

Virginia Fenn

10/4/03, T1, S1

- JT: ...and Ginger, I wonder if you'll tell us where you were born and when you were born?
- VF: I's born in June 5th, 1927, south of La Grande on Bushnell Road.
- JT: And you've lived in La Grande and Union County most of your life except for ten years you were in Huntington?
- VF: Right.
- JT: In growing up, what school did you attend when you started to school?
- VF: I attended Central School, junior high and the high school, all in La Grande.
- JT: All in La Grande. Then you had to walk approximately how far from your house to Central School?
- VF: We lived about two-and-a-half miles to Central School.
- JT: And that was walking in snow in winter and there were some pretty deep snows.
- VF: Oh yeah. We always walked where it was the deepest, you know. [laugh]
- JT: Is there anything when you going to grade school that you remember that were outstanding?
- VF: No. We used to play baseball quite a bit, which I enjoyed. I fell and skinned my knee one year and it took probably three months for it to heal up. And then I can remember pushin' the Hule twin, Kathleen and Elaine Hule, at school. I used to come over to the school and we'd push them in the swing. And then I can remember one year we was studyin' Japan and we painted some sheep, like a Japanese fleg, and we took them out on the lawn in front of the school there and let them dry. It was lots of fun.
- JT: Do you remember about what year that was?
- VF: No. I think I was in about the third grade.
- JT: So that was long before the war?
- VF: Yeah.
- JT: Now, how many brothers and sisters did you have?
- VF: I have four brothers and two sisters.
- JT: And where did you fit into the family?
- VF: I was about in the middle.
- JT: And was that an advantage or a disadvantage?
- VF: Come to think of it now, I think it was probably an advantage. I got bigger brothers and sisters to tell me what to do and then little ones that I got to tell what to do. [laugh]
- JT: Is there any particular things that you liked in grade school? Classes? Things you liked to study?
- VF: I enjoyed all of them. I don't think I was very good in English, but I always enjoyed Math. I enjoyed going to school. I don't know whether it was just because we lived out and didn't have all this modern stuff, but it was something to go to.
- JT: The fact that you lived so far from school, two-and-a-half miles, was that a disadvantage in participating in class activities or after school programs?

VF: Not when I got in high school when I did that 'cause I took after-school sports. You walked... You got home maybe a little bit later than if you got out at 3:30, but you get home probably about the same time.

JT: Now living here on the hill did you have chores to do? And what were they?

VF: Yeah. We had chickens and cows and pigs. We had to help with the chores and then we had garden that we had to do. And then we...in the fall we always picked apples – we had about twenty-one trees that had apples on – and we made lots of cider, which was lots of fun. We helped the folks when they were...

JT: Did many other kids from what you might say town come up here because at that time it was quite a distance from what you might say the city limits was to where you lived?

VF: There were some that would come up, some of our friends. Pat Connard, she lived down about a mile or two from us and she would come home with me. Then when my older brothers there was boys come home with them. We had a few. We did have neighbors that had children when we was growin' up.

JT: And what kinds of games did you play with people when they came up to your house?

VF: We played outside mostly, hiked around and played some baseball and wrestled. [laugh]

JT: There weren't any sidewalks or paved streets or anything like that.

VF: No. When it got muddy you usually had to wear rubbers or get your shoes dirty. We usually wore our rubbers down to about your place and ditch them somewhere in some of those bushes along the way and then pick them up when we came home.

JT: Then when you got into high school I know that you were a majorette. Was it difficult to come into night games and things that they...activities that they had to perform at?

VF: No. In the winter months if it was bad weather we stayed in town with Regan. We worked at their...they had a restaurant and we worked there.

JT: What was the name of the restaurant?

VF: Regan's Café. It was on Adams in that building that's new there now. They...

JT: Used to call it the Phoenix Building?

VF: Uh-huh. There used to be a pool hall and barber shop. We stayed with them. My sister and I would work after we got off of school and then in the mornings whenever we got up we'd work for our stayin' there at night and that we'd have deals. Otherwise, my older brother durin' the war he took us...he could drive so he took us to school and some of the deals. Then he went into the service so it was walk around. [laugh]

JT: Did you go to many movies during that time?

VF: The first one I can remember was when I was in the first grade and I was so shy I had to have my sister go with me. The whole class went. It was Alice in Wonderland. Then I think we went to several of the Christmas shows that they had. I remember Old Man of Barnio...I don't know. It was a scary one for me. Really, I don't think we went probably to over a dozen shows when we was young.

JT: These were Depression times and what effect do you think the Depression made on the things that you did and were able to do?

VF: I think it taught us how to save and look at the better side of life. You know, money don't buy everything. It's what you get with your family and friends. You don't have to have something to entertain ya all the time, you can entertain each other.

JT: And if you were poor you didn't know it because everybody else was like you.

VF: Yeah. We'd have... In the winter months once in a while the neighbors would have a party, I guess you'd call it, and we'd go to somebody's house and there was... My dad played the guitar and Grandpa Smith played the violin and his daughter played the accordion and it seems like somebody else...when my uncle came he played the banjo. They would sing and dance and visit. That was our entertainment in those days.

JT: Would they have it like a potluck?

VF: Yeah. They usually had sandwich, they had boughten bread – which we didn't have, Mom made all of our bread – so that was quite a treat for us.

JT: Now when you got into high school of course World War II started and did you notice a difference when the war started? What did you feel in the community or what was going on?

VF: I think everyone was behind it. I had a brother that went into Air Force, who was killed after...over in the Pacific, but we was all behind him. I think the majority of the boys in my class were in the service whenever we graduated.

JT: Did you have to assume some of the responsibilities because of people having gone into the service and working at war jobs?

VF: I guess we was...in high school and we did have the job at Regan's. We worked on weekends, which helped them. But I think I was out of high school whenever I went out and did my first job in '45 whenever I started workin' out.

JT: Did the rationing, did that bother you? Was there anything particular you remember about food rationing and shoes and things like that?

VF: Not too much. Sugar was sort of hard to get and gas, of course. My brother would let the car coast down the hill so we wouldn't use any gas...much gas. Then we had to use the gas to come back. But you had to ration it and you learned to take it easy on some of that and didn't run to town every time you needed somethin', in the car anyway.

JT: You made due.

VF: Yep.

JT: Then you started to work after you graduated from high school in 1945.

VF: I guess I had my first job out on a farm. I cooked for a harvest crew. That was in '42 is when I started that. And then that fall... I wasn't quite sixteen yet so I had to wash dishes in the restaurant on weekends. Then when I got to be sixteen I got to work out in front, wait tables of course. It wasn't anything like waitin' tables nowadays.

JT: When did you learn to drive?

VF: After I got married.

O: '47.

VF: On our honeymoon. Ray tried to teach me.

JT: And that was 1947.

VF: Yeah. Bluebird Hill in Idaho, I think, is where he taught me. It took...[laugh]
And ever since then every time we come to someplace that's got lots of curves in
I get to drive. [laughs]

JT: The two years from...you graduated in '45 and you were married in '47...you
worked at the restaurant...

VF: And at Payless.

JT: And at Payless. And Payless was one of the...was the first store in the Payless
chain.

VF: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

JT: How many years did you work for Payless?

VF: On and off I worked about twenty-five years. I quit in '47 and then went back
in...we was in La Grande for one year and I worked part time then. And then
whenever we moved back, I think in '68 I started workin' fulltime.

JT: You raised your family down in Huntington.

VF: First few...nine years, yeah.

JT: How many children did you have?

VF: We have three children, two boys and a girl.

JT: And now you have how many grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

VF: Nine grandchildren and I don't know whether I have five or six great-
grandchildren. [laughs] I think somebody told me that one of Steve's children
had another baby, but I haven't heard yet really.

JT: What did you do in Huntington while you were there besides raising three
children?

VF: That was about all I did.

O: You walked to work. You walked __ plant. Tell him that.

VF: Oh yeah. We walked... The kids and I'd walk out to Lime, which is five miles.

JT: From Huntington.

VF: From Huntington to the lime plant and then ride back with Ray on some days. It
was nice. Of course the traffic wasn't quite as bad as it nowadays.

JT: I can imagine. When you moved back to La Grande then what besides... Did
you go back to Penny's...not Penny's...Payless right away?

VF: No. We moved back in '57 and then we bought some land at Ladd Canyon, a
place, and I went back to work then whenever we bought the place at Ladd
Canyon. Otherwise between '57 and '68 I did mostly take care of the kids and
run the farm up here.

JT: In farming, when you bought the land, what were you raising?

VF: We raised alfalfa and some wheat and one year we took our dairy cows all out
there.

O: We milked thirteen cows.

VF: At that time we had... We started out with one cow when we moved up here and
we ended up with about thirteen that we were milking during that time.

JT: And you sold the cream to the creamery?

VF: Yes. We sold cream and...

JT: Now was that Tyler's creamery or somebody else?

VF: Lee...

JT: Roy Leonard?
VF: Roy Leonard, uh-huh. I think it was called Lee's...Lee's Creamery at that time. It's... Roy, I think, bought it out after that. Then we sold milk and eggs.
JT: About how many acres were you farming?
VF: We had 116 down at Ladd Canyon and 50 up here, 160.
JT: That's quite a lot of land to take care of.
VF: Quite a bit of it's rock so you don't have too much. [laugh] But most of it's pasture land. But out there it was...we farmed.
JT: I know over those years that there's been a couple of times that the fires in this area. What is your thoughts living out here...and there hasn't been too much protection at some times in case of fire.
VF: I went through two forest fires in my lifetime.
JT: The first one...
VF: The first one was in August 17th of...what was it...'39. It went through the back part of the place and clear up on Blanchard place before it got stopped. But it started right down here at the slaughter farm. Then the other 'n' was in August the 19th of '73 and it started at Hilgard and came clear across. We'd just moved into our new house here in the spring, a couple months, and it went over us, but we happened to be lucky enough to live through it.
JT: That's good.
VF: First the federal won't come help you or the state won't come help ya and at that time the rural wouldn't come help either. They come and watch, but they would not bring any of their fire equipment. And I think the first time we had the CC camp at Hilgard and they brought them in and helped put it out.
JT: But you are in the La Grande Rural District...Fire District now?
VF: Yeah.
JT: So that they will come...
VF: Yeah. I guess that's our choice to live outside the city limits, but I enjoy it more than I would inside the city limits.
JT: Do you particularly have any pictures taken in that one in '39?
VF: I don't recall having a camera in those days.
JT: When you were growing up – and I hadn't asked this before – did you listen to the radio much with your family?
VF: That was another thing. We never had a radio until I was probably...I's probably in fifth or sixth grade whenever... My oldest brother had one and he let us have it because he got a new one. We'd listen to... We weren't home during the day very much. On weekends we'd listen to "Ma Perkins" with my mother and a couple other of those shows.
JT: "One Man's Family."
VF: Yeah, I guess that was one of them. "Ma Perkins" was one I can remember, but I know there was a couple...
JT: And "Shadow" and "Creaking Door."
VF: And then we'd listen to some music once in a while. Then, of course, the news. I suppose there was a certain time whenever they had news on. But we didn't even listen to that too much. We weren't in the house. We's too busy doin' somethin' else.

JT: A lot of your entertainment you made and today they seem to have to have money to do everything. They can't... They have no imagination.

VF: No. The kids don't have toys bought to them they think they don't have any toys anymore, you know. They can't get out and we used to get out and play in the dirt and build castles and things like that. I know in the spring we'd go in the pasture here and get an old cow head and set it up with the eyes and all this stuff in it, you know, and then cover it with moss and think it was a castle and all that kind of stuff. We'd spend hours out there playin' on like that. They wouldn't do it nowadays, I don't think.

JT: What did you think about raising your family in a community like La Grande?

VF: I thought it was a nice place to raise 'em. I'm not very fond of big cities. They're probably okay, but... I think they had a better environment here, smaller town. They had plenty to do. Our kids were in 4-H and then in FFA. They played on the basketball teams and football teams. They weren't underprivileged, I didn't think.

JT: It sounds like that was a reasonable thing to do. When you and Ray a little later on got involved in square dancing...

VF: We lived in Huntington at that time and one of his co-workers out at the plant kept a-buggin' him to come play...square dance. We could take all of our kids, which were all small – I think Sonya was about a year-and-a-half or somethin' like that, two years old and then the others. We all took our kids and they set on the sideline and every time we stopped square dancin' then they'd get out and play or else they'd fall asleep and there was a little room they had a bed in they could sleep. But we got to where we really enjoyed it.

JT: So you actually square danced before we started. What year did we start square dancing with you?

VF: Whenever we came back in '57 we didn't square dance until '75, I think, we started back. And you guys started in '76 or '7, or somewhere around there. When we had it down at the Eagles?

JT: Uh-huh.

VF: So we'd been back in a couple of years whenever you guys started back.

JT: It was a great bunch of people. You'd go and square dance, have a potluck. A wonderful bunch of people.

VF: Yeah. And then we all went for a long time to all the other clubs around here, too. Did you go to Penticton with us in Canada?

JT: No. We went to Klamath Falls with you to the state convection.

VF: That was fun. It seems like we went to two of the different state...

JT: We went to the Dry Dock dance down in Portland.

O: Oh, that's right, yeah.

VF: And Prineville. I think you guys went...

JT: No, we didn't go to Prineville.

VF: Oh. Yeah, that was lots of fun to go to Portland and dance on the dock of the ship.

JT: We went to Aloha and they made sure that we won all of the door prizes. I still don't know how they did that.

VF: I don't either.

JT: But you also learned out to round dance in addition to square dancing and you continued on with...

VF: Both of them.

JT: And then we made corn dogs and sold 'em at different functions around town.

VF: Until we got so many restrictions that you couldn't afford to make them anymore.

JT: It was... What was the little guy at Albertson's that let us use their...

O: Gary Lee.

JT: Gary Lee. Used their fryer to make corn dogs. Then you went on later to rebuild a trailer, Ray did.

VF: Yeah. We sold quite a few corn dogs out of that. We went out to the Hog Wild Days and sold them for a number of years, too.

JT: Places that you went around the community, Union and Rock Wall and Elgin and up to Enterprise.

VF: And over to Baker.

JT: Lewiston.

VF: Uh-huh. We went on a trip to Boise one time. And then we went...did go to John Day. They used to have a square dance club in John Day and they belonged to our council. We went over there a couple of times. And Pendleton. Pendleton used to have a square dance. We went over there quite a few times.

JT: The thing that was so great about it was a good wholesome activity and people were very nice and friends that you have for many, many years. And that was quite evident was Howard Wilson's funeral was...

VF: Yeah. I was gonna say... There was so many of the older square dancers that was there at his funeral. In fact, a majority of them I think were there that were square dancers.

JT: What a wonderful time.

VF: Yep.

JT: And you and Ray have for a number of years here have been...you did haying. About how much hay did you usually put up for your...?

VF: It depends on what year. One year him and...he wasn't workin' at Borden's...we helped my brother, oh, he put up...what's that guy's name that was out...

O: Cooper.

VF: Oh, Bill Cooper's and...of course Clyde didn't have that one now. Clyde has about three hundred or four hundred acres that we help him put up now. We pick it up. He does...he and his wife cut it and bale it and we pick it up. But there's hundreds of tons.

JT: Then you used to go out and cut your own wood.

VF: We still do. I think you guys went with us a couple of times.

JT: Yes. About how many cords of wood did you usually cut per year?

VF: We used about ten cord or more. We'd have to get at least that many. If we can get a little bit more then we don't have to get so many the next year.

JT: And you're still running about how many cattle?

VF: Oh, we only have seven right now. We just have six or seven that we have.

JT: Up here where you live you have to have a pretty high fence to keep the deer out of your garden.

VF: Yeah. We got two big fences around two different gardens. If we don't give the gate open the deer don't get in. [laughs] A couple of times I think we've forgot to close the gate and the deer went in anyway. But now we got turkeys and that...[end tape]

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JT: Besides feeding turkeys sometimes, Ray has fed both deer and elk right here in your yard.

VF: Yeah. They come down every winter. If we get snow they come more of them. But the last couple years we haven't had much snow. We have probably a dozen or so deer that's out when we feed in the morning. And then, of course, the elk come at night. I don't know how many there is of them. One year, though, when it had the hard snows we had about a hundred head of deer that came down everyday and about eight-five or ninety elk that came every night.

JT: And you were a hunter right along with Ray.

VF: Yeah.

JT: Tell us how many deer you've killed and how many elk you've killed/

VF: I've killed one elk, is all I've killed in the elk, and probably ten deer. I usually go along and carry...carry...I'm the squaw, you know. [laugh] I carry the guns out, the hide or something like that, or help dress. I'm one of those kind, you know.

JT: And you have your own cooler out there so you cut up your own meat.

VF: Yes. That is, the deer and the elk. We take our beef down to the lockers down here and have them cut it anymore.

O: Could I interject a little story?

JT: Sure.

O: One year Virginia's dad and little brother and I went up south ___while Virginia milked that morning. She was going out after...meet us up on the hill after we...after she got through milkin'. We heard a couple, three shots, didn't think anything of that. She never did show up so we just went on hunting and we came back down the road through, a couple hours later, and Virginia's __ comes runnin' up the road and he says, "___ Virginia killed somethin' down the hill!" She went up there, she killed some deer. Sent __ down over the hill to get Clyde to bring the tractor up to get those deer. [laugh] We didn't get anything, the big hunters didn't get a thing.

JT: You're the experienced hunter.

VF: Yep.

JT: I understand that you're being able to use the grange hall out here. Can you tell us about how you were able to get...work that out so that you could start using it for square dancing?

VF: I think Bonnie Berry got hold of...the church...there was a church that was in there at that time and I think some of the Hill relatives were talkin' about it. So they wanted...the church wanted to move out and so she got the grange guy's name who lives over in Pendleton and she talked with him and he said yes, if we could get seven members that would become grange members so we could have a meeting every month then we could use the building and take care of it and fix it

up. So it has a wood floor, it isn't the best, but it's a wood floor. Got a little lump in it, but it's nice. It's got a nice kitchen and a dining room. It's really a nice place to dance. So we got I think seven or eight of our club members became grange members and we've had a couple of meetings, I guess. We don't seem to get enough to really have a quorum or whatever it is. So I guess the first meeting that we missed they did have. And then the next meeting there was a guy from Pendleton hasn't showed up any of the other times so he's the master. We still have our meetings every month and we've had several breakfasts which turned out fairly good, I guess. And then the square dance members come, some of them, but we haven't had too many other people come.

JT: That's a real good thing because for so many years it was very hard to keep a place.

VF: Yeah.

JT: You were always moving.

VF: We used to dance in the schools and then, of course, they cut us off of those. Then we went over to the fairground and that was cement floors and that's sort of hard dancing on. Then we went to Dot's for a while.

JT: That was the old telephone building that had been a beauty shop in front?

VF: No. It was down by old Moon Drugstore.

JT: Where the old Salvation Army?

VF: Yeah. And then we got in with the...Bonnie had bought that...or rented that building or that thing and it had the room in the back that was empty so we...

JT: By the old telephone office.

VF: Yeah. So we got that and then the...they kind of upped our rent again in January whenever we moved out there. So they upped our rent every so often. We did lay a floor just before we moved out there. I think a year ago we floored the square dance hall down here and then we moved.

JT: The hard thing is to get enough people for a square. There need to be four couples for each square and about how many are you able to have now?

VF: We're looking if we can get one square on a night when we have a club dance. If we have a plus workshop we usually have two to four squares. The regular workshop we usually have...we could have two if they didn't all set around and talk all the time. Some of them they're getting old and dilapidated, I guess. They're not as young as I am.

JT: You keep very active. And then before you go home everybody gets fed.

VF: Anymore we sort of set it all out and they eat all the time.

JT: Oh. Things have changed a little.

VF: Somebody complained about they didn't like to go home on a full stomach so they started puttin' it out and they just mince along all the time.

JT: And over the years how many different callers have you had?

VF: We started with Bob Herman and Ralph Moore. Then we had Steve Wilson. Now we have Bill Council. That have been our main callers. We have others that are learning to call and we let call once in a while.

JT: From Elgin, Rocky England and Bud Rogers.

VF: Yeah. And they both have...well, Bud died and Rocky I think he lives in Arizona or someplace now. We haven't seen him for quite a while.

JT: You still have the celebration up at Wallowa Lake that you used to have in the old skating rink up there?

VF: Yeah. They have it the first weekend after Labor Day every year. They still have it. This year we didn't have it at the lake because the people that they rent it from hadn't...told somebody else they could have that day. So they got a hall in Joseph, the community center or something there in Joseph and we had it down there this year. But it was supposed to have been up there, but there was some other group that went in. One of those things, you know, that...[laugh] And we still have Dick Spooner and Al Wolfington that are out of Lewiston that come and call.

JT: I know Dick was a very good caller.

VF: And I think, wasn't it last year that Vaughn was up there?

JT: Oh, that's the one from Colorado?

VF: Uh-huh. But he doesn't... I think he calls some, but he's had a number of strokes and heart attacks so he doesn't...but he...

JT: It's a very good activity. But you got to be able to hear and not have any aches and pains.

VF: Once you get out there your aches and pains go away.

JT: I'll have to tell my wife that.

VF: Okay. Is she gonna listen to this? [laugh]

JT: Probably will. In all, La Grande has been a wonderful place to raise your family.

VF: Yeah.

JT: Was there anything that you think you'd do different? What do you think about the way things changed?

VF: I don't know they've changed for the better, but maybe they have. I still like the older times where you got out and did something and...

JT: You used to be able to walk up Deal Canyon and maybe over to Morgan Lake and around and it was private property at the time, but now, evidently somebody's abused the privilege.

VF: Yeah. I'd like to go on that hike that Mrs. Brownton and the guys go every spring and hike up to Hilgard, I think it is, where they go. I don't seem to connect with that time. I was goin' through this year and then somethin' came up and I forgot what day it was. Yeah, you can't hardly walk to town anymore without gettin' run over and people goin' up and down like their mad.

JT: It seems like there's so many people impatient. A lot of these younger drivers are...

VF: They get behind ya and, boy, they really give you a dirty look if you're goin' the speed limit or so. [laugh] Yeah, everyone's in a hurry.

JT: You're a lot closer to town than you used to be. The town is kind of coming this way. Where is the urban growth boundary?

VF: I don't... It goes in and out comin' up the road there. Some of it's...

JT: Sunny Hill 2 and in that area.

VF: Yeah. But it seems like down there at the foot...one or two of those houses on the right-hand side you come up are still outside of the city limits. And then they got in where these modern homes are built then they want city limits, I think, in them. I think it's sort of a crooked line that goes through there.

JT: And all these houses that are being built just below you down here all so big, two stories.

VF: Those over by the cemetery I noticed tonight, gosh, they look like mansions, goin' up to that Hillside.

JT: Grandview Cemetery.

VF: Is it Grandview Cemetery?

JT: Uh-huh.

VF: Boy, they're big.

JT: It's a real surprise. La Grande doesn't seem to grow that much more.

VF: No. I think it said that we was 10,000 or so whenever we were in school or that part and now it's only up at twelve or thirteen.

JT: 12,000.

VF: So we really haven't... Of course, our city limits is pretty short. I mean, we didn't... whenever they made the city limits they didn't put it out far enough, probably. I know lots of these little towns you come it says the name of the town and you look around there's nothing there. You go a couple miles and then you come to the town. So the city limits is out lots further.

JT: I know times living out where you have... you've had a little problem with water and your well not being deep enough. Have you had that redrilled?

VF: Whenever the forest fire went through in '73 we had a well that was seventy-five feet and I think something happened to it about the time the fire was on and we didn't have... It caved in?

O: Yeah.

VF: And then we had another one that was seventy-five feet or so. Then the last one was down four hundred some feet.

O: Four hundred and five.

JT: And you don't have any problem anymore.

VF: No. So far we haven't. If we can pay the electricity bill. [laugh]

JT: The thing about it is these are some of the things people inside the city don't realize, you know, that you have to have your own well...

VF: And sewer.

JT: Have to go down... and drainage field and all the things that go along with living out that they take for granted.

VF: Yeah. My brother he... he's on a spring. He get's all of his water from a spring yet.

JT: And he lives just south of you.

VF: Yeah.

JT: What, half a mile?

VF: Yeah, probably.

JT: It's interesting that you and your brother lived in this same area for all these years.

VF: He wanted a place whenever he got old enough and him and Dad went over on the other side of the mountain and looked at several farms that was for sale and came back and he liked the one above us so they got and bought it. We bought their old... my folks' old place.

JT: And now your son lives on the area where your house set, however, he's put a new house there.

VF: Yeah. We deeded the place out to all the kids except this here is ours, eleven acres. They all have eleven acres if they live longer than we do. [laugh]

JT: That's a neat thing that family lives in an area for that many years.

VF: Yeah. My folks moved up in...let's see, how old are you? In '25. So that R__ was up here about in May, I think, is when they moved up in '25. So it'd been seventy-eight years that we've been...

JT: How long had they lived in the county? Did they come from someplace else?

VF: My dad came from Missouri and him and a couple of his brothers moved out in 1917 or somewhere around in there, before the war anyway. And they...some of them homesteaded for a while up at Enterprise and then they had a candy kitchen here in La Grande. Then World War I came and the sugar and everything got so expensive they closed that. I think Dad worked for the railroad for a little bit and then he worked on the WPA and then he went to Mt. Emily Lumber Company, which he was there for a number of years. So he's been in...we, one or the other... Mom, she came from Kansas and she didn't come out until she married Dad. They were all Easterns.

JT: Been here a long time, though.

VF: Yeah. You go back there they think they're out west. I guess they are west of the Mississippi.

JT: You have a beautiful view from right here. You see all the things that happen down in the city and all the lights.

VF: I watch you every night. [laughs] And you can see...the college used to be just that one building there and then Ackerman and then they built the dorm. Since then they've just been building and building.

JT: Now they're building two big athletic fields.

VF: Yeah.

JT: I don't know.

VF: They have the National Guard, does that belong to the college, too? Land?

JT: I think eventually it probably will. There's an advantage, that's college property, and the fact that the National Guard train at the Guard and go to school at the college.

VF: I thought that was the college land clear over to Twelfth Street.

O: They didn't buy that?

JT: I don't think so. The college probably... At one time I thought even where the stop light down there is...

VF: That's what they said, that was part college.

JT: But Fred Bell seems to be there. I don't know what the program is on that. Then that new building they just built, I understand, in a pretty good time that will probably revert back to the college as well as where the State habitat lab is.

O: No kidding.

VF: 'Cause that was all college.

JT: Yeah. I don't know what...how the mechanics work on it, but I've been told.

VF: They probably lease it from them.

JT: Yeah. Had a long term lease. But I'm not that familiar with it. Is there anything that you would like to say that we haven't covered that you think that would be an important thing in your life that you'd like said?

VF: I can't think of anything right now. I've just enjoyed my life and I think this is a very lovely place to be.

JT: There was one thing I was gonna ask you and there's been a lot of things said about a superstore for Wal-Mart, and having worked for Payless Drugstore – they were the first ones to move out there, you might say, a mall where Albertsons – what do you think of that?

VF: At the time, we increased our store...and at that time Payless was a store for the people around here. When I first started we had a veterinarian deal in there, I mean, they sold medicine and stuff, and you sold what the people around here wanted. I know I order for houseware and I'd have people come in and want to know about this or that, if they could get it. When a salesman came then I could find out and I could buy those things for them. Nowadays, you don't do that. They all come in from the warehouse that Payless or Rite-Aide has now, you just buy what's in the warehouse. You just buy so many and keep it up. In any of the stores anymore if you go in there and want...lookin' for something – not considering clothes, though, that's something else – but if you want a light bulb or somethin', you know, just somethin' like that, they only order so many at a time and if everyone wants that same light bulb at the same time then you go in, you usually have to wait because they only had three to begin with, so you wait for it. In the olden days, we used to buy what they wanted and usually extras, too.

JT: You knew what the customers wanted so you bought things in that quantity to be able to take care of their needs and wants.

VF: We had people from Long Creek, in that district, that would come in for sales and stuff and are down from Enterprise and they're mostly ranchers or farmers. Now, whenever they buy stuff it's for guys that live on the coast or in the city. If you're a rancher or stuff, all that stuff don't really make that much difference. You probably want a shovel that you can dig in the dirt with, not one in the sand.
[laugh]

JT: That's a good thought.

VF: Whenever we got the great big warehouse they got everything out of the warehouse and it was just what they could get in, you know, for all of their stores. Of course they had hundreds of stores anymore.

JT: How many years was Gene Detry manager?

VF: He started in... He was there whenever I started workin' in '75, '76. I would say he probably started in about '44. When we moved out to the mall somebody else took over. That was in...

JT: He was there just a short time after the mall...

VF: He was in the pharmacy, but he wasn't the manager then. So that was from about '44 to '72, '73.

JT: That was a long time.

VF: Yeah.

JT: They were interesting times. [recording stopped]