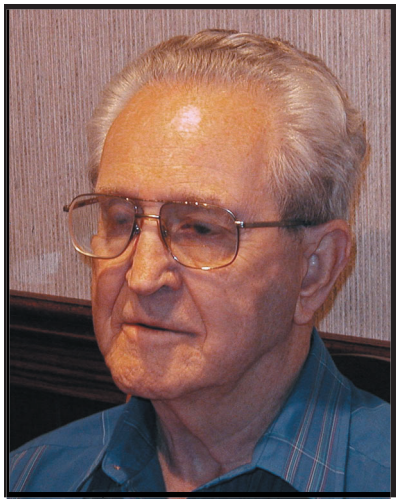
ORVAL TRUMP

Union County resident for 36 years

AN ORAL HISTORY



Interviews in June & September 2002
at the Grande Ronde Retirement Residence in La Grande OR

Interviewer: Eugene Smith

UNION COUNTY, OREGON HISTORY PROJECT
2004
(revised from 2002)

UNION COUNTY, OREGON HISTORY PROJECT
An Affiliate of the Oregon Historical Society

A non-profit, tax-exempt corporation formed in 2002

In collaboration with Eastern Oregon University
Cove Improvement Club History Committee
Elgin Museum & Historical Society
Union Museum Society

Purposes

To record & publish oral histories of long-time Union County residents
&
To create a community encyclopedia

Board of Representatives

Alice Alexander, Cove
Gerda Brownton, La Grande
Dorothy Swart Fleshman, La Grande
John Turner, La Grande
Merle Miller, La Grande & Union
Shirley Peters, Elgin
Jerry Peters, Cove & Union
John VanSchoonhoven, Cove

Eugene Smith, Executive Director
Jennie Tucker, Executive Assistant

Cooperating Faculty, EOU

Robert Davis, English & Cornerstone Program

Contributors

Union County Commissioners' Transient Tax Discretionary Fund Frontier Motors
Meyer Memorial Trust The Observer First Bank Wildhorse Foundation
Charles & Joyce Coate Dennis Cross Florence Davidson Peggy Delaney Betty Drummond
Helen & Pat Fitzgerald George & Dorothy Swart Fleshman Doris Foster Clayton Fox
Camille & William Hawkins Kevin Loveland Thelma & Emery Oliver Marj Parker
Helen & Elmer Perry Anita & Roby Pipes Retired Boise Cascade Employees
Lyle Sanderson Jennie Tucker Bernice & Gary Webster Gerald Young

Currently Active Volunteers

Gerda Brownton Dorothy Swart Fleshman Tom Madden Carol Summer
John Turner Patty Turner Arlene Young

For a list of people whose interviews are available as edited transcripts,
call 541-975-1694
or
write P.O. Box 2841, La Grande OR 97850
or
e-mail unionhistproj@eoni.com

copies of transcripts are $4.00 each + shipping & handling

Preface

Much of the history of a place is stored in the memories of people who have lived there. Their stories may be told to family members, but, unless someone makes a special effort to record these stories, they become lost to future generations.

Each of the historical societies in Union County, Oregon has begun to make that effort. Tape recordings exist in several locations, some of them transcribed in written form, others not. A more ambitious and thorough effort seemed necessary so that more of the oral history of Union County could be captured and preserved.

The Union County, Oregon History Project, begun in 2002, is making that more ambitious effort. One of its principal purposes is to collect as many oral histories of older Union County residents as possible and to make them available in both taped and written form. This edited transcript is part of the series of oral histories to be produced by that project.

About the Interviews and This Edited Version

Two interviews with Orval Trump took place at the Grande Ronde Retirement Residence in La Grande, where he currently lives. At age 80, Orval appears to be healthy, mentally and physically, though he has several physical disabilities.

The interviewer was Eugene Smith, a volunteer with the Union County, Oregon History Project. He completed a one-hour interview on June 18, 2002 and a two-hour interview on September 23, 2002.

Heather Pilling's full transcription (available for research purposes) presents the literal contents of both interviews. The edited version presented here differs from the literal transcription in the following characteristics:

- reorganization of content

- deletion of some extraneous comments

- omission of false sentence starts and other normal speech fillers that detract from readability

- normalization of pronunciation and grammar in conformity with standards of written English.

OT designates Orval Trump's words, *I* the interviewer's.

CONTENTS

How the Trump Family Came to Oregon	1
Orval's Birth in Wallowa County	1
His Father's Work & a Move to Elgin	3
Young Orval Changes Schools	3
Orval's Youthful Athletic Career	4
Transporting Teams	4
Staying Overnight after Games	5
Eating at China Mary's Restaurant in La Grande	5
Staying out of Trouble	7
Pride in Sportsmanship & Academic Status	7
Physical Training for Athletes	8
Athletic Facilities & Uniforms at Elgin High School	8
Coaching Techniques	9
Opinions about Academic High School Classes	10
Balancing Time for Study & for Sports	11
Wish to Become a Coach	11
Working for Bernal Hug, Farmer & Union County Historian	12
The Hugs' Dairy Operation	12
Bernal Hug Sr.'s Character	13
A Fence-making Accident	15
His Father's & Brothers' Work in Elgin	16
Orval's other Teenage Jobs	17
Performances at Elgin Opera House	18
Access to Newspapers & Magazines	18
Restaurants in Elgin	19
Custodial Jobs at Elgin High School	19
Forms of Entertainment	19
Enlisting in the U.S. Navy & Learning Diesel Engineering	20
Injuries in a Torpedo Attack	21
Marriage	21
Return to Grande Ronde Valley	21
Brief Work on Union Pacific's Portland Rose Train	22
Work with La Grande Montgomery Ward Store	22
Lured Away to Caterpillar Tractor Dealership in La Grande	23
Work in the La Grande Caterpillar Tractor Parts & Service Departments	24
Experiences with Labor Unions	25
Helping Fellow Workers in Times of Need	26
Attitudes toward Social Security	26
Workers' Vacations	27
Celebrating Christmas	27
Playing with Marbles, including Steelies	28
Moves to Yakima & Pendleton	28
Orval as Father & Grandfather	28
Surgeries	29
Family Reunions & a Final Resting Place	29
Appendix: Four Seasons by Orval Trump	30
Index	31

How the Trump Family Came to Oregon

I: Please tell me your full name.

OT: Orval Willard Trump.

I: Was this a long line of Trumps?

OT: Yes. I'd say there's a considerable amount of Trumps in this area.

I: Who was the pioneer in your family?

OT: His name was Jonah Trump.

I: He came by wagon?

OT: I know they came part of the way on train and then traded off and went by horses and wagons the rest of the way. At that time train stopped at the little station over at Union [about fifteen miles southeast of La Grande]. That's where most of them got off the train.

I: Do you think it might have been between 1880 and 1900 that he came?

OT: I know it was in 1890 when he came.

I: Do you know what brought them here?

OT: Just like everybody else, I guess.

I: Farming?

OT: Farming, logging. Some people came out here because they were sold a bill of goods to become pioneers.

I: Why do you say "a bill of goods"?

OT: Told them how wonderful the place was.

I: A little bit exaggerated maybe. Did they have a promise of land?

OT: This was never completely understood between the pioneers themselves and the people that actually designated the land reserve. They just ended up having, you might say, some of the lesser parts of the country in the land that was farming, lots of timber in canyons, that type of thing.

I: So if they got off at the Union Station, did they stay around the Grande Ronde Valley for a while before going up to Wallowa?

OT: No. There were about three or four different families, big families: the Trumps, Carpers, and Fleshmans. They all went in to the Wallowa country.

I: Right away?

OT: Yes. That's where they destined for. This nice valley was already pretty well taken up. They ended up more or less at the tail end of the trip, I guess you would say.

I: Was the Wallowa Valley pretty much unsettled at that time?

OT: The larger cattle ranchers and sawmills had pretty well taken up most of the country. They were still having some trouble with the Indians in that area, but they didn't bother the folks.

Orval's Birth in Wallowa County

I: Were you born in Wallowa County?

OT: I was born in Promise, Oregon in Wallowa County.

I: What year?

OT: 1922. Fred was my father.

I: About how old was Fred then?

OT: He was born in 1899.

I: So he was a pretty young man when he fathered you?

OT: Yes, he was.

I: Where did he find a wife?

OT: She was part of the group that came over--large families. One of them happened to be Sannar, and my mother was one of the Sannars. They had ten children.

I: Would that be a German name?

OT: Can't tell you. I was thinking it was from northern England, but I'm not sure.

I: By that time, did your father have a pretty well established ranch?

OT: No. That's what they were expecting to be able to do when he came out here, but the only thing that was available for them then was north of the Wallowa and the Grande Ronde River junction. They all ended up in what's called the Troy country.

I: Promise is part of that?

OT: Promise is part of that, yes--nothing but mountains and timber, more or less.

I: Was it pretty low level subsistence?

OT: Yes.

I: What do you remember about your early years, as far as the physical circumstances were concerned?

OT: I was born in a two-room log cabin, and that's where I lived my first nine years of life.

I: Were you the first child?

OT: No, I was the fourth child.

I: They got started young.

OT: Yes. Probably nothing else to do. I think Mother was seventeen and Dad was eighteen when they got married.

OT: Lots of the settlers went into the logging area. There was a big lumber company in the Wallowa Valley country.

I: Is that what your father did?

Orval's birthplace: Grandpa Sannar's two-room cabin in Promise, Oregon (Wallowa County)
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump (1952)

Grande Ronde River as seen from Trump homestead in Promise
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump (1984)

His Father's Work & a Move to Elgin

OT: Father started out logging and working teams and that type of thing. But he was lucky enough to get a job with the government delivering mail from Promise to Wallowa, which was twenty-five miles. It was all horse work, of course. So he had a pretty good job even up to the middle of the Depression. That's when it got away from everybody and they all moved out of that country. That's when our parents moved to Elgin.

I: Were you about ten or eleven then?

OT: I was eleven years old.

I: Did you all pack up in a wagon and come to Wallowa, or did your family have a car by then?

OT: Dad was lucky enough in getting the government job and was able to save a little money by raising a few cows and pigs and selling them every fall. He bought a Ford Model-T pickup because he was always hauling freight. Before that he hauled it by wagon to Wallowa.

Young Orval Changes Schools

OT: I know I really hated to change schools. We were in a little one-room schoolhouse, and I was the only child in my grade. I gained quite a bit, I thought, by being one of the younger ones; here I was in the first grade and got to listen to everything the teacher taught. But when I got to the town school, I found out it didn't work that way; we were all in different rooms.

I: Was that bewildering to you at first?

OT: Oh, yes. I was pretty well lost because I was always with my bigger brothers before.

I: Did you enjoy going to school?

OT: Oh, yes. I always liked school.

I: You did well?

OT: Pretty well. I loved sports, and back in those days the small guy had a chance at sports. I did fine in sports.

I: What were some of your impressions about being in fifth grade in Elgin?

Trump farm at Promise
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump (1952)

Trump cabin at Promise
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump (1952)

OT: Lost. I was sitting with twenty-five or thirty kids in these little, old desks. I didn't know what I was supposed to say or what I was supposed to do. I hardly knew the teacher.

I: But you got over that fairly quickly, I suppose.

OT: Oh, yes. After Christmas vacation, the kids got more friendly. The Depression was really getting tough, and nobody had any new clothes; I started to think we all looked alike. That helped a lot. There were always two or three rich men's kids, but they got teased more than anything else.

Orval's Youthful Athletic Career

OT: After I got to about seventh grade, I was really happy because I realized that I could compete in sports with this fellow sitting next to me. Once that feeling took over, I was always wanting to beat the other guy.

I: What types of sports were you playing?

OT: I played basketball from the time I was in the sixth grade all the way through. I pitched baseball five years. I tore my arm off from pitches but had lots of fun in baseball. I weighed a hundred and forty-five pounds. I didn't have much speed, but I could throw a crooked ball.

I: At that time did baseball and basketball teams travel to other schools to play?

OT: Yes.

I: Where did you go? Union, La Grande, and other towns in the valley?

OT: Joseph, Enterprise, Elgin, Baker; two or three times a year we'd get all the way over to John Day [in central Oregon]. We played thirty-two to thirty-five games.

Transporting Teams

I: Did they have a bus for you?

OT: We used individual automobiles to take five kids each with an adult driver.

Trump family ca. 1926, Orval at front left
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump

One-room school at Promise that Orval attended for grades one through four
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump

Lots of times we'd have to stay over in the wintertime. We had lots of snow in this country back then. You couldn't travel very much in the wintertime because the roads weren't open; the counties and states didn't have the facilities.

But the people that couldn't work in the wintertime because the snow was deep had time to drive us, especially the husbands. They were supposed to be paid so much a mile to take us to the next town. They'd keep us over night or whatever was necessary. One fellow, Shorty Ray, and his son and I ran around together a lot; he loved basketball and baseball. He'd pick us guys up and stick us in the car and away we'd go.

Then he'd report this to the school district, and they'd, of course, have to pay him a nickel a mile, maybe. It was kind of odd because he didn't need that. He was already a businessman. But that wasn't what it was about. It was about sports and keeping kids in school. It's too bad we don't have more of that today.

Staying Overnight after Games

OT: A lot of times when we would go from Elgin to La Grande to play basketball, the roads would be plugged up by the time we were ready to go back home, so we kids would find a private home to stay in till the next day.

Eating at China Mary's Restaurant in La Grande

OT: Shorty loved Chinese noodles, so after a basketball game we'd go to China Mary's. It didn't cost us anything; he always paid for the meal.

I: I've heard many people talk about China Mary's Restaurant, but nobody has described a meal that you would have there. Do you remember?

OT: China Mary used to have great chicken soup. She also used the same type of soup for her noodles. We used to accuse her, "The only difference between your noodles and your soup is the fact that you just took the leftovers from the noodles and stuck them over in another pan and that was your soup." Kids would always tease her about her soup not having anything in it because it really didn't. It was just broth. She got to advertising that; she had a couple of old rooster feet and legs hanging up above the door to the kitchen and said, "This is what's left over from my soup." She was quite an old lady.

She'd come right back. You didn't say too much about her soup because you were liable to get an old set of feet in your soup.

I: Describe the noodles.

OT: Long, thin noodles. She made them by hand and, instead of being round, they were flat. Were they ever good: altogether different than the noodles you get today.

I: When you say *long*, you mean as long as a piece of spaghetti?

OT: Right. More or less like that.

I: Was there a lot of slurping when you ate them?

China Mary's Noodles was on the second floor of the building on the right, 1920s
(all three buildings now demolished)
Photo courtesy of John Turner & Richard Hermens

OT: Yes, you'd go "slurp."

I: What else besides the soup and the noodles did she serve?

OT: Just about anything. She'd serve chicken--a full Sunday dinner, if you wanted a Sunday dinner, with mashed potatoes and gravy.

I: Did she serve American food, too, not just Chinese?

OT: Absolutely.

I: Did she serve a fortune cookie for dessert?

OT: Yes.

I: Did you get a fortune every time?

OT: They were always good ones.

I: Do you remember what the prices were?

OT: You'd get a big bowl of noodles for two bits.

I: When you walked out of there, were you ever hungry?

OT: If you were, it was your own fault.

I: What kind of beverage? Hot tea?

Interior of China Mary's Noodles, where Oral and teammates enjoyed post-game slurping
Photo courtesy of Betty Bethel

OT: Yes. They served the same type of thing as they do in the Chinese restaurants today--a lot the same type of thing.

I: When you went in there, was it usually crowded?

OT: The only time I was ever there when it wasn't crowded was on a family night or Saturday when the kids were out of school and weren't tearing in after a baseball or basketball game.

By the time my kids were two years old, they knew how to eat noodles. She or some of her help tried to teach them how to use chop sticks. They were the best little kids you've ever seen. They never made trouble throwing stuff around; we loved to go there with our kids because it taught our kids this is what you do: "You're in a restaurant now, a public place." It didn't take long to teach a kid.

I: You mentioned going there after a basketball game. Was China Mary's open until eleven or twelve at night?

OT: Yes. All our basketball games were played on Friday and Saturday. We didn't have any of this Thursday stuff that they have nowadays.

I: After a game I imagine you were very hungry.

OT: Yes, because they didn't allow us to eat very much back before games. The only thing we got during the game was a little cube of sugar. They'd call time out and coach would send the water boy out with a few cubes of sugar to give us a little surge. In the five years that I played sports, the coaches didn't want us to drink water.

I: Did you ask why?

OT: Some idiot thing, like it is going to cause us to dehydrate worse than we already were, I suppose.

I: They were wrong about that.

OT: Yes.

Staying out of Trouble

I: Under those conditions, boys, who tend to be rowdy sometimes, might have gotten into some trouble.

OT: I don't think that ever happened.

I: Was there no drinking?

OT: No. In high school when they said no, we believed them or we didn't play in ball clubs. That was all there was to it.

I: No sexual activity?

OT: No. No women went with us.

I: Nevertheless, there are temptations along the way.

OT: Oh yes, always temptations, but we were very careful that we didn't end up being one of the ones that got involved in that stuff.

I: What would have been the punishment?

OT: Getting kicked off the team. That was bad when you were one of the star athletes and you had study hall all day.

I: Do you think on the whole that boys, especially, had a lot of self-restraint during that time?

OT: Yes. They were trained that way from the time they were little kids.

I: By their parents?

OT: By their parents, absolutely. They had big families and had as many girls as they did boys. You were trained at home.

I: What did some of that training consist of? How would they do it?

OT: It was battle.

I: Corporal punishment?

OT: Yes, absolutely.

I: Was there fear involved then?

OT: Yes, some. A lot of times, you'd want to go some place and spend all night with your buddy. You'd better have been good for that two or three weeks, or you weren't going to go anyplace and stay all night. That's the kind of training. And you really believed them. My parents were not the type to teach you with a glove or a belt. They knew how to use the words.

Pride in Sportsmanship & Academic Status

I: Were you on winning teams most of the time?

OT: Most of them.

I: Were the boys on the team looked up to by many of the other kids in the school?

OT: Yes.

I: So there was a sense of pride in being on a team.

OT: Exactly.

I: Did that feeling of pride spill over into any of your academic work?

OT: Yes. You got a 2.5 grade average or you didn't play. Now you get a 1.1 and you can still play. I can't understand the idea of education nowadays.

Physical Training for Athletes

OT: We had rigid training programs with the coaches back in those days.

I: Tell me about that.

OT: We'd have a regular routine before we ever went to practice at night. We'd get out of school at three, and when we went out there, we couldn't spend that whole hour just running up and down the floor, shooting basketballs. They'd have a regular routine. For instance, we guys would run around that gym as hard as we could, holding onto another guy's feet while he was running with his hands--wheelbarrow fashion.

I: Was there strength-building training with weights?

OT: No. We didn't have weights. We had rope pulls. We had to get to the ceilings at least sometimes or we were in trouble. We had extra time practicing until we could do it.

I: Did the calisthenics include pushups?

OT: Yes, definitely. I don't know that we ever did over four or five hundred pushups. If we got into trouble, we'd do a hundred, wait fifteen minutes, and do another hundred.

I: How good were you at pushups?

OT: Very good.

I: Did your farm work and milking help with that?

OT: Absolutely. When I went to school, I was ready to go.

Athletic Facilities & Uniforms at Elgin High School

I: I don't know what Elgin school facilities looked like at that time. For instance, what did the locker room look like?

OT: Probably a lot like it does today only everything was wood. I remember that we didn't have nearly the stuff to hang in lockers that they do nowadays. For practice we had two pairs of shorts, warm-ups, and shirts. When those got very wet and stinky, we took them home and Mama washed them. The only ones that the school had were the ones that we used for games. When we got through with those for two nights, some lady did the laundry for the school. Otherwise, we took care of our own clothes.

I: What did the uniforms that you played in look like?

OT: They were beautiful and made of wool. Our colors were purple and white. They were really short pant legs. By the time they put the colors on those and around the collars on the shirts, they were beautiful. We had our numbers sewed in the uniforms. I kept the same number through high school.

I: What was the team's name?

OT: Elgin Husky, with a picture of a dog. That's why I say they were beautiful.

I: What did your baseball uniforms look like?

OT: Usually the regular old pinstripe.

I: Were they also made of wool?

OT: No. I don't believe they were all wool, but I can't remember now because we were all outside when we played. But we had to have knee high socks.

I: Wool is pretty scratchy. I should think that that wouldn't have been very pleasant to play in.

OT: It's according to what kind of wool

you're talking about. If you get good virgin wool, it doesn't scratch at all. I was terribly allergic to wool. Being raised on that farm, where sometimes we'd have four or five hundred head of sheep, when the shearers came in, I'd better be able to go wash myself pretty quickly because the wool was flying every place. A young lamb wouldn't bother me, but otherwise I could not work in the shearing crew. It just burned me up.

Coaching Techniques

I: From what you've said about the coaching of baseball and basketball, it seems the coaches were fairly tough. They didn't put up with any nonsense.

OT: No. After all, we were getting a credit for it.

I: What kind of direct instruction in the plays did they give? Did they demonstrate or try to explain?

OT: Sometimes they demonstrated. Almost every coach had a blackboard in the dressing room. They'd draw out the play, just like they do today.

I: Did you notice yourself improving a lot as you played because of what the coach told you?

OT: I didn't even think about it. He was the coach and told us to get the job done. As long as we were winning, boy, we had a great coach. If we were losing, the town took care of him.

I: What did you think the coaches did to try to assure that you would be a winning team?

OT: I think probably the number one thing they tried to do was instill character in all the fellows because that was ninety percent of winning. You can't go out there and hang your head down, as many will, because you're ten points behind. You've got to go out there and get with it. If we got that character going, usually it helped. He'd give us a little pep talk.

I: Individually?

OT: Usually not.

I: He talked to the whole team?

OT: He talked to the whole team when we were playing and traveling. Nobody ever knew who talked to whom or when they talked during school. It was always a private thing with the coach. You could usually tell which guys he'd talked to.

I: How many players did you have on a team? More than you needed for a team, I suppose.

OT: Yes. The team was like it is now in basketball--five players. We were allowed twelve in case a couple of kids got hurt. They couldn't dress up for the game; they got to practice and play, but every so often the coach would let the substitutes dress up and the other kids didn't.

I: Did the starters on the team play the whole game through?

OT: Usually.

I: No subs?

OT: Not unless you got hurt, worn out, or sprained an ankle.

The first year I played, after we made a basket, we'd run up to the center and jump the ball again. Then it got so you made a basket and took it off to the side. All at once, when I was a senior, we got to take it out of the basket. They've made lots of rule changes. When we played, three fouls and you'd had it.

I: You were out of the game?

OT: Yes. At the end of the game, if you had a score of twenty or twenty-five, that was a high score. If, towards the end of the game it was pretty tight--like twenty-two to twenty-one--everybody would foul on purpose because they took the ball out. You didn't shoot it; you took it out. That's when the foul shot came in. They changed the rule. They said, "These guys are letting the ballgame foul on purpose."

I: How were referees treated by the players and the spectators?

OT: They had the same boos as they get today. Usually, unless it was a league game which was counting towards state, local people refereed. If La Grande was playing Baker, say, they'd have somebody from Imbler or Elgin be the referee. He couldn't be a hometown referee.

I: Did you figure out which referees were good and which weren't so good?

OT: No, it wasn't up to us.

I: But you had your own opinion on that, didn't you?

OT: Yes, but you'd better not say it out in public. For sure, we talked about it when we were sitting on the bench.

I: Did schools have cheerleaders then?

OT: You bet.

I: But they didn't travel along with you?

OT: The only time they would travel would be at weekend tournaments.

Sports today has become, I think, sportless. I think we went to all business and forgot that there is a young life and you have to grow up with it.

Opinions about Academic High School Classes

I: Do you remember what subjects you were taking when you were a sophomore or junior?

OT: We took subjects back then which they don't even think about taking today.

I: Tell me what some of those were.

OT: One that amounted to a lot--and if you had a good teacher you'd learn a lot--was economics. Today, you don't even hear the word *economics*. Or history. You don't hear anything about the history of the United States.

I: It's called social studies now.

OT: "What is a plateau?" I bet I could ask twenty seniors now what a plateau is and they wouldn't know. I know what a plateau is; you know what a plateau is. We have high ones and we have low ones, but these kids don't know that.

Through high school, we'd start the day off with something that really settled us down. That was usually an English class. That would be number one.

I: Why did it settle you down?

OT: We usually had tough teachers. It was the hardest thing for them to make their students realize that there wasn't such a word as *ain't*. Now there is a word *ain't* because it's in the dictionary. Back then, it wasn't, so you had better not spend too many hours around the classroom saying *ain't*. They would let you know that right is right and wrong is wrong.

We'd usually have English first, then economics, and then math. There were eight subjects we had to take.

I had only one teacher I can remember that I didn't particularly like. I liked school. Usually our coaches were the math teachers. When I got up to trigonometry and was playing sports, I decided I'd better find something a little easier. That was one subject I never could quite comprehend in high school; it just did not make sense. "Why are we talking about this type of thing?" I'd think.

I: Were you expected to take textbooks home to study, or did you do all your studying in school?

OT: We had study hall, usually in the morning and one in the afternoon, and that finished out our eight credit hours. We'd start school at eight or eight-thirty in the morning with a half hour off for lunch. We went home at four.

Balancing Time for Study & for Sports

I: Could you finish all of your assignments in school?

OT: If I was really up on it. If I knew I was going to have a test in the next two or three days, I got two or three of my buddies to come to my house or theirs and crammed like heck. I had no trouble with that. But if I tried to do it at school, I was in a little bit of trouble because I'd run into a stone wall, like they say, and didn't know where to go. The school had nobody to help me, whereas at home I got two or three other kids to help figure it out.

I: How did you fit that in, though, after school with all your other work?

OT: It was pretty tough. For us fellows on sports teams, practice from three to four took up one of the hours that the other kids had in classrooms. But we were fine because we got out there maybe forty-five minutes or half an hour, and the coach would say, "If you need to do something with your studies now, go do it." Very seldom would we ever have to do that because we gave the coaches number-one effort.

I: Fall must have been a bit better for you because basketball is in Winter and baseball is in Spring. Did you have a little more free time in Fall?

OT: We did because we didn't have football in the little schools. The year I was a senior, they decided they'd get the district into football. I got to play a couple of games and lost my appendix. That was it. So I don't know much about the football game, but I do know that a lot of guys loved to try. You've got to love to try to play sports. If you don't, you're not going to make it.

Wish to Become a Coach

I: What are the main discouragements?

OT: I suppose a lot of it would be your coach. Maybe he thinks one thing should happen; half the team thinks it should and half think it shouldn't. It becomes a disgruntled operation. With a good coach, you don't have that. I would have liked to coach.

I: You would have had to go back to get other college training after you got out of the Navy, wouldn't you?

OT: Yes. I would have had to have four years. By then I had a family.

I: What do think would have been the satisfaction for you of coaching?

OT: Kids. You can tell a team that's happy and one that isn't.

I: With your emphasis on character and discipline, you could have been a very important influence on young people's lives.

OT: All their lives.

Working for Bernal Hug, Farmer & Union County Historian

I: When you were growing up in Elgin, did you know Bernal Hug?

OT: Yes.

I: In addition to being a farmer, he spent a lot of time writing history of Elgin and Union County.

OT: That's true.

I: How did you get to know him?

OT: Through his family and the church. It happened that his farm was across the river from Elgin, and my father worked for the nearby Chandler farm. He had a large family. One son was about a year older than I; we became friends. Bernal, along with his farm, did several things besides writing history. He had a dairy ranch, where I went to work helping out, as a kid--cleaning barns and going out in the pasture and getting the cows.

The Hugs' Dairy Operation

OT: A year went by and he thought I did a pretty good job, I guess, so he asked me to come back to work. That year we spent almost all of our time in the dairy; he had lots of work to do. He was getting started on making the land ready for his dairy cattle. It wasn't fit for raising much grain, so he decided he was going to run the water from the river to flood irrigate some land below for his cattle. This is what we started out doing--with teams and fresnos, as we called them. You got a load of dirt and dumped it in a hole and went back and got another load.

I: You called this dirt scooper a fresno? Do you know why you called it that?

OT: All I know is that's the way they built the roads and everything else. It was a sliding device with a bucket on it; you held up the handles and got as much dirt as you wanted, and then you could flip it over forward and it would dump it out pretty close to where you wanted it to be. Then they'd come by with their other units and spread it out.

OT: He also needed help in his barns. He had fixed up an old barn really well for a dairy so it would pass all government inspections. He had about twenty-six to thirty cows. There were only two of us: his son, about sixteen or seventeen, and I, about a year younger. We started about four in the afternoon, getting his cattle in--some of them two or three miles up on the mountain. We gathered them up and brought them down, and Bernal, Jr. had to wash them all down and get them ready.

Then we'd start milking about fiveand finish all the work at about nine. Everything was hand milking. He would milk one group of cows, and I milked the other. I called them spotted cows. They were Holstein cattle. They had big, black and white ones that gave lots of milk, but they were really hard to milk because their teats were so big that my little hands wouldn't cover them. I had to use both hands on one.

I: Did you learn to milk there?

OT: No. I learned to milk as a child when we were in Promise. Dad had to work away all the time to try to make a living because the farming that was supposed to be possible there wasn't. So we all had chores to do. There were four of us boys; I was the youngest. We started out getting in wood and worked our way up. Everybody had to work on the farm. By the time I was nine years old, I could milk almost any cow.

In those days almost all the young people could milk because they came

off farms or they were still living on farms, and any seventy-five cents an hour you could get helped a little bit.

At Hug's, after we finished milking, we took the milk to the milking parlor, where they would get it cooled down. Then they separated the cream from the milk because you couldn't sell milk that was above a certain percentage of cream. I'm not sure of the percentage. After that, we went to eat about seven p.m.

The whole family--he had six or seven children, including a couple sets of twins--sat down at a big table to eat. There weren't too many things to eat; we ate what they presented.

I: Who did the bottling?

OT: The bottling was done there. His wife and a daughter that was old enough would help. When the milk came off the coolers, they would have to decide exactly where on that bottle the cream would be and where the milk would be to get the 3.8% in each bottle. That took a considerable amount of time. By about nine p.m., the milk was ready to be delivered. In the morning we would deliver to stores. I've driven many, many miles in old Model-A cars with the back end taken out and bottles in the back.

I: Was there any way of keeping the bottles cool when you were delivering?

OT: We could deliver almost all that we had in probably one and a half or two hours. We would work at least till ten-thirty or eleven at night from five a.m. every day, six days a week; he didn't take care of the milk on Sunday. Everybody went to church.

I stayed with them in the summertime because, when I went to work at five in the morning and didn't get through till eleven at night, I didn't have much time to go home. We did get part of the day Sunday off, so we gave the milk to the hogs or whatever was necessary to get rid of the milk and be ready for Monday morning. It wasn't any good for the next day. That was my start in working for Bernal.

Bernal Hug, Sr.'s Character

I: Tell me a little more about him--what kind of a man he was.

OT: I can say to start with is that he was a great man. He had all kinds of things going for him. He was one of the first people that I know of around this area that started raising, separating, cleaning, and selling alfalfa seed. He had a place up in the mountains that was all dry land and away from any other thing that would cause the seed not to be certified. A lot of times, when Fall came along, we were up on top of the hill, threshing the alfalfa. Sometimes it got to be a twenty-four-hour day just about, but we enjoyed it.

I: When you said he was a great man, what do you mean by that?

OT: He was always starting stuff up; for example, he built his own building to clean seed and had his own sifting mechanisms to clean the seed. Then he started raising lawn seed--one of the first ones I know of. There could be others because I really don't know this business.

When we had time, if the cows didn't milk right up to snuff, he'd weigh every one of the cows' milk to make sure that they were staying equal to what we were feeding them.

I: You're describing him as a man who had ideas and knew how to carry them out. Was he a gruff man? Was he harsh in any way?

OT: Absolutely not. They were a very religious family. That's one thing you did on Sunday. You'd better be up, cleaned up, and with clean clothes on because you were going to go to Sunday School. That was also true in my family; my mother instigated that. Out in the Promise country everybody went to church and Sunday School. From the time we were two years old, we were brought up in Sunday School and church. That just passed on when we came to town.

He was more or less the kind of fellow that took over and helped out with big families, though he didn't have much extra time. I would say he was kind of a slow-moving fellow.

I: A large man?

OT: No. He was just an average size man. We'd wonder sometimes, "What happened to Bernal?" We wouldn't see him for two or three days. He was probably in the back corner of his bedroom, writing his book. He had enough faith in his family and his kids that we did the job for him.

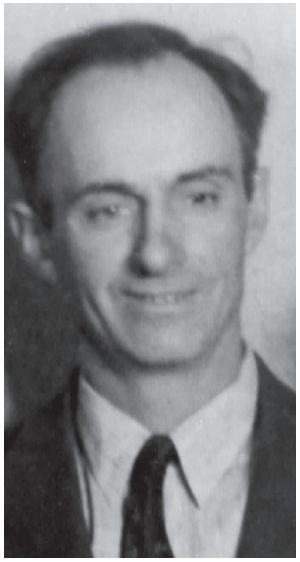
I: Did you know he was writing history?

OT: Yes.

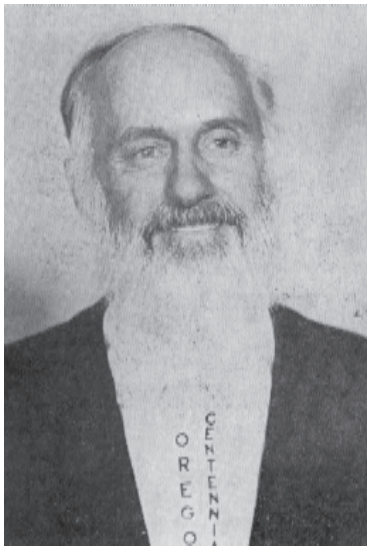
I: How did you know?

OT: He'd tell us once in a while. Or he'd have meetings with some of the old

Bernal Hug, Sr., 1917
Photo courtesy of Fred Hill



Bernal Hug, Sr., 1937
Photo courtesy of Fred Hill



Bernal Hug, Sr., in later years

timers, like my folks; they'd often be around there two or three days in tents, talking history, and he was taking notes. In the wintertime, when he couldn't do anything in the fields, he did his writing.

I: Did he show you any of his writing while he was writing his books?

OT: We could have seen it, I suppose, but we knew that this was Bernal's corner. If something was lying on a table and he didn't want it touched, all he had to say was, "Leave it alone." That was true not only in Bernal's home; it was true in almost all of our homes.

I: I suppose you knew his wife.

OT: Oh, goodness, yes. She was a great lady, who would do anything for you. I've got some good stories on her.

I: Do you want to tell any?

A Fence-making Accident

OT: I might tell one short one. In the building of those fields to get them flood irrigated, we were separating them. After we got them level, they made about five-acre plots so that the water would run about every twenty feet down through them for maybe three or four hundred yards. They'd do that for about two or three days and then let them rest for two weeks while the grass was growing. Then we'd move the cattle over to the other one, where we had had to have fences between. It was kind of hard to get barbed wire; I don't know where he obtained it.

The oldest boy, Bernal, Jr., and I had to build the fences. He'd lay them out, and we'd set the posts and stretch the barbed wire. We'd drive an old wooden post in the ground with a maul.

I: Wouldn't it rot away eventually?

OT: Yes, eventually. But we had creosote. The posts were set in creosote for two or three months. That way they'd last three or four times as long.

We had just gotten things going well, stretching the fence. We'd stretch it about a hundred feet at a time, nail it onto the post, and stretch another one. We would put four strands of wire on each section of post. About eleven one day, I was driving and Junior was stretching the wire with the wire stretcher way down at the end. I was coming along to the post and putting the nails in the wire to hold them tight. Evidently they had gotten acid on some of the rolls of wire, and they rusted about half way. I was standing there, turning my back to look down the fence line. To keep the fence straight, you look backwards. All at once, "whing." I heard something go and then I felt it. The ball of wire rolled up around me.

Bernal, Jr. cut the wire off; here I was with a big ball of wire on my back. It wasn't too far to the house, so he was screaming and yelling. His mother came to the back door. There was not much blood, just the holes. Junior said, "What are we gonna do, Mom?" She said, "How come you didn't cut that wire off Orval?" He said, "I did." He had cut it off at the ends, but he didn't cut it off around me; there were three or four strands still around me. She ran into the house and got an old tool; I don't know what. It didn't take her long to get that wire off me; then she ran me in the house, stripped me down, and set me in the bathtub. By the time that tub was about three-fourths full, I was wishing I could get out. My goodness, it did hurt! She give me the good old treatment, using iodine. In three or four days, I was feeling pretty good and got back to work.

That's the kind of the lady she was.

She'd do anything to help. A pleasant, great lady, who taught classes in Sunday School.

I: She did a lot of cooking, too, I suppose.

OT: Oh, my goodness, yes. It was still a community. The churches had their own places where they'd go on weekends. At least once a week in the summertime, they'd have a big outing of some kind. The kids played ball, and the folks would eat all the food they could. She was one of the main cooks with my mother. We had some great summers growing up. We didn't know they were bad times.

I: This barbed wire accident occurred in the late '30s, when you were about fifteen?

OT: Yes, that would be about right.

I: There were doctors then. Why didn't she say, "Do you want to go in to see a doctor?"

OT: You didn't see doctors. The farmers were better at doctoring than the real doctors were because they were born and raised here with their families, and they knew how to take care of these things.

I: Did she have any concern about your wounds' becoming infected? Puncture wounds are likely to become infected.

OT: Yes, especially with acid on them, but as far as I know that was never even a consideration. She just cleaned it off every morning and night. They didn't have anything like we do today, like tape to hold a bandage on. They just wrapped it around your body or whatever was necessary. Mostly, they'd tear up an old shirt or undershirt and wrap it around you.

I: You must have had a dozen wounds.

OT: Oh, at least. I still have the scars--or most of them.

I: You mentioned the wire stretcher. What kind of a gadget was it?

OT: It's the same thing as they use today --a single wire stretcher. It's a tool with a handle on it and a hook on one end. You jack the wire, and it should tie the wire on the other end. They had a clamp, usually, that would hold the wire. The other guy pulled till I hollered, "Hold." I'd figure out how tight to get it by the whing-whing-whing sound. I must have whinged it one time too many.

His Father's & Brothers' Work in Elgin

OT: A lot of times I worked for my dad across the street.

I: How was he making a living?

OT: The Chandler ranch was right across the road. If you're driving to Elgin now, the Hug ranch is on one side, where the big bridge is, and the Chandler ranch is on the other side. Dad ran the Chandler ranch. Chandler had an Alice Chalmers International equipment dealership, and most of all his work was done in La Grande. My dad, when he wasn't farming, was helping set up machinery and delivering it. He didn't have a good-paying job, but he had a good steady job.

I: What were they raising on the Chandler ranch?

OT: Since he was in the farm equipment business also, they were trading tractors and everything else from a sheep to a goat to cattle or what have you. So they were all coming through the farm to get them fattened up the best they could, and then they'd have a big sale and sell them off to someone else.

This is the type of work he did. My older brothers and some other fellows would do the hay because he'd have fifty or sixty acres of hay to feed the cows and sheep in the wintertime. He'd get them all started filling those big barns and making big haystacks. The younger fellows did most all that. Dad was busy all the time, running that ranch.

I: Your father was really supervising a crew, then. Was there work in the wintertime, too?

OT: Oh, yes. He always had a whole bunch of sheep or cattle traded in or a bunch of horses. It took quite a few horses and cattle just to keep the ranch running. It was quite an experience. Even as young as I was, I can remember most of it

I: What was your father's first work in Elgin?

OT: He went to work for a pretty big flour mill in Elgin.

I: What was it called, do you remember?

OT: It's the same one that's in Island City. The owner was Mr. Kiddle. The brand name for their products was Rose. They had a picture of a rose on the side of all the flour sacks. I can remember during the Depression some of my clothes were made of those sacks and had part of the roses still on them.

Dad worked in that mill. Right away Chandler found out that he was a farmer and hired him.

I: Did you go inside the flour mill sometimes?

OT: Oh, yes.

I: Could you describe it?

OT: It had big grinders, set up so there were different distances between the stones to make different fineness of the grains. Wheat and other grain ran through the grinders.

I: Is the mill still there?

OT: No. It was there until about two years ago, when some kids got in there--a fellow was making fine furniture there --and they burned it down.

The mill in Island City was just about double in size. Since they had no way to transport the products back and forth, they could afford to run two mills rather than just to have one big mill. I'm sure that mill hasn't been working as a mill for some time.

I: At that time they would ship the product out by train, wouldn't they?

OT: Most of them, yes. They had no other way to do it unless they put them on a wagon and hauled it.

Orval's other Teenage Jobs

I: What other jobs did you have while you were living in Elgin and before you graduated from high school?

OT: Besides working for Bernal, I got to a place where I was older and wouldn't work for pennies; I had to have quarters. I thought I did, anyway. I moved up to helping Dad and the boys out in the fields. Then I went to work for an old fellow at the H. F. Reed Lumber Company. He had a big sawmill in Elgin, and he sold slabs for wood. They cut the slabs up into about sixteen- to eighteen-inch pieces that weren't just the bark side and sold them to people for almost nothing--maybe a dollar and a half for a whole truckload.

In the summertime, we kids got jobs stacking the slabs up for people to keep it dry. If the mill was running well, four or five groups of kids could

run around all over town and make pretty good money. Nobody called it a job, though.

The only other job we had that really amounted to anything was at the Elgin Opera House. That's where the movies were, and about once a month, it seemed to me, there'd be a group of people who came in to put on shows.

It took lots of work because that big place was heated with wood. We'd get a job from the lumber company to stack the wood for that place. It would just about keep two or three guys busy all summer long stacking wood outside the building.

There was plenty of work for young people to do; we just didn't like to work for seventy-five cents an hour.

Performances at Elgin Opera House

I: Did you go to performances at the Elgin Opera House, as well as stack wood there?

OT: Oh, yes. The Opera House would give us a dime a cord for wood, and the mill they would pay us twenty-five or thirty cents a cord besides. So we made pretty good money. Usually we'd take it out in tickets. A ticket then was ten cents. They would pay us off in tickets or they'd pay us off a dime at a time. We'd get enough tickets to go to every show in the Opera House all winter long. Our folks wouldn't let us do that, but we could have.

I: Were the shows you saw usually music, or were they plays?

OT: A lot of them were plays coming in from La Grande, Pendleton, or Walla Walla. They'd just travel around. I never did know anybody that was a really good performer. In other words, they weren't from Hollywood.

I: What were the attitudes that people had about the Elgin Opera House and the entertainments that came there? Did they think that entertainment was something special?

OT: Oh, golly! You couldn't even get up and down Main Street the whole day, usually, before somebody was coming there. They'd try to buy tickets to get in to see them. Some things just didn't happen everyday. That Opera House was special.

Access to Newspapers & Magazines

I: How did people get word about the performances that were coming up?

OT: As long as I can remember, we had a weekly paper.

I: *The Elgin Recorder*?

OT: Right. The dad of one of my best friends owned it.

I: Who was that?

OT: His name was Turley Tucker.

I: Was that paper delivered to your house?

OT: No, they didn't deliver. It came through the mail. I delivered *The Observer* when I was a little guy. I did anything I could to make a nickel.

I: Did you read *The Observer* and *The Recorder* regularly?

OT: I can't remember ever reading it. I was pretty young.

I: You must have been a teenager, though, when *The Recorder* was published.

OT: Yes, but I just didn't read that old folks' paper.

I: Did you get magazines at your house, like *The Saturday Evening Post* or *Country Gentleman?*

OT: No, we were all poor people.

Restaurants in Elgin

I: Do you remember restaurants in Elgin?

OT: Yes. I remember four restaurants. My mother went to work at one owned by Bernal Hug's brother, I believe. She was a licensed practical nurse but didn't have a full-time job, so, after we kids all got to high school, she thought she had to help. She knew how to cook!

I: Did you eat there sometimes?

OT: Oh, yes. When Mom went to work there, a lot of times they'd tell her, "Send your kids in here and let's give them something to eat." That was so she wouldn't have to go home and cook.

I: Was this a meat-potatoes-vegetable kind of dinner?

OT: You bet. The old western-type diners. They had all the business in town before it was over. She finally quit because, she said, "I can't handle this." She was doing the cooking and there were three people helping her but they still couldn't keep up. They were open from about four in the morning to eleven or twelve every night. She was there several years.

Custodial Jobs at Elgin High School

OT: I went to work at the school also. Since I played basketball and baseball, I got to know the janitor of the place pretty well. The government came out with a program that would pay twenty-five cents an hour to help the janitor clean the floors and the gyms. I did that for over two years, but I had to do it during off-hours. I got so I could clean that gym and the upstairs balconies with big mops in half an hour, so I was making pretty good money. Then on Saturdays they'd pay us for four hours to come work outside and clean the yards. I kept myself in clothes.

I: Did you have your eye on a car, too?

OT: Yes, but you know how that goes awry. There'd be one car with twelve kids trying to ride in it all the time. Usually there'd be one or two families that would have enough money that they could let their kids go buy an old car like an old Model-T Ford. We've had a lot of fun with those old cars.

Forms of Entertainment

I: Between ages eight or ten and sixteen or seventeen, I imagine you listened to the radio every once in a while.

OT: Not too much.

I: No time?

OT: Sports was a lot of it, but you were lucky if you had one radio in the house. My dad was a hard worker.

I: Did he buy a radio?

OT: He bought a really good radio, and he also sat right in front of it. So if we wanted to listen to *Amos and Andy* or *Little Orphan Annie*, that was fine as long as he was listening with us. If he wanted his programs, he'd say, "You'd better go do your school work" or "I've got my programs." He wasn't rough; that was his way of teaching us to go do our work.

I: What live music did you hear?

OT: The only live music we had was old people that could play almost any kind

of an instrument--harmonicas, banjos, guitars. My uncle had a seven-piece western outfit and brought the whole thing out here, thinking he could get rich farming and playing western music. His family played. Boy, could they ever make music! They played music all over Wallowa County and made a good living at it. He didn't have to farm.

I: At what places could you listen to music?

OT: We kids went to somebody's house. They'd have a big dinner on Saturday afternoons and play music. Then everybody would go away to do chores and come back about eight or eight-thirty. We kids would all be at that one farm, the ladies cooking up a big meal. When they got that done, they'd play the music till about eleven and then play cards all night long. They'd change their clothes and go to church the next day.

We kids lay down behind some chairs with blankets against the wall, where we stayed all night.

I: Can you remember the names of any of the tunes they played?

OT: "Redwing" and "A Letter Edged in Black." It's about a guy that was in jail for a long time. He writes a letter, saying he is coming home. When he gets out of jail, he finds his dad was dead. I don't know how the tune goes, but that's the gist of it. I like western music.

I: Who paid these musicians for their performances when they'd come to town?

OT: Usually a Grange Hall, if they had a Grange. In Enterprise, when they have Enterprise Days, all the people get together, and the businesses donate five dollars apiece--either that or a jug of booze.

I: Did the people who came to listen have to pay admission?

OT: Usually not. It was the day for going to town--maybe the only time they went to town--when they did a lot of shopping.

Enlisting in the U.S. Navy & Learning Diesel Engineering

I: You said you enlisted in the Navy instead of being drafted in the Army.

OT: Right. I went in '42, but I'd been drafted in '41.

I: What was there about the Navy that you preferred?

OT: As long as you have a ship, you have a home--a meal and a bed to sleep in. I had fair grades in school, and I was lucky enough to get selected by the Navy to go to diesel engineering school. Back then we had no diesel engines to speak of, and we lost most of them at Pearl Harbor to boot. So they started building a brand new college campus at Ames, Iowa for nothing but diesel engineering students. I was selected to go to that--three hundred of us--and I graduated from that. We were supposed to go into some brand new ships that they were building, but they turned out to be three big, old ships because we had lost almost all of our ships.

I: Battleship or cruiser type?

OT: Battleship. When we graduated, they said it would be about a year before the ship was ready to go. They were far behind on building those ships. It turned out to be a lot longer than they thought. So they transferred all of us over to the amphibious force--diesel engineers stuck in the amphibious force. We went to Newport News [Virginia], and loaded on ships. We got a little bit of training and started overseas.

I: The amphibious force would have used LSTs [Landing Ship Tank, a ship whose bow dropped forward to facilitate loading of vehicles and other equipment], wouldn't they?

Injuries in a Torpedo Attack

OT: That's right. That's what I was on. We were in a flotilla over more than a hundred ships, going up past Iceland and Greenland and over. They were getting ready to invade in Africa, but we never did get there. Seven days out of New York, we were hit by a torpedo in the North Atlantic. I got torn up a little bit on the LST and spent about ten months in a hospital, going through rehab.

I: Successful?

OT: Yes, pretty well.

I: At the end of that, you were honorably discharged, I assume.

OT: Honorably discharged.

Orval at U.S. Navy boot camp, 1942
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump

Marriage

OT: I got married while I was in the Navy.

I: Where did you meet her?

OT: I met her at Iowa State College. She was from Hudson, South Dakota.

I: Was she working there or a student?

OT: She was working there. Her uncle had a contract with the government to operate all the taxicabs, since the campus was two miles from town. She was working part-time, taking phone calls in the hotel. That's where I met her.

I: Did she wait around until you were discharged?

OT: No, we only knew each other about seven weeks and got married.

I: Before you left Ames?

OT: Just a week after the marriage, I left.

Return to Grande Ronde Valley

I: When you were discharged, you came back to what?

OT: We came back to La Grande.

Orval having a bit of fun after boot camp, 1942
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump

I: What caused you to do that?

OT: The Caterpillar Tractor Company at that time was getting started with diesels. The railroad had the same diesel engines on trains that we had on the LST. The only one on the Union Pacific running through La Grande during the war was the Portland Rose, though two or three big freight outfits had diesels.

Brief Work on Union Pacific's Portland Rose Train

OT: The Union Pacific wanted me to go to work for them. I did take three trips with them on the Portland Rose. I deadheaded from Portland to Omaha, Nebraska.

I: Was your responsibility to fix the engine if it broke down?

OT: If it was just something like, say, a fuel injector that went out and it wasn't up to power, I was supposed to be able to diagnose it and repair it if it wasn't affecting the rest of the engine. We usually had one spare engine. On the Union Pacific, since they were using the engines so much during the war, every so many hours we automatically checked out the fuel systems to make sure it was running. They had a regular routine, just like changing the oil in your car every three thousand miles.

I: What were you expected to do on that trip?

OT: It was just routine. We had lots of problems with diesels to start with. They'd get plugged up, and the diesel would run on two or three cylinders. The Portland Rose had eight cylinders. That's what I specialized in the Navy; if something started missing, right away I knew it. They had all kinds of gauges, but if two engines had failures, the train would be out of business--and you couldn't be out of business on the Portland Rose. It had to run. I might travel that thing for six months and never touch a wrench.

I: You were there as a safety precaution.

OT: Yes. Most diesel locomotives have two or three engines. If it had three engines and two were fine, they would go into the next town, taken the broken one out, put in another one, and be ready to go on the next trip.

I: Where exactly were you traveling when you were on the Portland Rose? Were you sitting in the locomotive or in a passenger car?

OT: All these people that worked there, like the cooks and the brakemen, had their own car.

I: If you weren't really working most of the time when you were traveling on the Portland Rose, what did you do?

OT: Played checkers. I only made three trips with the shakedown crew. I didn't get paid; that's the reason they called it a shakedown. My wife said, "You didn't marry me to run up and down railroad tracks." I said, "OK."

Work with the La Grande Montgomery Ward Store

OT: I wasn't supposed to work for six months to a year after I got out of the service because I was on full sick leave. After about six months, they would allow me to work four hours a day. The first job I got was with Montgomery Ward in La Grande; it was a big store then.

I had a great-uncle that worked there and kept saying, "Come on down, Orval. We need somebody to help us inventory hardware in the basement."

Lured Away to Caterpillar Tractor Dealership in La Grande

OT: The word was out, I guess, that I was back home. I finally said, "OK, I'll come down, Uncle, and help you a little bit." A fellow walked into the basement one morning, where I'd inventoried a bunch of bolts, and said, "Are you Orval Trump? How would you like to go to work for Caterpillar Tractor Company?" I walked across town and went to work with Caterpillar Tractor Company. They only had two dealers back then; diesel was just coming out for farm machinery and logging contracting.

I worked here until I got into management, and that was a nice deal for me. We had a good territory. Finally, I got tired of staying in the same old place and moved to Yakima [Washington]. I stayed there for two years and decided I didn't like Washington. So I moved back to Pendleton and stayed over there twenty-eight years and worked for Caterpillar and John Deere. I was a manager there.

I: When you were associated with Caterpillar, was the office in Pendleton?

OT: When I went to work for them, the main office was in Boise, Idaho. I went to work in the La Grande office, where there were seven of us in the service department.

I: Where was that office exactly?

OT: Right around the corner on Jefferson, there's a flat, square building. At that time it had windows all around and took in about half a block. That's where our main office was. Everything had to be hauled in by railroad and unloaded.

I: Did you have the farm machines there?

OT: Yes. We had two little lots behind, and, if we got too many, then we had a lot out to one side where we could store the machinery.

I: What were the main kinds of farm machinery that people wanted?

OT: Farmers had old gas engines from before the war. Since farmers made pretty good money during the war, they started updating to D2 or D4 diesels. Then the loggers came in. They went into the bigger dozers--the sixes, sevens, and eights.

I: What would have been the life of some of those machines if they were in active service?

OT: They had depreciation time set at ten years, but most of them would run for twenty.

I: What happened to the old machines?

OT: A lot of them were abandoned or put in used sales lots. There was always the gyppo logger to pick them up for used parts.

I: What was the nature of the first work you did with them?

OT: A Navy man that was in charge of my health benefits at that time came in

Orval in 1945
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump

and told them exactly what they could do and what they couldn't do to keep me on the job. I couldn't work more than four hours a day, and I couldn't lift over twenty pounds. The first job I had was steam cleaning parts, and finally I did get hurt.

After about eighteen months, they transferred me to the parts department in a dealership here. Pretty quickly I was feeling really good. The more I moved around and worked the better I felt. Before long, I was working full time. The Navy guy said, "If you go to work full time, you're not going to get much of a pension, fellow." So they cut the heck out of my pension. I said, "OK." I stayed there for two or three years.

Work in the La Grande Caterpillar Tractor Parts & Service Departments

I: What exactly did you do in the parts department?

OT: In a parts department you do almost everything. Everybody thinks you just stand there behind the counter and wait till some guy comes in, but it doesn't work that way. All at once you get a big shipment in a railroad car or a truck at the back door, and that has to be put into inventory stock. So you need two or three people doing nothing but put away stock. When it came in, it had a part number on it and a location. We took it out of a crate, broke it down, and put it away. Then when you'd sell a big order--like from a big logger over in Burns country--we would package it all up and send it to Burns.

Then they started letting me wait on customers. I got regular training over about three years; they had a good one.

At that time, they bought out the dealer that was here and also the John Deere dealership, combined the two, and changed the name. Then we started moving stores. We put a store in John Day and one in Enterprise. They wanted to give people that were experienced a chance to move into a better job at the other store.

I: Did you stock all the parts to these machines?

OT: All the parts from the radiator to the tailgate--all their driving parts.

I: Did the company also do repairs?

OT: Yes.

I: Would the customer bring the machine in to town to repair it?

OT: If possible. A lot of them came in because you can't repair a lot of that big equipment in the field. We had big trucks and could load anything.

I: Were you doing the repairs yourself?

OT: I was for some time until I got hurt and transferred into the parts department. From the parts department, after I'd been there for some little time, they started expanding, as I said, to other towns, and that left an opening in their main store for parts managers and service managers. They said, "We're not that big. You can do both." So they made a parts-and-service manager out of me. I took care of our own training --teaching mechanics how to overhaul engines. I spent a lot of time away from home, but I liked the job really well.

I: You must have had a lot of conversations with the owners of these machines.

OT: Yes. It was a really gratifying job. An owner would call me up, usually after hours when the store was locked up; he had my home phone number. He was

mad because his machine had broken down. He couldn't get parts. As a manager, especially a service manager, I could treat them right. When the customer was down, he had millions of dollars in his road job. I enjoyed that type of thing. Most people didn't. They wouldn't have it. I fired a lot of guys in six months. They'd throw up their hands and say, "I just can't take that kind of crap. How do you do it?" I knew how the guy worked. You have to know your people and you have to know your customers. That's the secret.

I: Were you usually able to provide the repair service they needed?

OT: Maybe not, but within a few hours or a few days, we would work it out. Maybe we'd have to haul a used machine to him and haul his in. We could work it out. You could see a million dollars a day go down the drain, so I'd say, "I've got to help this guy."

I: How good were the wages at a company like Caterpillar?

OT: The wages were comparable to everybody else. They made sure they were within a few dollars a day of what the other guy was getting. Otherwise, one guy was going to have all the business. They paid fairly and had good working conditions and good pension plans.

Orval & his wife, Grace, in 1950s
Photo courtesy of Orval Trump

Experiences with Labor Unions

I: What role did labor unions play?

OT: The fellows were getting the same kind of wages as the unionized guys in constructions jobs, and they weren't paying the dues. So the unions and the contractors were having fights with the union that was trying to get the money out of them.

I: By the time that had started happening, were you in management?

OT: Yes.

I: How did the fighting about unions affect you?

OT: I had to be just a little bit smarter than the guy who was talking to me. I had darn good training service and treated my people right.

I always said a union had its place, but they weren't used right. They let convict types get in charge of them. If you didn't belong to the union and took your pickup and drove out on a construction job, these guys who were controlling the union would block you off; you could hardly get your pickups back off the job.

I: Strong-arm tactics.

OT: Strong arm all the way. I strong armed them the other way.

I: Did you get into fights?

OT: No. I didn't have to. There was always a reason to call us. It usually ended up that the tractor had warranties on it that the union wasn't allowed to touch; the factories are the only ones that can work on warranties. So if you just sat down and talked to these guys, it could always be worked out; I spent thirty-seven years at that.

I: Were there attempts to bring unions into Union County?

OT: Oh, every day. There'd be union guys in my shop. I'd have run them out darn near once a week.

I: What would they do and what would they say?

OT: They'd just try to convince the guys how much better the pay would be and how much bigger their pensions would be. Usually, they'd offer top pay in three years. Nationally, Caterpillar had a four-year training program, but the unions were paying top wages in three years to get a man away from us. They would keep him six months or so and say he wasn't qualified. They didn't care about that; they just wanted to get him away from us. Nowadays it's different than that. Most unions are really sensible now. They finally woke up to the fact that they can't live with guys that carry rifles. They realized that they had to learn how to get along with customers.

I could usually make my managers see what I was trying to do: keep my mechanics by giving them a decent wage. I wasn't allowed to can one of them if he'd been talking to a union man. That was against the law. Usually, if I found out that they were going to have a vote, I'd tell them, "Now look. I'm giving you guys a decent wage. I'm not going to give you a big pay raise and then can all of you six months from now. If you want a living wage and a good retirement, this is the place to be."

I: Were you usually successful in persuading them not to join the union?

OT: I never had one of my outfits join a union. After World War II things got to be a little better and organized. We got hospitalization and things like that which would help the families. This was pretty easy to sell because, if a man had a pretty good-sized family and something happened in the family that laid up several of them at the same time, they were in trouble. There were a lot of things I could talk to people about without breaking the union. It was never proven that I was a union breaker; I wasn't that kind of a manager.

Helping Fellow Workers in Times of Need

I: If somebody who didn't have health insurance had a serious injury accident, would the company help the family in some way, or did you rely on charitable organizations in the community like Elks?

OT: I think every company, even the car dealers, had their own ways to help out if they could. Employees donated a little money here or there. We prided ourselves on having the type of people working for us that cared about their other employees.

Attitudes toward Social Security

I: What were attitudes that you were aware of about Social Security deductions?

OT: I took it as something that had happened and had to be. When I was sixteen years old, I started contributing to Social Security. They didn't say it was going to completely save the whole universe from going broke. They said, "For so many dollars a month you can get this much when you retire, if you ever retire." It had a lot of faults in it, but I thought I was going to get something, since older people weren't getting anything in those days. I think everybody probably felt pretty well aligned with it.

I: Workers didn't resent the deductions?

OT: No, they didn't.

Workers' Vacations

I: What vacation allowances did people get in those times?

OT: After working there for one year, they got one week's vacation and after three years, two weeks' vacation. That was an incentive from the start. Most of the men had been out of work and needed anything that they could get. That second week made a lot of difference because many of them went to work in the hay fields and made a few extra bucks along with that week's vacation.

I: So people mostly didn't take vacations?

OT: For a long time we said that, if you wanted to work it, we'd pay you for the vacation time. In other words if, say, you worked this week and we needed you to work next week, we would give you the vacation pay for it. That's like double time and a half.

I: Did a lot of people take you up on that?

OT: Not a lot. We preached, "You've been working fifty hours for twelve months out of the year, and you've got four weeks that qualify for something. You don't have to take it, but we want you to because we think you certainly need it--not only for the company you're working for and yourself but for your family."

I: Did most people take all their vacation time in one period consecutively?

OT: Usually not because they always liked to go elk hunting. One of my employees would say, "Hey, boss. Put me up on the board for November 1 through 12. Then I'll take the other two days at Thanksgiving." We'd do it.

I: What do you remember about people going on trips for their vacations?

OT: I remember that I was one of the ring leaders. My wife was from South Dakota and Iowa, so that meant two to three weeks every year--got to go.

I: Would you drive there?

OT: Almost always. Either that or, when the kids were little, I'd send the wife home on the train. We'd get a roomette--something for the kids to enjoy. It would take a couple of days, and she'd stay there maybe thirty days. I'd go back and bring them home from visiting the Black Hills. We used to go home every two years.

We'd stuff a hundred dollars in a can every now and then and that four or five hundred was good for two or three weeks on a nice vacation.

Celebrating Christmas

I: How did your family, both when you were younger and when you had your own wife and children, usually celebrate Christmas?

OT: The old-fashioned way, just like Grandpa and Grandma did.

I: Tell me about it.

OT: We always had Grandma around pretty close. We were a pretty close-knit family. But once we grew up and started having our own families, that started doubling and tripling the pressure on Grandpa and Grandma for Christmas. It did make a difference, but we still had the same old Christmas trees, pulled taffy, and made popcorn.

I: Did you go out and cut the Christmas tree?

OT: Yes, wherever the government let me.

I: How did you handle gifts?

OT: We drew names usually. After all, Christmas is not a time to spend a lot

of dough for presents. We gave each other a nice gift and left the rest to the Lord.

I: What sorts of gifts would people usually give?

OT: The gift I remember first ever receiving--and I still have it--was a little porcelain dog and three porcelain puppies.

I: Why did they mean so much to you?

OT: They were the first real gift I ever received.

I: Who gave them to you?

OT: My folks. It was Santa Claus, of course. I have them in glass. I also remember my first set of marbles. I was the only one in the first grade in the one-room school. That winter was so terrible we had to ride horses or skiis to school. I didn't miss one day because my older brothers carried me to school. I still have the little bag of marbles the teacher gave me in second grade.

Playing with Marbles, including Steelies

I: Have you played marbles a lot?

OT: Used to but not with those. Those didn't get played with.

I: They're too special?

OT: You bet.

I: When you played marbles, did you have steelies often?

OT: Especially in high school, we tried to figure out the biggest steely we could get. A logger friend would open up his shop, and we'd start looking for big ball bearings from those old Cats and trucks. I had one about almost three-eighths of an inch around. I took it over to school, hit the middle of a pile of marbles, and "poom," they were all gone. The school principal said, "I think we better bar these steelies."

Moves to Yakima & Pendleton

OT: After I worked for Caterpillar in Yakima and left there in '68, I came back to Pendleton and said I was never going to take another bossing job in my life. No more! After twenty-five years, I had it at that. I decided to go out and do a little selling, since I'd been selling something all my life. After not even a year, the John Deere dealership had trouble with one of the parts managers; the boss came to me and said, "Orval, would you mind running that parts department until I can find a parts manager?" I said, "Yes, Fall is coming. I won't be able to sell anything till Spring anyway." I took that job and stayed there ten years.

I: Where was that office?

OT: That was in Pendleton. After that, I figured that was enough.

Orval as Father & Grandfather

I: Would you like to tell me about what has happened to your children and grandchildren?

OT: I had four children--three boys and a girl. My daughter and her family are in La Grande. Two boys are in Corvallis and one boy in Bellingham, Washington. They just took off on their own ways. Of course, it wasn't any of my business; they're grown people.

I: Did they go into any kind of engineering activity?

OT: They didn't, but I have a grandson that is. He's working for Caterpillar as a shop foreman. He went to Blue Mountain College, took diesel engine engineering, and went to work for a

trucking outfit and then Caterpillar, who paid him more money.

I: Do you think you might have influenced his decision to go into diesel engineering? Did you talk to him a lot?

OT: Some. He wouldn't listen to his dad.

Surgeries

I: Do you get back to Wallowa County now?

OT: I haven't for the last year and a half because I've had a heck of a spinal operation. I've got lots of pain in part of my face and skull and down between the shoulders. So I had to quit work. Then, about a year and a half ago, I stepped where I shouldn't have stepped, fell, hit my head against the washing machine, and crushed my skull. That's the reason I'm here at the retirement residence [i.e., Grande Ronde Retirement Residence].

I: Do you think your spinal problem is related to your wartime injuries?

OT: I say yes, but I can't prove it. The Veterans Administration still takes care of me most of time. They've been great to me.

I: What was the nature of the symptoms?

OT: I tore up the inside of my stomach and a lot of my internal organs. They screwed them back together and got me fixed up pretty good, but I don't digest my food like most people do. I have to eat more often to digest it. I was down to a hundred and seventeen pounds when I came here.

I: How long ago was that?

OT: Less than two years.

I: Is your wife here too?

OT: No, she passed away just before I came here. I fell and got hurt, and she passed away while I was still in a coma.

Family Reunions & a Final Resting Place

I: Have you had family reunions?

OT: We used to have Trump reunions all the time; we used to go to Promise and have our reunion. But everybody had trailers and motor homes, and they scattered out so far, like Olympia and Seattle and Bellingham, they couldn't come over for the weekend. Then we started having our family reunion at Hat Rock Park out of Hermiston on the Columbia River. It was for two days, and the first three or four years it turned out really well--two or three hundred people. All at once, the next year it went "kapoof"--about thirty-five or forty. So they decided to discontinue because they were too busy.

I: I was traveling around the north part of the county recently and stopped at the Summerville Cemetery. I saw your name there. How did you decide on Summerville?

OT: Family.

I: Are other members of the Trump family there?

OT: My folks are buried there. My brother and my wife are buried there, so that's where I'll be.

Appendix

Four Seasons
by Orval Trump
2003

The warm fire in the fireplace, the quiet whispers of the fan. The accumulation of moisture caused from the cold winter temperatures outside, frost on all the bushes and trees, with the sun shining brightly, becomes a beautiful winter wonderland. The snow is gone from the low land and the south slopes, all showing first signs of Spring. Snow still lingers in the north canyons and on the high mountains. In a few weeks the leaves are opening on the trees and the bushes, early flowers blooming everywhere.

Every day it seems you must leave for the high country in search of wild flowers: Blue Bells, Yellow Bells, Kings Crown, Bird Bills, wild Roses, Hairs Ears, Sunflowers, Fox Tails, Snap Dragons, and Indian Paint Brushes that cover the ridges and the southern draws.

As you walk along the ridge, water trickles slowly down across the lush green meadows, caused by the sun melting the snow from above. Walking slowly and quietly, you will see birds of many species, small squirrels, rabbits, and even a doe deer with a small fawn at its side.

If you are lucky, as you are walking along an animal trail or in a timbered draw, you might find the always elusive, delicate Lady Slipper or Wild Orchid. You notice that the small trickle of water you saw in the high meadow above is quickly becoming a muddy stream; the stream soon becomes an overflowing river in the valley below. You realize Spring is here.

Spring fades into Summer; the sun is now high in the sky. The blossoms are all gone from the flowers; the muddy stream is now cool and clear. The time has come to just enjoy the wonders of nature, as the water fashions its own music and the wonderful calm feeling of contentment comes over you.

Walking along in the high hills, you now see life as it really is; bushes are now loaded with beautiful, green foliage; the elderberry bushes are loaded with berries and the smell of huckleberries fills the air.

The green meadows are now gold and yellow with fall flowers appearing on the ridges and the canyons everywhere. Below you notice many fall colors: yellow, crimson, gold, and, yes, the beautiful evergreen standing stately toward the sky. Looking closer you will see small squirrels scampering everywhere; deer with their young, almost grown; or a herd of elk, just appearing along a brushy draw. Listening, you can hear a fall breeze blowing down the canyons and over the ridges.

It is now that you realize Spring and Summer are over and Autumn is well on its way. You sit alone on the hillside, remembering how the seasons of the year really are. It seems autumn is the most beautiful time of all. The breezes are getting cooler, and chill fills the evening air.

You leave the high lands for the valley below, somehow realizing all the seasons of the year are great in their own way--always looking forward to another year of four great seasons and enjoying each one as it arrives.

Index

A

acid 16
Africa 21
Ames IA 21
Amos and Andy 19
amphibious force 20
appendix 11
assignments, school 11
athletes, star 7
automobiles 4

B

Baker OR 10
ball bearings 28
banjos 20
barbed wire 15
baseball 4-6, 11, 19
baseball & basketball, coaching of 9
basketball 4, 5, 9, 11, 19
battleships 20
Bellingham WA 28, 29
Blue Mountain Community College 28
Boise ID 23
booze 20
bottling of milk 13
brakemen 22
brother, Bernal Hug's 19
burial plot, Orval's 29

C

car, buying of 19
Carpers 1
car dealers 26
Caterpillar Tractor Co. 22, 25, 26, 28
cattle 12,16
Chandler 17
character, instilling of 9
checkers, playing of 22
cheerleaders 10
China Mary's Noodles (restaurant)
    exterior, photo of 5
    interior, photo of 6
chores 12
Christmas tree, cutting of 27
church, going to 20
coaches 6, 9, 11
coacing of baseball and basketball 9
colors, school 8
Columbia River 29
coma 29
contractors 25
cookie, fortune 6
cooking 16
cooks 22
corporal punishment 7
Corvallis OR 28
cows 3, 17
cramming for tests 11
creosote 15
customers, waiting on 24
customer relationships 25

D

D4 diesel 23
dairy ranch 12
dealers, Caterpillar 23
dealership 24
dehydration 6
department, parts 24
Depression 3, 4, 17, 23
diesel
    engineering 29
    engineering school 20
    engines 22
discharge
    honorable 21
    military 21
doctors 16
dogs, porcelain 28
dressing room 9

E

economics 10
Elgin OR 8, 10, 12, 16, 17
    flour mill, burning of 17
    Husky 8
    Opera House 18
        attitude toward 18
employees, firing of 25
engineering, diesel, school for 20
engines
    diesel 20, 22
    LST 22
English 10

Enterprise OR 24
Days 20
entertainment, attitudes toward 18
equipment, for business 16

F

facilities, school 8
farmers 23
farming 1, 12, 16
farm
equipment business 16
machinery 23
father, Orval's 1, 2, 12, 17
feet, rooster 5
fence, stretching of 15
fences 15
Fleshmans 1
floors, cleaning of 19
flour
mill 17
sacks 17
food, American 6
football 11
foreman, shop 28
fortune cookie 6
fouls in basketball 9
freight, hauling of 3
freznos 12
fuel injector 22

G

game, football 11
gifts, Christmas 28
goat 16
Grande Ronde
River 2
Valley 1, 22
Greenland 21
guitars 20
gyms, cleaning of 19

H

H. F. Reed Lumber 17
Hat Rock Park 29
hay 17
haystacks 17
health insurance, not having 26
Hermiston OR 29
high school 17
history
U.S. 10
writing of 12, 14
Hollywood 18
horses 1, 3, 17
Hug
Bernal Jr. 15
Bernal Sr. 13-15, 17
ranch 16

I

Iceland 21
Imbler OR 10
injuries, wartime 29
inspections, government 12
instruction, athletic 9
internal organs 29
inventory stock 24
Iowa State College 21
irrigation, flood 15
Island City OR 17

J

janitor 19
Jefferson Avenue 23
John Day OR 4, 24
John Deere
dealership 24
Tractor Co. 23

L

land 1
laundry, school 8
La Grande OR 5, 10, 16, 18, 21
Little Andy Rooney 19
locker room 8
logging 1, 23
log cabin 2
LSTs 21
lumber company 2
lunch 11

M

mail, delivering of 3
management 25
diesel equipment 23
manager
service 24, 25
parts 24, 28
marbles 28

marriage, Orval's 21
math 10
    teacher 11
maul 15
mechanics 24, 26
mechanisms, sifting 13
milk 13
    weighing of 13
milking 12
    parlor 13
mill, flour 17
Model-T Ford 19
Montgomery Ward 22
mother, Orval's 2, 19
movies 18
music, western 20
musicians, paying of 20

N

nails 15
Navy, U.S. 20, 22
newspaper, old folks' 18
New York NY 21
noodles
    bowl of 6
    Chinese 5

O

Olympia WA 29
Omaha NE 22
operation, spinal 29
organs, internal 29

P

pain 29
paper, weekly 18
parlor, milking 13
parts
    machine 24
    department 24, 28
        work in 24
    managers 24, 28
Pendleton OR 18, 23, 28
pep talk 9
pigs 3
pinstripe 8
pioneers 1
plateau 10
plays, performance of 18
Portland Rose train 22
post, fence 15
pride 7
products, transporting of 17
programs, training 8, 26
Promise OR 1, 3, 14, 29
pulls, rope 8
punishment 7
    corporal 7
push-ups 8

R

radio, listening to 19
ranch, Hug 16
ranchers 1
referees 10
    opinions about 10
restaurants in Elgin 19
room, dressing 9
rooster feet 5
rope pulls 8
Rose (brand name) 17
roses 17
rowdiness 7

S

sacks, flour 17
Sannars 2
Santa Claus 28
scars 16
school
    district 5
    facilities 8
Seattle WA 29
seed, alfalfa 13
self-restraint 7
separating of milk & cream 13
service managers 24, 25
shakedown 22
sheep 9, 16, 17
    shearing of 9
shipping of products 17
shirts 8
shopping 20
shop foreman 28
skull 29
slabs, wood 17
slurping 5
snow 4,5
social security, deductions for 26
social studies 10

song
"Letter Edged in Black" 20
"Redwing" 20
soup, chicken 5
spinal operation 29
sports 3,11
starters, team 9
steelies 28
stomach 29
stones, grinding of 17
strands, wire 15
stretcher, wire 15, 16
study hall 7,11
subjects, high school 10
sugar, cube of 6
Summerville Cemetery 29
Sunday School 14, 16

T

tea, hot 6
teacher 3
math 11
team 7
winning 9
temptations 7
The Elgin Recorder 18
The Observer, delivery of 18
threshing 13
tickets 18
timber 1
training
children's 7
programs 8, 26
traveling plays 18
trigonometry 11
trips, vacation 27
Troy country 2
Trumps 1
Tucker, Turley 18

U

uniforms
athletic 8
baseball 8
Union OR 4
union
labor 25
not breaking of 26
not joining with 26
Union County 12
union man 26
Union Station 1

V

vacation 27

W

wage, decent 26
wagon 1
Walla Walla WA 18
Wallowa WA 1, 3
Wallowa County 20, 29
warranties 25
wartime injuries 29
western type dinners 19
wife
Bernal Hug's 15, 16
Orval's 21, 22, 27
death of 29
wire stretcher 15,16
wood, stacking of 18
work, outside 19
wounds, infection of 16

Y