and stay at that…just go up there and get a job in the park when they opened to save that transportation money. But I thought, well, if Goss Motor Company got another car or truck to go to La Grande that'd be a lot better than hitchhiking and riding the freight. So I wrote and asked them if they had anything they wanted driven out. Didn't hear anything for a couple months. One day I got a letter and said they had a car they wanted brought out and they'd give me a job when I got here. That's what brought me back.

ES: Did they say what kind of a job it would be?

EB: No.

ES: Maybe janitor?

EB: Didn't care what, you know.

ES: Steady job.

EB: In those days you didn't ask what it was or how much it paid.

ES: Now by this time it was 1935, wasn't it?

EB: Yeah. March. I drove… I landed out here and stood around for a few days. Finally I had to eat and have a place to stay, I had to have some money. I reminded them they told me they'd have a job. He says, "what do you want to do?" I thought probably I could…I thought I'm gonna shoot for the top and I said, "I'd like to work in the office." I'd never written a check in my life. I stood around for a few more days and a fella that was keepin' the books said to me one day, "You've stood around here long enough, come on." So he showed me how they were keeping the books and I went from there.

ES: Did you think at that time you might become a salesman?

EB: No. I guess…you were living from day to day and you didn't think too much about what the future was.

ES: It sounds to me as though you had learned a fair amount about cars though. You knew what a carburetor…

EB: Pardon?

ES: You'd learned a fair amount about cars. You knew where the carburetor was, for example.

EB: I think most everybody… Cars were so simple then. I think most people had that general knowledge.
ES: Especially males.
EB: Yeah.
ES: You were sort of expected to know those things. If you can bring to mind some of the images and feelings you had about being in La Grande those first times, the first time you were here and then when you came back a little bit later? Could you tell me some of the images or some of the things you remember seeing or some of the feelings you had when you were talking to other people?
EB: You were… You were thrilled to have a job. It was a little bit romantic. The West was…I'm sure not everybody, but there were…it was a…just kind of…the West had a romantic feel to it. As I say, I was fascinated by the mountains.
ES: There was probably still some snow on the Blues when you got here both times.
EB: Yeah, I think so. The people were friendly, open and it was just…I just liked it and stayed.
ES: Did you do a lot of talking with people during that time, especially before you had the job?
EB: No.
ES: Were you sort of quiet by nature?
EB: Pardon?
ES: Were you quiet by nature?
EB: I would say so, yeah.
ES: You were not pushing for anything, just hoping something good would happen?
EB: Survival was enough of a motivator to kind of keep you going.
ES: This first job then at Goss Motor Company was in the office. What were you doing there?
EB: Keeping books.
ES: Keeping books? And you'd never done that before?
EB: No.
ES: Was it at first difficult?
EB: Yes. There was… There was a fellow that was keeping the books and also selling cars. He spent most of his time up in Wallowa County selling cars. He showed me how to do things for two or three days and then he took off and went to Wallowa County and was gone for a week. When he came back I had plenty of errors. He straightened me out and then he took off again and was gone about a week. He'd be gone all week and come down on weekends.
ES: This is like teaching you to swim by throwing you in the pond and say "swim!"
EB: That's just about it.
ES: Mr. Goss, which Mr. Goss was this?
EB: The father of… There were three boys, Bill – that's Milo Jr., M.J. Jr. – and Bob and then Ken. They were kids that high when I first started there.
ES: I was asking about the Mr. Goss who was in charge of the company when you got there. What was his name?
EB: Milo. M.J. Goss.
ES: I see. And had he begun that car agency?
EB: Yes.

ES: And was it strictly Studebaker?
EB: No. Studebaker, Desoto and Plymouth.
ES: What sort of a man was he?
EB: He was… He came out west from Michigan as a young man. I don't know too much about his… He came from the area, oh, I think in the rural area from Plainwell, Michigan.
ES: Did you have much day-to-day contact with him?
EB: Sure. He ran the place and…
ES: Was he an easy man to work for?
EB: Yeah.
ES: Cheerful?
EB: Yeah.
ES: Optimistic?
EB: Had to be, I think, in those days.
ES: I think so. And at the time I guess the business was being fairly successful, as much as it could be in the Depression?
EB: The Depression… The economy, I mentioned way back…it was starting to strengthen a little bit here in 1934. To show you the… They didn't sell very few cars during that depression. They'd sell maybe two, three, four cars a year…[end tape]

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ES: By 1934 they were selling?
EB: I can't… It's been too long ago for me to be very accurate, but they were probably selling twenty, twenty-five per year, new. The place…business just…the establishment just grew with the increased economy.
ES: At that time you weren't yet a salesman, but I suppose you were observing the selling of cars.
EB: I started… I went to work there in '35 and I was selling cars as well as keeping the books after a year and a half or two. And then just kind of go with it and was sales manager.
ES: Give me some idea of what kind of a conversation you'd have with somebody who is coming in looking at a car and considering buying one. How did it usually go?
EB: If you didn't… If you weren't acquainted and knew something about your client that was the first thing to do, get to know him, something about him and establish whether he could buy a car or not. Number one, did he want one, but if he wanted one could he buy one.
ES: So you didn't come right out and say "can you pay for this?" How did you do it?
EB: That brings up a… We had a used car salesman and that was one of his openers. He'd get a fella and head for the used car lot, he'd say, "alright now buddy, how much you want to pay?" And he qualified him in short order.
ES: So how would you get the conversation going? About what kind of a person this was and whether he could pay for the car.

EB: Oh, just to visit with him. As I say, just to get to know your customer. You didn't…you didn't ask him these things right out in the raw.
ES: I wouldn't think so.
EB: But you tried to find out about him through just normal conversation.
ES: Did you teach yourself to do this just by what felt right to you, or were you following somebody else's model?
EB: I think that we all watch the people around us and…
ES: To varying degrees.
EB: …if they're successful we maybe try to imitate them.
ES: I suppose so, yes. Is that what you did?
EB: I wasn't aware of it.
ES: At that time you couldn't buy a car on a time arrangement, could you? Didn't you have to have cash?
EB: A lot of cars were bought on time. I mentioned the farmers, ranchers in this valley being successful. They, as a rule, or generally, they…after harvest they…there were a lot of grain storage elevators in the valley at Elgin, Imbler, Alicel, La Grande, Union. The Kiddles – I'm sure…
ES: I've heard the name Kiddle, yes.
EB: They pretty much owned and managed, operated the grain storage and merchandizing. You harvest your crop, which was generally wheat, and put it in the elevator and watch the market and when the price was favorable you sold it. That's when they'd come to town and buy a car, truck. They'd pay their account. They probably hadn't paid their account since the year before. When they had repairs and tires and all that they just charged it. It was a good example of honesty because…you couldn't do business like that today. Number one, the interest would run you out of business, the cost of money.
ES: And these were no-interest loans?
EB: Pardon?
ES: These were no-interest loans in effect when they ran up a charge at the garage?
EB: Their open account as we called them they were interest free. But sometimes a farmer'd buy a car and he'd give you a note due in a year sometimes and that would bear interest.
ES: At the time we're talking about, mid-'30s, in La Grande were the streets of La Grande paved?
EB: Yes.
ES: And the board sidewalks were gone, they'd been replaced?
EB: Yes.
ES: You didn't see La Grande when it had dirt roads?
EB: No. When… I mentioned driving that truck out the first time from South Bend. There were paved roads pretty much through Illinois and Iowa 'til you got Nebraska you started hitting gravel roads and it gravel road pretty much all the way to Boise.
ES: Gravel roads through Pyles Canyon and from Union to La Grande?
EB: Yeah.
ES: Only Adams Avenue or a few of the other streets paved?
EB: I think the streets of La Grande were…I'd say a majority of them were paved.

ES: Where did you find a place to live once you finally got a job?
EB: I roomed with a family, a man and his wife and they had some children. They took… They had extra bedroom and I roomed in a place like that at a home.
ES: They served food there, too?
EB: Pardon?
ES: Did they serve food also for you?
EB: No.
ES: Just a room.
EB: Yeah.
ES: Up until this time were you having any kinds of relationships with women?
EB: No. I didn't have… I'd been through those hard times, I didn't want to take on any obligation like that.
ES: There are other ways. Did you have any temptations to visit some of the places of entertainment in town, taverns, for example?
EB: That was part of life in those days.
ES: Part of your life, too?
EB: Yeah. When you're young.
ES: Can you remember any experiences you had, say in taverns?
EB: No.
ES: How 'bout barbershops?
EB: There was lots of barbershops then.
ES: Tell me what it was like to go to a barbershop at that time?
EB: I used to go to a barbershop once a week.
ES: You did?
EB: Yeah.
ES: Just a haircut or a shave, too?
EB: Get a haircut. I didn't often get a shave.
ES: Why did you think you should go once a week?
EB: My hair grew fast.
ES: [laugh] Not that fast. Was it had to do with the way you thought you ought to look at the garage or at the agency?
EB: Yeah. I always wore a suit and a tie.
ES: Were you making enough money at that time so you could buy a suit and some other clothes?
EB: Yes, because things were priced pretty much… It was hard to earn money, but it also went a long way. Depends on whether you wanted to wear Coopenheimer and Hard__.
ES: Floorshine shoes. Who did your laundry?
EB: There was a lady down on Spring Street that did washing and ironing.
ES: Starched your shirts?
EB: Yep.
ES: Did it look good?
EB: Yep.
ES: Did you wash your own socks and underwear?
EB: She washed everything.
ES: She did everything? Did you take laundry to her once a week?

EB: No. She charged ten cents a shirt and everything else just threw in, socks, underwear, everything.
ES: Handkerchief.
EB: Pardon.
ES: Handkerchiefs and that sort of thing.
EB: Yeah.
ES: Do you think she was washing with a washboard?
EB: I don't know whether she did or not.
ES: You never asked her? [laugh]
EB: I think people had…they were kind of primitive, but I think they had washing machines.
ES: I'm sure they were some, but not everybody could afford one. What was her name?
EB: Mrs. Vanderwheel.
ES: Vanderwheel. Was she a widow?
EB: No. Her husband worked at the mill.
ES: What else did you do for entertainment?
EB: The usual things, hunt, fish.
ES: You were getting up into the mountains then early on when you were here? Did you have buddies to do that with or go up all alone mostly?
EB: We had…would go together.
ES: This would be a weekend, maybe a Saturday and Sunday?
EB: We worked Saturday.
ES: Oh, you did?
EB: We worked six days a week.
ES: Eight to five?
EB: No. We worked… I usually went to work before eight and, as I mentioned, in the early years they kept the showroom open in evenings, every evening until ten, eleven o'clock. But then after War II…then they used to be open Sundays also. But after War II came back things changed a lot. I worked six days a week instead of seven and closed at six o'clock in the evening.
ES: Were you traveling to any of the towns in the valley, Elgin, Union, anyplace else in connection with the job?
EB: Yeah. You circulated around the valley in search of people that were interested in buying a car or truck.
ES: Would you make… Would they be making appointments for you to come out or were you just going out and scouting around to see what you could find?
EB: Just go out and see what you could find.
ES: How did you do that? Would you go into a place of business or a restaurant or a bar and start talking to people about cars?
EB: No. You'd call on people at their home or…
ES: How did you find out about what people you should call on?
EB: That's what I was gonna mention. Sometimes these people would come in to the place of business and look around and maybe not buy anything, but you knew they were interested.
ES: Did that work?

EB: Sure.
ES: They'd be more likely to buy when you visited them than when they came to the showroom?
EB: Oh, I don't know about that, but the fact that they, just like yourself, if you're thinking about buying a car you're probably gonna go downtown and stop at the showroom and see what they have. If somebody had that much interest, why, go call on 'em.
ES: When you sold a car were you getting a commission?
EB: Most everything was on commission, yeah.
ES: You were also getting a salary if you were keeping the books?
EB: Yeah.
ES: So the commission was in addition to your salary?
EB: Yeah.
ES: Can you remember anything about your reactions to Elgin or Union or any of these towns that you visited during that period before the war, before the Second World War?
EB: They were… Elgin was a lumber town. Cove was cherries. Union had a sawmill. And there isn't…wasn't much… La Grande was railroad and sawmill.
ES: But La Grande was a big city in comparison, wasn't it?
EB: La Grande was about eight thousand.
ES: A lot bigger than all those other places.
EB: Yeah. La Grande, Pendleton, and Baker at one time were pretty much all the same size.
ES: I've heard some people say that at one time anyway La Grande…Elgin was pretty much noted for roughnecks, a really tough life and way of living out there.
EB: It was a logger and sawmill town.
ES: Do you remember getting into any arguments with any of the men out there?
EB: No.
ES: You probably didn't pick fights.
EB: Too small to fight.
ES: [laugh] You said that there several changed after the Second World War, changes in the days it was open, the number of hours you worked. What other sorts of changes do you recall right after the war?
EB: Population had shifted a lot. A lot of people that you knew before the war didn't come back. I think it'd be pretty hard to say how… I don't think anything was the same after the war. It'd be different if we have another one. It never gets back the same thing.
ES: How did some of the changes affect you personally?
EB: As I say…[telephone ringing] [recording stopped]