STUART ZAUGG

Union County resident for 65 years

AN ORAL HISTORY

Interviews in February, 2005
at his home in Union OR

Interviewer: Brenda Lawson

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

2005

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

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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

The interviews with Stuart Zaugg took place in Union, where he lives with his wife. At age 78, he appeared to be healthy and active

The interviewer was Brenda Lawson who completed two one-hour interviews on February 17 and 24, 2005.

Stuart Croghan's full transcription (available for research purposes) presents the literal contents of the interview. 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.

SZ designates Stuart Zaugg's words, *I* the interviewer's.

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Born in Union County

I: Please state your full name.

SZ: My name is Stuart Stringham Zaugg.

I: And your date of birth, Stuart?

SZ: I was born on August 19, 1927, in the old Grande Ronde Hospital.

I: So you've been pretty much raised in this area?

SZ: Pretty much. We were gone a few times. I went to Corvallis to school for awhile and graduated from there, and then I was in the service for a couple years. We spent eleven years in northern Washington—after we were married and working. Then we came back again. I've been here all the time since.

I: Had your parents come from this area as well?

SZ: My father was born in northern Utah to a Swiss emigrant; his family moved to Canada and came here from Canada in 1911. They lived out on the Mt. Glen Road [a few miles north of La Grande]. My mother's folks came from way down in southern Utah in 1899. They moved to Imbler, and my mother was born just across the river from Imbler in 1905.

I: Were you ever told any of the details about your birth?

SZ: Yes, several interesting things. My mother went to a Dr. Gilstrap, who was one of the more prominent doctors in the area. It was his policy, or his procedure, to have a baby nurse eight ounces of milk, and that was all. And to be able to tell that, each mother had a pair of scales. After so much nursing, the baby would be weighed on the scale, and then, if the baby hadn't received the eight ounces yet, it was back to nursing until the amount on the scale showed eight ounces. The baby could only nurse every four hours and have no tidbits in between. There were times when I would have liked to have had a sand wich, I think. They said I cried quite a bit, and they thought it was because I was hungry. It was also Dr. Gilstrap's recommendation that you sleep by an open window. They said that during the winter months my hands were blue from the cold when they came out from under the covers in the morning. That's why I'm so puny today, I guess.

I: Did you have any siblings?

SZ: I eventually had four brothers and one sister.

I: So you were raised in a large family.

SZ: Yes, six of us altogether.

I: Did you have grandparents or other relatives in the area?

SZ: My father's parents lived out on Mt. Glen Road. There is a cemetery on the right as you go out on Mt. Glen Road [i.e., Ackles Cemetery]. Off to the left of the cemetery, up against the hill, was where my grandparents lived. They built houses and a big red barn there. They had thirteen children, one of whom died during childhood, so there were twelve kids.

They also lost their farm during the Depression, but they managed to hang on until 1934, and then they moved from La Grande about the same time that we moved to Union.

My mother's folks lived in Imbler. One of them had a grocery store there, and one operated the bank, so they had some income and weren't bothered quite so badly during the Depression.

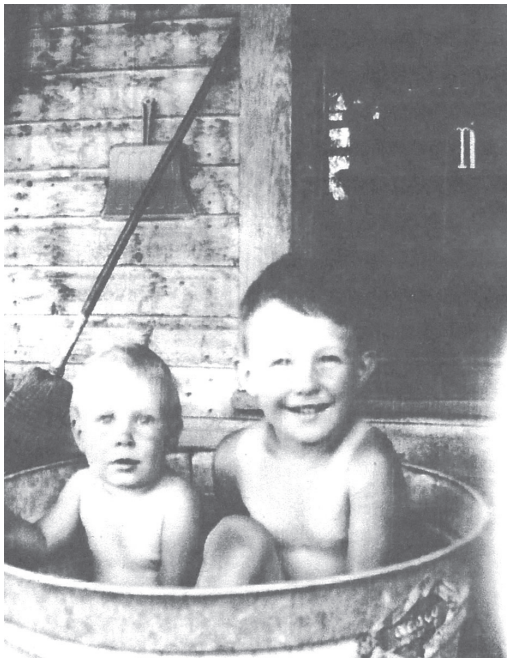
The Depression Era

I: Do you recall the attitude of people during the Depression?

SZ: I was too young to recall the feelings of most people. I do recall that when we went to La Grande there were a lot of men with old hats and old coats, sitting or standing beside the buildings. A lot of those men had wooden legs. That was due to two reasons. Men who worked in the railroad roundhouse in La Grande got hurt there and lost legs. Others lost their legs while operating hay balers, which required pushing the hay down into the baler with one of their feet. If you didn't get your leg out of the way before the plunger came by, you lost your leg. I know a lot of people lost their legs baling hay.

I: Did you notice any changes at home during tough times?

SZ: Not especially. Dad got his rifle out one day, put on his skiis, and started down through the field. I heard a shot and pretty soon he came back dragging an animal; they told me it was a coyote. The next Sunday I told my Sunday School class, "We're eating coyote for dinner today." The animal was actually a deer, but my folks didn't want me to



Bath time for Stuart and one of his younger brothers while they lived at the Mt. Glen farm
Photo courtesy of Stuart Zaugg

tell anyone that Dad had poached a deer. But that was one of the things you did: if a deer came by, you shot it. I can remember Dad telling stories later about how Mother used to skimp on meals in order to feed us kids. But mother was quite a food preserver and knew how to skimp and make things come out.

Early Childhood

I: What were the circumstances right after your birth?

SZ: At that time we were living on Hunter Road near Woodell Lane, which is four or five miles north of La Grande. That farm is called the Teeter place now. My father had 640 acres there. I was born in '27, and in '29 my dad lost that whole 640 acres because of the Depression. He had just built a new house on the property, built it himself. When the men dressed in black [i.e., mortgage foreclosers] they took the farm, the house, and everything, and kicked us out. My dad went to work for N.K. West out by Imbler. N.K. West had quite a large farm—I don't remember how many acres—and Dad and one of his brothers operated the N.K. West farm for a year. Then we moved to Enterprise for a year. Dad broke his knee and couldn't make his farm payment, so we returned to a place along Hunter Road that was a little closer to town. There are no buildings there anymore.

That's when I first remember the deep snow. One winter we had to dig a tunnel through the snow so we could get into the house. The snow was clear up over the roof. That was the year we loaded the old Model T coupe onto the bobsleigh and pulled it up the hill to Hunter Road. The county kept Hunter Road plowed out. We pulled the Model T up there with the horses, and then we went to town in that old car. When we returned home, they loaded that Model T back on the bobsleigh and hauled it back down to the farm. Dad was milking quite a number of cows, and he had

Zaugg house near Mt. Glen in 1930, when snow accumulated to roof level and a tunnel was the only route to the interior
Photo courtesy of Stuart Zaugg

to get the cream to market, so we had to haul it out. That snowstorm lasted for seven weeks.

The winters were terribly cold. Dad rode a horse to gather cows and often froze to the horse because ice built up around the tack and his legs. We took pictures of us all bundled up.

I: How did the cold weather change your daily routine?

SZ: In doing the chores we took our time, sometimes taking all day to do what needed to be done. There were no schedules to keep and nowhere to go.

I: You didn't have to go to school?

SZ: The closest school was in La Grande, and there was no way to get there.

I: This was before you started school?

SZ: Yes. There were no busses, and my folks couldn't afford to drive me to school every day.

Farm Chores

I: What was it like growing up in your home?

SZ: It was really interesting. I was the oldest, and so it was my responsibility to help with the chores—milking the cows, feeding the pigs, the chickens, and the horses. Two of my younger brothers, right under me, took turns doing chores. Every week, one of them helped with the chores, and the other one helped Mother in the kitchen. They changed off helping in the kitchen and grew up knowing how to prepare food. I never did learn how to do that.

I: How did you get out of helping in the kitchen?

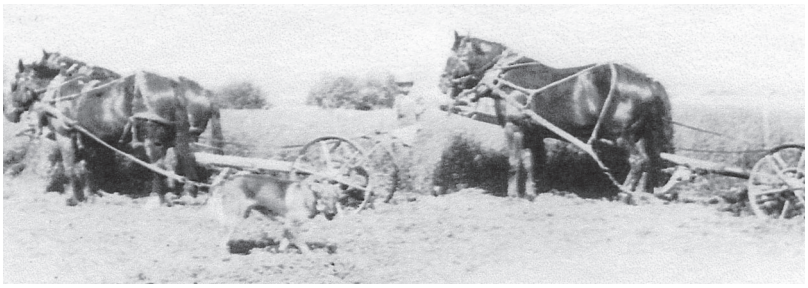
SZ: There are about twenty years between me and my youngest brother. My par-

Hauling the Zauggs' Model T by horse and bobsleigh from their Mt. Glen farm to Hunter Road
Photo courtesy of Stuart Zaugg

Farming methods on the Zaugg farm in Mt. Glen, early 1930s

Photos courtesy of Stuart Zaugg

Feeding farm animals in snow



Cutting hay

Haying with a derrick

Preparing to hitch horses to plow

ents said I was more needed to milk the cows. The kids could feed the chickens and feed the pigs, but the milking was a little more difficult, so that was my chore. It was a terrible chore.

I: Tell me more about a typical day in your childhood--the chores that were involved.

SZ: As I remember the chores, we had quite a large number of chickens and, of course, eggs and milk. We separated the cream from the milk. We took our cream to the creamery and fed the skim milk to the pigs. The cows, pigs, and chickens were our prime source of income. That really saved us—got us through those tough years of the Depression and kept us going. We all took our turns doing the chores.

On a Sunday it was not uncommon to come home from church and to hear Mom say, "Go out and get a chicken for dinner." So I'd have to go out and catch a chicken, chop its head off, tear the feathers off, and Mom cooked it for dinner. My brothers, of course, helped. We did get along pretty well as a family and seem to have accomplished quite a bit.

I: How old were you the first time you had to kill and clean a chicken?

SZ: I was probably eight or nine.

I: Do you remember that as being a difficult, or was that just part of life?

SZ: I had often watched Dad do it. He had a long wire hook and used that to reach into the pen, hook a hen by the leg, and pull her out—preferably one that was somewhat scarred up or didn't look very productive. Then I held her head in place between two nails driven in a chopping block so I wouldn't miss with the ax. That was an awful chore but one that had to be done.

Pets and Other Animals

I: Did you have any pets?

SZ: Yes. We had Old Bruno, the dog—a type of German police dog. He wasn't purebred, but he was a big old dog, and he was our buddy.

My folks were often in La Grande doing business when I came home from school. When they weren't home, I brought Old Bruno into the house with me. I lit the coal-oil light, built a fire in the stove, and that good old dog sat there with me; he was my friend. We watched the highway for the car lights that, finally, turned and come down our road; that was our folks. Then, we had to go out and do our chores.

Later on, we had another big dog. I can't think of the breed, but he was a great big dog and a really good friend of ours.

I: Was it a St. Bernard or a Great Dane?

SZ: Great Dane, that was it!

Later, soon after we moved to Union, there was a plague of magpies, crows, and squirrels. There was a bounty on bird eggs: the grocery store in town would pay us a penny or two for all the magpie and crow eggs we could bring in. We kids crawled around through the brush out by the creek where there

were lots of nests and collected many eggs. We collected as many as we could without breaking our dumb necks, and then we took the eggs to town and sold them. And Dad paid us a penny for each squirrel tail, giving us a bunch of traps to catch them with. We were raking in a lot of pennies collecting eggs and trapping squirrels. We used the money we got to buy candy bars, and our favorite treat was a Mr. Goodbar candy bar.

Mother's and Father's Activities

I: Did your mother work outside the home?

SZ: My mother completed a year at Oregon State and then worked in a bank in Imbler for a year before she got married. Other than that, she worked full time in the home and took care of the family. She was an excellent cook. She prepared all kinds of meals. She was involved in preserving food as well—canning produce, drying apricots and peaches. She made some beautiful quilts. She painted. She was a full-time mother.

I: Your dad, I suppose, kept busy with the cattle and the farm?

SZ: Yes, he kept busy with the farm. For extra income he hired out his farm equipment and did custom haying and grain-cutting, but most of the time he was tied to the farm. When we first came to Union, Dad bought 46 acres; then, over the years, he purchased more land. The farm eventually reached 250 acres in size.

I: What sort of crops did you grow?

SZ: We raised alfalfa for cattle feed, and we raised wheat, barley, and oats. We also had summer pasture for the cattle.

I: Were you producing for local consumption, or was it all being shipped out?

SZ: The crops were mostly for our own animals. What surplus we had we sold at the local mill, and the mill probably shipped a lot of it out of the area. I know they chopped a lot of grain for feed.

I: Were you living on the family farm near Union at that time?

SZ: Yes. It was the old Dobbins Estate, out on Godley Road. The house was simple, built in the late 1800s.

I: Why did they call it the Dobbins Estate?

SZ: Dobbins was the name of the prior owners.

Fire at Hot Lake Sanitorium

SZ: When we were moving to Union in June of 1934, we were hauling some farm machinery along the road past Hot Lake, and the building was on fire.

I: Tell me about that day.

SZ: I was not quite seven years old. Dad made me stay in the truck while he went to see what he could do to help. There was a north breeze, so the smoke was rolling over the new brick building and off to the south. I don't know

what my father did, whether helped get furniture out or fought the fire, but we were there a long time. It was an exciting fire.

I: Were there a lot of people watching?

SZ: Yes. As time went on, many people came by. The fire truck from La Grande broke down, and by the time they finally got it going again, there wasn't much they could do except watch the buildings burn. The new part of the building to the south was made of brick and had a metal roof, so they managed to keep that from burning.

I: Was the rest of it a total loss then?

SZ: The old wooden part of the sanitorium was pretty much a total loss.

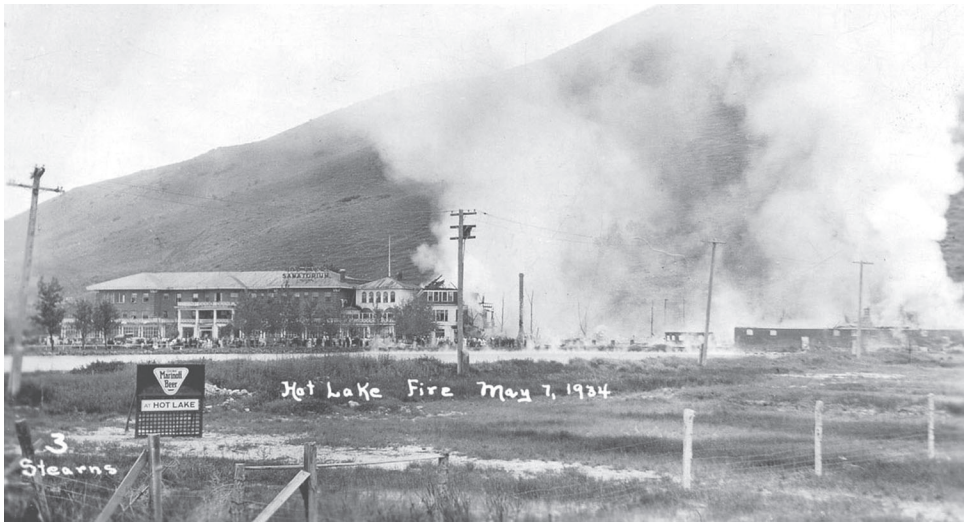
I: Do you remember the feeling that was in the air that day? Were people scared? As a seven-year-old you must have been pretty excited about all of the activity.

SZ: I didn't get to mingle with any of the people, because Dad made me stay in the truck. But people pointed and shouted, and then a lot of people from La Grande arrived to see the fire after they heard about it.

I: Did you spend any other time at Hot Lake?

SZ: I've been there a few times. Hot Lake was quite a prominent place, a pretty nice set-up. It's too bad they let it dete riorate so badly before they started to rebuild it. I visited there once when Dr. Phy was the medical doctor. He had a really nice operating room and facilities to take care of people.

There was a railroad station right across the road from Hot Lake, and people came from all over the world to take mineral baths there. Later on it became a care facility for older folks. There was a lot of room at Hot Lake, and people did quite a few things there. At one time my wife's sister and her family either had an office or did some kind of business there.



Fire at Hot Lake Sanitorium destroyed wooden structures
Photo by Mae Stearns, 1934

I: Do you remember what it looked like inside?

SZ: I can remember the marble tile—those one-inch squares of white and blue marble tile--all over the floor and up the walls. It was quite elaborately furnished—big mirrors, large desks, and other furnishings. It was quite a place. They did a lot of business with the mineral baths and the hotel rooms. I think the rooms were on the second floor and available to rent when people came to take their mineral baths. You could always see steam coming off the lake, and the bathhouse is still there.

I: Did you ever have an opportunity to use the mineral baths?

SZ: No, I never did get one. On cold days we went down there and skated on the ice, but I never did get a hot bath.

I: You were ice-skating on Hot Lake?

SZ: There was a standing joke that, if you went ice skating on Hot Lake, you didn't want to break through or you'd burn your feet. There is more than one pond or lake there, and only one of them is hot. So the other ponds sometimes froze over, and we ice skated on them. When a good south wind was blowing, my brother and I used to walk a short distance out of Union on Catherine Creek. We had an old GI blanket that we held between us, and the wind blew us down Catherine Creek at several miles an hour. When we got to the highway bridge, we had to duck to get under, but we usually crashed because we couldn't duck low enough to get under the bridge and still stand up on our skates. We used to have a lot of fun doing that. We built fires so we could go ice skating at night. We had a lot of fun parties. Ice skating was a real sport that a lot of people did. It doesn't seem to freeze up like that anymore.

First Residence in Union

SZ: The first house we moved to in Union was a rickety old place. We got our water from a well dug just outside the house. There was a pitcher pump out on the back porch that was our only source of running water. The toilet facilities were out behind the house in a wood shed. We used coal-oil lamps that had a wick and a glass chimney for lighting. We frequently filled them with oil. The chimneys got smoked up, so we washed them to clean them. We used kerosene lanterns for outside light and light in the barn. They were metal with a wick and a frame to hold the glass in place. There was a big bail on the top that we used to hang the lantern from hooks in the barn.

The main power line from La Grande to Union ran right by the house, but they wouldn't let us have electricity until all the neighbors on that road had signed up for electricity. I think five families lived along that road, and one of the families would not sign up because they were afraid of electricity. So, it was a few years before we got that squared away. Finally the power company connected all the families except the one that refused to sign and resolved the problem that way.

I can remember the old refrigerator with the big coils on top. We got one of

those to take the place of the cellar where we used to keep things cool; the cellar was insulated with sawdust. Then we got a motor for the cream separator and gradually more appliances.

I: Do you remember that first day of having electricity?

SZ: Yes. Boy, the light bulbs! When they told us the power was coming, Dad wired the house. That was quite a day when the power came. They turned the power on, and we had lights! It was an exciting day.

We eventually drilled a well, got an electric pump for the well, and had running water. That was handy. We didn't have to take a bath in the old tub on the kitchen floor.

I: How did that work with six kids in the house?

SZ: At that time there were only the three older kids. Things were more modern by the time the younger kids got involved. In the summertime, my two younger brothers and I went out to the ditch in front of the house to take a bath. In the wintertime we used that old #2 tub on the kitchen floor—with a teakettle of hot water poured in it.

I: How long did it take to heat enough water for a bath?

SZ: It would take quite awhile. That old tub probably held ten or twelve gallons of water, and filling it with water from a two-gallon teakettle heated on a wood stove took quite awhile.

I: And, of course, each person didn't get their own fresh water, did they?

SZ: The first one got the fresh water. That was one little battle we had to resolve. I think one week it was my turn first, then the next week another brother went first, but that problem was eventually solved. When we got running water, Dad put a water heater tank behind the

The Dobbins Estate house, where the Zaugg family first lived when they moved from Mt. Glen to Union
Photo courtesy of Stuart Zaugg

woodstove, and so we had enough hot water for everyone. On those occasions when we got cold doing the chores, we came into the house and backed up against that hot water tank to get warm.

I: Sounds like you experienced a lot of changes just by living in different houses.

SZ: Yes, each place was separate and different. I don't remember the houses we lived in before coming to Union all that well.

Preparing and Canning the Family's Food

I: Did your mother can things that were being produced right on your farm?

SZ: Yes. She canned meat, potatoes, and carrots. When we needed meat, we did our own butchering—cow, calf, pig. When you butcher a pig, you have to scald it to remove the hair. We took the pig down to Hot Lake and scalded it there. They had a place where the water temperature was just right, so we slid the pig down a little chute into the hot water.

I: Then, how did you get him back out?

SZ: There was a rope tied to its leg. We pulled the pig back out, brought it back home, hung it in the barn, and butchered it.

I: Did other people scald pigs at Hot Lake?

SZ: Oh, yes. There were usually lots of rigs down there. Nearly every time we went by Hot Lake someone was scalding a pig. Dad also hunted. We ate a lot of game—deer and elk. Mother canned a lot of meat in jars. Meat tasted good after it was canned!

We also raised turkeys on the farm in Union. We had turkeys all over the place. The heads had to be on the turkeys when we sold them to a store. Dad grabbed a turkey and ran a paring knife down its throat, cut the inside of the mouth and throat, then let it bleed out. Plucking the turkey was our job--my brothers and I. You only had three minutes to pluck a turkey; otherwise the feathers would lock up in the skin, so, boy, did the feathers fly! We made fun out of it. Then we cleaned the turkeys up, and the folks took them to market. I do remember the first Christmas when we came to Union. Each of us kids got a twenty-five-cent toy truck for Christmas, and that was our total Christmas

School

I: Where did you attend school?

SZ: Union. When we lived out on Mt. Glen, we were too far away from a school, so I couldn't start school until we came here. I was seven years old when I started school. I walked one and a half miles to Union. The first two years I walked up along the highway, then cut through a field to get to school. The third year we were included on a bus route, so I ran down the road for a quarter mile to catch the school bus at the highway.

I: Were you involved in any extracurricular activities at school?

SZ: I played baseball and track. I held the high-jumping record for two years in high school. My evening milking chores kept me from playing football or basketball, but my brothers got to play those games. After the cows were milked, I could go up and watch my brothers play basketball and play in the band.

I: What instrument did you play?

SZ: I played the trumpet and French horn.

I: Did you learn to play before you started school?

SZ: No, that was part of the school curriculum, but after school was out we would play for a little while. Three or four of us had a dance band, and we had fun with that for awhile.

I: Did you have any favorite places in Union where you liked to hang out?

SZ: Favorite places? The only places we hung out were where we had to—the creamery, flour mill, and school. We used to play along the railroad spur into Union from the main line and on the old railroad engine there that pulled the cars. Other than that, I can't think of any places that were special.

I: So, most of your time was just spent working.

SZ: A lot of it was just spent working, just working.

I: Did you feel like you were missing out on activities at that time?

SZ: I might have complained, but I don't think I really did. There were just those things to do, and we did them. It seemed like that was the way it went.

After High School Graduation

I: Did you graduate from high school in Union?

SZ: Yes. As I started my senior year, I received my draft notice for World War II. However, the notice contained a deferment until I had graduated, and during that year the war ended, so I was never drafted.

As soon as I graduated from school, I got a job driving a truck for the local creamery. My dad was kind of opposed to that, but the driving job only took two days a week. The first day I drove up to Pondosa and Medical Springs [approximately 20 miles southeast of Union] to pick up cream. The next day I picked up cream out towards Ladd Canyon—along what was called Sand Ridge—out past Hot Lake and in that area. I had to heave those ten-gallon milk cans up onto the truck.

As soon as haying season began, Dad said, "You've got to quit one job or the other; we can't do this." At that time my best friend didn't have a job, so he took my job driving the creamery truck. Then, on the second or third trip coming down from Pondosa, he lost control, went off the road and hit a tree, and was killed. So, I had to go back and drive

truck for the creamery until they could find another driver. That was kind of a sad point in my life. It was the first time I'd lost a really good friend, and it made quite an impression on me.

I: Were there any kind of services to help kids deal with a situation like that at the time?

SZ: No, not that I'm aware of. We just dealt with it.

The Creamery Business

I: Tell me a little more about the creamery business. Were you involved at the creamery itself?

SZ: Yes. I left early in the morning with the truck and came back loaded down with five- and ten-gallon cans of cream. I unloaded them from the truck onto a set of rollers, and the cans rolled into the creamery. The butter maker sampled each can with a dipping spoon that he dipped into each can to see what it tasted like.

I: Really? With the same spoon?

SZ: Yes. The spoon had a long handle on it. He stirred the cream a little bit and then sampled it. Once in awhile, when a mouse got into a can, he had to destroy the cream. While he was sampling the cream, I was unloading the truck; then I washed the cans and put them into a steam cleaner. I repeated this cycle until the big butter churns were filled. Then, for the rest of the day, I helped make butter.

The round churns were large--each probably holding 100 pounds or more of butter. The butter maker stopped the churns at a certain time, reached in with a wooden scoop, and pawed the butter out to his stomach with his hands. From there, he dropped it into wooden containers.

We weighed each container, formed little cubes of butter, folded the small butter boxes, and put the cubes into one-pound boxes. We also made one-pound blocks of butter. They shipped the butter to grocery stores and other places. Some of the butter was returned to the farmers; I delivered it to them on my driving route.

I: Were all the cream containers the same size?

SZ: They were heavy metal cans of two sizes--either ten-gallon or five-gallon capacities.

I: How did they store the cans of cream while waiting for you to pick them up? Did they just set them out?

SZ: They generally kept them in a cooler or a shed where it was cold. Of course, they knew what time we would be there, so they generally set the cans out somewhere convenient for us to grab and throw up on the truck. Ten gallons of cream weighs eighty pounds, plus ten or more pounds for the can, so you're looking at almost 100 pounds per can.

When we picked up the cream, we often had an order to leave so much butter. That was right after the war when butter was still rationed. We had the little ration cards, and when I delivered the butter, I picked up their ration cards. I

turned those cards in to the creamery when I got back.

I: Can you explain a little more? Who was rationing?

SZ: The government was. There were many other types of rationing, including gas rationing. You've heard of the ABC cards that we had to stick on our car windows?

I: I have heard about that.

SZ: We had butter, gas, and tire rationing, and there were some other products that escape me now. You received monthly and yearly allotments of rationing coupons. When I delivered a pound of butter, they had to give me rationing coupons for a pound of butter, cheese, etcetera. Sometimes we had a variety of things to deliver but mostly butter and cheese. I picked up the coupons and returned them to the creamery.

There were also little round tokens for rationing, about the size of your finger nail, and there were the stamps. A stamp was equal to two or five tokens; I can't remember exactly.

I: Do you know what the rationing system was based on? Was it income or family size?

SZ: It was based on family size, if I remember right. My folks had the stamps and tokens, too.

I: So your family kept a portion of the cream for themselves, and then the rest would be processed into butter and sold?

SZ: Yes.

Father as Mechanic

SZ: Dad was in World War I. He was in England during the war. He trained as an airplane mechanic, and, when he came back, he retained that mechanical ability. He helped people overhaul airplanes. I remember seeing airplanes parked under a tree out in our field, and he was out there working on the airplanes.

Dad did the mechanical work on our cars, trucks, and tractors. He was a very good mechanic. In fact, he insisted that I help him, and I'm glad that I did. I could overhaul an engine for a tractor or a car before I could legally drive.

Dad could fix almost anything. "If there was something he couldn't fix, then it wasn't broke." That used to be the motto around the house. He did a great amount of mechanical work--repairing and welding farm machinery.

Dad was also a good irrigator. He knew how to make water run up hill, just about. He knew how to take care of crops.

I: Did he work in La Grande?

SZ: No, he never did. He did some work at the sawmill up here, when they needed some extra help, but he was never away from the farm for any extended period of time.

Farming Practices

I: What farming techniques did he practice?

SZ: Dad had three big work horses. Ol' Topsy was a bay horse. She was the mother of the other two, which were named Diamond and Doll. They were black. We did all our farm work with those three horses. The spring plowing was done with a sulky plow [i.e., one with a seat for the driver], a one-bottom plow with two wheels that required three horses to pull.

Mowing and raking hay only required two horses. Cutting grain with a binder required three horses. The machine would cut the grain, place it on a canvas conveyor belt, then move the grain up to the binder, where a bundle was wrapped with a string and tied with a knot, and then the bundle was kicked out the back of the machine. The field was covered with bundles of grain when we finished. Then we used a pitchfork to stand the bundles on end and placed them by hand next to each other in large stacks.

We had a neighbor who had a thrashing machine that he brought over to our place to thrash the grain. The thrashing machine was pulled by an old steam engine that had tracks on the sides and one great big wheel in the middle up front to steer it. When he brought his thrashing machine over, that steam engine came huffing and puffing down the road.

When the trashing machine was set up, my job was to load the stacks of bundles onto a wagon and bring them to the thrashing machine. I rode on the wagon while two men pitched the bundles up for me to load on the wagon. When I had a load on, I drove the wagon over to the thrashing machine, and then I had to pitch the bundles, head first, into the machine. That old steam engine huffed and puffed, thrashing the grain--quite a sight.

We farmed for quite a number of years with just those three horses until one day we bought an old Henry Ford tractor. That was an exciting day. It was an old Fordson tractor, probably a 1917 or 1918 model. The tractor had steel

Stuart's father cultivating potatoes while three Zaugg offspring get a ride, 1936
Photo courtesy of Stuart Zaugg

wheels and could pull two plows. That was the beauty of that one.

I: Is that where you learned to drive?

SZ: That's where I learned to drive--that old tractor that didn't have brakes, three gears, and steel wheels.

We cut the tongues out of our mowing machine, our binder, and our rake. I drove the tractor pulling the machinery, and Dad rode on the machinery—the mowing machine, the rake, and the binder—and ran them. That was quite an advancement when it came about.

I: I bet it was. Did that change your workload?

SZ: Yes. We could do a lot more that way.

I: So you didn't get to do less work?

SZ: No, we just produced more--more work and longer hours. That old tractor was so hard to start that we hated to shut it off. We also did custom haying and binding for some other farmers and had a little bit more income from that.

I: Why was the tractor so hard to start?

SZ: Oh, they were cranky, old things. Dad was cranking on that old Fordson one day. It started, ran for a little while, and then quit. He was still cranking it when a traveling salesman came by and wanted to sell him something. The salesman said, "How long have you been cranking that tractor?" Dad said, "Well, the radiator is hot. The salesman set his hand on the radiator, and, sure enough, it was hot, and he couldn't believe Dad. Dad didn't tell the salesman that the tractor had been running earlier.

The tractors were temperamental for some reason. They burned almost anything—diesel, stove oil. We started them on gasoline and then ran them on stove oil. It was cheaper that way, but

Zaugg farm equipment in the 1950s
Photo courtesy of Stuart Zaugg

it made them harder to start—especially if you killed the engine. When you killed the engine, you had to drain the stove oil out and then start it on gasoline, then switch back over to stove oil.

I: Were you excited about the changes that were happening?

SZ: Yes. It was progress of a sort. We basically upgraded, got a little better tractor and then another, so, when we had two of them, boy, that was a big day. Dad and I could both go out and play in the fields.

Times were tough in those days. Lots of people didn't have much, and they traded a lot of work. Dad would cut their hay, and they would help us with our grain, and so on. If someone needed a cow for meat, then another person might trade a cow for some grain. Dad did a lot of trading. We were poor, but I don't think we really knew it. It was just the way it was.

Herding Hogs and Daydreaming

SZ: In the Fall my folks rented a couple of fields from the neighbors who lived on the other side of Miller Lane from us. The fields had had grain in them, and Dad turned the hogs out into them. I nailed a board to a fencepost over there to have a place to sit and watch the hogs—keep them from getting through the fence onto Miller Lane. At the end of the day, I herded the hogs back home. The next day Dad turned the hogs out again, and they worked their way up the fields, foraging as they went. I had to get up there about noon to sit on that fence and keep track of the hogs, and I spent a good part of the day just daydreaming

Shopping in La Grande

SZ: One of our favorite places to go shopping in La Grande was J. C. Penney. Above the main doors was a balcony, where the cashier sat. And I'm guessing there were about eight or ten trolley-cable wires running from the balcony down to different desks on the main floor. Metal cups ran on the trolleys from each desk to the balcony. When you purchased an item down on the main floor, the clerk took your money, unscrewed the cup from the trolley, put your money in the cup, screwed the cup back into place, and pulled a cord; that trolley went scooting back up to the balcony.

Then the cashier removed the cup from the trolley and took the money out. If you had some change coming back, she put the change in the cup, screwed the cup back onto the trolley, and sent the trolley back down to the clerk, who unscrewed the cup and gave you your change. I had fun watching those trolleys. They ran up to the balcony from all over the main floor. Of course, as a kid, I was fascinated.

Missionary and Military Service and Marriage

I: Once you had graduated from high school, what did you do?

SZ: I graduated in 1946 from Union High School; I think there were twenty-six in our class. World War II was over, and they had stopped the draft. The next

year following graduation I went to Holland and Belgium for two and a half years as an LDS missionary. I came home just in time for the Korean War, and I went into the Army. I trained in Fort Knox, Kentucky as a tank gunner, then transferred to other places. I became engaged to my future wife just before I went into the Army for two years. When I got out, Josephine was in Hood River, teaching school. We decided to wait until school was out to get married. We were engaged for two and a half years and married in June, 1953.

I: Was Josephine from this area?

SZ: Yes. She lived on a dairy farm a little further out, along Catherine Creek, and we rode the same school bus. We had a dairy farm then, also, with about thirty-five cows. We both knew what farming life was like.

College Life

I: Did you settle in the area with your wife?

SZ: We built a little house on the farm, intending to settle down and farm, and we did so for about three years. My GI Bill entitlement was going to run out in three years, so my wife and my brother got together and pushed me into "Harvard on the Hill," the college in La Grande. I started school in engineering. During the summers I worked for a Massey-Ferguson dealership, as a mechanic, serviceman, and repairman for tractors and combines. I also helped with the farm--milked cows morning and night.

I: When did you find time to study?

SZ: That was a problem. I got up at 4:30 in the morning to milk cows, and when I came home from school I did chores. I did some studying afterwards. I averaged four and a half hours of sleep a night for those two years.

We transferred to Oregon State College for the next two years. The GI Bill didn't quite pay all of our expenses there, so we had to earn extra money to meet expenses. To pay the rent, I worked in a heating plant at $1.21 an hour from 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon until midnight, getting between four and five hours of sleep, depending on how much studying I had to do. You had to work a lot of hours at $1.21 an hour to make ends meet.

Work with the U.S. Forest Service

I: When did you decide to settle back in Union County?

SZ: I had to go an extra term at Oregon State because the curriculum was different. I graduated there in the winter of 1959 and took employment with the U. S. Forest Service in Enterprise on January 1, 1960. We worked in Enterprise for about six years, then in Baker for about a year, and Omak, Washington for eleven years. Then we came back to La Grande and settled here in our present home.

I: What did working for the Forest Service entail?

SZ: I was a civil engineer, so I was involved with designing, surveying, and building

roads. We also built a lot of bridges, lookout towers, and campgrounds. I had to maintain the lookout towers and did a lot of road maintenance. I've been all over the forest, nearly everywhere. Engineering was used primarily in construction, but my primary duty was building timber-sale roads--a lot of them.

I: Was the business booming during the time you were employed in that line of work?

SZ: Yes, business was booming. We were really busy with logging and fighting fires. I had several exciting experiences on fire lines.

I: Can you tell me about any of those?

SZ: I guess the most interesting fire they sent us to was on the Oregon coast. Right after supper, about 5:00 o'clock, they sent us hitchhiking up into the mountains and into the fire until midnight. The fire chief gave me a flashlight and a radio and said, "Go find that fire, see where it is, and keep us posted." It wasn't long until I could hear the fire. I walked toward the sound. All of a sudden there was a horrible roar, and that fire went past me so fast I could hardly see it. It was headed directly toward the camp where those other guys were, so I used the radio to warn them, and they managed to get out of the path of the fire. That was a little spooky.

The last fire I was on was over in Hell's Canyon, way up on the point of a rock. I could see the boaters down on the river. The borate [i.e., fire retardant] planes came down low over the hills to drop the borate. It was hot as the dickens, and I didn't have any shade, and I could see those people playing in all that cool water below.

I: Did your job require spending a lot of time in the office, or were you out in the field more?

SZ: Winter was mostly office time. That was time for designing the roads, campgrounds, and projects. We were in the field as soon as construction could begin in the spring.

I: Who were your primary partners in this? Would it be local contractors, or was it all done by government workers?

SZ: The timber harvesters--logging companies--contracted the timber sales.

I did work on the Grande Ronde River Road, the first paved road up the Grande Ronde River to the Tony Vey meadows [approximately twenty miles southwest of La Grande]. Some people out of Portland had that contract, and we worked with them. Our job was to consult with them and to make sure they did it right. We did do quite a bit of our own maintenance work on lookout towers, campgrounds, and buildings, and we did some road maintenance.

I: Did you find the process to be any different in Union County than in larger areas?

SZ: No, the process was quite similar. Prac tices were similar throughout the region, and everything ran about the same. I

understand that today it's not quite that way, but things were pretty standard back then.

Returning to the Farm

I: Did you also do some farming when you returned to Union County?

SZ: When I transferred to the La Grande engineering unit, I went back to farming at night.

I: Back on the family farm?

SZ: Yes. I ran the farm at night and worked for the Forest Service in the day. I kept busy.

I: Were you in the dairy business again?

SZ: My folks had sold the dairy when we moved to Washington. There were some big changes coming with the equipment and inspections you had to have to be a graded dairy. The upgrades were going to be so expensive that Dad planned to quit the dairy business. He sold the cows, and we just farmed—mostly wheat and hay. After I returned, we got out of the haying business. I seeded half the farm in wheat, and half of it was summer fallow. Summer fallow is where you just work the ground to keep the weeds down and don't plant a crop.

I: What's the purpose of doing that?

SZ: Resting the soil makes quite a difference in the yield of the next crop. You could seed the summer fallow to wheat in the fall and get a better crop and greater yield the following year than if you planted every year.

I: What sort of tractors were you running?

SZ: Cheap old wrecks. At that time I had two gas tractors and one diesel tractor. They weren't really big rigs, but they got the job done.

I: Did you do this work by yourself, or was the family involved?

SZ: I worked mostly by myself. I didn't work past a cutoff time at night, so I could get enough rest to go to work during the day. Later on, the dust and the dirt finally got to me, and I finally had to quit farming.

Community Involvement

I: Were you involved in any other activities in the community?

SZ: We were active in our church, of course, and I spent a four-year term on the Union City Council. We also helped our neighbors--helped with chores and helped them move. But I think my term on the city council was the time I was most active in the community.

I: Tell me more about that experience.

SZ: It was a good experience. I was on both the city council and later on the planning commission. My position on the council had involved working with the planning commission. It was an interesting four years.

I: Was this something you were recruited for?

SZ: Right after the elections one Fall, one of the people elected to the city council refused to register to vote, so they asked for volunteers. Like a dummy I went up, volunteered, and got the job, but I didn't run for office after that. My wife's health wasn't all that great, and so I decided not to do more than one term.

I: Did a lot happen in those meetings? Was there much political maneuvering?

SZ: A lot went on. We built the main highway with the sidewalks through Union.

I: Did you have any opposition to that program?

SZ: People were pretty much ready for that to happen. Some people didn't quite like how things were going, so we had to work with that. One issue was development of the golf course; we started that program.

I: Sounds like a time of change and growth in the area.

SZ: It seemed like a lot of growth. We approved a number of housing permits and mobile home permits, and we approved some businesses and some home-business-type things. But, during the same time, we lost the sawmills and the grain elevator. When I was working for Hatch, I hauled most of one sawmill to Boise, and it was rebuilt there.

Working After Retirement

I: When did you retire from the Forest Service?

SZ: I retired December 31, 1985, with 26+ years of service. The winter I retired a train loaded with corn wrecked coming down Pyle's Canyon [approximately five miles southeast of Union]. The railroad custom is to get those cars out of the way in order to move them, so they poked holes in the cars and let the corn run out. A man from Elgin got the contract to clean up the corn, and he wanted truck drivers. It was in the middle of the winter, and I had nothing to do, so I drove truck, hauling corn until the area was cleaned up.

I: How long did it take to clean up the mess?

SZ: Three or four months. We hauled the corn to Hot Lake [approximately ten miles southeast of La Grande]. As we dumped the corn, the wind blew the dust away, cleaning the corn somewhat. But the wind didn't blow all the little rocks out of the corn, and when the contractor sold the corn to the dairy farmers, those little rocks got in the cows' teeth. The fellow had to take the corn back and scattered it as fertilizer. He ended up losing money and was even taken to court. I had to go testify in court as to what went on. That wasn't a very pleasant experience.

I: Did you return to work after that?

SZ: The next spring, a neighbor was starting

up a Ready Mix [i.e., concrete] plant out of Union about two miles. He had dump trucks, backhoes, loaders, and various pieces of equipment, and he crushed his own gravel for road work. He knew I had been driving truck, hauling corn, so he approached me about working for him. I still had my farming to do, so I drove truck for him on an on-call, part-time basis. I worked for him for about three years, hauling concrete and gravel all over the county and working bulldozer jobs. Later on he wanted a full-time worker, so I quit the job, and he hired a full-time replacement for me.

I: Do you think it's common for people in this area to work after retirement?

SZ: Yes. I didn't have any trouble getting a job. I don't know whether it was because of my experience, but it seemed like jobs were available then.

After I quit working for Ready Mix, another neighbor had a fleet of fourteen semi-trucks and wanted me to come and work part-time for him, so I went to work long-hauling with eighteen- and twenty-six-wheelers. I hauled as far away as California and Wyoming. That was also a part-time job, but in two years I had logged half a million miles. That didn't count the short hauling runs; you didn't have to fill out a log for short hauls.

I: Do you attribute your motivation to return to work to economic reasons, or was it the work ethic you developed working during the years?

SZ: It was both. We had two kids in college, and the extra money was helpful to them. I also just had to keep doing something; I couldn't just sit. I couldn't just do the farm in the summertime and do nothing during the winter. So it was a combination of needing something to do and making a little extra income.

Hunting and the Freeway

I: What do you think are some of the more remarkable changes in this valley?

SZ: Oh, golly, a guy could talk forever about all the things that have happened. We've seen several trains that have been blown over by the wind down near Hot Lake. The forest fires were bad in those early years, and this county used to be full of smoke every summer.

One of our popular hunting areas was where the freeway now goes up Ladd Canyon [approximately ten miles southeast of La Grande]. There used to be plenty of deer and elk up there; then they built the freeway, and that changed things.

I: Were you disappointed when the freeway came through?

SZ: Yes, but it had to be, I guess.

I: Were you disappointed because it meant change or disappointed that it would bring more people?

SZ: Actually, it was kind of a blessing because it got the traffic out of Union. The main road to Baker City used to be through Union, so the freeway helped the traffic here, but it did ruin some nice hunting country. We had to have the freeway, though, because the old high-

way couldn't have handled the traffic we have now. It's progress. At least the litter is on the freeway and not here.

I: If the freeway had come through Union, would that have changed things?

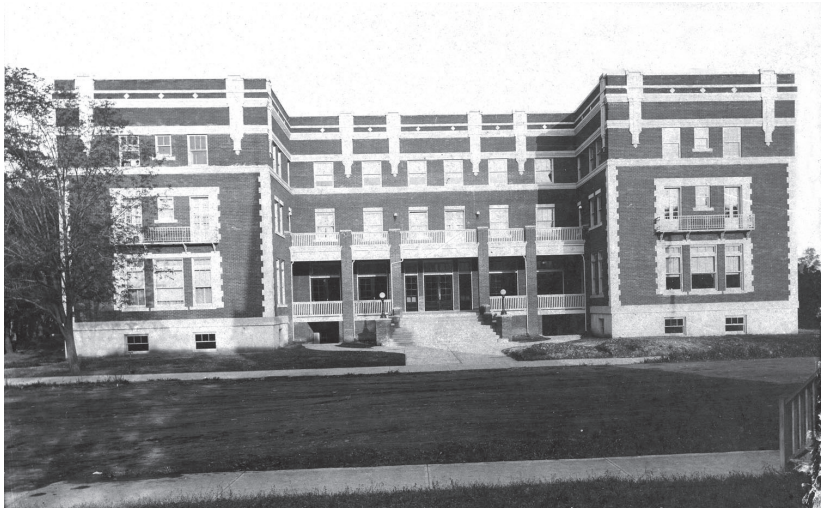
SZ: Hard to tell. The freeway was proposed to follow the railroad route through Union and up Pyle's Canyon, but that plan was discarded, and they decided to go through Ladd Canyon.

Union's Hotel and Movie Theatre

I: Can you tell me anything about the Union Hotel?

SZ: When we were kids, that was the place to visit. It was an interesting old build ing. One night during my senior year, there was a high school prank at the hotel. Some of us got in the hotel, then got up on the roof and walked all the way around the ledge of the roof. We had a big time. We got out of there before we got caught. A movie theater, the Roxy Theater, used to be next to the hotel, and that was quite a popular place. They showed lots of good movies, and it was good place to go to see a movie. When I was a kid, I failed my piano and guitar lessons, so my mother made me take tap-dancing lessons. I used to tap-dance on the stage of the old Roxy Theater in Union.

The high school is quite an historic old building; the courthouse and jail used to be on that site. The jail was back where the heating plant is, and the bars are still on the windows there. When I first started school in Union, the high school was in an old rock-type building, a double-story building that had a big ding-dong bell on the top of it. That was a pretty historic old building, too. I went there two years before the new schoolhouse was built. Where the school bus barns are now used to be Levy Brothers' Mercantile. They kept the Union hearse in the building where the Union Grocery is now. That used to be a variety store. My dad bought the old Union hearse, and we made a wagon



Union Hotel, 1920s, shortly after it was built
Photo courtesy of John Turner and Richard Hermens

out of it to haul hay. We junked the rest of it for scrap; we were dumb.

Antique Automobiles

I: Can you tell me something about your other activities?

SZ: During my senior year of high school, Dad bought us an old Model-T coupe, and my two brothers and I drove it to school. Those old cars wouldn't hold liquid in their radiators very long, so before we could drive to school we had to fill the radiator. In the winter, when it was so cold that the car was hard to start, we had a routine to get the car started. In the mornings we jacked up a back wheel and put a block under the axle; then we poured a bucket of hot water into the radiator, and one of us pushed the starter while the other one hand cranked the engine. After the car finally started, we left the car running and dashed into the house to eat our breakfast. When we finished breakfast, the three of us dashed back out to the car. Two got in, one pushed the car off the block, and away we went. When we got to school, we drained the water from the radiator into a bucket so the radiator wouldn't freeze. Sometimes it was cold enough that we had go through the starting process again in order to drive home.

I guess that was where I got interested in the old Model-T. After we got married, I had an old Model-T pickup for awhile. Then, when we were up in Washington, I had the opportunity buy a couple of old junkers; they were pretty rickety. I didn't have a garage, so I worked on them out in the open. When I came home from work, I went out and tinkered with them. I had two of them running while we were up in Washington. We took them to parades, and we won quite a few prizes. After we moved back to Union, every now and

The Zaugg collection of restored American automobiles (l.ro r.):
1920 one-ton truck, 1917 roadster, 1915 brass sport car,
1926 touring, 1928 roadster, 1927 pickup
Photo courtesy of Stuart Zaugg

then I had an opportunity to pick up an old car to rebuild until, somehow, we had seven of them.

I: Have you done all that work yourself?

SZ: I bought three of them from people who wanted to get rid of them, so I got them at a good price, but it still took a lot of time to finish them—put tops on, rebuild seats, repair engines, front ends.

I: How much time do you spend on that now?

SZ: I spent all last winter out in the garage, rebuilding one, putting a new top on it, and there was quite a bit of mechanical work to do. This winter I didn't do much; I was caught up. Now, I have two motors to overhaul, so there's some work to do.

I just like to drive in the parades, like the Stock Show parades. I go to Enterprise for Chief Joseph Days, and then to Cove for the cherry parade, then over to Imbler and Island City. We had five cars in the Stock Show parade one year with the kids driving them. Kids like to drive them, even girls.

I: Are there still prizes involved?

SZ: Anymore, they just give ribbons. There are big handfuls of ribbons hanging on the wall out there [in his garage]. I haven't joined the car club in La Grande yet. They want me to join, but I'm just solo, on my own.

I: How many do you have in your collection now?

SZ: The oldest one is a 1915 sports model. It has a brass radiator and brass lights, and it's the favorite one of the grandkids. They'll probably fight over that one when I'm gone. There is a 1920 one-ton truck, a 1917 roadster, a 1923 touring car, a 1926 coupe, and a 1927 pickup. That one is the same age as me.

I: Did you acquire most of those locally?

SZ: No. I got two of them out of Portland and one out of Washington; those were the greatest distances I went to get cars. I got one from Elgin. I also put a couple of cars together from various parts that I had collected from different places. Of course, a person has to buy things like new tires and new tops.

I: Is it hard to get parts for the cars?

SZ: There are a number of suppliers that have catalogs, and a lot of parts are accessible. They're expensive, but there're accessible.

I: Do you plan to increase your collection?

SZ: I've got to quit! I don't have any more room. I'll knock on wood, cross my fingers, and say I'm quitting, but I'm going to keep those I have. I have one car for each kid. They'll end up getting the cars, though I don't know what they'll do with them.

I: Do they have to be stored inside a garage?

SZ: That depends on the type of insurance you have. I don't have the specific type of insurance that requires garage storage, but I do store them inside a

building. They are all licensed, and they all run.

I: What are the licensing requirements for an older car?

SZ: You can get a lifetime license. If you just want to drive to parades and shows and not regularly on a highway, you can get one-time license. I think the license costs something like $25.00. Of course, you have to have the title. And, you don't have to have insurance to drive them in parades. However, if you want to drive them to the post office every day, then you have to have a regular license and insurance.

I: How difficult is it to find titles for some of those old cars?

SZ: If the car doesn't come with a title, a bill of sale is generally accepted by the state. I had a problem or two with DMV [i.e., Oregon State Department of Motor Vehicles], but we worked around it and finally got it resolved. They're a little bit fussy.

I: How does the community react to your collection?

SZ: I sometimes get calls. Every now and then somebody wants a ride or wants to come and look at them. When we drive one downtown, people wave and come to look at it. People seem to enjoy seeing the old cars around. We have our local grassroots thing, so I take some of the cars down there for that show.

I: Do you think it gives people a sense of the "good old days"?

SZ: Probably. I gave a ride to an elderly woman here awhile back. She was so excited about the car and said it was the same model as the first car she ever drove. She just wanted to look at the car, but I gave her a ride anyway. She was 90 years old, and she was pretty thrilled. An attorney came over from La Grande one Sunday, and we gave him a ride, too. He was interested in finding an old car for himself.

Rebuilding the cars has been a lot of work but a lot of fun. It has been enjoy able for me, and the kids have had a good time.

Stuart & Josephine Zaugg preparing to ride off into the sunset in their restored 1926 Model T coupe
Photo courtesy of Stuart Zaugg

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