

Edwin Hug

10/4/03, T1, S1

ES: You were born in 1936. Was it in Elgin?

EH: In La Grande.

ES: In La Grande. At the Grande Ronde Hospital or St. Joseph's?

EH: Yes. Grande Ronde Hospital ___ was the doctor.

ES: I'm not incorrect in thinking you have a twin brother?

EH: Yeah. But supposedly, according to the doctor, we were identical twins, but we were not because ___ the same ___ but we don't look anything alike...

ES: ___

EH: So it's pretty obvious that we're not. But back then I guess they weren't quite as sure about that.

ES: At the time, where were you living in Elgin? Or where was your family living, I should say?

EH: On the home place there in Elgin ___ on your way to Wallowa.

ES: And, briefly, what's the history of that house?

EH: That house my dad ___ about the time my youngest sister was a baby or shortly afterward. So that would've been ___. That would've been about '33, '34 ___ we moved there.

ES: From where?

EH: We had a house in Elgin where Walter ___ lives ___ school ___ house one block off the main road and the second block down ___.

ES: If he was a farmer why did he live in town?

EH: He... At that time, as I understand it, he still farmed ___ his dad. He moved to town he all sold it to ___. I think that was when he found ___ I really don't know a lot about that. I've read ___.

ES: What was your father's name?

EH: My father's name was Walter. He had ___ brothers with him.

ES: ___ 100 years ___.

EH: Yeah.

ES: ___

EH: Right. Our middle names were named after our two granddads. ___ after Walter F. Fritoline ___

ES: Fritoline? That's f-r-i-t-o-l-i-n-e?

EH: Yeah.

ES: That must be a ___

EH: Yeah.

ES: Back to you and your early years. You first went to school in Elgin?

EH: Yes. Before... The year before we started – or maybe it was two years – my mother and one of the neighbors wanted to get us started early. Kindergarten was no such thing, but we had some lady _____

ES: Sort of pre-school?

EH: Yes.

ES: Home pre-school?

EH: Home pre-school. Some of the... Some of the schools, I guess, had been trying ___ us kids we liked to do something different ___ but I don't remember an awful lot about it. It didn't last too long.

ES: But at that time...well, still there's only one elementary school, but it's not the same school that's there now.

EH: No. The school burned when I was third grade.

ES: That was the old high school building.

EH: That was the old...

ES: That's an elementary...

EH: Elementary and high school both, same building ____. It took a couple years... About that time ___ was outlined ___ several of the old schoolhouses ___ still there. ___

ES: My memories of the place where I lived at a comparable age are still pretty vivid. Are yours, about the town of Elgin itself?

EH: Yes, although we didn't spend an awful lot of time in town other than going from across the bridge down the road to school and back, sometimes we'd ___ through town. ___ highway ___. Yeah, we... It's changed quite a bit. New housing...

ES: What about the main business district?

EH: Very much the same except it had several fires. ___ the school that burned ___ all burned. That was when the schoolhouse burned. Of course _____

ES: I know that there were several fires in Elgin. Do you think the cause was primarily faulty wiring?

EH: I don't know. From my understanding from what people said the schoolhouse probably burned from ____. The other one that burned across from the post office, that part of the lot there, I think they figured that possibly caused it. Also, there was some talk that the elevator burned before that and that possibly ___

ES: Do you remember the excitement of the fire?

EH: Oh yeah! Oh yeah. Yeah, I remember sitting up on the hill here not too far from where we are right now, ___ around and I don't...

ES: How did people react to the fire _____?

EH: You know, at that age ___ fire I really was not involved ___ because...

ES: ___ talk about it?

EH: They probably did and ___ and that type of thing.

ES: How did it feel to you living in Elgin when you knew there was a bigger town like La Grande and other smaller towns nearby? Were you curious?

EH: We spent quite a bit of time ___ a lot of time, but we went to La Grande quite frequently. We would drive up... One of the advantages we had on the farm during the war, World War II, we could drive my granddad's Model A and get gas ___ money up into the...

ES: Little container, metal container on a wire.

EH: Right.

ES: Was it powered by a spring?

EH: Right. Pull that thing back and...

- ES: If you've looked at some of the manuscripts, either the typewritten ones or the handwritten ones – maybe you haven't looked at them this closely – but I'm wondering if you could make any inferences about he wrote? Were there lots of crossings out and other evidences that it was perhaps a difficult process to get the writing done?
- EH: I don't think so. I really think that just wrote. I know that my sisters or something, "Oh, you spell that wrong" or want to correct his spelling. He did get my wife went over and read some of his things that he had written and proofread it, if you want, or... And I was never as interested in that has my wife. She was very interested in some of that stuff so she would read...when I was goin' to summer school she'd go over some of the stuff. He would visit with her quite frequently.
- ES: Did she report any of his comments to her about his writing or how he did it?
- EH: I don't think she... I don't remember saying anything about it. No, I really couldn't put that judgment on it. I do know that his typing he had a lot of type-o's writing on the typewriter. I don't other than that.
- ES: Were you aware of many false starts or do you think he saved anything that he wrote?
- EH: I really... I really don't know on that. But I don't think there was too many false starts because especially when he was gathering history because he was putting it down. He may never have used it. It may have been the sheaf of papers that he had in a file cabinet someplace he may not have used it. As far as starting writing and then redoing I really... He did that after all of us kids were out of the house and so we weren't, you know, we weren't subjected to that much. I don't know __ middle son might have some idea because he lived with them at the farmhouse when Dad was writing at that time so he might have...
- ES: Was your father a photographer or collector of photographs?
- EH: Yes, he was. Yes, he was. He really liked photography. He got a... His first camera his granddad bought it for him to on a trip back East in 1912, '13, '14, whatever it was. They were quite new at the time. And then he... I remember he always had a camera, a 620 or 120 or whatever it was. He used that for ages until he... That's the only one I really remember him using until he got his 35mm right after the war.
- ES: Are you aware of evidence that suggests that he was trying to photograph things that had historic value?
- EH: No. I just...things he would take would be probably they were, but it was the countryside, houses. He did, I guess, probably...because he would take some of the pictures some of the old schoolhouses or something like that.
- ES: Are all those photographs in the collection?
- EH: I really can't say. They're in some of the books someplace. I don't... I don't know whether you've seen any of the family albums that he's made with pictures of different things, some of 'em ____. In the earlier years he was involved with a lot of agricultural improvements so he traveled with that, but that was before my time.
- ES: Photographing?

EH: He took pictures, yeah. He took a trip down the Oregon coast. It must've been '28 or '29, right at that time. And pictures I know went over McKenzie Pass and stopped to see someone down at ___ Butte, ___ went on to Corvallis somewhere and then on to the coast. ___ pictures, in that little pictures, see, in the...

ES: Are you aware that in his later years he might have been seen as a kind of consultant, you know, about farming methods or about history?

EH: No. You know, you live with it, it's natural, it's normal, but...

ES: You could tell, perhaps, if people were calling him and asking him for...

EH: People did, but I thought nothing of it. It was...

ES: Yeah, well, it's not whether you thought something of it, it's just was he active as a consultant for groups?

EH: He probably... I know that the...that people did ask him comments and wanted to look at things, but I didn't think anything about it. I suppose he knew a lot of people in the county and around and I suppose that a lot of people felt...come visit because he liked to visit with whoever was around.

ES: Was he involved with any kind of fraternal organization activities?

EH: Yes. He was in with the Masons. He was the Grand whatever it is. He's got his picture on the wall down there. I didn't know at the time, should've, but he was... After the '40s I don't think he was in it much. He was... I was unaware of it if he was. I remember he was in it and would go to lodge and then he stopped. I don't know... I don't know the real reason why, but I can speculate on it. They had a minister that came there ___. I just don't know whether that's...I'm sure it had an effect on it, I don't know. ___ It was back, I'm kind of guessing, but he did...yeah, he was involved in the Grange and ___.

ES: Do you remember his talking about what went on in the Grange?

EH: Not really because I was pretty small when he went to Grange and, of course, the kids all went out and played when they had their meetings. I do know that then went up to high school he still went to Grange and they...it was different...grange of the area of the county ___ state Grange. He was good friend of...I can't think of his name now...Carter, ___ Carter. Carter was a...down at Salem ___ a number of years for the farmers. But Dad ___ appointed county commissioner. I don't know what the circumstances was ___ out and campaign ___ campaigning. But he did go out, people would ask him to come to some meeting ___.

ES: When was he county commissioner? '50s?

EH: Yes. It must've been in the '50s. I don't know just... I don't remember he replaced, someone ___ what happened, but anyway, they appointed him. It came up time he had to be elected...the election came up ___ "You gotta get out and campaign, Dad." "No. If they want me elected they..." I think he was busy doing the other stuff, but he was elected. I don't know whether if they think he didn't campaign. He did go out and talk with someone ___ one of their meetings. He didn't go out and campaign.

ES: Is there an epitaph on his gravestone?

EH: No.

ES: Do you think he might have wanted one, or did that occur to anyone?

EH: I don't think that was something of concern to him.

ES: Suppose somebody had suggested "Union County Historian" placed on his gravestone? Would he have approved of that?

EH: Oh, I think so. I think he would appreciate it.

ES: Can you think of anyone else who better deserves that kind of title?

EH: I really very biased, but probably not. There's two reasons that you don't want to take my opinion on this, I don't read a lot of history, I do read some, but I more so now than I ____ when I was younger.

ES: Often a function of age.

EH: Yes. That's true. But, yes, I think that...

ES: ____

EH: No.

ES: Is he in the Elgin...?

EH: No. He ____ plot up on the hill.

ES: Describe that a little bit. How big is it? How many people there?

EH: There's just Mom and Dad are there so far and ashes of my brother-in-law. But he built...got it approved by the coroner and built the cemetery.

ES: That surprises me. I had not heard that.

EH: Unfortunately, the family has not taken as good of care of it as they might could, you know. But I remember when they...when Mother died and was the first person who was buried there and we wondered where it was and all that. I remember the coroner was...I can't think of his name now ____ Anyway, he was kind of concerned because he'd been out there and looked at it and he said, "All I could remember was there was a lot of rocks around." [laugh] He was...it made him a little nervous, but...and we thought it was just great because it'd been a good number of years before...he'd been out there.

ES: Was this on land he already owned?

EH: Yes.

ES: Why do you think he picked that spot?

EH: Probably... He might've told other people more than me, but probably because it was an area where he grew up and also he thought that it was significant the Indians gathered in this area. I think that was ____ and I think that he wanted...that he wanted a place where all the family members could be buried.

ES: But his parents weren't buried there?

EH: No. They were buried in the cemetery...

ES: Why didn't he think the Elgin Cemetery wasn't good enough...

EH: I don't know. It's got lots down there. He had lots. My brother that died was buried down there. You know, I mean, that's... I don't... It's kind of interesting. I remember as a small kid we used to go to the cemetery and decorate, of course, Granddad was buried there and Great-granddad and his mother, Dad's mother, my grandmother. But, you know, we were out there at Memorial Day and now ____ for people to do and it isn't in our culture as much as it used to be which I think is good and bad.

ES: ____ maybe your father was trying to start a new sort of family tradition?

EH: I think... I think he did. He wanted... He thought... He thought that... He didn't... He didn't... He thought, well, if he was embalmed that's kind of a waste and he just would be natural and go back to the earth. I know that some

say, well, what about...what if you die and you can't be buried within twenty-four hours or whatever the rules are? He said...if it's the wintertime. He said, "Well, if they have to cremate me that'd be alright." I don't remember him talking about it an awful lot. When he built that I was not around.

ES: He built it himself?

EH: Yeah. I think one of his...one of the grandsons, one of my brother's sons, helped haul dirt up and helped dump it out 'cause you have to have dirt, walled it up around some kind of a slope _____. That's what made the coroner a little nervous [laugh]. But I'd have to look. I know I'd have to get the coordinates and all that _____ after Mother died.

ES: What were the dates of their deaths?

EH: Oh boy. I really couldn't tell you the dates right now.

ES: What decade?

EH: I'd have to go back and... My dad died later after the kids were in college. My mother died before that. I'd have to go back and "what car was I driving?" [laughs] to relate. I know when my dad died I hurt my back and my daughter drove me up there. _____ I know that that would've been probably '79.

ES: Do you remember reading obituaries?

EH: _____ I probably did, but I don't remember 'em.

ES: They must've been one in *The Observer*.

EH: I'm sure there was, but living in Portland I may not have seen it. I'm sure that _____.

ES: Do you know of any other Hugs who took an interest in studying and writing history?

EH: His granddad did. I don't know just history, but his granddad had come over from Switzerland and he wrote quite an extensive book that was in old German _____. Then he... That was... That was Granddad Hug...

ES: This one?

EH: Yes. That's _____.

ES: Page 76 of *100 Years of Hugs*. Remarkable, as the little note says here, for penmanship.

EH: Yes. Yes. I remember I'd get the book out and look at that book and he was always amazed at what great penmanship.

ES: Had it been translated?

EH: Some of it has, most of it. The little ___ is a little difficult because the book was not in order, in sequence, ___ bound up, but also it's old German a lot of it, the old script, and I don't think you can translate that now.

ES: Is it mostly, then, about Hug family in Switzerland rather than in Union County?

EH: Yes. Yes. ___, my nephew, has done quite a bit on trying to get it translated _____ he has ___ on CD, but there's still, like I say, _____.

ES: This has...is just circulating within the family?

EH: Yeah. I think I've got a copy _____

ES: If someone were to make an effort to go through your father's writing and perhaps put together some sort of publication that would...gave at least a representative sample of his work what would be your opinion of that?

EH: I think it'd be good. I would have... I can only speak for one of the...

ES: What would you like about it?
EH: I think it would... As you get older you get tuned to history, I guess, ____
ES: It would be possible to do such a thing without having it be solely a tribute to him, although, of course, that would be part of it.
EH: Oh yes.
ES: Perhaps be gone through to try to gather what information of Union County is most likely to be valuable to general readers later.
EH: That's right.
ES: As opposed to just the Hug family members. Something like that might have a wider significance.
EH: ____ if it's just the family...just the family is interested in it a few other people might be parts of it, but if you're going to make it more...something other people are interested in finding out happened it'd be much broader.
ES: Of course it is notable...notable if it's true, the end of the this 100 Years of Hugs he says he knows of no Hug who has been an alcoholic, or has been in prison for any kind of crime and the divorce rate is very low. So I suppose then it might be a tribute to a family that has stuck together, worked hard and was successful.
EH: Yeah. I think that...
ES: I think it's a somewhat unusual family, for the 20th century anyway.
EH: Yeah. I think that... I think a couple of things, one, __ our family there's a dominating czar and kids that get away and there's others where there's no leadership so it has to be leadership with direction and moderation so that they let individuals do their own thing. As kids we were always able to do...try our own thing, which we greatly appreciate now.
ES: But you were also aware of limits.
EH: Oh yes.
ES: You've described him as what I would think to be a fairly benign presence, not one to restrict too much, being interested, but certainly not prying and not pushing.
EH: Yeah. I would say that's probably true. You know, of course being he was forty when I was born, or thereabouts, and so it's probably a little different if...twenty years before that or fifteen or whatever it was.
ES: Of course.
EH: ____ children I know that the first ones are more...you expect more and you want perfection when you realize it really doesn't matter.
ES: And later on you did become a little more relaxed as they grow up.
EH: Yeah. He was... He was more relaxed. But he did get excited about _____. That's rightly so. ____ ...[recording stopped]