

Genevieve Carter  
Interviewer: John Turner  
Place: Grande Ronde Retirement Center  
March 21, 2002

JT: First question I would like to ask you here is to say your full name, including your maiden name.

GC: My maiden name was Adler, Genevieve Isis Adler. [?]

JT: Carter.

GC: And then Carter.

JT: Uh huh. And did you have a nickname or anything like that.

GC: My mother insisted \_\_\_\_\_ [?] she named me Genevieve. She told everybody I don't want you to call her Jenny or anything but just Genevieve. So I've never had a nickname.

JT: Well then when and where were you born?

GC: I was born out by Alicel. It's out here in the middle of the valley. And I was born on my grandfather's farm, James Moss. Out at the Moss farm and uh it was on Christmas Day in 1912.

JT: Uh huh. And who else was in your family?

GC: I was the only child.

JT: Only child. Your father farmed?

GC: What?

JT: Did he farm?

GC: He farmed some but my dad never did care much for horses. He got awful mad at a horse and um...so he preferred machinery. And he started working...he worked part of the time in the shops at the railroad and then he worked at the mill.

JT: Where did you go to school?

GC: Where did he go to school?

JT: Where did you go to school?

GC: I went to school here all my life, in LaGrande. I went uh...I was in the country school out by Alicel when I was in the first two grades and then my folks...our house and barn burned to the ground and we had to move, so we moved to town and then dad started working for the railroad then. And uh...so I went to Central School then I went to LaGrande High School and then I went to Eastern Oregon Normal School. It was a Normal School at that time.

JT: And then you became a teacher?

GC: Uh huh.

JT: I understand the Skeen's introduced you to Harvey, is that correct?

GC: Well I don't remember for sure, but um, Roy Skeen sang in the choir and Harvey was singing in the top choir. And I was playing the organ there at the Methodist Church. So I always just thought we met there in the choir. {Laughter} And then a funny thing Hermela, when she came along, she started playing the organ and then Don Paul [?] joined the choir and he was a Bass singer too and she married Don so...{Laughter} so we both met our husbands at the choir.

JT: Is there anything outstanding when you were going to school, high school, that you can remember was a high point in your life?

GC: I don't...I don't remember particularly. I remember when the high school burned, part of it burned and then that winter we had to go to school in the churches in LaGrande. But I don't remember... Course I played the piano and I played for the operettas. I think every operetta that came along. Mr. Nussbaum [?] was the director and uh...I'd play the piano for the operettas and then I could've graduated at Christmas time because I entered the school at that time; we could enter at mid-year. He said why don't you just stay for another half year and then you can play for one more operetta. {Laughter}

JT: Well that sounds pretty interesting. Then what year...when you graduated from college, now what did you teach?

GC: I taught at Pumpkin Ridge out there above Summerville at the little Pumpkin Ridge School. And I lived with...I boarded room with Ray and Berti Hud. [?] They uh...I had a bad knee and we were about...they lived about a mile and a half from the school so I wasn't able to walk that distance. She said well don't worry about that. She said uh...we've got this little cart and the boys would go out...there's two boys, two Hud boys that were in school at that time. And they would hitch up the horse and take me to school in that little cart. {Laughter} Then they'd haul me down in the evening. But uh...it was quite an interesting experience. I had about seven or eight students I think.

JT: And how many grades did that represent?

GC: I think probably about five.

JT: About five.

GC: Uh huh. Two of them were in the sixth grade and then uh...I had a little first grader and I know I had a second grader. I think just about seven or eight students.

JT: And what year were you and Harvey married?

GC: We were married in 1935.

JT: 1935. And uh...Harvey taught at Central School I know.

GC: Yes all of his career. He taught there first and then he became Principal and he was there until he retired.

JT: At one time didn't he go to Portland? Didn't you go down there?

GC: We were in Portland in '48.

JT: During the Vanport [?] flood. When it flooded out where you were living.

GC: The reason he went was to get his Masters Degree. And uh...so we spent the year down there in Portland and of course we had to get out of the flood. {Laughter}

JT: The way I heard it, he swam with two of your daughters, is that correct?

GC: Uh we were...my aunt and uncle Ray and Mina Fuller [?] were in Portland at that time. And we had gone to the zoo and I had taken um...did we take any of the children? We took Barbara with us. Took Barbara, she was the oldest one. And Harvey said well I'm going to take....He had gone down so he could get his Masters Degree and um...and he was teaching at Vanport. And uh...and they uh...daughter kind of had the flu or a cold and he said well I'll just stay home with Lanetta then you can go on to the zoo with my aunt and uncle. And we took Barbara. And then Darla said well if daddy's gonna take Lanetta to the zoo why I wanna go with him, so she stayed and went with him. Then he took them home and put them to bed for a nap and he was having a nap also. When Lanetta, or Darla I mean, never did much napping. And she got up and was playing in the front room and she noticed a lot of people were leaving. She went in and woke Harvey up and said Daddy people are leaving. And he said, yeah I know...he knew the neighbors were gonna move out that morning. And he didn't think anything about it. She went back in the front room to play a little more and she

noticed more people were leaving. So she went back in the bedroom, and about that time the sirens started blowing. So he hopped up and got on his shoes and grabbed Lanetta and Darla. By the time they got out the front door, the water was clear up to Harvey's knees. So Lanetta couldn't walk, she was too little. So he had to carry her and hang on to Darla's hand. They were headed for the car, but the water had pushed the car under a railing there and he couldn't get the car out; the bumper was caught. And in that time anyway \_\_\_\_\_ [?] very long and the water was getting higher; so they went across the road and up a bank. Then the water came up to the top of the bank and so they climbed a tree; and they sat in this tree for three or four hours before a helicopter came over and found them in the tree. Then a boat came and got them.

JT: That was quite an experience.

GC: It really was.

JT: Then you came back to LaGrande.

GC: Yeah, my aunt and uncle came the next day back to LaGrande and I brought Lanetta and Darla. And came back to my mother and dad's here and stayed with them. Harvey finished...stayed down there with my aunt and uncle that lived in Portland and finished his thesis. He had his thesis ready to hand in on Monday morning...this happened on Sunday [?]. And of course that was swept away, he had to write it all over again. He went to the Professor and said would it be possible for me to give it orally? He said I can remember exactly what he had written yanno. And the Professor said no, it had to be written. So he sat down and wrote it all over again. {Laughter}

JT: Then you came back to LaGrande and then you...

GC: Then Mr. Patton, Fred Patton was the Superintendent at that time and he came out to my mother's house and said well if there's anything I can do, let me know. And so the first day...it was...that was May \_\_\_\_\_ [?] Harvey went to a Principals meeting and uh...Mr. Patton said something about...Harvey said if you have an opening, if there's some teacher that doesn't show up or you need another extra teacher, Genevieve would like to \_\_\_\_\_ [?] And he said the first thing that shows up will be hers. And the next morning when they went to the meeting, why Fred said tell Genevieve to come at 8:30 tomorrow morning. And it was at Central School and Harvey was the Principal there. {Laughter} So I had part second and part third, I had the second and third grade and then I taught from that time on at Central. {Laughter}

JT: And Harvey was right there too.

GC: Uh huh.

JT: And then he taught swimming during the summer?

GC: Yes, he loved to do that.

JT: What did you do while they were all swimming?

GC: I just took care of the kids. {Laughter} I went to summer school.

JT: The girls followed his footsteps.

GC: Well they went with him. First Barbara helped him; she was the oldest. And then when Darla got old enough she started helping him. By that time, Barbara was tired of doing it anyway. And then uh...Lanetta followed and she was...she worked the longest with Harvey. And then she did a lot of it by herself too. At Cove and then she taught at Hot Lake when the...oh I can't remember the mans name that...Roth.

JT: Dr. Roth.

GC: Yeah, she worked...she taught at that swimming pool with him.

JT: I remember when they built that. Well you've had quite a career, as I understand you are always saying, well I taught them in the second grade...

GC: Yes. {Laughter}

JT: Is there any outstanding things in your years of teaching that you'd like to share with us?

GC: Well I don't know. Of course I, as I say I taught music. I was musical and so I always had...

JT: I can't remember, what year did you and Harvey retire?

GC: Uh let's see. I retired in uh '82 and I think Harvey was '77 but I'm not real sure about that. He taught his...I taught 32 years...34 years all together including the two up at Pumpkin Ridge. And I taught at the little Iowa [?] school out there in the middle of the valley. I taught there for a couple of years too right at first. And then I quit teaching when I was having Barbara and then I had Darla and Lanetta so I didn't teach while I was having children. But then I started in again and I kept right on at it.

JT: Well are there any outstanding things that you had during your life that you'd like to share with us?

GC: Um...

JT: Is there anything you'd do over again?

GC: {Laughter} Well I'd teach again, that's for sure.

JT: You liked that? You would marry Harvey again?

GC: Huh?

JT: You'd marry Harvey again?

GC: Oh yeah.

JT: Well you've got nice daughters.

GC: I sure do. Yeah we have great daughters. Barbara's retired and she was a Physical Therapist in Pendleton and she worked there at St. Anthony's for a long time. She's retired now and she and her husband are in New Zealand right at the present time. They're gonna go on a big long trip, they'll be gone for six weeks. And then Darla and Lanetta are on their way to Mexico so...{Laughter} I have to hold the fort. Bob didn't go, Bob Sutherland [?] so Bob and I are...and Don, Don's still here.

JT: Then you...Didn't Harvey have some cattle and you had some cattle up in Perry?

GC: Yeah he liked to do that. He didn't mind getting up early in the morning and going up to feed the cattle and coming home and change clothes and get ready to go to school. And then dash home after school and change clothes and go up to feed the cattle. {Laughter} He didn't mind it; he loved it.

JT: Then you had a cabin up on Fox Hill?

GC: We had a cabin up on...way up on Mt. Emily.

JT: Mt. Emily?

GC: Mhm. It's just below the peak of Mt. Emily; it's down from that. And uh it was the old Eaton Cabin and Harvey and I bought that the first year we were married. It was for sale and he loved the mountains, as you know.

JT: I know.

GC: And uh he said I'd just love to buy that cabin. But he didn't think he could swing the cost of it. Then uh Grant Swapper [?] was his brother in law, uh Sally was Harvey's sister. So the two of them got together and...it was a saddleback cabin. It was a cabin and then a porch and then another cabin. They call them

saddleback. And uh...so we had one side and Grant and Sally had the other side. And uh...so we'd go up there every year. After the flood we lived up there all summer long; that was our home. {Laughter}

JT: I know that you took many of the kids that Harvey taught up there at different times.

GC: Yes.

JT: He liked to ski didn't he?

GC: Oh yes, he loved to ski. And he took his boy scout troop...course he always had a boy scout troop and why he'd take them up there in the winter time. One time the snow was so deep it was clear up to the eaves on the cabin and they couldn't even see out of the windows; but they managed to scrape the snow off the porch so they could open the door. They'd get up on the roof and ski off the roof. {Laughter} But he told about that a lot, he thought that was fun. He did enjoy taking those boy scouts up there. And he taught them a lot about the woods and the trees and the flowers.

JT: Well it sounds like the Harvey I knew. He was awful good to me as a teacher. I had him in the seventh and eighth grade.

GC: Uh huh.

JT: Well I didn't know if there's anything that you'd like to share with us. You're happy up here at the Grande Ronde Retirement Center?

GC: I like it up here very much. I've only lived here since July but uh...I really appreciate the accommodations here. And it's so nice to have the meals cooked and I don't have to drag in those groceries. That was the hardest thing I did with the walker was just get in the groceries. And it's so nice to just go down and have dinner and not have to cook.

JT: Did you know Lavelle Ritchie [?]?

GC: Uh huh. Lavelle and I knew each other in high school. And we belonged to the Methodist Church and got acquainted there and we've been friends ever since.

JT: I interviewed her the other day and she knew my wife's family, the Burns family.

GC: Oh she did? Uh huh. I know Harvey knew the Burns too. Yeah he knew the Burns family too.

JT: It's kind of nice when we all lived here and know about one another.

GC: Yes that's right, uh huh.

JT: Very nice community to live in.

GC: I think it is. I've lived here all my life. So that's a long time. {Laughter}

JT: \_\_\_\_\_ [?]

GC: ...Possibly same students that I had in school. In fact \_\_\_\_\_ [?] that works here. When he got on the elevator with me about the first day that I was here and I said and what's your name? And he said \_\_\_\_\_ [?] and I said good lamb I had you in second grade. {Laughter} He said yes I know. He knew me, but he's changed a lot, I didn't know him.

JT: Well that is neat.

GC: But then when I lived down in the other apartment building, I got acquainted with Laura Pierce and we'd walk downtown and walk along the street and nearly everybody I met I'd say hello to. She said you know so many people. And I said well a lot of them are parents of students I had in school. And that's true; I meet them all the time. And that's nice.

JT: I have another question I'd like to ask you. Who was your greatest satisfaction in the life that you lived?

GC: Oh I think my music.

JT: Your music? Very important part of your life?

GC: Uh huh. It always has been.

JT: And being a Methodist.

GC: Uh huh.

JT: I'll always remember that.

GC: I was going to say too, I'm a descendant of two old pioneer families; the Walsingers and the Whittle's. I'm a descendant of that family...of those people.

JT: And they came to the valley about when?

GC: About 1862 it'd be.

JT: Oh that's right after the Brown [?] family came here, one of the first. It's nice that people are putting the history of Union County together.

GC: Uh huh. Yeah there was the Walsinger. They were quite a...called the Walsinger train that came, and the Whittles joined the Walsinger train. And when my great great, I guess, grandfather uh...Where that rest stop is out of town on your way to Baker and then right up above it there's kind of a cliff up there you look up you can see it. They said that my grandfather Walsinger drove the wagon out to the end of that bluff and he looked at the valley; and of course it was all green and beautiful and he said here's where we'll stay. Some of the younger Whittles wanted to go on; they were headed for Portland. But some of the younger ones wanted to go on to Portland and not stay. But he said no, this is where we're gonna stay. And he drove on around the valley cause they had to go around the hillside yanno. Down on that bluff right above Summerville was where they settled for that winter. They built a cabin and they just stayed here. {Laughter}

JT: Those were uh, what'd they call it? Uh...when they got a parcel of land? Homestead. And they homesteaded? And nobody else had bought before that? With homesteading that's how they got their land.

GC: Mhm. So the Whittle family stayed right around the Summerville area; had farms out there.

JT: They had that one Whittle farm out there that I know about.

GC: Mhm.

JT: That's pretty interesting. That's in the historical...Hundred Year Farm out there. Whittle Farm is one of them in the valley.

GC: Yeah. My grandmother was a Walsinger then she married a Whittle.