

# ANITA PIPES

Union County resident for 86 years

## AN ORAL HISTORY



Interview in June, 2003  
at the Grande Ronde Retirement Residence  
in La Grande OR

Interviewer: Eugene Smith

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

2004  
(revised from 2003)

# 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	Merle Miller, La Grande & Union
Gerda Brownton, La Grande	Shirley Peters, Elgin
Dorothy Swart Fleshman, La Grande	Jerry Peters, Cove & Union
John Turner, La Grande	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](mailto: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**

The interview with Anita Pipes took place at the Grande Ronde Retirement Residence in La Grande, where she lives with her husband, Robert. (She refers to him as Roby.) At age 86, Anita is trim of figure, physically active (e.g., regular walking and pool playing), and alert mentally (e.g., she does frequent Internet searches and e-mailing).

The interviewer was Eugene Smith, Executive Director of the Union County, Oregon History Project. He completed a one-hour interview on June 11, 2003.

Heather Pilling'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.

*AP* designates Anita Pipes' words, *I* the interviewer's.



## CONTENTS

Arrival in Union County at Age Three Months	1
Activities of a Self-described Tomboy	2
Helping with Her Parents' Dairy Business	3
Nourishing an Urge to Play the Violin	3
Performing for Audiences	4
Schooling in Island City	5
Attending La Grande High School	7
Seeking Further Education and Jobs	9
Meeting the Man She Married	12
Roby Pipes' Work with the Railroad	12
Mutual Interest in Fishing	13
Playing in First Violin Section of Grande Ronde Symphony	14
Other Recreational Activities and a Major Move	15
Index	19





## Arrival in Union County at Age Three Months

- I: I believe you came at a very early age to Union County. Is that correct?
- AP: Yes. Three months old.
- I: Where had your parents been living previously?
- AP: They were both raised in Quincy, Illinois. Some of the family had moved out here, bought some farm land, and my parents encouraged them to come out to beautiful Oregon. They thought Oregon was great. In 1916, when I was born, things were a lot different than they are now.
- I: Did your parents later tell you some of the specific things they heard about the Grande Ronde Valley?
- AP: Not a lot. My grandparents came here before my folks did. They came by train; they shipped their belongings in a box car to La Grande.
- I: That must've been in the late 1800s.
- AP: Yes, it probably was, yes. They were, I thought, ancient when I was eight or ten. My mother was the youngest of twelve. When they first came out they rented a two-story house about three-and-a-half miles east of Island City on the Cove Road. It's the one that has two front doors. The reason it had two front doors was that my uncle had it built for his two daughters. Each was to have one-half of it. So it was two houses, literally. It's an interesting place.

When I was about four years old, we moved about an eighth of a mile down the road to a house on a forty-acre farm.

- I: Had he ever farmed before?
- AP: No. So he got a job at the mill.
- I: Which mill was that?
- AP: I think it was Bowman-Hicks. We lived on that forty-acre place until I was ten or eleven.
- I: Can you tell me exactly where it is?
- AP: About three-and-a-half miles east of Island City on the Cove Road. At that time, there was a slough that's since been filled in and made into a highway. That was where we learned to swim and ice skate in the winter. I had a brother, now deceased, about four years younger than I. I was the only girl in the region, so I became a tom-boy.
- I: What do you remember about the building or buildings on the piece of land?
- AP: There was a nice barn; the house wasn't too old. I don't remember whether there was any indoor plumbing, but I know there was an outside toilet.



House with two front doors on Cove Road,  
east of Island City, where Anita lived  
as a very young child  
Photo by Eugene Smith, 2003

- I: Was it a two-story frame house?
- AP: No. It was a one-story--two bedrooms, no bath, of course, and a kitchen. A pretty nice, little house, really, for the country.
- I: Were your parents renting the house as well as the land?
- AP: Yes. There was a little woodshed that furnished us kids with jobs, taking care of that wood--splitting and piling it and taking it into the house. We had a nice garage. My dad was pretty much the neighborhood mechanic for tractors. The tractors then were very simple or he wouldn't have been able to do it.
- I: Was he making extra money that way?
- AP: I think it was just a gratis thing. Times weren't very good then.

### **Activities of a Self-described Tomboy**

- I: Tell me more about being a tomboy in that place.
- AP: Being the only girl in the neighborhood, I played with a neighborhood boy, who lived about three blocks from us. We all had access to a horse and we



Second house Anita lived in as a child, complete with barn for her pony  
Photo by Eugene Smith, 2003

had dogs, of course. We made our own fun. This boy's folks had a hired man who smoked cigars. We sneaked cigars from him. Four of five of us took the cigar back behind our barn. We were sitting in a row behind the barn, passing this cigar from one to the other. I think we were all beginning to go a little bit dizzy when my mother came around the corner. That ended the cigar business, of course. I think I was a little bit sicker after she came then I was before. We also went cat fishing--mud cats.

- I: Was the slough full of them?
- AP: Yes. We'd take a skillet and whatever was necessary to fry those catfish and have our own little picnic down by the slough.
- I: This was not very elaborate fishing equipment, I'm pretty sure. Just a line with a hook on it?
- AP: Right.
- I: And a worm?
- AP: Yes.
- I: Is that all it took?
- AP: That's all it took. Today, I couldn't even think about eating a mud cat.
- I: Presumably, you learned to open up the fish and take out the innards.
- AP: I don't remember whether I did.

We skated all winter long--during our hard winters. We could skate for miles and then we would build a bonfire and maybe roast weenies to go with our lunch.

I: It sounds as though most of your play was unsupervised.

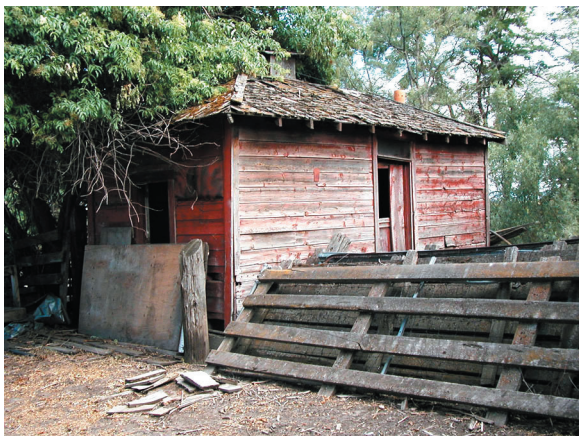
AP: Oh, yes. We were good kids.

### **Helping with Her Parents’ Dairy Business**

AP: Later, my folks went into the dairy business. It was about half-a-mile up the road toward Island City. They bought the cows and the milking, cooling, and bottling equipment. I don’t remember how many cows they had, maybe half a dozen. My mother did the milking; my dad did the bottle washing and taking care of the equipment. They put a certain amount of whole milk through the separator and sold some cream. That left me to do some cooking because they were busy down there.

My mother delivered bottled milk--better than 4%--to houses in town. The crates of milk were carried in the back of the Chevrolet two-door passenger car.

I: How did she keep it cool? Or was it just a matter of just delivering it as quickly as possible?



Milkhouse at Hermanns’ dairy, east of Island City, in its deteriorating state  
Photo by Eugene Smith, 2003

AP: Yes. That was about what it amounted to.

### **Nourishing an Urge to Play the Violin**

AP: I heard Jenny Nielson play violin; She’s Jenny White now. I told Mom, “I want to play violin like Jenny.” So I started taking violin lessons when I was nine.

I: Where did you hear her play?

AP: Probably at a Grange meeting. All the farmers belonged to the Grange.

I: Did she play what we call fiddle playing rather than classical violin?

AP: No, she was playing classical. I started taking lessons from Mrs. Robinson on the corner of Fourth and O in La Grande.

I: What did she look like?

AP: She was not a tall person; she had a fair-size build. She wasn’t heavy. Nice looking woman.

I: Did she play the piano while you played your pieces?

AP: Occasionally, but mostly listened to me.

I: Did she have many students, do you think?

AP: I knew of four or five. One of them was Ernest Briggs. I don’t know that I knew any of the others.

I: At that time there were several music teachers in La Grande. Do you know of any other teachers of violin?

AP: The only ones I knew of were Florence Miller and Dr. Bryant, I think they called him. I was so small at nine that I started on a three-quarter size violin. The violin was tied on the back of my saddle, and I rode my pony about six miles in to take my lessons. And here was that poor violin bouncing behind me. But it survived anyway.

I: What did your parents think of your riding the pony with the violin by yourself into town and back?

AP: That was the only way I was going to get there because of the extra expense to drive in.

I: What happened to the pony during the lesson?

AP: I tied her up to their tree. Through the years, we had several horses. We had bought her from Fred Bowery in Island City. He had trained her to lie down and the kids played cards on her sides. She was very gentle.

I: Tell me about paying for the lessons.

AP: Probably chicken, eggs, milk, and cream--part of it anyway. Times were tough for sure, and my parents were struggling to give me lessons.

I: These lessons, I'm sure, were during the daytime.

AP: Yes.

I: Were they on school days?

AP: Oh, I'm sure not. They must have been on Saturdays. I don't recall how many years I took from Mrs. Robinson.

I: Do you recall anything about the music she had you play?

AP: Just the regular beginner stuff.

I: Perhaps a book of exercises?

AP: Yes, but not all in books. Quite a few pieces were sheet music.

I: Did you have to buy them, or did she loan them?

AP: She loaned some, but I had to buy most of them.

I: What do you remember about practicing in between lessons?

AP: Rarely did my mother have to push me.

I: Did you have a regular time set aside?

AP: Apparently I did because I had school-work to take care of during the week. I'm sure I practiced every day, and it must have been horrible to listen to. Nothing worse than a stringed instrument when kids are in the learning phase.

## **Performing for Audiences**

I: Did the teacher have you do recitals?

AP: Yes, there were several but the one I remember most was held in the ball-room of the new La Grande Hotel.

I: Did you have to wear a pretty dress for that?

AP: Yes.

I: That must have been a little hard for a tomboy to do.

AP: I'm sure it was. She had a grand piano put in the hotel and had hired a woman to dance between solos. She must have



spent quite a little bit on the rent for the ballroom, flowers, and all the rest.

I: I'd be interested if you could describe more about the interior of the La Grande Hotel.

AP: As a kid you don't pay much attention, but it seemed huge. Other recitals were held in the ballroom. It was a lovely building and couldn't have been many years old at that time.

I: Did several students play on program?

AP: I was the only one; it was my recital. The woman danced several times. And, of course, I got a bouquet of flowers; I don't remember who that was from.

When I was in high school, I was playing solos at practically all the Granges in the county. My mother hauled me here and there.

I: Probably the teacher and other adults in the valley regarded you as a very promising player.

AP: I suppose they did. It seemed to me I was getting too many requests. It was getting to be old stuff.

I: Did you play in the high school orchestra?

AP: Yes, for all four years.

I: Were there musical groups other than that orchestra that you were aware of?

AP: I wasn't aware of any at the time, but, after I had finished business college, I became part of a group--viola, two violins, and a piano. They were mostly classmates and we performed several times, but it was mostly for our own enjoyment. Living out in the country, I wasn't in tune with what was going on in town.

### Schooling in Island City

I: Switching to your early schooling, it was in Island City, was it not?

AP: Yes. I went through all eight grades in Island City.

I: What do you remember about the building?

AP: Two grades to a room and four rooms. There were two students to a desk.



La Grande Hotel (at 4th & Adams), where Anita performed a solo violin recital, 1920s

Photo courtesy of John Turner and Richard Hermens



Anita in her recital dress and with the flowers presented after her recital

Photo courtesy of Anita Pipes

I: Did any girls and boys share the same desk?

AP: Yes. At that age, I wasn't interested in boys, anyway. The teacher assigned a certain kid to sit with me, and I didn't like him. That wasn't very pleasant for me.

I: Did he do something objectionable?

AP: He got sick one time and threw up. That did it.

The principal, who also taught seventh and eighth grades, was a push-over for the kids. He didn't have any discipline. The seventh grade boys pulled

dirty tricks on him. As he walked up and down the aisle, the boys took a pen filled with ink and splattered his grey suit. He never said one word about that or their shooting spitballs all over the ceiling. He didn't last too long as a teacher--or a principal either. Those days at recess the boys would play marbles. I don't recall what other games were played.

The other three teachers stood by the rules. At home my folks told my brother and me, "If you get in trouble at school, you're gonna get in more trouble when you get home." Neither of us ever did have any problems.

**1925, 4th, 5th and 6th Grades  
Myrtle Hoyt, teacher**



Front row: 1. Anita Herman; 2. Jesse Bork; 3. Lorene Robertson; 4. Daphne Bowery; 5. Audrey Phillips; 6. Donald Steinbeck; 7. Eleanor Smith; 8. Wilbur Blokland; Richard Ducket; 10. Beulah Hagey. Second row: 1. Marvin McIntosh; 2. Rea Cooper; 3. Darl Hagey; 4. May Mattice; 5. Howard Ducket; 6. May Shafer; 7. Gene Blokland; 8. Wanda Berry; 9. Emma Goodwin. Back row: 1. Thelma Marks; 2. Tom Cooper; 3. Mildred Wardell; 4. Milton Smith; 5. Geneva Cole; 6. Wesley Smith; 7. Hilda Clay; 8. Alvin Bork; 9. Maravene Kiddle.

Students in Island City School Classes, 1926 (Anita at left end of first row)

I: What did you do about lunch most days?

AP: Most days I brown-bagged it or occasionally went to Grandma's and Grandpa's. They lived just a block and a half from school.

I: Mother made the lunch for you?

AP: Yes.

I: What did she usually give you?

AP: Probably an egg sandwich for one thing because we raised chickens. Maybe a fried egg sandwich. That's the kind I liked. And we had the typical lunch box--ten inches long--with a hinge top. It would hold enough lunch for both my brother and me.

I: Tell me about going to La Grande High School. Did you simply finish eighth grade and say, "Well, next year I'm going to school in La Grande"?

AP: No. I was going to go to Gem City Business College in Quincy, Illinois.

All through high school, since I had to travel the furthest, I drove the folks' car and picked up the kids at Island City--a whole carload going and coming.

I: You learned to drive when you were about fourteen?

AP: Probably younger than that.

I: Was that because your mother needed your help in delivering milk?

AP: No. She didn't need my help for that.

I: Is it because you lived on a farm?

AP: I think so. I learned to drive a tractor, too. They were simple tractors.

I: Of course, you didn't have any insurance.

AP: No, we didn't.

One winter the snow was very deep when my brother and I started to school. In several places the road was drifted shut so we didn't make it. We couldn't go anywhere, and the wind was blowing hard and it was very cold.

I: Was this was about 7:30 in the morning?

AP: Yes. There was a comforter in the car that Mom covered the milk with to protect it from the cold. So my brother wrapped that comforter around me and tugged me along to a friend's house. We stayed there until they got the road opened. They couldn't call my folks; the phone lines were down. That was the only time we had trouble like that.

I: Was it common then, as you recall, for students to drive to high school, especially if they lived out in the country?

AP: Yes, although some of them would walk several miles to school.

### **Attending La Grande High School**

I: Can you remember your first experiences, at La Grande High School? This would have been the old high school at Fourth and M. Like the La Grande Hotel, it must have seemed huge after Island City School.

AP: Yes. I was so shy I dreaded going into new classes the first time--so many

- kids I didn't know. I wasn't a loner exactly, but I didn't need close friends. I got along OK by myself.
- I: Was it your habit to try to find a back seat in a corner and kind of scrunch away so that nobody would notice you?
- AP: More or less. If the teacher called on individuals from the class to say something and it came my turn, my heart came up in my throat and I could hardly talk. It took me several years to get over that. I was a kid from the sticks!
- I: Did you lack confidence?
- AP: I suppose that was part of it.
- I: Both socially and academically?
- AP: Not academically. I studied hard, got good grades, and made the Honor Society. I didn't get to participate in after-school functions like attending the games. I had to get the car home. So I missed out on most of the functions.
- I: It wasn't really practical to come back in the evening for events, I suppose.
- AP: No. We were poor, along with everyone else, and we didn't go anywhere unnecessarily.
- I: Did any boy ask you to go to a dance?
- AP: No. They probably didn't know I was around since I didn't attend any functions.
- I: To come in for a movie?
- AP: No. And I wasn't interested in boys then. On Saturdays occasionally Dad would take both of us to the Tarzan shows. But it was a rare occasion when we did that. That cost money, too.
- I regretted later on having missed the school functions. The only thing that I ever came back for was something the orchestra was going to take part in.
- I: What, at that time, was involved in becoming a member of the orchestra?
- AP: Just showing up. It was a class. For me, orchestra took the place of gym class, which pleased me.
- I: Do you remember the conductor at that time?
- AP: Yes. I can't tell you his name, but I do remember him. He was also the band conductor.
- I: What sort of music do you recall the orchestra's playing?



La Grande High School, 1930s  
Photo courtesy of John Turner and Richard Hermens



AP: They were pieces that were familiar, at least to people who had a musical background--definitely classical.

I: Were you playing in the second violin section?

AP: First violin. I had first chair.

I: How did the conductor find out that you were good enough to do that?

AP: We were assigned chairs after a few sessions.

I: How did that make you feel?

AP: Good, of course. We had quite a nice string section, both first and second.

I: You mentioned that you were in the Honor Society. By the time you were in your junior or senior year, were you thinking about Z?

AP: In lower grades I had in mind I wanted to go to Gem City Business College in Quincy, Illinois. Why that one I don't know, but I had that in my mind from the beginning.

I: When you were in La Grande High School, were you still thinking that you might like to be a secretary?

AP: Yes, and I still wanted to go to Gem City. I did go, too.

I: What made you think you should be a secretary?

AP: Typing was one of my good classes and so was shorthand. Eldridge Huffman taught our bookkeeping class and I loved figures, so all that reinforced my idea of wanting to go to business college.

I: Do you think that you were influenced at that time about widely held beliefs that women shouldn't aspire to anything professional? That if they weren't going to get married immediately, about the only other things they could do would be to teach school or be a secretary?

AP: I don't think I was influenced at all. I had my mind set, and that was it.

### **Seeking Further Education and Jobs**

I: Were you aware that some La Grande High School graduates were going on to Eastern Oregon Normal School?

AP: Oh, yes, several.

I: Did that enter your mind?

AP: No. I could stay with relatives and go to business college, so that worked out financially. I rode the train--just a little kid from the hick town going alone! Going into that business college was quite a step for me. I seemed to come out of my shell there.

I: Did you finish the course there?

AP: Yes. It was a year course that I finished in nine months. That was in 1935.

I: Was it standard secretarial practice?

AP: Yes.

I: Back to Union County after that?

AP: I came back to La Grande and jobs were terribly scarce. I put an application in here and there: at Eastern Oregon Light and Power and at Montgomery Ward. Dad took me to Salem

because I had letters of recommendation from Senator Kiddle and several other influential men here.

I: That's Kiddle of Island City's Pioneer Flouring Mill?

AP: Yes. I took the letters with me to Salem and knocked on doors. No luck. We couldn't afford a motel and slept in the car. We were only there a day and overnight.

I: When you got the job at the Montgomery Ward store, what did the store look like?

AP: Tires and automotive things were in the basement, and furniture was on the 4th Avenue side. It was a pretty good-sized store. Our manager at that time was Jack Farris, a really nice fellow. One winter, he took toboggans and skis from stock, and four or five of us went up to Stump Patch. It was a nice Saturday. There were several of us on a toboggan with not quite as much snow as there should have been. I think I was in front. As we came down at a pretty good rate, we hit a stump and split that toboggan. It could have split us, too. That ended that stuff.

I: Tell me more about your job.

AP: I started as cashier, and they broke me in on the books. I had to balance the books, and one time I was one penny off. I hunted and hunted and hunted for that. They weren't about to let it go, though I never did find it. They finally had to debit or credit something.

I went from that to inventory in offices upstairs above the entrance. I liked that job probably better than the books. It entailed quite a wide variety of things

--taking care of the inventory in stock and incoming stuff, ordering, and so on. It was a more responsible job than the books, I felt.

I: How did you do inventorying?

AP: The clerks went around in their departments and wrote down the numbers of each item. All departments did that and sent the sheets up to me.

I: Did you compile the information?

AP: I ran the inventory on a new calculator-type machine. It was a lot different than any regular office machines and also much faster for making calculations. I enjoyed the challenge of becoming acquainted with any new office equipment.

During that time I had put my application in at Paul Bunyan Trailer Company--trailer manufacturing.

I: Where was that?

AP: The building is still there on Cove Avenue, next to the railroad tracks--a large, old metal-looking building. They manufactured logging trailers and sold GMC trucks and Buick cars.

I got the job at Paul Bunyan Company. It was a little more money. I'd been making \$85 a month at Montgomery Ward, and I was going to get a \$100 a month at Paul Bunyan. It involved four-entry bookkeeping and some responsibility for the parts department, too.

I had also put in my application for a secretarial job in Washington, D.C. After I had been at Paul Bunyan a year-and-a-half, in mid-December,

I got notice that a job was available there. I had bought a Buick coupe from Paul Bunyan. I wouldn't go to D.C. without my new car, but it was winter, not a good time to be driving clear across the United States. I had started going with Roby about six months before, and he didn't think too much of the idea, so I turned it down. We were married six months later. I never regretted turning it down.

I: What encouraged you to think about applying for a job in Washington, D.C.?

AP: I thought it would be more money.

While I held the jobs in La Grande, I took a correspondence course on court reporting. I had visions of getting big money taking notes at trials. But I found I couldn't finish the course. It was too involved, and I really felt I needed instruction so I gave that up.

I: This suggests to me that you were feeling rather ambitious at that point in your life.

AP: Yes. I felt that I needed to pay back--and I did pay back--the relatives in Illinois for my board and room for nine months while I was attending Gem City Business College.

I: Tell me about the kind of clothing you were wearing when you were doing these jobs at Montgomery Ward and Paul Bunyan. I assume that you had to buy some clothes that you hadn't had for high school.

AP: Yes. I bought several outfits from a firm that came through from somewhere in Utah--really good quality. A lot were woolen garments.

I: Ready-made or custom?

AP: Ready-made. I think they came through with displays of clothing.

I: There were other places in La Grande you could have bought clothes, weren't there?

AP: Yes.

I: What was there about this traveling arrangement that appealed to you?

AP: They were so nice.

I: Do you think they were better than anything you could've bought locally?

AP: Oh, yes. Much better selections.

I: More expensive?

AP: I'm sure they were. I never was a clothes horse and didn't have a lot of clothes.

I: But you realized that you needed to dress a little more formally than you had before?

AP: Yes.

I: Were there any specific instructions you got about how you were supposed to dress?

AP: No.

I: You just looked around and saw what the other women were wearing?

AP: I didn't see any women wearing slacks then. They wore nice-looking dresses or skirts and blouses. At Paul Bunyan, they didn't want me to be too dressed up because I had to get into the parts department, which sometimes wasn't the cleanest place. I got so I could order and sell parts and became familiar with the different trailer parts.

I: Were you wearing makeup at that time?

AP: Not very much, probably.

I: What did you do with your hair?

AP: My hair was naturally curly, so I didn't have to do anything with it.

I: You got it cut, I suppose.

AP: Yes.

I: Where did you do that?

AP: Dad cut my brother's hair. I must have had mine cut downtown somewhere. It wasn't a big deal for me. You would say my long-term memory is not very good.

### Meeting the Man She Married

I: Would you like to tell me how you met the man you married?

AP: I met Roby out at the cattle-sale yard in La Grande; I had worked at the sales a couple of times. He was hauling animals from all over. Not too long after that at a dance, I was in the wallflower line, and he was in the stag line. He came over and started talking to me. Six months later, we got married on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. It had to be on the 4<sup>th</sup> because he had to work the day before, and we could have the weekend off than.

I: Had your parents met him?

AP: Yes, but they didn't know we were going to get married.

I: What made you so impulsive?

AP: He just bowled me over. He's told it so

many times I think he believes it: that he gave up his independence on Independence Day in leap year.

Before we got married, we bought a little place over on East O. I think we gave \$900 for it--not too old a house but still with outdoor "plumbing." After we were married, the first thing Roby did was put in a septic tank and modernize everything. There was room for a bathroom but no fixtures, so we did all that.

I continued to work about six months breaking in a girl to take my place on the books. At this time, he was still hauling cattle. He'd gotten into a deal with the owner of the stockyard, an old friend of his, to buy the truck used for hauling. So he was making payments on that. I didn't know that he had put in his application for the railroad. When a notice came stating that he should show up for a job, I figured it would be working on the tracks. I thought, "I don't want him doing that," so I didn't show him the application. Not too long after that, he found out there was an opening. He got it and started as a brakeman.

### Roby (Ted)\* Pipes' Work with the Railroad

I: Did he tell you why he wanted a job with the railroad?

AP: No. I suppose he figured it was more money--but not necessarily better hours. He never said anything about it. So he took his train runs, and then he worked as switchman in the yards--

\*Footnote by AP: The railroaders started calling him *Ted* since he always signed *T.R. Pipes*, thinking the *T* stood for Theodore. (It actually stands for *Taylor*.) So *Ted* stuck with all the "rails."

switching cars from one train to another going a different direction. He wrote down the numbers on the cars. He worked as a switchman for several years and then went on the swing shift as yardmaster--3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. He worked that job for eighteen years. There was a lot of pressure on the job, but it was a good job. He didn't particularly want to get out on the road as a conductor.

I: Was that because of the irregularity of the hours?

AP: Irregularity, yes. But then the eliminated the yardmaster job, so he had to go out on the road. He was a brakeman on the branch for a while--from La Grande to Joseph. That ran three days a week, each trip overnight and back. That gave us weekends for fishing.

### **Mutual Interest in Fishing**

I: When did you discover you were interested in fishing?

AP: Right after we were married.

I: Of course, you'd caught catfish when you were a little kid.

AP: Yes, but I'd never done anything else. The first experience was on the Wallowa River, where I caught a big sucker. I didn't know a sucker from a salmon. I thought I had a wonderful fish there. The rocks were so slick and so round--I think every one of them was round--and I was almost up to my hips in the water. I got on one of these slick rocks and I went down, but I held my pole up. My watch got wet, but my pole didn't.

I: As you became more accustomed to fishing and perhaps learned more of the techniques, what was there about

fishing that appealed to you so strongly?

AP: The fight they give and the technique required to be smarter than the fish.

I: I presume you went to fly-fishing.

AP: It was mostly bait fishing and stream fishing. We got to the point where we didn't think we wanted to do much more wading fishing, so we got a boat and a trailer.

I: What was the matter with wading fishing?

AP: It seemed like the fish supply was not really too good.

I: Did you go on some trips and not come back with a fish?

AP: We'd get a few, but it got harder to get them. It was getting harder for us to wade the streams, too. So we got



Roby and Anita Pipes at the end of one of many salmon-fishing trips  
Photo courtesy of Anita Pipes

the boat and went on camping trips that were mostly fishing trips. I think the kids got a little bored and tired of going fishing. We started out camping with a bale of straw for our mattress, and each of us had a mummy bag which we had bought at the Boardman Ordinance Depot. They were down-filled, and some of the down came out. The kids hated getting feathers in their hair and mouths. We had a portable stove to cook on and a gasoline lantern. We were pretty well fixed for camping. We never got rained on anytime on our camping until the first time we went out in our first trailer; it poured that night. We went from a trailer to the camper on a pickup and then to the motorhome.

I: You said fishing was the main motive. Was part of the appeal of these trips to you being away from civilization and being closer to nature?

AP: Yes. We wanted to get away from telephone and cars. We both always liked the outdoors--the mountains especially. It was a made-to-order setup for us.

### **Playing in First Violin Section of Grande Ronde Symphony**

I: Did playing the violin come into your life again?

AP: Yes. I hadn't played the violin since I got out of high school. Florence Miller had been my teacher for a while. I think it was Florence who thought I should be in playing in the Grande Ronde Symphony. So I decided I would try. I didn't join until their second year. I'd lost quite a bit of technique.

I: What did it take to get yourself back to the point where you could play reasonably well?

AP: It really didn't take too long. I practiced at home on the music we were working on. I always did that.

I: What was your reaction to the first rehearsals?

AP: I think I had pretty well overcome my shyness by this time.

I: Did they put you in concertmistress position?

AP: Dick Lindsay was the concertmaster. I sat next to Dick. He was known around here for his dance orchestras, dances he played for. When he died, I took his chair

I: What sort of a man was he?

AP: Very friendly, I'd say. A gentleman and a gentle man. And he really loved his music. He made a remark one time, "When I die, I hope I die with a violin in my hand."

I: Did the community orchestra that was just forming sound better or worse to you than the high school orchestra?

AP: Oh, much better. We had some pretty good players that had played in big orchestras.

I: Were they all living in Union County?

AP: Yes. I really enjoyed the symphony.

I: What do you remember about the concerts that the orchestra gave?

AP: We had to wear black dresses or skirts.

I: You performed in what is now Inlow Hall, didn't you? In the auditorium on the second floor?

AP: Yes.



I: How many concerts a year?

AP: Three or four. We went to Baker City one time, I think, and to Pendleton once. The kids were small, so I had to hire a babysitter. The only time I ever hired a babysitter was for Wednesday night orchestra practice.

I: What turned out to be some of the satisfactions for you playing in that orchestra?

AP: Playing the good music, music that people were familiar with--good classical music.

I: What sense did you have of community response to the symphony?

AP: I thought the response was very good --large turnouts. It was something new and cultural.

I: How did they express it?

AP: By turning out--showing up.

I: You'd have a full auditorium?

AP: I think we did, at least part of the time. Little string groups played at plays like *Fiddler on the Roof*--maybe a ten-member group. I didn't think our youngest daughter was old enough to stay home alone, so I brought her with me. She had to sit in the front row, where I could keep my eye on her. I heard a few years ago about how she had resented having to sit and listen through that every Wednesday.

I: For how many years did you play with the orchestra?

AP: Twenty-nine years--until we started spending our winters in Yuma, Arizona. I had to quit.

I: Is there something about live classical music that you think contributes something to life here that nothing else does?

AP: The Grande Ronde Symphony is certainly a cultural asset, and La Grande doesn't have much of that. I think that it is a great addition to what La Grande has to offer to people, at least to those who have had some touch with classical music in their lifetime--anyone who has ever loved music.

I: What is it that a live orchestra gives to people's experience of music that they can't get from recordings?

AP: Maybe partly expression on the players' faces when they feel certain phases of the music--because we do. I got to the point that I missed playing.

I: Do you attribute your interest in classical music mostly to the experience with the La Grande High School orchestra?

AP: That was probably the start of it, yes. I just plain like classical music.

### **Other Recreational Activities and a Major Move**

I: Has reading been a major part of your life?

AP: Yes. I got to the point my eyes wouldn't allow too much of it. I do like to read.

I: Have you been a major user of the public library?

AP: I used to use it quite a bit, but I got the computer and you know what that does to you.

I: What?

AP: Changes your lifestyle. I do a lot of searching on the computer and e-mail.

I: What do you search for?

AP: A lot pertained to strokes since Roby had a stroke. I myself went to Mayo Clinic at Scottsdale, and I subscribe to their weekly newsletter. There often is something in there that I want to research. I do a lot of researching. I start out here, and first thing I know I'm over there.

I: How did you become comfortable using a computer?

AP: Both my daughters insisted I should have one. I thought, "I'm too old to start to learn." "Well, we'll teach you." So I started out with their help and went on from there.

I: I believe you lived in one house on Washington Avenue in La Grande for quite a number of years.

AP: We moved there in '51 and sold in '91.

I: What were some of the pleasures and

difficulties with owning a home, the same home, in La Grande for those years?

AP: I don't say there were any difficulties. We always enjoyed the home. It was an old place built in '24. The husband of the couple we bought from was a railroad engineer, and for every trip he had clean clothes. For a railroader that's a little unusual. He never got dirty. Even after their having lived there for twenty-seven years, the house looked like it had never been occupied.

I: What determined that you should leave that house?

AP: My husband had his stroke almost six years ago now. He took care of the lawn and other household things for a while, but it got to where he couldn't do it anymore. We were hiring a man, which was fine, but then I was lifting things that Roby couldn't. Being raised on a farm, I was used to doing everything, but I had a brain aneurism that I'm sure I brought on myself. I had been digging rocks--boulders almost--putting them in a bucket, carrying it



Anita in 1950s  
Photo courtesy of Anita Pipes



Anita in 1973  
Photo courtesy of Anita Pipes



to the alley, and dumping it. I became dizzy and couldn't walk alone. The doctor said I'd get over the dizziness in about eight weeks. When the kids found out that had happened, they put our name in at the Grande Ronde Retirement Residence. They thought we would not want to move, but, when

they mentioned it to us, we were both in favor of it. I knew it was the thing for him particularly; also, I shouldn't get to the point where I couldn't take care of him so that's why we're here. And we both love it. I sure don't miss cooking and cleaning.



House on Washington Street, La Grande,  
where Anita and Roby Pipes lived for 50 years  
Photo by Eugene Smith, 2003



# Index

## Symbols

4th of July 12

## A

aneurism, brain 16  
animals, hauling of 12  
Anita in 1950s, photo of 16  
Anita in 1973, photo of 16  
Anita in her recital dress, photo of 5  
asset, cultural 15  
auditorium 14

## B

babysitter, hiring of 15  
bag, mummy 14  
Baker City OR 15  
ballroom 4, 5  
barn 1  
bathroom 12  
belongings, shipping of 1  
Boardman Ordinance Depot 14  
board and room 11  
boat, getting of 13  
bonfire 2  
bookkeeping, four-entry 10  
books, balancing of 10  
Bowery, Fred 4  
Bowman-Hicks 1  
box, lunch 7  
boy, neighborhood 2  
brakeman 12, 13  
branch, Joseph 13  
Briggs, Ernest 3  
brother, Anita's 1  
brown-bagged lunch 7  
Bryant, Dr. 4  
business, dairy 3  
business college 5

## C

camper 14  
car, Chevrolet two-door passenger 3  
car, parents', driving of 7  
cars, Buick 10  
cashier 10  
catfish 13  
    frying of 2  
cats, mud 2  
chair, first 9

chicken 4  
cigars, smoking of 2  
class, bookkeeping 9  
classmates 5  
clothing 11  
    displays of 11  
college, business 5  
comforter 7  
Company, Paul Bunyan Trailer 10  
computer 16  
concertmaster 14  
conductor  
    train 13  
    band 8  
confidence 8  
cooking 3  
coupe, Buick 11  
course, correspondence 11  
court reporting 11  
Cove Avenue 10  
Cove Road 1  
cows 3  
cream 4  
    selling of 3

## D

dairy business 3  
dancer, woman 4  
daughters, Anita's 15, 16  
department, parts 10  
discipline 6  
dizziness 17  
dogs 2  
doors, house with two front 1  
down (feathers) 14

## E

e-mail 16  
Eastern Oregon Light and Power 9  
Eastern Oregon Normal School 9  
East O Avenue 12  
eggs 4  
engineer, railroad 16  
equipment, milking, cooling, and bottling 3

## F

farm, forty-acre 1  
farm land 1  
Farris, Jack 10  
father, Anita's 8

feathers 14  
*Fiddler on the Roof* 15  
fishing 13  
    catfish 2  
    stream 13  
    wading 13  
fish supply 13  
flowers 5  
flowers, bouquet of 5  
Fourth Street 3  
fun, making one's own 2  
functions, after-school 8

## G

games, attending 8  
garage 2  
garments, woolen 11  
Gem City Business College 7, 9, 11  
Grande Ronde Retirement Residence 17  
Grande Ronde Symphony 15  
Grande Ronde Valley 1  
grandfather, Anita's 1, 7  
grandmother, Anita's 1, 7  
Grange meetings 3, 5  
groups, string 15

## H

hair, cutting of 12  
highway 1  
high school 5  
Honor Society 8, 9  
horse, access to 2  
horse, clothes 11  
house, one-story 2  
house, two-story 1  
house Anita lived in as a child, photo of 2  
house on Washington Street, photo of 17  
house with two front doors, photo of 1  
Huffman, Eldridge 9

## I

ice skate, learning to 1  
Independence Day 12  
Inlow Hall 14  
inventory, taking of 10  
Island City OR 1, 3, 4, 5, 7  
Island City's Pioneer Flouring Mill 10  
Island City School 7

## J

job, secretarial 10

## K

Kiddle, Senator 10

## L

land, farm 1  
lantern, gasoline 14  
La Grande OR 1, 3, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16  
La Grande High School 7, 9  
La Grande High School, photo of 1930s 8  
La Grande Hotel 4, 7  
    interior of 5  
    photo of 5  
lessons, violin 3, 4  
    paying for 4  
    practicing in between 4  
letters of recommendation 10  
Lindsay, Dick 14  
line, wallflower 12

## M

machine, calculator-type 10  
machines, office 10  
makeup 12  
man, hired 2  
manufacturing, trailer 10  
marbles, playing of 6  
mattress 14  
Mayo Clinic 16  
mechanic, neighborhood 2  
meeting, Grange 3  
men, influential 10  
milk 4  
    bottled 3  
    crates of 3  
    whole 3  
milkhouse at Hermanns' dairy, photo of 3  
mill, job at 1  
Miller, Florence 4, 14  
Montgomery Ward 9, 10, 11  
mother, Anita's 1, 7  
motorhome 14  
music  
    classical 9, 15  
    sheet 4

## N

Nielson, Jenny (aka White) 3

## O

O Avenue 3  
orchestra 8  
    community 14  
    dance 14  
    La Grande High School 5, 15  
ordering 10  
Oregon 1

## P

parts, ordering and selling of 11  
parts, trailer 11  
Paul Bunyan Trailer Co. 11  
Pendleton OR 15  
piano, grand 4, 5  
Pipes, Roby 11, 12, 16  
play, unsupervised 3  
plumbing, indoor 1  
“plumbing,” outdoor 12  
pony 4  
practice  
    orchestra 15  
    secretarial 9  
principal, Island City School 6

## Q

Quincy IL 1, 7, 9

## R

railroad, application for 12  
recitals 4, 5  
rehearsals, symphony 14  
relatives 11  
rent 5  
reporting, court 11  
response, community 15  
Robinson, Mrs. 3  
Roby and Anita Pipes, photo of 13  
rocks, digging of 16  
runs, train 12

## S

saddle 4  
Salem OR 9, 10  
salmon 13  
sandwich, fried egg 7  
satisfactions 15  
schooling, early 5  
schoolwork 4  
Scottsdale AZ 16

section, string 9  
separator, cream 3  
shift, swing 13  
shorthand 9  
shows, Tarzan 8  
shy, being 7  
skiis 10  
skillet 2  
skirts, black 14  
slough 1  
snow 7, 10  
solos, playing of 5  
spitballs, shooting of 6  
stove, portable 14  
straw, bale of 14  
stroke 16  
students in Island City School Classes, 1926, photo of 6  
Stump Patch 10  
sucker (fish) 13  
swim, learning to 1  
switchman 12

## T

tank, septic 12  
things, automotive 10  
toboggans 10  
toilet, outside 1  
tomboy 4  
    becoming a 1  
tracks, railroad 10  
tractor, learning to drive 7  
tractors 2  
trailer 14  
train 9  
trials 11  
tricks, dirty 6  
trips, camping and fishing 14  
trucks, GMC 10  
typing 9

## U

uncle, Anita's 1  
Union County 1, 9, 14  
United States 11

Utah 11

## V

viola 5  
violin 14

playing of 3  
three-quarter size 4  
two of 5

## W

Wallowa River 13  
washing, bottle 3  
Washington, D.C. 10, 11  
Washington Avenue 16  
weenies, roasting of 2  
White, Jenny 3  
wood  
    piling of 2  
    splitting of 2  
woodshed 2

## Y

yard, cattle-sale 12  
yardmaster 13  
yards, railroad 12  
Yuma AZ 15