

Coming to Northeast Oregon

- ES: My full name is Edith Ebell Scott and I was born in La Grande, Oregon on January 6, 1908.
- I: I think that your grandfather was what might be called a pioneer to this part of Eastern Oregon, was he?
- ES: Definitely. Granddad followed the sea from Germany. Their ship wrecked right out of San Francisco. As far as he knew he was the only man that made it to shore because he was a good swimmer.
- I: Do you have any idea what year that was?
- ES: In the late 1800s, at that time the gold rush was just coming to an end in California. Some of those men were headed up toward Baker Valley because they had discovered gold there. So my granddad came with those people up to Baker, and he established a post for the trail he had at his ranch.
- I: The Oregon Trail?
- ES: The Oregon Trail. That was one of the stops -- at the ranch years ago.
- I: Did they stop there to get supplies or to rest?
- ES: Supplies and to rest. He went on and had a huge vegetable garden, and during harvest season he supplied all the vegetables for the city of Baker.
- I: He didn't do any mining at all, apparently.
- ES: Apparently not. That was not his cup of tea. He supplied things to the miners, though.
- I: Do you remember hearing stories directly from him?
- ES: No. Granddad was older and he didn't share his life with his family at all.
- I: How did you find out about what he had done?
- ES: Dad picked up some of the things. He shared enough of that, but he never shared these things with me because he was upset that I was a girl instead of a boy; I didn't carry the Ebell name very far.
- I: Now I gather that your grandfather once he got to Baker and got the vegetable garden going found a woman to marry.

Black Plague

ES: Granddad was married and had three children when the Black Plague went through Baker. He lost his wife and two of the children, but a small a baby lived. The Plague killed off hundreds of people all through this area. My grandfather married my granny when he had one baby left from the illness.

My grandmother, whom I knew, and her sister came over from Germany to visit their brother, who lived in Baker. Here were these two women who were educated in a women's school in Germany and had the equivalent of a college education. The train only came as far as Denver, so these women had to come by stagecoach from Denver to Baker.

I: Why did they want to come to Baker?

ES: To visit their brother, my Granddad in Baker. It nearly scared them to death! Here were these two really refined women. Granddad happened to be in town and met Granny and she was afraid to go back to Germany, so she married him. She was a delight. I just adored my grandmother. She was just a sweetheart. Then her sister also married and stayed in Baker. My granny and Granddad had six children together.

I: So your father grew up in Baker?

Her Father's Coming to Union County and Becoming a Railroader

ES: My Granddad's garden situation had ended when he and his older brother went into raising cattle. Dad hated working with horses and cattle, so he ran away from home when he was 21, came to Union County, and got a job establishing the telephone lines over at Cove. Near there he happened to see a train coming through from Joseph into the lumber company. He went and talked to one of the men about it because he loved anything that was mechanical. Dad could make anything with wood or metal -- a very creative man. The railroad man said, "We're looking for men to work on the railroad." Dad got on the train and rode into town with him and got a job on the railroad. Dad stayed with the railroad till I think he was 72.

I: They were burning wood at that time, weren't they?

ES: Coal.

I: What was his first name?

ES: Edward. They called him Ed. He had a wonderful reputation as an engineer. I have a couple of letters written from the high executives complimenting him.

I: Did he talk much about his railroad work to you?

ES: It was just a conversation around the house. Mother and Dad loved people. So many of the railroaders at that time were not married men but lived in boarding houses in La Grande. We had more people in and out of our house all the time; Dad brought them home. It didn't make any difference what Mother was doing, Dad would say, so-and-so hasn't had lunch yet and Mother would stop whatever she was doing and fix lunch for all of them. My mother was a fantastic cook. Our house was an open house to people-- it was a happy, happy house. We had more people in and out of our house all the time.

Dad had a heart of gold. Several people have told me that when men were starting out to work on the railroad, if he felt they were really interested in learning the ropes, he would bend over backwards to help them. But if he felt that all they were interested in was salary they were going to get, he wouldn't help them. He loved the railroad so much; it was his life. He was darn good at it. No one ever had to go get Dad if his train had a breakdown; he fixed it himself. He always got it back to the roundhouse.

All of my friends loved to come to our house. Dad teased them to pieces. I remember one time I had a birthday party. Since it was January it was cold, so all of their shoes were removed and were left in the front hall. When Dad came in, he went down to the basement and got one of Mother's big washtubs, he put all those shoes in and mixed them up. The kids had to scramble to find their own shoes to wear home. Those are silly things that have stayed in my mind.

When Dad was a railroader, he took pride in his work. Mother kept his blue and white overalls and jackets just spotless. He was always just clean as a pin.

But he loved his work. He loved being a railroader. Of course he was gone a lot and me being an only child, I was with Mom; I became involved with her in church work. The Christian Church was right next door to us. When Dad was home, I was having fun with him in his backyard garden. Sometimes when Dad was home, we took off because he loved to fish and to hunt. We were often up the Minam, or up to Olive Lake.

Railroad Certificates

ES: [Showing several pieces of paper] Here are some of Dad's certificates from the Railroad. There's one of the orders when James Hill died; all of the trains came to a complete stop in his honor. Imagine doing that now.

I: [reading] May 31st, 1916 number 23 engine, ENG 560, on siding and neat extras 2141 and 2129 east at Perry, eng 3802, run extra Kamela to Hilgard, meet number 23, eng 560 at Hilgard..." I don't see anything about James J. Hill, though.

ES: No. That isn't the one then.

I: This is the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company.

ES: That's what the Union Pacific was originally. I don't know what year it became the Union Pacific.

I: Here's another. [reading] "May 31st, 1916. In memory of the late James J. Hill all trains will come to a full stop at twelve o'clock noon and remain standing until 12:05 p.m. All work will be suspended during this period. Signed W. B." Would that have been the trainmaster?

ES: Yeah.

I: [reading] "For the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company."

ES: Yes. Isn't that piece of history, all of that? Imagine doing that now!

I: Here's the certificate of examination for Edward Ebell.

ES: Ebell.

I: This is June 20th, 1910, I think. Would that be about right?

ES: Yes, he probably became an engineer at that time.

I: [reading] "Qualified to fill a position of road engineer."

ES: I found these all in the desk when I was cleaning out my parents' house.

Engineers received their orders while they were underway. Dad would receive a stick that was about so long that had a hoop in it; he stuck it out and the people at the helper station would clip the orders on with a clothespin. He'd bring it back, take the order off, and throw the hoop back on the ground. That's the way they took the yellow order slips. Of course now they do it all from Omaha with electronics.

[showing other papers] This is a certificate that said that he is required to wear glasses while on duty, and here's an airbrake certificate.

The Silk Train

I: I have heard about the Silk Train? What do you know about that?

ES: When the ships came into Portland, the silk was put on the train; I wish I knew what condition that silk was in, but the Silk Train was heavily insured. It was

given the right-of-way over everything. Dad could go as fast as he wanted and stop for nothing.

I: Where was he going?

ES: Going back apparently to New York or back east someplace to a manufacturing place.

I: Why do you guess that it had such a high priority?

ES: It was so heavily insured, I am assuming it must've been the raw silk. Dad loved to get that Silk Train. I remember Mother was always scared because she knew he'd go as fast as he could on the train, which he loved.

Another thing he loved was getting the snowplow. When the railroaders were here they went from here west to Reith [approximately 55 miles northwest of La Grande] and back, and then from here east to Huntington [approximately 70 miles southeast of La Grande] and back. Dad had both runs, wherever he was called.

I: Did your father say anything about the difficulties of getting a freight train over the Blue Mountains to Reith?

ES: They always had helper engines that got off at Kamela [approximately 40 miles northwest of La Grande] or sometimes they'd come back to La Grande. There was a helper station at Kamela. The one big problem was going east; oftentimes, the winds were so great in the valley, the freight trains could hardly get up through the canyon [i.e., Ladd Canyon, approximately 12 miles southeast of La Grande]. He said the tops blow off of the freight trains out there.

Another thing that Dad did, which I thought was great, was the way he whistled out of town. I never did figure it out. He had a little quirk to it and Mother knew when he left town and when he was coming into town. She could hear the whistle and knew when he was coming home. That was Dad's way of saying goodbye to her or I'm headed home. I always thought that was the sweetest thing. They were the happiest couple and they had such fun together.

I: Was he always on freight service?

ES: For a while was on the branch line from La Grande to Joseph, which he loved, he threw seeds all along the right-of-way. There were flowers growing here to Joseph.

I: You said he wasn't always on freight service.

ES: Yes, he graduated from that to passenger service.

I: Was that supposedly a better job?

ES: It was steadier because he knew the time he was going to be in and out. He liked the regular hours.

Circus

I: Tell me more about your activities in La Grande when you were growing up.

ES: Dad several times brought the circus train into town. When he did, he would get me and take me down so I could watch them unload the animals from the train. Then we would the gorgeous parade downtown.

I: Would they parade up Fourth Street?

ES: Yes, I think Fourth Street.

I: Were you allowed to follow them up to where they were going to put up their tent and perform?

ES: Dad took me a time or two up to watch them set up the tent, but I don't remember that for sure. When I was in high school a lot of us would go to see the circus.

I: Was that on the grounds where the university is?

ES: Yes.

I: How many people do you think came to see the circus?

ES: Generally the tent was full, maybe five hundred people.

House in La Grande - Single Child

I: Where did you grow up in La Grande?

ES: On Penn Avenue between Sixth and Seventh

I: Is the house still there?

ES: Yes, it's a little yellow house.

I: Has it been changed?

ES: It's been changed quite a bit. It had a long porch that went clear across the front. One year I came home from college; Dad had cut it down to a little porch and I was so upset! He said, "I got tired of watching your mother having to keep that porch clean all the time, so I cut it down to a small porch."

I: Were you born in that house?

ES: No. I was born over on 'T' Street, where they were renting a house. I was born at home rather than the hospital. When I was three years old, they bought the house on Penn. That's the only house I remember.

Birth at Home

I: Do you remember hearing from your mother anything about your birth?

ES: It was horrible; it was so hard on Mother.

I: Why was it horrible, no an anesthetic?

ES: Heavens no, they didn't use anesthetics then. It was a miserable birth for Mother, so there were never any more children; that's why I'm an only child.

Indoor plumbing and electricity

I: Do you remember if the house had electricity?

ES: Oh, we always had electricity.

I: What about indoor plumbing?

ES: As I remember we did have indoor plumbing later on; my mother was so pleased when they put plumbing in the house. I do not remember going outside to a toilet. My granddad was very progressive; he had electricity in Baker as well. I have the certificate over there, the first certificate for a telephone out in Baker valley. He had what was called a Delco plant outside the house in a shed. There were all these glass containers that had cells for batteries. Even when I was little they had electricity up at the ranch. Granny had electric lights and she had an electric vacuum cleaner.

Washing Dad's clothes

I: Do you remember any of your mother's household activities?

ES: Oh, definitely. Mother would wash Dad's overalls. She even went so far as to make soap up at the ranch with lye so she could get all of those stains out.

I: Did she make the soap all the time?

ES: Not all the time, but when Dad's overalls had really bad stains, she'd use some of that soap she had made up at the ranch. Mother loved that homemade soap. Granny, Mother and Dad's sisters would all make a batch of soap. Other times, she used regular soap from the grocery store.

I: Was she doing this on a washboard?

ES: I'm sure when I was little she had to do it on a washboard. Later on Mother had an automatic washing machine that was powered by water. She'd hook it up to the faucet in the kitchen and the water would run the washing machine. When she was finished, she would empty the tub with a hose and it would go out into the yard. Dad always had a beautiful garden out in the back yard with flowers.

I: I guess that meant that all over washing was done with cold water.

ES: No, she heated water on the stove and poured it into the washing machine with the soap. The rinse water was cold.

Soldiers/WWI/Parade

I: Do you remember anything about World War I and soldiers coming home?

ES: When the soldiers came home on a train, at the close of World War I, school was closed and all of us were all dressed up. We led the parade, sprinkling rose petals down the street followed by the marching soldiers. That was quite a parade.

I: Presumably these soldiers were all Union County residents?

ES: Yes.

I: Did you have any concept of what they had been doing?

ES: We knew they'd been to war, but we didn't know much about it. I don't think we cared much about it, except everybody was happy because they were coming home.

I: You didn't realize that it was one of the most vicious wars up till that date?

ES: No, we didn't have any radio or television then.

I: Did some of the soldiers have missing legs or arms?

ES: I was not conscious of that at all, probably they were some. I knew my dad wanted to go and they said no; he was married, had a family and they needed him to transport troops on the train. A lot of Dad's friends who were railroaders that were not married did go, but Dad never went. He would've liked to, I think, but they turned him down.

Central School

I: What were your earliest recollections what Central School looked like and was it an inviting place?

ES: Oh, I thought Central School was wonderful. It was a brick building and it was at least two, three stories high on the corner. The high school had been three stories but the top story burned while I was away from La Grande. School was fun; I loved it. Dr. Ingall's mother was my first grade teacher and she was a love. We all just adored her. The college wasn't built then; it was all an open field and no houses were up there. When I was a kid, in the spring we'd go up there and pick buttercups in the field.

I: Did you regularly walk to school even from your earliest years?

ES: Always. Where I lived, grade school was downhill and we all roller-skated to school. We would coast clear down and jump the curbs. I went home for lunch every day.

Neighborhood Activities/Games

I: What were some of the games and activities you enjoyed growing up?

ES: In the evening after dinner, all of us in the neighborhood would play out in the street – tag, hide and seek, marbles, hopscotch, and Kick the Can -- until it was dark. Then I'd go home and practice the piano or do the homework I had to do. It was a very easy life. Up through the eighth grade and into high school, we never thought about boys very much; very few of us were dating. We were a bunch of naïve kids, I think. In the winter we used to go to Palmer Mill where they had taken the logs out of the pond, and we'd ice-skate. Palmer Mill is out near where the fairgrounds are now. Sixth Street hill was always closed which is where we did all of our sledding.

The two-story white house at the top of Sixth Street belonged to a family who were railroaders by the name of Batey. Vera and Howard Batey were their children. Mrs. Batey was just a love, she would invite in those of who knew Howard and Vera, and would have hot chili for us sometimes and always hot chocolate. It was lots of fun.

I was busy with my friends; I don't know where the time went. Mother taught me how to sew; I sewed a lot. Mother had made all of my clothes on that little treadle machine. In the evening when Dad was gone, Mother did a lot -- embroidery, knitting and things like that. She taught me how to do all of that because I was home with Mother a lot.

School Activities

I: Could you tell me a little more about being a young student at Central School? Do you remember any of the routines or interactions with teachers or other kids?

ES: It was a happy time. There weren't any problems like the kids have now. The Catholic grade school children went to a Catholic school and then came over to the high school, and then we met them when they came to the high school

In the summertime Dad and Mom would take me off on fishing trips up to Anthony Lake and we would visit the relatives in the Baker area on the way. We would also go down to the Minam River. In the summertime when Dad was home we were out in the woods someplace, I wasn't circulating with the kids in town. The Mormon Church was down where the Observer office is now and they had a wonderful social hall. All of the young people there were very active and had lots of fun. After school so many us young people would go down to the Mormon social hall and we had dance classes. The YMCA was nearby and all of us learned to swim down there as youngsters

Piano lessons

ES: Hilda Anthony lived right next door to us and she taught piano. I took piano lessons from Hilda and she used to scare me to death.

I: Was she fairly demanding?

ES: Very demanding, and she had such a strange way of teaching. It was all from memory. I guess they taught piano that way because I took lessons for around eight years. She would play a piece of music for you, then you had to learn the right hand and the left hand, and then you put them together. You learned about two lines together, and we never learned to read music. She was quite a gal.

I: Why did you stick with piano lessons for so long?

ES: My Uncle Pete Beaver and Mother's sister and husband played in the La Grande band; Uncle Pete felt music was very important and that I should keep at it. I enjoyed it when I was doing it. It was something to do.

I: Did you perform?

ES: Oh, always at recitals at Hilda's house.

I: Never at the La Grande Hotel or the Sacagawea Hotel?

ES: No, neither the La Grande Hotel or the Sacagawea had been built by then.

I: Do you remember how you felt about these recitals, were you nervous?

ES: No, it never bothered me, I knew my music and that was all there was to it. I've always been very independent person and very confident in what I can do. I think my dad taught me that. Dad's attitude was, "Of course you can do it, just try it."

Downtown/Movies

I: Can you remember what it was like to go to a matinee at one of the theatres?

ES: We would go downtown to the two movie theatres to Saturday afternoon matinees, and they were silent pictures. They had a piano player, whom I loved. I didn't go every Saturday. I wasn't allowed to go that much to the theatre when Dad was home because I was doing things with him. Dad was gone I was doing things with Mother, or I was practicing the piano. When I did go, I went with a bunch of girls.

I: Did you ever go down to the railroad yards?

ES: No way!

I: You weren't allowed to go over there?

ES: No way! Dad just didn't approve of that.

I: Did he think it was dangerous?

ES: He just didn't think that's where girls belonged.

I: Too many men around who might have some dangerous ideas?

ES: Men didn't have those ideas then, or at least if they did, it was under the carpet. It was never talked about publicly. No, women had their place and men had their place in those days.

I: Did that seem perfectly normal to you at the time?

ES: I never questioned it.

I: You didn't feel as though you were being put down?

ES: No, not at all. It surprises me now to see all of these women bowling; that was a man's thing when I was growing up. Women never went near the bowling alley. So the world has changed.

I: Were there any overt ways in which females were taught their place?

ES: I was not conscious of it, I guess. There were women that were secretaries for different business offices. Lee Johnson's sister was a legal secretary. I admired her and she was a delightful woman.

Allowance

I: When you went downtown to the movies, where did you get the money to go?

ES: My parents gave me money. I always wanted an allowance, but I never had one. Most of my friends had allowances. Dad said if I needed money I just had to tell him what I needed it for and I got it. He didn't approve of allowances. When I think back, money didn't mean much to me; I feel it's a mistake not to have a child on an allowance.

I: I wonder if, as you look back on your childhood, you think that you were pampered?

ES: I was pampered a great deal as an only child, but I never felt I was spoiled.

I: Did you have jobs you had to do around the house?

ES: I had to take care of my own room. Mother and Dad had, as children, a pretty hard life of working; I think they didn't want me to have that as a child. They wanted me to have a happy childhood. I don't remember ever being requested to do things. I do remember in the summertime Dad always had the most gorgeous sweet peas along the driveway there at the house. It was my job to keep the sweet peas picked because if you didn't they wouldn't bloom.

NK West Department Store

I: How did you get your clothing?

ES: Mother made most of my clothes -- dresses and things like that, the rest were bought at N. K. West store. It was a wonderful department store in those years. It had everything that anybody would want in it. Of course people did not demand the clothes like they do now.

I: What were some of your favorite stores besides N. K. West when you were young?

ES: I wasn't a store person nor a shopper. When I needed something I'd go get it or Mother would get it. I think most of our mothers made our dresses when I was a kid.

I: Was NK West strictly a clothing store?

ES: General merchandise for men and women. Women could buy yardage there and thread and things like that. Also they had one department that catered to the railroaders. When Trotters Men's Store opened up, they catered to the mill people and the railroaders.

I: What do you remember about the prices at N. K. West?

ES: Never paid any attention to them. I never had to think about prices or what things cost.

I: Would you and your mother make trips in to select yardage for a dress that she would make you?

Honeymoon Sewing Machine

ES: Oh, definitely. I could pick out the patterns and Mother made them.

I: What kind of sewing machine did she have, a Singer?

ES: No. It was called a Honeymoon and I think it was made by Sears. The word 'Honeymoon' in gold letters was on it. It was a treadle sewing machine, the paint and all of the fancy decorations are still on it.

I: It still exists?

ES: Yes, one of my granddaughters has it sitting in the corner of her living room.

I: What kind of a sound did it make?

ES: There's not much of a sound to it.

I: Just a little gentle hum?

ES: If you peddle real fast.

I: Did you learn to use it also?

ES: I sewed on it all the time until I had an electric sewing machine, I did a lot of sewing. I loved dolls as a child; I made all the doll clothes and things like that. I ended up making all the clothes for my two daughters when they were growing up.

Automobiles/paved streets in LG

I: Talking about your early childhood, do you remember automobiles and what the conditions of the streets were like in La Grande?

ES: The first car that we had was a Dodge. It was an open top that you could put down or put the side curtains up and you couldn't see out. After Dad taught me how to drive the Dodge, he bought a car that was called a 'King Eight', a sports car. It was called 'King 8' because it had a V8 engine in it. You could climb up telephone poles with that thing.

I loved that car! It's just a shame we never kept it because it had the big wooden wheels, instead of the metal bars. It had bucket seats, brown leather inside and was painted red on the outside. The top would go down and it had side curtains.

I: It took the hills around here pretty well?

ES: Heavens yes, and at a high speed. I always had the use of the car since Mother never learned to drive. I don't know how many of my girlfriends I taught how to drive.

I: What were the streets in La Grande like at that time?

ES: Of course there were fewer streets than there are now.

I: I mean the main streets like Adams Avenue, Washington, and Jefferson.

ES: They were all paved as far as I remember. I don't remember any dirt roads anywhere.

I: Some of the older people I've talked to, say that they came in from farms out in the valley in the horse and buggy. They recalled that the streets were dirt and that there were board sidewalks. Was that before you knew downtown La Grande?

ES: I don't remember. Some people have talked about that, but I do not remember. I guess I didn't pay that much attention to it; it wasn't important, apparently, in my mind. They did erect Cast Iron Mary around then.

I: You remember seeing her?

ES: Oh heavens yes! She was put up by, the Women's Temperance Union. There were water troughs for the horses around the base of it.

I: Wasn't there a fountain for people, too?

ES: Yes, I think there was. But I remember most were those trays for the horses.

Concerts/Sunday Afternoons/Gazebo

ES: Another thing that I just loved, was on Sunday afternoons down where the credit union is now, there was a little park with a gazebo.. Every Sunday afternoon the band would play concerts there. I used to always walk down from the house to listen to the concerts. It was wonderful! My uncle Pete Beaver played the clarinet in the local band and then he went on to become a Shriner.

I: Now this was a town band made up entirely of men?

ES: Mm-hmm.

I: Did they all have full-time jobs doing something else?

ES: They all had full-time jobs. Dick Lindsey was their leader. Every Sunday afternoon, all the men that were in town and weren't out on the railroad played.

I: Do you remember any of the music they played? Was it all marches?

ES: Oh no, a lot of it was classical music. It was great.

I: How much of a crowd would come usually on Sunday afternoons, maybe two or three hundred?

ES: It was closer to fifty to seventy-five, something like that. People would be parked all around and they would sit down on the lawn.

I: What age range?

ES: There were little kids up to seniors that enjoyed music.

Ice Cream Wagon

I: Kids sometimes are interested in candy or ice cream, things like that.

ES: Oh sure, we had ice cream parlors. Of course the ice cream wagon went through town all the time; they always had ice cream cones and things like that.

I: Was that a motorized vehicle or a horse and wagon?

ES: Originally it was a horse and wagon. Much earlier, the ice wagon went around town all the time delivering ice, and the kids would follow and get the little slivers of ice that fell off.

Swimming Pool/YMCA

I: Would you describe the pool at the YMCA? I assume it was in the basement.

ES: The pool was in the basement. It was smaller than an Olympic size pool, but it had a diving board. When I was learning to dive, I belly-flopped which scared me to death and it hurt as well.

I: The YMCA building was built in 1914. Then it became the I.O.O.F hall, maybe ten or fifteen years later. At the time that you were in the swimming pool was it operated at the YMCA and available to anyone in the community?

ES: Yes. Anyone in the community could swim there. As far as I know we all learned to swim there.

I: Do you remember anything else about activities at the YMCA?

ES: I don't, I just remember going swimming there.

Chinatown/gangs

I: Were you aware of any kind of criminal activity in La Grande when you were growing up, like petty thievery or worse?

ES: No. The only thing I remember was when they had a gang war once Chinatown, down where the La Grande Hotel was. We all thought it was kind of funny.

I: Why'd you think of the gang wars were funny?

ES: I don't think we took those things very seriously.

I: What was your attitude toward the Chinese then?

ES: They were fine and they didn't bother me any.

I: But if they were engaged in what seemed to be serious, possibly lethal, activity why was that funny?

ES: I guess it was just something that didn't happen around town very much.

I: Funny odd then rather than funny humorous?

ES: Yes, funny odd. It was strange to have something like that happen in our town.

I: I know that there were a number of Chinese in La Grande who sold vegetables and had laundries and that sort of thing. Did you have any direct knowledge of them or interact with them?

ES: No, because Mother did all of her own laundry. I wasn't around the Chinese at all; I don't remember any Chinese children in our school. I do remember the first

time a black man came into the high school. We were all just floored because there were no black people around La Grande at that time.

I: You mean in the 1910 to '20 period?

ES: Yes. There were no black people around that I remember. In fact, Dad told me later, if any of them came to town they were run off; they wouldn't let them stay overnight. The police would make them leave town. But that's something that shouldn't be published, I don't think.

KKK in La Grande

I: In 1922 through 1924 the Ku Klux Klan was active around here marching around in their white robes and burning crosses on Table Mountain occasionally. Were you aware of any of that activity?

ES: Yes, I was aware of it because Mother and Dad were very upset. For some reason or another, Dad's name got on the list but he was not involved with it at all, I know that. I don't know whether he was invited or what, but one of Mother's close friends wouldn't speak to Mother because she thought my dad had joined the Ku Klux Klan. Mother was so hurt; I remember that conversation between Mother and Dad..

I: How might she have gotten that impression about him joining the organization? Do you have any idea?

ES: I didn't know that much about it since I wasn't interested in it. When I was young, we were much more interested in our own little group and we could have cared less what was on the other side of the fence. I don't think any of us were particularly interested in politics. We didn't have a radio; we didn't have television. I don't think many of us read newspapers. We had current events that we read in Civics class at school. I don't think we were conscious of what was going on in the world.

I: Did you ever see any of the men dressed up in their white outfits or crosses burning on the hillside?

ES: No, I never saw the men all dressed up in white, but we did see the crosses occasionally. Mother and Dad were very concerned about it. They were not in favor of it at all.

I: Did it mean anything to your parents or to you?

ES: I don't think I ever thought about it.

- I: Wasn't it bizarre? Do you remember asking yourself, "Why are they doing this?"
- ES: Yes, it was strange and I wondered why. We didn't have any black people here in La Grande.
- I: It wasn't just black people that they were bothered with; they didn't think much of Catholics and there were a number of other kinds of people that they didn't have much use for
- ES: That was not part of my life at all. My daughter Susie, who's living here with me now, she picked up that book about the Ku Klux Klan in La Grande and she was going through it. I could not believe some of the people that I knew growing up, their names were in there and they were active in it.
- I: You mentioned earlier the name Everheart.
- ES: Yes, he was active in it apparently.
- I: Yes, he was one of the leaders. I believe it was in his office that the minutes of the meetings were found.
- ES: I think that's what the book said. Susie was laughing about it when we were going through it, "I just can't believe this."

High School/Mimir/Theater

- I: When you got to high school did your view of life in La Grande change in some ways?
- ES: I just went on to a higher grade in the next building. I think life became, more active. I remember about two or three of the plays I was in; mostly I was interested in preparing, building and painting the stage pieces.
- I: When did you graduate from La Grande High School?
- ES: 1926.
- I: Do you remember any of the plays, the names of the plays?
- ES: Oh heavens! I'd have to go back and get the old *Mimirs* out to do that.
- I: I ask that because a number of years ago many of the high school plays that were put on, were pretty light, trivial, meant to be comic.
- ES: Oh, most of these were, too.
- I: Tell me about your work with the *Mimir*.

ES: Marge Warnick and I did all of the artwork in our *Mimir*. Getting the letters together and the design around the pictures. (Her dad was the sheriff here and they lived in the house just beyond where the Bateys lived on 6th.) Our *Mimirs* were always published on the last day of school. When we got them, we went around and had everybody autograph or write something in the back.

I: What's your memory of how it happened to be called the *Mimir*?

ES: I don't know, never questioned it.

I: It's a strange word, isn't it.

ES: Yes, but I don't know where the *Mimir* came from now that you mention it. I just accepted it.

I: Do you still have your copies?

ES: I have all four.

I: I'll bet there're some photographs in there that would be of interest to others.

ES: There probably are. You say you've seen them?

I: I've seen some from a later period in the '40s.

ES: Let me go get them. It won't take me long. I'll bring them up.

I: I'd like to hear more about activities at the high school. You said you were interested in set production.

ES: Yes.

I: And you worked on the *Mimir* staff. Was that just one year or several years?

ES: Probably my junior and senior year I was working on the *Mimir* staff. All through high school I was involved with the drama department. I was never interested in participating in the drama, I think I had a part one time, but I was much more interested in what was going on backstage and helping with costuming and that type of thing. We made all of our costumes.

Those of us who were in the home Ec department did all of the work for the awards' banquets at the end of the school year, and for the different sports events.

I: About the *Mimir*, how much time did you spend putting out a *Mimir* during the year and when did you do the work?

ES: After school for an hour or two, or we would go early in the morning sometimes. We would have one of the teachers kind of oversee us, like an advisor. We kind of worked on it practically all year long, collecting pictures and such.

I: Even with an advisor did students have considerable involvement in making decisions?

ES: Oh definitely. It always went very smoothly as far as I remember.

I: How did you learn how to do it? Just by the experience?

ES: Natural, I guess, by instinct.

I: Was there any sort of master plan that you were working from?

ES: No. We had the pictures of the seniors and every senior had a story. Each school department had a section in the book, and we had odds and ends of pictures in the back.

I: Didn't someone have to go around to all the businesses in town to get advertising?

ES: I never got involved with that.

I: Were you involved with the layout?

ES: That's what Marge and I did, the layout -- putting the pictures where they belonged.

I: Was this a paste-up operation?

ES: Yes, quite a bit of it. I don't remember who published it. I don't know whether that's in the front of the *Mimir* or not.

I: It doesn't seem to have a credit line here for the publisher.

ES: We didn't give people credits in those days.

I: How much did it cost, would it correspond now to ten dollars?

ES: Oh, I wish I could tell you that, but I don't know.

I: I was wondering whether some students might not have had enough money to buy a copy?

ES: A few students were never interested in buying one. I don't know whether they could afford it or not. I never felt "they have a lot more money than I do" or "they don't have as much money as I do." I was never conscious of that.

Class Distinction in La Grande

I: You bring up the word class again. I think you said that from a fairly early age you were aware that business people, railroad and mill workers were in separate classes.

ES: Definitely.

I: Tell me how you became aware of that and what the effect was.

ES: You felt it. I was amazed when I came back after being away that railroaders belonged to the country club. No way would they have ever been invited to the country club when I was growing up.

I: Suppose one had wanted to join, what would've happened?

ES: I have no idea. When I was growing up, the original country club had a big swimming pool and was up where the weigh station is now as you come down from Perry.

PineCone Swimming Pool at Perry

I: Pinecone?

ES: Yes, the Pinecone swimming pool. The country club was on the hill across from the Pinecone swimming pool.

I: I think you can still see the foundation of one of the buildings. Did you go up there at all?

ES: No, I was a railroader brat. I wouldn't have been invited.

I: This country club, do you think that the members were exclusively from the business and professional groups?

ES: Yes, definitely.

I: Did your father ever say anything about wishing he could be included?

ES: No, Dad was a down to earth man. He was a hunter and a fisherman -- he was a real he-man

I: What about this class difference thing?
ES: There was a class difference; you just accepted it.

I: Were you aware of it partly because of the way people dressed, the men particularly?
ES: It was the attitude of the people.

I: I'm curious how could you detect that?
ES: It was like some of the women who played bridge and were high society; the way they would talk to Mother and all. It just felt different.

I: A little bit condescending perhaps?
ES: A little bit, yes. My mother was a fantastic woman. She was sweet and darling as they come. Now the railroad women, wives of the engineers, had their own little meetings. I think they were called the GAR. They and the neighborhood club women were entirely in two different worlds. The neighborhood club was there on the corner of 'N' Avenue and Sixth.

I: Didn't most of the businessmen wear suits, white shirts and ties, shoes shinned?
ES: Yes, definitely.

I: I suppose the only railroad men who did that were the executives.
ES: The executives always were in suits.

I: Were the railroad executives part of the other class?
ES: Definitely. Dad wore the bib-overalls, the blue and white stripes that were just spotless and starched stiff. Dad was always so clean; a lot of the railroaders, especially the engineers took pride in the way they looked. Nowadays, I just cringe when I see these men. They look just awful.

I: Do you believe that this class divide between railroad, mill workers, and business and professional people, was simply accepted by everyone without resentment?
ES: It just seemed to be kind of a normal thing. No one seemed to question it at all.

I: You didn't ever detect jealousy on one side or the other?
ES: No, it was just life in a small town.

- I: Probably like life in many other small towns. I don't think that La Grande was unique in that way.
- ES: No, I don't think so either. The business people and their families were always maybe dressed a little better and lived in a little better neighborhood.
- I: Where did farmers and ranchers fit into this social class scene?
- ES: Isn't that strange, I have no idea. I think they were out in the granges. Even though they came into town to shop a lot, but they weren't part of the urban community.
- I: People in Cove and Elgin, were they completely separate?
- ES: They lived their own life out there.
- I: Did you ever visit any of those places when you were in your teens?
- ES: No because I didn't know anybody out there was no reason to drive out to Elgin or Cove.
- I: But all the teenagers went to high schools in those towns.
- ES: I don't remember going to Cove or Elgin for basketball games. We went to Baker, a time or two and to Pendleton.
- I: Others have told me that it was primarily the cheerleaders that traveled with the teams.
- ES: That I don't know because I was never a cheerleader. I was thinking as we were talking, when I was growing up here in the school there were really three distinct groups in town. It was a very thriving community, but the mill workers had their own life, the railroaders had their own life, and the business and professional people had their own life. It was just like three different groups that were living here in town.
- I: Didn't they meet for social reasons?
- ES: No, they didn't intertwine at all

Town living for rural families

ES: A few of the farmers wanted their children to come into our high school in La Grande. The mothers would move in into an apartment during the school year with their kids. When school was over they'd all move back out to their farms. Did you know Wilma Gaskell Hiatt? Wilma's two girls always came to high school and she'd move into an apartment or someplace with Sally.

I: Why do you assume they wanted the kids to go to the La Grande High School?

ES: La Grande high school was bigger and I think they felt they were going to get a better education. A lot of times, they couldn't get off the farm in the winter.

Church/Christian Endeavor

I: Tell me about the Christian Church and Christian Endeavors that you were involved in. You also mentioned teaching Sunday School. Did you start doing that when you were in high school?

ES: I think I was only a freshman in high school or maybe an eighth-grader. I had no more business teaching a Sunday School class than anything. I think I just played with the kids to keep them quiet while the parents were in church. What it amounted to was a baby-sitting job.

I: How did you have exposure to Christian theology?

ES: I went along with Mother. I was involved with the Sunday School class and the Christian Endeavors. It was a group that I was in. As far as diagnosing religion, that never entered my mind. I never thought about comparing it with the Episcopalians or the Catholics or anybody else. It's just where I went on Sundays with Mother since Dad was away most of the time. I didn't ever analyze those things, I was more interested in what I'm going to do tomorrow, if I'm going to a birthday party, or if I'm going to have a new dress made or something like that.

I: But you were considered to be a trusted member of the church?

ES: Oh, definitely. The women would have potluck dinners. I remember they would be over at my Mother's house, making homemade noodles out in the kitchen. The kitchen was full of homemade noodles and chicken, for the potluck dinner in the basement of the church when it was on Penn Avenue.

The Church was strange, you came up to the corner of Penn and Seventh to get into it. You could walk up the steps on Penn or you could walk up the steps on Seventh to get into the church.

- I: Where was the old Christian church?
- ES: There was a wooden building, on the corner of Seventh and Penn which was torn down. The church elders decided they needed a new church so they built a big brick building three blocks further west up the hill.
- I: Aside from your ‘babysitting kids in Sunday School’, were you ever called upon to serve in any conspicuous way in the church?
- ES: Just for the Christian Endeavor.
- I: What did you think the words “Christian Endeavor” meant?
- ES: I never questioned it. It was just young people getting together endeavoring to do something right as Christians, I suppose.
- I: Endeavor usually means try hard to do something.
- ES: I think what it was, was young people trying to do the right thing, to live a good life. There were no drugs in my generation, and there were very few of us who even smoked cigarettes. Alcohol wasn’t really available and the kids I hung around with were not interested in such things.
- I: What about all the saloons in town?
- ES: Just men went to there and to the smoke shops, where they sold cigars and cigarettes, and played pool in the back room.
- I: Were you aware that the boys your age might not be living such a pure life?
- ES: Once in a while you’d hear something and you wouldn’t pay any attention to it. Maybe it was going on, but we didn’t have the problems they’re having in the schools now. I feel a lot of these problems have happened because the family circle has completely broken down.
- I: That’s certainly true of many...in many cases.

Ceremonies/Graduation

- I: Tell me about your high school graduation ceremony.
- ES: We didn’t have all night parties like now. The ceremony was in the high school and all of the girls were in white dresses. We didn’t wear caps and gowns or anything. We walked across the stage and were given our diplomas and that was it. There were some speeches but I don’t think any of us paid any attention to them. I don’t even remember who were the outstanding seniors in my class. I can look in my *Mimir*.

- I: I imagine you did rather well in high school as far as grades were concerned.
- ES: Average, I was too busy playing, doing other things than classes: helping with the *Mimir*, helping on the background sets for plays and anything that was going on. We always decorated the gym when we had special dinners. I always was involved in helping with the decorations. So school was just kind of something I had to do.

U of O/Architecture

- I: Was it important for everyone who was fairly bright to prepare to go to college?
- ES: I had decided I didn't want to go to college so I went to the business school here in La Grande.
- I: What kinds of courses were they offering in the business school -- typing, shorthand and bookkeeping?
- ES: Typing, shorthand and bookkeeping. I loved bookkeeping and the shorthand was fun because it was drawing things.
- I: Do you think these classes were taught by people who had been in business themselves?
- ES: No, they were real teachers and I have no idea where they came from. They were business people that came in here to open a business school and they had had the training.
- I: When did you decide to go to college?
- ES: I had had no desire to go to college. After four years of high school I had no idea what I was going to do. I knew I wanted to do something along the art line. Old Anthony encouraged me to go on with music, but that was for the birds. Miss Clark was my art teacher and she encouraged me so much in my artwork. I was kind of torn there. I wasn't sure what I was going to do.
- A couple of my friends -- we were real close friends -- Marge Condit and Elmer Cleaver, they had gone on to college and when they came home I thought, "I'm missing something." So I got my grades all together and went down to the University of Oregon after I had gone to business school for a year.
- I: What do you think you were missing?

ES: It just looked to me like they were having a lot of fun and I was missing out of some experiences. So I talked the folks in to it. I said, "I think I've decided I want to go to college." I went down to the University of Oregon and decided I was going to become an architect.

They had a wonderful architecture department. When I registered for my freshman year I told the advisor that I wanted to be an architect. I signed up all the art classes I wanted, English, history and I've forgotten what else. I also went into a sorority that was fun. When I went back the next year to register my advisor put down Education as my major. I said, "What's that for?" He said, "You're going to be a teacher, aren't you?" I said, "That's the last thing in the world I want to be is a teacher. I'm headed for architecture." "Oh," he said, "that's a five-year course and no woman wants to go to college for five years. We have started you towards a teacher." I was mad as a wet hen. I did finish the second year at University of Oregon, but I dropped out at the end.

I went on to art school in Portland, but I never got a degree. I felt it was because of that first person that registered me at college, deciding no woman wanted to go to college for five years and be an architect. Unfortunately for me, that was discrimination, the difference between men and women.

I: Did you feel that it was the prevailing attitude, at least held by men?

ES: It was in those days, definitely. It all changed with World War II when women started spreading their wings.

I: Do you think if you'd protested and said, "That's your opinion, but I think I will go to school for five years", would he have allowed it?

ES: Probably, and I would've ended up going the full five years because some of the classes I should've been taking that first year I didn't. It was just like that first year was lost.

I: You could've done it, though.

ES: Yes, but I didn't want to. I was mad. I went to art school in Portland for a year.

Met and married Husband in LG

I: Did you meet your future husband here in Union County?

ES: Here in La Grande. I was home after I had dropped out of school and was working at a dress shop. My good friend Vera Batey who became Vera Hedrick was the bookkeeper for the butane gas business owned by Standard Oil that was coming to La Grande. Bob had been sent up to La Grande from San Francisco to finish a contract that someone else walked out on. The company panicked because

the job had to be finished by a certain date; we were having one of those real bad winters when the ground was frozen about twenty-four inches down and the job was finished. A man in San Francisco asked Bob if he thought he could handle it and get it done. He said of course he could, so he came on up.

Vera at that time was the bookkeeper and secretary for the outfit here on the corner of the Sac Annex. Bob happen to say to Vera, "I need a date." She said, "I know just the gal. I can show you how you can meet her." He said, "I've got some presents to wrap to send to my mom." Vera said, "Take them down there and Edith will wrap them for you and you can look her over." So Bob brought his boxes down, I wrapped them for him and we had a New Years' date. Six months later we were married.

I: When you married how long did you stay in La Grande?

ES: We were here just a short time and then Bob was transferred to Portland, then to Shelton, Washington, and then we bought the plant in Anacortes, Washington. Since the people that were on the board were driving Bob crazy, he had a chance to take a real good job in Tacoma so then we moved to Tacoma. From Tacoma he was transferred to Seattle. From Seattle we moved back down to Portland.

These were advancements all along the line. In Portland, the sales manager from the Honolulu Gas Company had heard about Bob and talked to him. Bob first turned the job down but after they insisted, Bob took the job and we moved to Honolulu, where he became the sales manager of the Honolulu Gas Company. He worked himself up to first vice-president and then managing director of the Pacific Coast Gas Association (covering the seven western states). We moved to San Francisco next and that's where we were when he retired from the Gas Association.

That was fun job; Bob had to arrange monthly conferences for different departments of the gas company; once a year it was a big convention. The board asked me to go with Bob to entertain the wives who accompanied their husbands; that was a lot of fun. He was in that position for eighteen years. When he retired, my mother became very ill and passed away. Dad was still living in the house that I'd grown up in and we were concerned that he was alone. We decided that as long as Bob was retired, we would move back to take care of Dad. Bob knew La Grande because this is where I'd met him. Also, we use to come up every summer with our girls to visit the family.

Laying Pipe for Gas – Butane then Propane

I: Let's go a little, tell me what's the difference between butane and propane.

ES: I'm not sure. Butane was brought in, in big tanks which were hooked up to underground pipes.. Butane was used cooking, heating, and hot water.

I: What were Bib's responsibilities when he first came to La Grande?

ES: He had to finish that project of laying the pipes in that frozen ground.

I: Was this the first installation of gas service in La Grande?

ES: Yes, in 1929 and '30.

I: Were these pipes buried two or three feet, do you think?

ES: I think they were close to twenty inches down.

I: Where did the pipe system start?

ES: These huge butane tanks were out off of Cove Avenue; they were filled by the railroad cars. The tanks were attached to all of the pipes in La Grande. Natural gas came in afterwards, so they didn't need the storage tanks anymore.

I: Did you witness any of the installation of the pipes?

ES: Oh, I saw it all over town.

I: Were these mechanical diggers?

ES: Most of it was hand dug; there was no heavy machinery, just a pick and shovel. It was during the Depression in 1929. It was a very severe winter, about twenty below zero. When Bob took over the contract, they were just getting ready to dig the ditches. There were a lot of people looking for work, and wages were low. Bob convinced the company if he could pay five or ten cents more an hour, he could get a lot of help. Boy, they worked their tails off.

I: Were they mostly local men?

ES: Mostly local men who had left other menial jobs to work for the gas company which paid a little bit more.

I: Were they going down the middle of the streets or over to the side?

ES: They were mostly on the side parking strips.

I: How far had they reached at that time; did they go up as far as Oak Street?

ES: I was trying to think how far they went. I know they went up our street because we had gas in our house. I think the lines went up maybe to the end of Spring Street where the Stange Mansion is. Above that was all open area. I've forgotten how much of downtown La Grande was well laid out with pipes.

- I: What was your experience with the quality of the heat you could get from the butane gas?
- ES: At that time, we didn't have butane gas at the house because Dad had oil. We used to have coal and then Dad went to oil. Years later Dad had gas put in. It was the same as oil or coal. It's just like I have now with natural gas.
- I: Was it as good as natural gas?
- ES: Definitely.
- I: What was the name of the company that your husband worked for?
- ES: Natural Gas.

Music at the Theater – Liberty – Stage Shows

- I: When you were growing up, did you go out dancing or to the movie theaters in La Grande?
- ES: At that time we went to the old Zuber Hall to dance. Bob and I loved to dance to the 'kiss waltz'; I don't know if anybody even knows it anymore. Every time Bob and I'd go into the dance hall, it didn't make any difference what the orchestra was playing, they'd go into the 'kiss waltz' for us.
- I: Of course you had to kiss when they played the waltz.
- ES: It was fun. Then Jack Wright came to manage the theatres. The Liberty Theater was clear down on Adams; it had the most wonderful pipe organ in it and Jack Wright could play anything on that pipe organ.
- After the movie ended, Bob and I'd stayed and listened to Jack play the organ. Even though it was still Prohibition, Bob and Jack knew where to get some liquor. We'd have drinks and sit down there in the front row to listen to Jack play the pipe organ for us. Some of my friends knew what we were doing and they started coming to the theater as well. There would be all sorts of couples enjoying the organ. We might be there maybe an hour after the show closed and Jack would still be playing. He'd even play the Bumblebee on the organ.
- I: By the way, while we're talking about the Liberty, there were stage shows there periodically, weren't there?
- ES: No, the stage shows used to be in the opera house building called Stewart's.

I: Did you ever see any stage shows?

ES: I don't remember seeing any stage shows in La Grande. The ones that I saw were in Portland. When I was at the University of Oregon, some of the men I was dating would go to Portland to some of the stage shows.

Bob Dies and Edith Begins to Travel

I: What did you do in La Grande when you came back in the early 1970's?

ES: We bought the house on May Day in '73. We had only been in the house a short time when we discovered that Bob had cancer. I lost him seven years before I lost my dad.

When Dad was gone one of my friends in Olympia called and she said, "I'm going on a trip to China and I need a roommate. Why don't you go with me?" I said, "That's a wonderful idea!" So we went all through China. I guess that first trip gave me my gypsy feet again. From then on I did a lot of overseas traveling with a sorority sister that still lives in Pendleton, Berl Grilly. I've gone to many countries with her -- Kenya, Israel, and Cairo. Jean Cuthbert and her daughter and I went to France and Germany. I took my girls to Austria to see the passion play. There, we left the group and visited a relative of ours in Germany. When I got back here to La Grande, I got involved with hospital.

Elderhostel/Rafting

My friend Berl and I have done several Elderhostel programs including two float trips. The first float trip was on the Grande Ronde River and we've done two on the Rogue..

I: Tell me all you can remember about the float trip on the Grande Ronde River.

ES: It was delightful! We put in at Minam and came out at Troy. The river was not too difficult and it was fun. Most of the people interested in Elderhostel, are retired teachers or people that are still interested in learning new things. On that trip there was a young student, a senior I think at Whitman. He adored rocks and knew every rock by its first name. He would talk to us at evening about all the rock formations. Then there was a man who knew every wildflower by its first name. Since the trip was in the spring, the wildflowers were in bloom and he was so fascinating. Also there was a man on the trip who was the one who created the recipe for Smith's Swiss chocolate.

The two Rogue River trips that we did, we did on our own because we loved the Rogue. There were some young people from the Midwest on that trip and they came over to us and said, "We know we shouldn't ask you this, but we are so

interested in how old you two are.” Berl said, “Well, that’s no question at all, we’re octogenarians.” “Oh.” Berl laughed and said, “I bet they went and looked that word up a dictionary.”

On our second trip, Berl and I were standing there looking at the Rogue River waiting for dinner. Berl had talked me into going again. I said, “I’m tired of sleeping on the ground.” She said, “We’re going to stay in cottages this time.”

Volunteering – Hospital Women’s Auxiliary/Sewing

I: What else have you done in the last twenty-five or so years in Union County?

ES: Mostly activity up at the hospital, I was president of the Hospital Auxiliary volunteer group in ’76 and ’77.

At that time they were asking the members of the Auxiliary to sit in the board meetings so whatever the board was discussing, the auxiliary would know about. The year I was president they said, “Edith, we don’t want all these women coming in, we want you as President of the Auxiliary to join the board.” I joined and was on the hospital board for several years. Then they asked me to be on the hospital foundation board and I was on it for several years. I thought twenty years was enough volunteer time at the hospital.

I: What satisfaction did you get by being a volunteer and on the board? Was there anything else you did in the service line at the hospital?

ES: One day I went into where the nurses were and these things were lying about. I asked, “Ima Bristo, what are these?” She said, “Those are the falsies that we give to the women after they’ve had mastectomies.” I said, “That’s the damnedest looking thing I’ve ever seen.” At that time I had a very close friend that was going through a mastectomy. So I came home, designed and made a new design and took it up to Ima. The Red Cross was paying five dollars a piece for those falsies. I said, “What do you think about this?” She said, “Those are wonderful.” I said, “Well, forget those other things.” I made them in three sizes, large, medium and small. The hospital auxiliary bought the material, but I made them all. I kept them supplied for many years. I think when I turned it over since one of my eyes started to fail, I counted up that I’d made close to a hundred and fifty of them.

I: Did they call you the Falsie Lady?

ES: The Falsie Lady, yes; they’d call me and say, “Hey, we’re short.”

I had another project, the puppets that I made up with Veda Fallows who started the project. We gave the cute little hand puppets to children who were patients in the hospital. They had the little clown head and faces. I made hats and the

bodies, too. Veda would always assemble them. They haven't done them since I've finished the last ones.

Eastern Star

I: Tell me about what clubs you belonged to other than the Hospital Auxiliary.

ES: When I was eighteen I was initiated into the Eastern Star. Mother was not active, but my Auntie was very active in Eastern Star. Dad had become a Mason and went on and belonged to the Shriners. My Uncle Pete Beaver played in the Al Keda Band with the Shriners in Portland. Auntie and Uncle Pete would go often with the Shriners, when he was in the band with his clarinet.

I: What was your understanding of the purpose of Eastern Star?

ES: Just something to belong to at the time. They had officers and one year I was one of the points of the star in the ceremony. Women belonged to groups like that; in those days, it was their social activity. Women are not interested in activities like that much anymore except like our PEO group that I was invited to join here.

I: What would go on at a typical Eastern Star meeting?

ES: They'd have this regular program where they had the ceremony, and then there was generally a social hour afterwards.

I: Can you tell me what the ceremony consisted of?

ES: No, it's secret. Each star point has a station and there are words that go with the ceremony.

I: Is the ceremony supposed to bring you together in some sort of beliefs?

ES: It's a part of the Masonic order that is another organization that Dad was in. It was an opportunity for women to express themselves and to get out away from their homes. Women were not working women in those days. I can remember in college when the gals were juniors or seniors, and if they weren't engaged or had wedding plans, they were scared to death. They thought they were going to be old maids. Marriage was the future for women in those days; very few women worked.

I: Apparently when you got married and left La Grande you didn't continue with the Eastern Star?

ES: No. I'm a life member because Mother always gave me my dues as a birthday present; she kept me paid up. After fifty years you become a life member, you don't have to pay dues anymore. I've been a member for over seventy-five years. Catherine Meran and I were initiated at the same time.

I: You give me the impression that a number of women join at least partly so they could get out of the house. Was it also so they could maybe dress up and catch up on gossip and have a party?

ES: I think it was a lot of that and visiting together. Men joined the Eastern Star, too, but there weren't too many men that came to meetings. It was a social club type of thing. The building on the corner of 'N' and Sixth, on the southwest corner that has the porch on the front, that was the men's clubhouse. It had been moved up from the train yards.

The Ranch

I: Tell me about the ranch.

ES: We would go up to the ranch when Bob was with us for a week on his vacation. I'd stay there a week or two more with the girls. We lived in cities and it was fun for the girls to have an experience out in the country. The ranch was at the end of Pocahontas Road out of Baker about eight miles.

I: That's the ranch that belonged to your family?

ES: That's where my dad grew up. We never stayed in La Grande because the house down here was too small. The kids just loved it up there running up around on the ranch. It was a wonderful experience for them. I can remember they'd go down when Uncle Frank milked the cows. Susie said, "I can't wait to tell my friends about milking the cows and all." And Marcia said, "Don't bother, they think it all comes in a bottle." They wouldn't believe her.

Being in the Hospital

I: In your earlier years do you remember any experiences with any sort of medical care?

ES: No, I never was sick.

I: Did you accompany anybody to the hospital to see a doctor, or visit anybody in the old Grande Ronde Hospital?

ES: Marcia was born in the old hospital, and Jimmy Haun delivered her. I was there for two days.

I: Two days?

ES: Jerry was very modern. She was delivered early in the morning and I went home the next day down to Mom and Dad's. I think she was only six days old when I had her downtown in a buggy.

I: That's not unusual for today, but it was for then. I think it was customary at that time to stay in the hospital for at least a week.

ES: Yes, so many women here thought we'd lost our mind. Jimmy was brand new in town and he had all these modern ideas. Mother couldn't believe it either.

I: What did the inside of that hospital look like, at least the parts you saw?

ES: Just sterile. I don't remember any details particularly; there weren't any pictures around. It was pretty bare and everything was white. There were iron beds. I was in a private room. It had steam heat from the radiators and electric lights.