

## **Edited Roy Leonard**

### **Moving to Union County**

I: Roy, please tell me when and where you were born?

RL: I was born in Delbeed, Alberta, Canada on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1914. I lived there until I was six and then we moved to Blaine, Washington. I hadn't finished high school in Blaine, Washington, when the family moved to La Grande in '32. I graduated with the class of '33 in La Grande.

There were five brothers and seven sisters in my family.

I: When you moved here, did you find it difficult coming in just for one year?

RL: It was pretty rough. I was kind of a loner, but I played baseball. When I was playing baseball, I was right amongst the rest of them; it just made me one of the bunch.

### **High School**

I: When you came to La Grande as a senior and the high school was burned what were some of the things that happened when you?

RL: I remember a schoolteacher up there that was cross-eyed. Cross, I think, was her name, or what she was called. She was our homeroom teacher. We had a lot of fun with her. She'd be looking right at you, and see somebody doing something way over there. She was a good teacher, but we used to play tricks on her.

Oh, I didn't have too much trouble. The only thing was I took advantage of every chance I got. Old Jay Lutz was the history teacher. He usually gave us tests that were always true or false. I found out after a while, if I'd answer every one of them that I knew was false, 'false' and the true ones, 'true', I was running better than eighty, eighty-five average on the tests. He thought I was pretty smart.

The last exam we took down in the city building office, when I went down and set down in my desk, why, there were the answers to the exam. Then something clicked, and I followed what was written down and I got a hundred. After school was over, I got a letter from old Jay Lutz complimenting me on getting a hundred on that exam. So we learned how to use all angles. I didn't know who that kid was that was there before me at that desk, but it was fresh writing. I didn't fit in with the rest of the guys until we started playing baseball.

I Well, you had to go all over town to go to school, didn't you?

RL: Yeah. I went to East Asian History at the Mormon church, next to them was the Methodist church. I don't remember where we had auto mechanics, and I was in to that. There was a shop there someplace. I got along pretty good in the auto mechanics class. We'd set and grind the valves, learned how to adjust all the valves on a practice auto. Of course it didn't run worth a damn. Mack something was the math teacher. He said to me, he said, "Your car runs." And I said, "Yes. Sometimes I had a heck of a time figuring out just how far to turn it to get the valve where I wanted it." He said, "That's why yours runs so much better than everybody else's car".

I: Did you work on your own car?

RL: No, they had a car up there to be worked on by everybody.

I: That Model-T that you bought and drove down here, how long did you have that?

RL: Oh, I wished I had it now. Before Fred and the others got through school in Blaine, Washington, we had an old touring car with the aizine glass windows. That's the one I learned how to drive. I drove that Model-T most the way down here. We had a box on the side, sitting on the fender, where our pet Labrador dog sat. We stopped to say our prayers that we had made it, after coming down off of Horse Heaven on the flat down at the bottom. We turned the old dog out for some exercise. He took off after a jackrabbit. That was the last we saw him, up on the hill out of hearing range. Most of us were weeping a little bit since we were going to lose our dog. He stayed there and stayed there and by golly, he turned around and tracked himself back. We saw him running and pretty soon here he was coming back towards us. He never caught the rabbit, but I think he learned something.

### **Dairy Farming in the Depression Years**

I: Tell us a little bit what prompted your family to move to Union county during the Depression.

RL: With all the kids in the family, even though some had gone, things were pretty tough up in Blaine. Renny Clark, who was a relative, wanted us to come down to Union County and run their dairy. So that's what we did; we came down here and milked cows for a year. Renny Clark then got an idea of having his own dairy. We split the wages owed and my family moved out to a place on Clark Creek owned by a man named Jordan. Jordan worked on the railroad and he couldn't get much work done on his dairy, so we bought him out. He had been bottling and delivering milk in town to the Blue Mountain Creamery.

I: I imagine you had to work on the farm while you were going to high school; did that interfere with your activities at school?

RL: Yes, the dairy came first; we had to make a living with that large family to feed. It worked out. There were enough of us so that one guy could go do what he wanted to do like play a ballgame someplace, and the rest of them could pick up the slack.

I: It was hard work when you were working, but you did have a little bit of time off to go into town for entertainment, or attend school functions.

RL: The milking part of it was steady. You had to do that at a certain time each day and night.

I: You said you bottled the milk at that time and made home deliveries?

RL: Yes.

I: How much was a quart of milk at that time?

RL: Twelve cents a quart. When the war started they froze the price of everything. We delivered it for twelve cents. Milk was ten cents if you bought it at the store. When I delivered the milk, sometimes they would take the bottle and turn it into the store for the dime so I didn't make much on that deal. But we straightened that out pretty fast, getting our customers to return the bottles.

I: I know the first time I met you was probably about 1943, I think, just before you married Lee Wilcox. Did you meet her by going into the Wilcox store delivering milk?

RL: Yes, delivering milk to the store.

I: When did you move to this place across from the Island City Cemetery on the McAlister Road?

RL: Well, we moved out to Hot Lake for a year before moving here. I built a milk house out there, but there was a lot of disease in that layout. I got in trouble with Bangs disease in the cows. So we moved and first rented this place in '41.

### **Milking Machines**

I: Did you have milking machines in those days?

RL: I didn't when I first moved out there, but I sure did afterwards.

I: How many cows were you milking at the time?

RL: We were milking thirty-some at the time we moved out to Hot Lake. When we got here and set up, we were milking fifty cows. That was the we got milking machines. It was quite a change for us. There was quite a lot of milk to handle, as well as washing up the bottles and getting them ready. Milking goes on seven days a week and 52 weeks of the year.

I: How long did you continue to operate the dairy?

RL: I sold it to Valley Dairy when they were first starting out. I sold them my bottles, customers and all the stuff that I had there. In '55 I sold the cows and quit the dairy business altogether. The last five years that I was milking' cows, I couldn't go anywhere overnight and that's too darn long.

I: What were your hours?

RL: We always milked at four o'clock in the morning and four o'clock at night. During harvesting hay or other cow feed, when four o'clock came, we stopped and went to milking. My brother Fred and I were working about eighteen hours a day.

I: What did you think when people started buying most their milk at the grocery store?

RL: Profits were way down and then the state came in with new regulations and we'd have to have all our equipment in stainless steel. We just couldn't afford it. That's why the Valley Dairy got started.

RL: One of the craziest things that ever happened was when I was in the house deliveries. There was a family with one of their kids having trouble with milk. The doctor told the mother that if she could get milk from just one cow, the same milk everyday, that's the only way that kid could make it. By God, I milked that one cow, we'd have to cool it and bottle it separate and we did that for three years. Of course we had to change cows once in a while, but the kid made it. He finally got over it. That was quite a chore to separate that one cow all the time.

Another time, I thought a gal was going to kiss me. I was delivering milk uptown on Second Street. I don't remember her address or her name or anything. I went there one morning and there was a quarantine sign on the door. That took me a little bit of brain-figuring. I went back to Wilcox Grocery and called her up. I told her, "You need that milk. You put a sign in the door how many quarts you want, and a pan on the porch to put it in. You can stand there and watch me when I bring it; I'll open the bottles, pour the milk into your pan and take the bottles. Don't you come out there to get the milk until I'm gone." I did all through that quarantine. Never took any money or anything, it was all on the books. When the quarantine was over, I got a pretty nice check.

I: You hardly ever hear of anything being quarantined anymore.

RL: That's the first and only one that I've ever run into while I was delivering milk. I don't remember what it was for, either.

I: I can remember the long sign.

RL: Sign on the door, "Quarantine" and I knew what that meant.

### **Gas Rationing**

I: Did the war make things harder for you running the dairy?

RL: Yes, due to gas rationing, I couldn't get gas. They told me I had to cut my deliveries in half. Hell, I didn't have any place to keep it for a day or two. So I did half the route each day. They told me that I had trouble getting gas because I was running on empty half the time. Hell, that truck wasn't empty when I delivered the milk; I had all them empty bottles back in there and I couldn't put anything else in the truck. You just couldn't...people that don't know what they're doing and...

I: Nellie Grimmet, head of the ration board was a hard taskmaster.

RL: Yes, she was. I never had any trouble with her. But one guy, a mailman, who delivered mail up Perry and that area had to have a tire for his car. She said, "We don't have any tires." They got in quite an argument. He said "You're double lucky that you aren't a man." "Why?" She said, "I'd pull you across this counter and just beat the hell out of you. You won't use your head for nothing!" He stormed out of the joint and the next morning he had permits for two tires. He made a believer out of her right then and there.

I got along good with rationing. When they told me, that I had to cut down my mileage, we went to delivering milk every other day. When we moved from Hot Lake into Island City, he said, "That's taking it off the wrong end." What the hell difference did it make to him what end I had to cut my mileage down? We had a lot of fun, though. But it doesn't pay to get mad. I never will forget that guy telling her that she was lucky she wasn't a man. He was big enough he could've done it, too.

### **The Wood Business**

RL: I don't remember when I took over the dairy for the family. My dad didn't like the dairy, he wanted to cut wood.

I: You were saying your dad cut wood and sold it for what, twelve dollars a cord?

RL: Eleven and twelve dollars a cord, delivered, put in their shed. He wore out three of the Wade drag saws before he got the chainsaw. He was a pretty busy man. He spent long days up there cutting that wood. Finally got smart enough so that he'd go up there in the morning, load his pickup with wood so when he got tired in the afternoon all he had to do was get in the pickup and drive home. Lots of times I went up and pulled the end of a cross-cut saw to help him fall some of the trees.

I: How many acres on Mt. Emily did you say that he bought for six hundred dollars?

RL: Forty. I don't know how many cords of wood he sold out of that area. He made a deal with Stange's mill and sold the place for ten thousand dollars that we had bought for six hundred dollars. The only way he'd sell it was if he could cut wood on their property any time he wanted to. So that was the deal he made with Stange. After that, he quit cutting wood.

We used to haul a cord of wood and stack it in this field out here. I had a buzz saw and we'd saw it up into sixteen inch lengths. Then we would stack it again so people would buy it. We would have to load it in his pickup, haul it up to their place, and unload it in their woodshed or wherever -- all for eleven and twelve dollars a cord.

We had some it stacked along the fence out here, and the people going hunting or camping, would stop and steal some off the top off that rickety old fence, so they would have dry wood to take out into the woods.

### **Raising Sheep**

I: You said that after you sold the cows, you went into the sheep business.

RL: Yes.

I: Were there problems about the sheep business?

RL: Getting up all hours of the night when lambing time came, because they lamb when they wanted to. If you weren't there to pen them off, they would nurse a while, and they wouldn't keep track of their own darn lambs. We had to take them and put them in a pen if we could figure out when they were going to lamb. Why, sometimes you had a heck of a time putting the right lamb on the right ewe; they would get so mixed up.

I: How come you picked sheep?

RL: Lack of experience.

I: You told me then when you sheared the sheep and went to sell the wool, that you had such a small amount to sell that nobody was interested in buying it. You and some other fellows formed a co-op, so that you had enough wool to offer the buyers. Is that correct?

RL: Morten Swartz and I started it. Old Chuck Gavin was the county agent on the livestock end of things at that time, and he helped us on this. We went around to all the sheep growers we knew in the county and talked to them about what we had in mind. There were just a very few that wouldn't sell to us at first, because they had a deal with some outfit in Portland. When they found out what we were doing and the hours they spent working for the Portland outfit, they quit, and all joined our cooperative. After four, five or six years we went from the Union county sheep growers to become the Tri-County Cooperative, bringing in Wallowa and then Baker counties. We were selling four and five carloads of wool, pooling together.

I: What did they pay for wool?

RL: We were getting sixty cents a pound at first, but when we started the cooperative, we always got at least seventy cents a pound. That's how much we gained by having several carloads.

I: How many sheep were you running?

RL: I was running about three hundred. It was especially busy around lambing time. We sold the lambs at the local sale yard. We went in together and sold them. I was in the sheep business for maybe ten years.

### **Forming a Rural Fire District**

I: Along about then, you wanted to form a fire district. Can you tell me a little bit about how you formed the rural fire district?

RL: Some of us got to talking about it. There were five of us went together to get signatures. I can't remember whether it was old Dickson Maloy or Toilet Howard who was with me. But we went out, got signatures, and had several meetings. We needed to form a boundary line for this district. We couldn't get Island City to join us. We couldn't infringe on the Forest Service either, but we didn't want a space between the Forest Service and no-man's land. It took us pretty near a year to get all the signatures we needed. The five of us that were doing all this work became the first committee.

I: Who was on that committee?

RL: There was \_\_\_ Erickson, Skinny Whardell, Shorty Boswell, myself and let's see, how many does that make? There were five of us.

I: This is four so we need one more.

RL: I don't know, I believe Ed Counsel wanted in on it. We went up to Dickson's office and he helped us organize. We had to have a chairman so he put five numbers in a hat and we drew out the numbers. Well, I was slow and I just took the last one. It happened to be number one so that made me chairman of the board. I wasn't smart enough to get out of it; I've been there for thirty years! We did a lot with that fire district.

I: How did you acquire equipment and set up the volunteers?

RL: Taxes. Every year we had a vote on the fire district tax. We did so well even the insurance company cut their fire insurance rates down. The City of La Grande talked about running it so they could get use of it. But the old fire district chief up there, said leave it, that we had nothing that would be any good to them. Island City said, we will man it, for the use of it. That's the way we started. It wasn't very long till Island City went ahead and joined the district and a chief was hired.

I: Do recall what the first fire truck cost?

RL: No, it was built in Portland. I know it was in '51 when the district was started.

I: Was it a Mac?

RL: It was a Ford four-by-four. We were smart enough to have four-wheel drive for wintertime. Several times the city of La Grande couldn't get up to the south end of Fourth Street on account of the snow, and they had to have us come and help them. So they kind of ate their words after a while.

I: I worked for the City of La Grande during that time in the Recorder/Treasurer's office. I remember the City of La Grande did have some contracts with certain businesses outside the La Grande Fire district.

RL: If there was a house on fire just out of their district, they'd go set there to watch the house burn, but be on hand to protect any other houses that was in their district. After the rural fire district got formed, we made darn sure that that changed. If there was a fire there and you got to it, you worked on it, put it out or tried to until the other guys got there. Sometimes, some houses in La Grande were on fire and Island City beat the La Grande trucks to that fire. So we changed that all around; the two districts worked together after that.



We formed a fire chiefs' association and Baker and other towns joined in with us. I was chairman of that for a while, too, but I don't belong to it anymore.

I: Do you remember who your first fire chief was?

RL: I think it was Ed Draper.

I: Ed Draper worked for the flouring mill in Island City and Parley Hutchison was the fire chief.

RL: He was the one that said that we didn't have anything that'd be of any value to the City of La Grande. He sure ate his words a lot of times. All the time that I was in, whenever anything was needed, we put it up to the vote of the people, and it was never, ever turned down. We built a building that took a lot of money, but the tax payers never, ever turned us down, even when they got into more expensive equipment.

I: That spoke well for the department.

RL: Yes. It is known as one of the best in the state of Oregon. One time Island City wanted to change the name from La Grande Rural to Island City Rural. I was one of the ones that stopped that. I said we're known all over the state of Oregon as one of the best, and the cost of changing the name wasn't worth what little we would gain by having Island City stuck on the front of that. Everybody around here knows what it is.

I: You said you were on that board for thirty years.

RL: I was chairman for thirty years.

I: Tell us a little bit what happened when you got off of the board.

### **Cemetery District Board**

RL: Well, I took over as chairman of the Island City Cemetery District and I've been chairman of it ever since. We formed a cemetery district just after I joined, and we had as much luck as with the fire district. But we didn't start taxing high enough. At first, we just taxed what we needed, and of course, everything costs more. We're having a little trouble now keeping enough money in the fire district, but they're still one of the better ones in the county.

I: With all those sheep, Fire and Cemetery District Boards, when was the first time that you were able to become a rock hound?

## Rock Hound

RL: Well, that was quite a bit after.

I: I figured it was quite a bit after. And you trailered for a number of years.

RL: Yes. Most of that was done after my first wife died and I married Lauree. That's when we got the trailers. It was in 1981 or 1982.

I: When life got a little bit easier, and you could take some time, what did you like to do the most, be a rock hound or hunting and fishing?

RL: Fishing and hunting and rock hounding. I became a rock hound because my oldest sister and her daughter were rock hounds; her husband got into it. Finally somebody uptown was a rock hound and he did all his work in his basement. If you're running rocks, working in rocks, you get a lot of dust and dirt. The rock club used to have over a hundred people in it.

I: They used to show things at the county fair.

RL: Yes. One of the guys had to have a lung taken out on account of the dirt from working the rocks and not having enough ventilation. My brother-in-law quit, and he made his wife quit also; he wouldn't let her run any more rocks. So I told her, we will set it up down here, she could come down here and use it anytime she wanted to. She thought that was wonderful so I took all of her equipment and set it up out there in the shop.

But she never came down and used it. She brought stuff down for me to do for her, but she never came down and used any of that equipment.

I: You still got your showcase and everything down in the basement where you display your gems that you've polished and cut?

RL: Yes. I'm kind of crazy. When women come down they want to see the rocks. I show them and tell them I'm going to run a little contest. "If you can pick out the best, the prettiest one in there, you can have it." "How do we know which is prettiest?" "That's your problem, not mine." Boy, you could just see the old wheels going around when they're picking them. When they pick one out, why, I look at and I say, "No, that isn't the prettiest one, but it's close enough." That's the advertisement I'd get. They'd take it and talk to somebody else. I don't go to the shows anymore. I have two or three yard sales here; people pick up, finger the rocks, look them all over, and buy. I hate to have them come, finger it all over, then lay it down and walk off, because they think it is too expensive.

I: You belonged to the trailer club?

RL: Yes Good Sam's Club. I also belonged to Blue Mountain Gem Club.

I: Where would you go?

RL: Utah. We would set up a circle of our parked trailers there, and then hunt rocks. We had a lot of fun. Lots of wild stories told. I'm too old for that anymore. I mean not too old, but I'm not sure enough of foot to be wandering around looking for rocks.

### **Willy Hammann**

I: Did you work for Willy Hamann?

RL: Everybody told me "you'll never make it out there." I'm ten years younger than he is. He said, "You got too many ideas of your own." One time I went out there in wintertime, there were one of two us feeding his cattle. Snowed about four inches that night and covered all the hay on the trailer he had. Nobody was out at the shed yet when I got there, so I figured we was going to haul some hay to feed the cattle. I took the scoop shovel and shoveled that snow off the trailer. When Willy got out there we didn't use that trailer. That was the only time that I did something for him before I was told to. He never said anything, but I knew he'd seen that I'd shoveled that snow without being told to.

Well, I saw the message right there; I do what you tell me to. I got along fine with him. I hate to say this about Willy but when he worked on a piece of equipment in the shop or out in the lot, he had stuff all over the place. When I got there, I would pick up the wrenches, take them over to the desk, wipe the grease and muck off, and put them in the drawer. The only thing he ever said about that was, "It took me a little while to learn what you was doing." Picking up his tools and putting' them away when he got done with them. We got along fine. That's

I: What did you do for Willy?

RL: Everything he wanted.

I: Was that after he moved out to the Beasing place?

RL: Yes. He had his house built out there. He and I and one extra man run that whole place out there for ten years.

I: Was Bob Gulzo with Willy at that time?

RL: They lived right across the lane from each other.

I: But they didn't do things together?

RL: They didn't work together too much, but they did their harvesting together. Pete, his son-in-law, came and married Becky, his second daughter. Pete wanted to go to college and become a veterinarian. Pete was working out there, got through college at Oregon State, but he had to wait two years before he could get into veterinary college at Washington State. He was a good enough guy, but we got into an argument. I told him, "If you're smart, why, you'll get in with this Willy here." He said, "Well, I don't think there's enough here for two families." I said, "Yes." I told him about Bob Gulzo, that Bob Gulzo came to this county in a Model-A Ford coupe, a wife and a pair of work gloves, that's all he had. He went to work for John Turner until he owned damn near a million dollars. As I was talking to Willy's son-in-law, I said, "If he'd put all his stuff together right now he'd be worth a million bucks." Pete forgot all about being a veterinarian. I told him anybody's crazy who wanted to be a veterinarian. You have to get up in the middle of the night in a snowstorm to go out and take care of cow.

I: Did you know Willy's dad?

RL: Yes. I used to buy seed grain and cow feed from him when I was in the dairy business.

I: Willy learned a lot of things from his dad about cleaning grain and cleaning grass seed. So he has many things that he can do to earn a living, not just raise wheat or cattle or something like that.

RL: I want to tell you something that's difficult to believe. Willy never bought anything that he couldn't pay cash for. If he couldn't pay cash he never borrowed a dime to buy any equipment. He had the money there. So he made a lot of money on saving interest payments.

I: I think he learned a lot of that from his dad.

### **Changes in Island City**

I: You've seen a lot of changes in the valley. What do you think about how things are going?

RL: When I first moved into this house here on McAlister, there was a gravel road and maybe they'd be, oh, four or five cars a week go by here. In the wintertime the road used to drift with snow between the cemetery and Island City. Once there was three weeks that I couldn't get to Island City from here without going down Cove Avenue toward town and then cutting across and coming back to Island City. During one winter they had a funeral and had to bury somebody over in the cemetery. Old S. B. Morgan was road master then and he came out here with a grader to open the road so they could dig a grave. He got stuck and we had a hell

of a time getting him out. He went back to town and put chains on all four tires so he could buck that road out, and they could have the funeral. Hell, that guy there he didn't need the funeral. He was off and gone.

I delivered milk to Morgan at his house up the road here. I told him, "I don't know about this . You went out there and opened that road up to bury a guy, but you wouldn't open it up so I could deliver your milk!" He never forgot that. He got a kick out of that.

I could shoot a .22 at squirrels out here any direction if I wanted to. Now you can't even shoot a gun of any kind out here. There are too many people and it isn't safe.

### **The Mormon Church Land**

JT: What did you think when they built the Mormon Church right next to you?

RL: Well, I thought that was a pretty good deal because they wanted to buy five acres from me to build it. "Yes, I'd sell them five acres, but you'll have to buy the whole hundred and twenty because I will not subdivide." So we made a deal. The Mormons formed a partnership and we signed the contract. I had tried to give it to the Eastern Oregon College, but they couldn't handle it. One of the lawyers here wanted it to go to Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. The Mormon partners came out, and I showed them the boundary line, and talked about the sewer and water district, the whole darn thing. They said, "Well, you have to have it appraised." So we did and the State appraised it with water and sewer available at \$560,000. I told them that I wanted \$28,000 a year for twenty years. You multiply that out real quick it comes to \$560,000.

Well, these two Mormons, Russell Elmer and Russell Lester signed a contract. They hired some lawyers as well. After they had paid seventeen-and-a-half years, Russell Lester said it was all paid for. He amortized it out and said it was paid for. When the accountants here figured out a deal like that they said, "You can't do it that way. You can't sell it like that." And I said, "The hell I can't. It's mine. It's the first time in my life I had it all paid for, I don't owe a dime on it. They want to buy it and I want to sell it." The accountant said, "Well, you've got to have some interest." I said, "Hell, I didn't ask for any interest. I told you I wanted \$28,000 a year for twenty years." He said "There's got to be some interest for the buyers. They said, "Well, I don't know whether we can do it." They said, "We'll have to set it up so that there is some interest." After they paid seventeen-and-a-half years, Russell Lester sued me and said it was paid for.

### **Neighbor to Neighbor**

I: How did you and Lauree get involved in Neighbor to Neighbor?

RL: I don't know. I usually say that's the second mistake I made. First mistake was when I was born, they turned me up, they slapped me on the butt and I cried. I think the second one was when we got involved in this Neighbor to Neighbor setup.

I: You helped a lot of people, though.

RL: Oh yes, still do. I knew better than to get too involved in this wood stuff. I went out there one day when we had the county work crew out here. When you work with wood, you always wear good gloves. It had rained all night. When I went out there the next morning, there was a brand new pair of gloves barely used part of one day, laying on a block of wood out there in the rain. I picked them up and started to leave. There was another pair down on the ground and I bent over and picked them up. When I straightened up I didn't stop, I just went right over on my butt, banged my head. It's a damn good thing I didn't break something.

I quit the wood business after that. I go out there to help them a little bit. But I don't pile or pick up wood or stack it.

I: You allow them to use your barn lot out here to store wood and deliver to people that need it.

RL: Yes. We got a wood splitter out there. Wal-Mart sold a wood splitter to somebody in Cove. They hooked it on their trailer for them but when they started home, it came loose and it went down through the ditch and up into a guy's grain field. It got kind of bunged up. They had to go get it and haul it back. They had old Floyd Knapp build it back up and put it together again. He did, came and told me about it and he said they will sell it to us. He said, "I'll tell you, I'll buy half of it. You and I buy it and you can rent it anytime you want to. We can let the Neighbor to Neighbor program have it." So that's why we got a woodsplitter out there. It isn't mine, it's Neighbor to Neighbor's wood splitter. Boy, there's been a lot of darn wood split out here and that splitter has made it much easier.

When the county work crew comes out here, I'm supposed to be out there. I go out there and push the levers. "Doesn't your arm get tired?" I said, "Yes, but I got another arm I can use for a while." Finally they told me, "You're not supposed to be out here with the wood."

I: How many cords did you split and stack a year?

RL: I think it was eighty-one last year. First couple a years it was four or five.

I: How many years have you been involved with the project?

RL: It's been six years, ever since the county got smart and gave it up. The county used to do it. I got so when I walk and see if there's a pair of gloves laying on the ground I just step around them.

### **Candy Kisses**

I: What does your wife think about you giving all these young ladies candy kisses?

RL: Oh boy, that doesn't go over very big, but she buys them for me. In the summertime I don't give kisses, I give these Worthers and they're kind of expensive. Some people like them better than the kisses. When I go to the restaurant if I get special service, I give the waitress a candy.

### **Elks**

I: What fraternal organizations have you belonged to all these years?

RL: Elks is the main one and I have been a member for over fifty years. I'm still paying my dues, but I don't go very often. We used to go to their Wednesday night dinners, but Lauree has allergies and there's only certain things she can eat. One of the guys that I used to go with all time, he can't go anymore, so I just kind of gave up on it.

I: Wasn't Dick Tartar one of them that you went with?

RL: Yes. There was one old guy, Henry Stoffer, who had a cane and he could hardly walk. I told his wife, "If you take him to Elks I'll bring him home." They thought that was second heaven. She'd bring him down there and wave at me; I'd take him home, and walk him to the door because he was on crutches.

RL: I picked up Carl Stow a lot, event though he never was that bad off. There was Raymond Gray who had the electrical shop and I would bring the two of them and then take them home.

I: Is there anything that you wished you had done instead of having a dairy?

### **Traveling Abroad**

RL: I really wished I'd had more sense, and kept more of my money when I was a cattle grower. I told you the first mistake I made was when I cried. Oh, I don't know. I've been pretty damn lucky, pretty happy. The best thing I ever did was I married Lauree. I didn't know there was so many different places in the world I could go.

We went to Hawaii two or three times; went to the Virgin Islands. We went on a trip to Alaska above Vancouver Island, taking a tour ferry boat, going around the state of Alaska. We have traveled to Australia and New Zealand.

When we got the trailer, we took Jim and Gail Whitmire, Fred and Iris on trips. Lauree and I took my older sister up to Canada for six weeks. We spent quite a bit of time up there in that country. Enjoyed that, too.

### **Possible Dual Citizenship**

I: Actually, you were eligible for dual citizenship, weren't you? Weren't you born in Canada?

RL: Yes. When I got to be twenty-one I went up to register to vote and the guy up there said, "You're one of the few people in this country that's got a choice. You can either be a Canadian citizen or American citizen." I didn't know about all the things between Canada and America, so I decided I'd better be American. That was funny, since I forgot that I had a choice.

I was born up there but my folks were never Canadian citizens. They just moved up there and farmed for quite a while.

I said I wasn't going to tell any stories about that, but I got to tell you this one. We moved here and started milking cows as I said earlier. I wanted poles to build a fence around the haystacks. Old Mick Riley who lived up there on the edge of Mt. Emily, had some poles we could get. He and my dad got to talking and bragging. Pop told him that he had thirteen kids and old Riley got mad. "Wow," he said, "Where did you live?" "Well, we lived up in Canada." Old Riley said, "Well, that explains it. It was so darn cold up there." Dad said, "the cold had nothing to do with, the mosquitoes were bad." That's the first time in my life I could laugh right straight at my dad. Old Riley, he just darn near fell on the ground, he laughed so hard.

### **Searching for The Pinto Horse**

I: There's a question I wanted to ask about the "Baker's Dozen" and your family. After you graduated from high school, you and a number of fellows went after a pinto horse that was running loose. I wonder if you'd tell us that story.

RL: Kenny Ferril, Abe Debois, Al Zurbrick, Wilber and Gene Blocklin, Jimmy Dyle, Fred and I went running after a horse. Somebody in Pendleton wanted that horse and said, he'd pay a thousand dollars if someone could capture that horse and bring it to him on a halter.



We were riding out there and came upon a band of sheep; we visited with shepherd for a while and then left. My horse started acting funny. I was up in front of the group. I couldn't figure out why she didn't want to go. Pretty soon she turned and started to run. There was a damn bear across the trail and my horse was running right along side the road trying to get away from it. When I realized what was going on there, I took a shot at it. It's a damn good thing I missed it. That bear could've eaten me before I got back on my horse and got out of there.

We got up to the area and there was too much snow and not enough horse feed. So we hunted and tried to catch this horse. But we never could find him. He knew his way through this whole country. He knew where he could take us and we wouldn't catch him. Finally we gave up and started back home. We got to the Ruckle Road guard station and it was just getting dark and snowy. We were getting kind of short of horse feed, so we broke into that place. There was enough room so we could all stay in there, sleeping on the floor.

Harold got the measles. He was pretty damn sick and he got kind of screwy in his mind. He was jumping up and catching hold of the rafters and hanging on them. The next morning Fred and I, one of the Blocklin boys and somebody else, I don't know which one it was, rode out because we didn't have enough horse feed. They stayed another day because they were having trouble leading that colt. They damn near had to drag it. It took them biggest part of the day to ride out from Ruckle Road ranger station to home. Those damn wild horses aren't dumb. That stallion knew just exactly where to go and where to take us. No way in the world we could get close to even thinking about throwing a rope at him. He'd lead us out where we could get in trouble and he knew how to stay out of it.

I: According to the book you ended up with a little filly?

RL: No, I bought a filly from Brenda Clark.

I: You didn't go horse hunting after that, did you?

RL: No, once was enough.

I: Did you have any other interesting experiences as a young man?

RL: You mean that I can talk about? Oh, not really. Marie and I made some trips after we were married.

I: Did you notice during those early years when things were tough that people helped one another?

RL: Oh yes.

I: Your entertainment were your friends because you didn't have any money.

RL: Yes. There was a neighbor kid who we played together a lot. He came over to play with us about ten o'clock in the morning, and he wanted to know if he could stay for dinner. Of course Mom never turned anybody down for dinner. "Sure, he can stay for dinner." We called up his folks and told him that he was going to stay for dinner. When dinnertime came, my mom called us all into dinner. She had a big pot of cooked beans. "Oh," he said, "You have to eat beans all the time, too." Those were tough times and we ate beans a lot. Once in a while, well more than once in a while, we'd have rice.

I Didn't you have beef now and then from the dairy cows?

RL: We sold them. We needed them to pay the cash bills. I never could figure out, anybody who would come to our place after eleven o'clock, would never leave without eating. They always had to serve two tables. The older ones would get to eat first. Then us younger guys would sit around, waiting until they got done, and then we'd get to eat. If people came to the door, Mother had enough food for them. She never ever was out of feed. Everybody got to eat all they wanted.

If the there were no visitors, there was never any waste. How the heck Mom could cook for all those and not waste a lot.

### **Cleaning the Chicken House**

I: There is a story about you cleaning out a chicken house and getting paid a dollar. Can you tell me about that?

RL: There was this old bachelor and he had five chicken houses with five hundred chickens in each house. There was an outfit that came around two or three times a week and picked up the eggs. He made a good deal of money.

I cleaned one of those houses a week. I would use a slip to shovel out all of the old feed and manure, scatter it around the yard and put new straw in each of the chicken houses. I had to do a pretty good job of cleaning them, because the man wanted them kept clean.

I had wanted a pair of bib-less overalls to wear to school, and I told him what I wanted. He was going to go to town that Saturday while I was cleaning the chicken house. He bought me a pair of bib-less overalls. Boy, I thought I was king. I had me a brand new pair of bib-less overalls instead of hand-me-downs. He paid sixty-six cents for that pair of overalls for me so I didn't have to have an old pair of bib overalls; I hated those hand me down bib overalls.

I: When you said a slip, a slip was like a large scoop shovel big enough to be pulled behind a horse or two.

RL: We had one, but that's not what I was using. I was using just a shovel and pitchfork. There was a sled that was, oh, about six or eight feet wide and ten, twelve feet long pulled by the team. I cleaned chicken houses quite a bit for that guy.

I: Learned about working. You had a little experience picking fruit and berries, didn't you?

RL: Oh yes. We used to go over to the Wenatchee Valley and pick apples in the fall. We would stay out of high school and go over there, trying to make money.

Another job I remember was this old guy who was sick one night. He called up and wanted to know if I could come over to help him. I went over there and he had twelve, fourteen cows to milk. His neighbor was supposed to come and help as well. This guy was really sick and he waited till after dark for his neighbor. That man didn't arrive, so sick as he was, he and I went out and milked them damn cows. By then it was way after dark, so I slept on the floor in front of the heater stove, and got up and milked the cows again in the morning. That old guy was supposed to come, but he said it was too cold, he didn't want to fool around milking cows. You can't wait on cows; they have to be milked.

He had an old Model-T Ford coupe pickup that I wanted awfully damn bad. I had pretty near worked enough for him, that he was going to let me have it. When he died some supposed-to-be relative of his came and got that pickup instead of letting me have it. I never forgot that. He had stuff all over his table that I was cleaning up. I saw something that kind of looked funny, picked it up, and saw that it was a check for eggs. My god, he had two or three hundred dollars worth of checks just laying on the table that he didn't know he had.

Boy, I'll tell you, he took off to town when he found that he had all those checks that he hadn't cashed.

### **First Car – Model T**

I: What was the first car you owned?

RL: A Model-T that I bought when we were still in Washington. I called it a glasshouse because it seemed to have glass windows in it. We paid twenty-five dollars for it up in Washington. We drove it down here and used it milking cows out at Clark's, hauling ten-gallon cans of milk up to Blue Mountain Creamery. We built a platform on the back of that Model-T and hauled the milk to town. That car was what we kids went to school in. Took the milk to the creamery and then went on to school. We came back from school, stopped to get our cans and took them back home again.

I: About how much were they paying for milk or was it cream?

RL: Milk, whole milk. We could buy milk for about a dime a quart. It wasn't a whole lot, but you'd be surprised if you knew how many mortgages on farms in this valley were paid by eggs and milk. The eggs and milk would pay for the cost of farming, and anything they made off the grains went to profit.

I: One cow could support a family and usually you could sell a few gallons aside. On an average, how much milk does a cow give?

RL: Some of them give two gallons, two-and-a-half gallons. The Jerseys produced richer milk so they didn't produce quite as much as the other cows.

### **Milk Cows**

I: What kind of cows did you usually run on the farm?

RL: Jerseys, Gernseys, and Holstein -- Jerseys and Gernseys for the cream and the Holsteins for the volume of milk. We mixed them together when we were bottling milk. If you bottled straight Jersey milk, we'd have about that much milk and the rest were quart bottles of cream. You have to mix the milk to keep about an inch or two of cream on top of the milk bottle.

I: What would happen when you delivered milk, and it was very cold out?

RL: Oh, it would freeze and it would push the cap up an inch to an inch-and-a-half. One time, I delivered milk to Mrs. Sylvan Rasmussen and it was cold. I put the milk on the porch, and when she went out to get the milk, the cap was up an inch. She called old John ? who was the milk weight inspector and talked to him about this problem. He said, "Well, that's natural. If it's frozen, that'll push the cream that's on top of the milk, so the cap is shoved it up. Put it in where it's warm and it'll settle back down." Mrs. Rasmussen thought I was doing something to the milk.

I: Did you have the tall slim bottles or did you those with the bubble in there?

RL: I had both.

### **Poor Man's Cream**

I: Did you used to call that poor man's cream?

RL: Yes. One of the dentists, Dr. Brown, bought milk from us. He wanted the cream separate, and Pop would say skim it off the top of the milk. The second or third time I delivered milk to him, he told me, "That was top milk, that wasn't cream. I want something that you've got to scoop out of a jar." We had a hell of a time there. We had to get a separator so we could separate the cream and the milk. He wanted the cream, when it got cold, you could turn it up side down, and it

wouldn't run out. You'd have to scoop it out with a spoon or a knife. But that cost money to do that.

I: Then you didn't have a separator?

RL: Not for a long time. We separated by mixing Jerseys and Holsteins. They arrested me one time for having too much cream in the milk. By god, they were going to take me to Portland! There were regulations on how much cream could be in the bottle. I told them I couldn't go to Portland, because I had to stay here and milk the cows. They said, "Well, you got too much cream in your milk". Whoever tested the milk, took the one bottle whose cream line was the furthest down the bottle; just one quart had too much cream. The customers didn't care; they liked it. We had to be awful careful.

I: When you did get that separator? Wasn't it a bear to clean?

RL: Oh, you bet it was! I didn't like that job; nobody else did either. Mom did it most of the time. You have to take that bowl apart and take each one apiece, supposed to put them back in the same rotation they were in.

I: When you got the separator started you had to start turning that handle and it just got to humming.

RL: Yes. It wasn't easy, nor too darn hard, just something you had to do all the time.

As I said, those five years my wife, neither one was home overnight working in the dairy, and that's why I sold it.

I: Did you raise most your hay, or did you have to buy some?

RL: I had to buy some at first. But when I got here I could do pretty well. I raised the kind of hay I wanted when I moved here. Very seldom that I didn't have enough so I had to buy hay.

I: Actually the hay in this part of the country is quite good. It's better than that, that comes from the Willamette valley; they usually buy our hay.

RL: Yes. One thing about when you raise your own, you didn't let it get too far in bloom. It makes more hay, but it hasn't got the feed value for a milk cow. They waste too much stem than a beef cow would eat. Well, there are lots of tricks to it. The one thing that I was awful mean about was milking at four o'clock in the morning and four o'clock in the afternoon. If we were harvesting hay or anything else, by god, everything quit when milking time come. I think the cows appreciated the schedule.

I: Makes for a long day.

RL: We finally got a radio in the barn out here. We'd play that radio and get KLBS. If some stranger came in and we made too much noise, that made the cows nervous, but the radio never bothered the cows any. We didn't get as much milk when that happened and had a clean up job afterwards.

I: When you had the radio on, did that make a difference in the amount of milk that the cows gave?

RL: It did. They never got excited about anything except when other people would come in. The radio kind of soothes them or something, that and putting a pan of grain in front of them when milking.

I: Did you raise anything else besides cows on the farm?

RL: Yes, we had a garden and chickens. My dad used to like to raise raspberries and strawberries. With that many kids everybody is always doing something.

### **Slopping the Hogs**

I: Do you ever have any hogs?

RL: Yes, we did. I was slopping the hogs one time. We had a trough over the fence, when I reached over with the bucket of sour milk and grain mixed up. I leaned over too far, dumped the bucket and I fell right into the damn trough. I can understand why the hogs made so much noise when they eat, it didn't taste very good. I had to go to the house to change all my clothes. We did a lot of that slopping hogs and stuff.

I: Did you smoke your own hams?

RL: Yes, we had a big smokehouse. Dad liked to fish. We had a creek running through the place and we would get salmon when they'd run up the creek. We'd get them with pitchforks or anything we could; we had smoked salmon most of the time. It wasn't often that the smokehouse wasn't busy. Lots of times in the winter, Mom would say, "Roy, go down there to the oat bin and get us a ham." We put the smoked meat in the oats to keep it. Bugs couldn't get to it and it never spoiled or anything. It was good smoked ham.

We were sure happy. We had cherry trees and when the cherries were ripe, my nephew would go out there and eat some. He'd pick one for himself and one for the dog. He put his hand on the dog's head and said, "Spit the seed out. Spit the seed out." Mom would give the nephew a sandwich, and he'd go set down on the porch. He would take a bite out of the sandwich, hold it out and that dog'd take a

little bite of the sandwich. They would eat that sandwich clear down; the dog never took a big bite of any of the sandwiches, he always shared them. He was a good dog. Of course that wasn't the healthiest thing in the world, but then nobody suffered for it anyway.

I: Did you ever fish on Catherine Creek by the Davis cattle ranch when the salmon were running?

RL: No, never did. I have seen them over there, but I never fished them.

I: There have been a lot of changes in this valley, some good and some bad, but it's still a great place to live.

RL: With all the running around I've done, I've never found a place I'd rather live. You got all kinds of weather. I got no desire to go. Last time Lauree and I went to California, to her great-granddaughter's wedding, I told her, "Take a good look while you're here 'cause I'm never coming back here again." They have five and six lanes of highway, cars going in both directions. They got signs down there, it's sixty-five miles per hour but they driving eighty!

### **Ford Pickups**

I: You bought a number of Fords.

RL: I've been a Ford man all my life, ever since I had that first Model-T that I liked to drive. I learned the hard way that it don't stop when you say "whoa" either. I never wrecked anything or hurt anything, but I sure learned a lesson quick.

I always bought from George. I'd go in there, "George, I need a cup of coffee." He knew what I had in mind. We got in quite an argument onetime when I was wanting a new Ford pickup. He just wouldn't budge at all. I had a friend that was living in Spokane and I told him I was going to buy a new pickup. I told him just exactly what I wanted: I wanted a big six in there and interlocking' rear-end wheels. George had one that he'd sell me for \$2700. The one from Spokane said, "Cash, no trade-in?" I said, "Yes, \$2000." That's \$700 difference. I said "I can walk to Spokane for that much money." George just absolutely wouldn't budge.

We began to walk out, Claude was there and he seen us going out. He said, "Wait a minute, neither one of you look happy." I said, "No, I wanted to buy a pickup. I can buy it cheaper someplace else, but I don't want to have to get it that way." He said, "Come in and sit down." So I went into his office and set down. George he stayed at the door. We got to talking. Claude says, "What's the matter?" Well, I said, "I can buy that truck, that's exactly what I have my mind set on. George wants \$2700 and, I can't afford that." Well, he said, "It's a cash deal". I always borrowed money from the bank to pay cash for it because I could pay it

off when I wanted to that way. Claude says, "Let me make a phone call." So he called someplace in Boise and they talked and he repeated what I said I wanted. Pretty soon he looked up at me he said, "What color do you want?" I said, "I don't give a damn what color it is as long as it runs, that's what I'm after." "I can have a red one here the day after tomorrow for 2100 bucks." I said, "Order." After that I never had any trouble with George.

I: What do you think about the price of cars now? The prices have gone completely through the roof.

RL: Yes. I can't believe these advertisements in the paper, no interest, no payments for a year. Somebody's paying the bill. When I was driving that cream route, I put on ninety thousand in two years on the truck. I sold one with ninety-two thousand miles on it. A guy out here in the valley called me up about it. He said, "What all did you do to that truck?" I said, "Put gas, oil in it and grease the bearings when I was supposed to." "Never had it overhauled?" I said, "No."

If I hadn't had to overhaul it, he wanted it. I said, "No, I never overhauled it." I said, "I kept it serviced, took care of it all the time and never beat it up." So he bought it with about ninety-five thousand miles on it. I talked to him two or three years after that and he said, "I drove that thing till it had a hundred and ninety-five thousand on it. I went into Ford to trade it in for a new one and they wouldn't trade." I said, "They wouldn't trade it." So he went up to Enterprise and traded it: he got quite a bit of money for that old pickup.

I bought one Ford pickup from them up in Enterprise. I wanted to take it out and drive it before I put it on the cream route, so my wife and I took it up Tollgate. I thought it was early enough in the day so we drove it on to Pendleton and came home that way. We got out, and as I was about ready to take it on a cream run, I said that the seat didn't look right. They had put in the seat cushions but never bolted the seat to the frame! That's dangerous and I had driven it all the way to Pendleton and back. After getting in and out of it, delivering all the cream, I went to Ford and I said, "You can have this damn thing." "What do you mean?" I said, "I took it for a ride and when I got out the seat was loose. There wasn't a bolt in it." Claude, he just had a fit. That day there was some action around there. The next morning it was ready to go, but I wasn't; I took back my old truck.

I: It sounds like it's been a good life, enjoyed yourself as you went along and have been married to two nice ladies.

### **Free Moonshine**

RL: I've been lucky that way. I'll tell you one more thing that we did as kids. We lived a little over a mile from the grange hall and they used to have dances there



all the time. There's gravel road going by it. I don't know who thought of it to start with, but we'd go out there along the gravel road and get a handful of that pipe gravel and broadcast it along the edge of the road by the fencepost. Pretty soon we'd hear a tinkle on glass. We'd go up there and we get home brew and bottles of whiskey from the fence post. Men would set their whiskey bottles down by the post there so they'd know where they were. Some of the kids would get pretty drunk. I never drank it that much because I traded it. I got a kick out of that. I don't know how many bottles of whiskey we walked by before we got smart enough to throw gravel.

I: There are a lot of stories about Prohibition.

RL: Fred Hill lived over behind Wal-Mart, where that church is now. He told me that Saturday afternoons late, he used to go over to the corner of my place where the brush lay right along that creek, and look around. Moonshiners would try to give him five dollars or whatever for the bottle he hid out in that brush out there. Of course, he'd go get the bottle that he'd put out there Saturday afternoons for Saturday evenings when he went out. He said, "I got more than my share."

### **Flooding**

I: When you first moved out here wasn't there quite a little bit of water there?

RL: That must be when they changed the river. Since I've been here when the river flooded and washed the Levelinson's house uptown, it hit the railroad bridge down here and knocked things all to pieces.

I: There used to be those ponds up there by where Quinlin's live.

RL: Yes.

I: But that's all dry now.

RL: Yes. I have never seen any extra water extra running down Quinlin's in the bottom here through the golf course. Uptown on Jefferson at the backend of that cream station, there was quite a hole in there, right next to the railroad tracks. I went uptown and I couldn't get through the underpass, it was so full of water. I had to go back around the other way on Jefferson. I thought that the backend of that thing would be a-floating. Do you know there wasn't a damn drop extra in that creek there? It was dry as a bone. John Lemmon who ran Globe furniture had furniture parked down below him, under my building, and under another one. They were pumping water over there at Miller's on that side of Jefferson trying to keep it out of their stores, but over there it was dry. Old John was afraid to come over there. He knew it was just going to be full of water, but it stayed dry. I don't know why, they must have a good dam up there someplace that kept the river there.

I: That tin sewer used to go down the alley there between Adams and Jefferson and that helped fill a lot of basements.

RL: Yes, I set there and watched that pump run right in front of Miller's pumping water when that water was high over.

I: That was that flood of '64, '65.

RL: Yes. That's the only time I ever seen a river humped up in the middle. It was actually rounded, the top of the water was rounded, there was so darn much water coming down. That flood was the one that took out the railroad bridge. I'll never forget driving from here to Cove on the Cove road. As I turned on top of Sandridge Road, there was that T-Track Cat of Claude Anson's with its exhaust pipe barely sticking out of the water, that whole Cat was under water except about two inches.

It set there for quite a while; they had to take every bolt out of that and put it back together all cleaned up. A lot of people laughed about that, Claude leaving his tractor set out there when it should've been home in the shed.