

Helen Fitzgerald

9/10/02, tape 1, side 1

ES: For the record would you give me your complete name?

HF: I go by Helen Davis Fitzgerald.

ES: And you were born I believe in Union, or...

HF: In Hot Lake.

ES: At Hot Lake?

HF: Yes, that was an official post office and place to register.

ES: So that would have been what year?

HF: 1920.

ES: Not too long before I was born.

HF: Oh, quite a while I bet! [laughs]

ES: We'll discuss that later. Why at Hot Lake?

HF: Because that was a very well known hospital, sanitarium, at that time. And my folks lived in Union... no, we...yea, they lived in Union. They hadn't moved to the ranch yet. And mother just thought the best care was the kind you had, although a lot of babies were born at home then.

ES: Yes.

HF: And my brothers and one of my sisters was born there. And my other sister didn't quite make it because she was born the year Hot Lake burned. All the big part that's gone.

ES: So I know that your family, or I think there's more than one family [inaudible]...

HF: Millers.

ES: Millers. Have been in Union County for some years before that. Could you give me just a quick view of those families as you understood them when you were young?

HF: You mean the ones that I knew?

ES: Yes.

HF: Of course, the first one...

ES: How they were interconnected.

HF: How they were interconnected? Oh boy! You go back to one of the first two settlers in the valley were Conrad and Simon Miller, brothers. And they married sisters. Julia Danum was a Galloway. And my grandmother was the daughter of Julia Danum Simon. One of the daughters. And she's, of course, the first one that I remember very well. Then her youngest brother, Ed Miller. Ed was the father of all, a lot, of the Millers. And there's still Millers over there. And from that side of the family. Now the Davis' and the Millers they got together too because Melissa, who had married Conrad, had one daughter and she married my Granddad Davis's brother. So you see this is gunna all mixed up. But you can see it on the family tree.

ES: Yes.

HF: And then the Bensons were tied in because they were a very early family. And Sam Benson married my Granddad Hall's sister, Louine. And his sister, Virginia

Benson, married my Granddad Davis's brother, Charles. So those early, early families there's lots of connections.

ES: Glen McKenzie said in a recent interview, and a little bit humorously...

HF: Oh, he's good at that!

ES: ...that he thought that all these...everybody was related to everybody else in Union County because transportation wasn't very good.

HF: [laugh] You think how few families they were. Because I guess the first...maybe at Telecaset [inaudible]...legal suit in the valley was Conrad trying to prove his claim. Conrad Miller. So when you go back that far there's just a handful of people. And all of them came in on the Oregon Trail except my Granddad Hall who came from the gold fields in California where his father came. So...

ES: As you were growing up were you hearing a lot of stories about their...their earlier lives?

HF: Oh, my grandmother was great at telling stories. And uh...enjoyed that a lot. Then really my parents didn't get down to the story telling until they were old and decided to do the book. They were just too busy. I think maybe that's the way it goes. When you're older you think back. But I remember, you know, a story of being a part of a [inaudible].

ES: What was the nature of some of the stories you heard? Was it about the daily life that people led or was it about travels they had made?

HF: Few of them. My grandmother told about how when she was a child, and of course this was the pioneer family, how they all had jobs to do. And at night the father always read to them. And everybody had a job to do. Maybe they were knitting socks, or making candles. Those necessary things that there was for their life. Of course when she told it it was pretty good story. But that always impressed me.

ES: Were you hearing stories then about self-sufficiency?

HF: I guess so. They certainly had to be. And then she told stories about...they were...raised sheep in those early days. And about how the bears came to get the sheep and how old Joe Brown planned to corral the sheep and fix himself a place to sleep up on...you know, or to wait up on top for the bear to come and kill the bear. And things like that, you know, that little kids just eat up. And she told how her father had come as a young man to this country from Switzerland. And then he'd gone clear back...no, it was really the older brother, Conrad, that came first. And he went clear back to Switzerland and got her father who was sixteen at the time and brought him to this country. And oh she made, you know, like a mother would, she'd tell about how the mother stood at the gate waving as long as she could. And we'd cry a little 'cause it was such a sad story to think that the mother never saw her two boys again. But it took all...you know, it was all made you proud of the strength these people had to do what they had to do. So feel pretty lucky to...

ES: When you were about six years old where exactly were you living?

HF: I lived in Union just a block off Main Street. When to school my first year at the old North School, which was the last year it was ever used was that year.

ES: What do you remember about the inside of the house you lived in?

HF: Remember about it? Oh, it was a small house. And I remember that there was an old refrigerator that the ice man came and put ice in every week. But there was also a cooler built into the side of a hallway that had screen on it, doors on the inside and Mother kept milk and things in there.

ES: That house had been built maybe 1870, 1880 thereabouts?

HF: I don't think it was quite that old, but I don't really know.

ES: Before 1900, though, I suppose?

HF: I think there's some...I suppose so. I really don't know. It was a small house. It's still standing. My dad remodeled it a lot in later years. I only know the dates like when this house was built. I think in the book it tells most of those facts, though. He's got pictures of all the houses. Ours wasn't picturesque at all, the little house we lived in.

ES: So you went to the North Union School for the last year of its existence?

HF: Uh-huh.

ES: Kindergarten or first grade?

HF: There was no kindergarten.

ES: No kindergarten?

HF: Mm-mm. First grade and my teacher was Elizabeth Vogle. And she was a very wonderful person. And then we graduated from high school and she drove back and forth with us taking graduate work when we came over here to college. I mean, she taught all those years and then was still getting her education. She was a great lady.

ES: Would you describe a little bit about how the school was conducted in those early grades and either routines or the ways...

HF: You mean the first grade, or after that?

ES: Let's say the early years.

HF: Then I went to the old South School, which is gone now too. But my parents had gone there. It was a very old school built way back in the 1800s. And it had three stories. And when it was time to come in...Mr. Conner was the principal...he stood outside and rang his little bell. And all the kids lined up by grades. And you marched in at the same time. And I can still hear the feet going up the stairs because... And the third floor was condemned by that time. It was somethin' that the kids sneaked up and looked at sometimes.

ES: I noticed that the Union High School still has one entrance for boys and one for girls.

HF: Right.

ES: Was that common in all the schools you went to?

HF: It didn't apply to us. Because my parents went to that school and that's who it applied to. And they went there I think...I don't know whether it was...how many years, but at least they went there when it was brand new. And the boys did have to march in one door and the girls in the other. But by the time I got there we didn't do that anymore.

ES: Did you ever hear why they had that practice?

HF: No. Uh-huh. I don't know. I guess they were just thinkin' that they'd be careful how they got 'em mixed up. Some foolish idea! People still notice that and comment about...

ES: I don't think I've seen another school building that has that feature.

HF: I can't think when...I'm sure...Daddy might have it in the book about what the year was. Because...gosh, they were married after he'd been in the service. 1919. I don't know when they went to Oregon State. Anyway, a long time ago.

ES: Do you remember that going to school in Union elementary and secondary schools involved strict discipline and hard study and generally intense application all the time?

HF: I suppose. We certainly had a lot of respect for the teachers. But we had fun. We had great fun. And I remember, you know, like you always you remember some teachers that were outstanding. But Dorothy Busick, who just died, was my third grade school teacher and I can still remember doing so many things in her class. And she made it fun. She did! I didn't know what school was s'pposed to be, I'm sure, but we did learn a lot.

ES: Elmer Perry talked about a feature of Imbler schools that he thought was one of the most outstanding ways of learning and that was a sandbox upon legs so that he was studying Holland, for example, he would made buildings and landscape the area so it would look like Holland. Do you remember anything like that?

HF: No, but I remember that we did have art projects that I especially enjoyed. I think I got my lifelong interest in art really from my first grade teacher. And she had certain famous artists that we learned about. And she would have, you know, paintings or prints of the paintings that we were gunna talk about. And then each child got a little one. I can still remember some of the exact paintings she taught us about. And I can remember her taking us to the Women's Club to perform and stand up and show the mother's what we learned about these things. But my whole life I've been interested in art and I know that's where it came from.

ES: What was she trying to have you learn about the paintings?

HF: She wanted to tell us about the famous artists like Milay and...

ES: Biographical information?

HF: I don't remember that much detail. I remember that was one of my favorites. And Rosebaughn. She showed us a big picture of the Horse Fair. And for a six year old I don't remember the details, but I did get a lot of thoughts that stayed with me a long time.

ES: I suppose these paintings were displayed in the schoolroom for a while so you could look at them anytime.

HF: Yes, they were nice size, uh-huh. And then I can remember that you didn't have the kind of supplies you have now. You think about the sort of artwork kids do. But we used to weave designs out of paper, cut paper. And then the first grade we had little colored sticks, I remember, maybe just that long, you know, bigger than a toothpick, but... And it was somethin' to work with. I don't remember anything about color crayons or anything like that. ___ I loved all those things. And we had nice rocky play yard, grounds, to run on and skin our knees. And every room...when we were at the next school, at South School, would have a jump rope and a ball and a bat. And that was mostly what your entertainment was. And one of the things I remember most was every room had huge, old, wooden stoves that they lifted the top up. And I guess the janitors must of brought the

wood up. But they...great huge pile behind the school, four foot wood. You've probably seen wood cut in four foot length.

ES: Oh yes.

HF: And it was stacked high. And they'd...that's how they heated the schools.

ES: And a stove in each room?

HF: Every room had it's own wood...

ES: Who was in charge of keeping it going?

HF: I suppose the teachers had to do it. It would be started for 'em when they got there, but it seems like the lid 'd come up and the wood 'd go in whenever it was necessary.

ES: Did that keep the rooms generally warm and comfortable?

HF: I never remember bein' cold. So we evidently did alright. And we weren't supposed to play on that wood pile. It was huge. Or around it. I think we played around it quite a bit. But I loved school.

ES: In high school did you have your mind on college?

HF: Yes because my parents were very...they got their education cut short at two years of college when the war came along, First World War. But my grandmother had been to college. Just one year, but she went to University of Oregon. Can you even imagine how early that was! I think there was one or two buildings there. And she lived in some professor's home. So I always thought that that's what I was going to do. And I only made it a year and then I got married. It was Depression times and I should of gone on anyway, but that's as far as I got in college. But it was on our mind because we...they just always expected we would. My brother was two years behind me and we went until World War II put an end to that. And my sisters did a little better. They were younger and times were better.

ES: In order to prepare for college what courses were you required to take in high school?

HF: You were required...nobody...I don't know that they talked too much about college at the high school. But you had to take four years of English. And I took two years of science. And all the math I could get, three years of math 'cause I liked it. And I took things like typing. And then the things you could choose were music and drama and that sort of thing. Mostly it was pretty much set out for ya. I didn't ever take Home Ec. I thought I knew it all [laugh] bein' the oldest kid in the family. Of course I didn't. I liked those things. We had history and geography. I think were required. It seems to me. I don't have that kind of a memory that's positive about everything. [laughs] I really enjoyed school. It was great experience.

ES: During that period you must have been aware of the Hall Ranch?

HF: Oh yes! My granddad took my brother and I when we were little kids in an old Model-T.

ES: Tell me as much as you can remember about that place.

HF: We just loved it! But my earliest story that I...it's a story, I don't remember. My grandmother, in the early days, would take her whole family up there in a tent and cook for the men like when they were making hay and things. But that was only a

story. But Granddad was kind a old and the Model-T didn't even have a top on it. But he would go back and forth and take us.

ES: This was George Francis Hall?

HF: Yes. And he was...he was the kind of granddad every kid should have. He was strict and he expected a lot, but there was always a horse to ride. And when I first remember the highway didn't go through where it does now. It was just a little old windy road through the ranch. Then it was condemned and taken later. So that was a great big meadow there. And he had his dairy cattle up there in the summer. And it was a very crude sort of set up. There was kind of a log shed, long and narrow, that they'd bring the cows in to milk 'em. And they actually had some kind of a milking device.

ES: Mechanical?

HF: Yes. And of course they stripped 'em out by hand afterwards. And then that milk was separated and taken across this little road and down behind the old log house to the spring house, which was a natural spring, and put in this cold spring water until it could be picked up taken to the creamery.

ES: Would this have been a creamery in Union or La Grande?

HF: Yes, Union, uh-huh. I think they did pick it up in those days. That involved...that was just for the summer. Because the ranch...the dairy was at Sunnybrook the rest of the year. That was for summer pasture and all that. And he took us a lot to that ranch. But the best part of all was when you had to bring the cattle down from the Hall Ranch to Sunnybrook. And of course you rode horses and drove 'em. And the same thing you'd take 'em back in the spring. So that was the big joy of our young lives, my brother and I.

ES: I was up the Hall Ranch the other day and there's...

HF: Not much there.

ES: ...there's a building and an outhouse in the meadow that looks as though it might be a hundred years old. Do you remember it?

HF: Oh, of course, yes. And people still lived there in that log house.

ES: Were they caretakers of the ranch?

HF: Yes, they were people that ran it for Granddad. And I can't remember who anymore. But the log house is just practically a shambles now, isn't it?

ES: It's falling down.

HF: It was always just primitive.

ES: Did your grandfather build it or have it built?

HF: You know, I don't know about that part. I don't. But I know there must have been...you see if you go back to the time when my mother was a child...she was born in 1896 and there were five children in the family. My grandmother had to take the children up there, you know, just for...I don't [inaudible] the summer, but I don't know when the log house would have been built, or the old log barn that's gone. I don't remember. It was just kind of...it's just, I guess, right for me bein' a kid.

ES: Did the Hall Ranch seem like an exciting place to be then?

HF: Oh yes! Because we loved it, yes.

ES: Did you tramp around most of it...

HF: Oh yes!

ES: ...or stay in the meadow?

HF: No. Granddad would have different parts that he'd go check on, you know, that we'd go with him 'cause we weren't very old. Then I can still remember when they started to log up there, which I wasn't too old then. But that was some of the very first logging. And I wasn't allowed to run there. Stay out of the way.

ES: Had most of it been fenced to keep the cattle contained?

HF: Oh yes, it was all fenced. I think there was a lot of probably rail fences, but yes, it was fenced.

ES: The animals would then just come and drink out of the creeks?

HF: Yes, a creek ran through. The land ran clear over to the creek where it's all divided now. And there wasn't any fences like along the road, that's all open. I have a picture of the old house a-way back then. Yea, in the house, I'll show you.

ES: I'd like to see it.

HF: A long time ago, anyway. It...I can remember the fences must have been...I remember there were split rails. 'Cause we used...there were some of 'em that we could jump on the horses and that was pretty....oh boy!

ES: Yes. [laughs]

HF: And the ditches and all that stuff. So he put up with all that. The road goin' out there was so narrow in those days and they were starting, like I say, the early logging. And here was Granddad in this old Model-T. And when you'd come to the corner you'd honk the horn because you couldn't see around 'em and it wasn't wide enough so you always honked the horn. And if you met a logging truck that was...you might have to back up a long ways to pass. It was...that kind of stuff's exciting to a kid.

ES: It certainly is. The family had several ranches. You said Sunny...Sunnydale?

HF: Sunnybrook Ranches up on Little Creek.

ES: And then there are two or three others in the family, weren't there?

HF: Oh yes. My grandmother said they were land poor. But when I was a kid they still had on this side of Union a mile or so the land that she had inherited from her father, which was divided up. And some of the Millers still live on parts of that old land. My mother's cousin Rodney does and then her cousin Odin is no longer living, but his son has a nice place and he's raised his family on other part of that land. And it runs between Union and that Foothill Road that runs around the junction, like if you came from Hot Lake and ran around. There was a lot of land out in there.

ES: Did you get around to those places...

HF: Oh yes!

ES: ...often enough so you really saw what was going on?

HF: We did whatever worked out with my granddad's plans. Like we'd be there when...at Sunnybrook when they cultivated and seeded and when they put the hay up and that sort of thing. And they had big silos that they chopped and filled full of...I don't really know what it was. They just called it fodder whether it was corn or something else. And we were supposed to stay out of those, of course. But...I can remember stacking the hay. My brother used to get...they would have a horse they you would ride or lead out and he would pull the cable that lifted the hayfork up. That was all so manual.

ES: Would you describe a little more the haystackers? I've seen pictures of them, but I've never heard anyone describe how they worked.

HF: I don't know how well I can describe it. The exciting thing for us was the horse that you led or rode and it would be a big heavy work horse. And of course there's something that goes way up this way. And then they could swing this fork...after they pulled the hay up they'd swing it over however high it needed to be and put it on top.

ES: And then was there a rope that would've let it down on a pulley arrangement?

HF: It was a pulley thing, yea. And then you'd take the horse back and the rake would go down.

ES: I have read that those forks were pretty large and pretty dangerous.

HF: They were! They were!

ES: Probably at least put your eye out.

HF: Oh, you could be impaled on it! I think I might...I don't know. There might be a picture in the book of haying. But that was a great memory from the Sunnybrook farm.

ES: Were you a little afraid of the...?

HF: I wasn't allowed to get very close. I didn't get to...you know how girls were supposed to be a little bit more protected, I suppose is the word.

ES: Maybe. Not Gertie Hibbert, for example, she did what the men did.

HF: My brother would get to do the horse part and I'd have to watch that from afar. It's like when they were branding the cattle. You could stand and watch and hold your distance and we did that lots. When it was time to castrate the calves I couldn't stay. Granddad did not think that was suitable.

ES: Not appropriate for little girls to watch?

HF: No. No. [laughs] He certainly didn't. Oh shoot!

ES: What do you remember about sounds around those places?

HF: Sounds. Mostly there'd just be...

ES: Did you hear animal sounds all the time?

HF: No, they were so spread out. Of course when you bring the cattle in. Every night the dairy cattle sorta knew when...he had dairy and beef...they knew when it was time to come into the barn. Sometimes it'd just...and you might hear a dog nippin' their heels a little if they didn't get there fast enough. But it was just animals sounds.

ES: Did you hear crickets a lot?

HF: I don't remember that.

ES: Chickens?

HF: They didn't have chickens. There were pigs and they could be pretty noisy. They had a big hog house that you'd walk in the front and there were the places for the animals were separated. Like you'd have an old sow and there a bunch of little pigs and maybe there'd be space for another and another. And then they'd have a door for themselves that went outside. But you'd go down in between and tend to the feed and do things like that. And boy that was one place you watched out for! 'Cause there's nothin' meaner than a sow that has pigs. We got all our warnings, that's for sure. And those were kind of indescribable sounds. But I remember the

creek. That was always so pleasant. And riding up the hills behind the ranch up there. So that was...

ES: What smells stand out in your memory?

HF: Oh, those are pretty distinct! [laughs] [end tape]

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ES: Okay, go ahead.

HF: You sorta stayed away from the pig pens. They were quite a distance. Quite a long ways from the house and the other barns. And the barnyard I don't remember being fancy.

ES: The microphone's getting by your hand there.

HF: Okay. I forgot it was there.

ES: Good.

HF: I can't remember anything that bothered. It's not like the feed yards that I've seen in later years where just concentrated feed and lots of cattle in an area. There wasn't anything like that. Just really pleasant to be there.

ES: Could you describe spring at one of these ranches?

HF: What?

ES: Spring. The season spring.

HF: Oh, spring! The thing I remember most is all the little calves because that was the best part of spring.

ES: They'd be born in March or April?

HF: If everything went right they'd be born in...yes, in March or April. Then if it didn't you might get some in January that were gonna have a hard time.

ES: Did they have assisted births? I mean was there a veterinarian called in?

HF: No, no. But that was one of the farmer's jobs was to be watchful so if there was assistance needed they would.

ES: It was often needed, wasn't it?

HF: They talked about pullin' calves and I, of course, remember better in my dad's generation. My brother grew up to be a rancher. By then you were checkin' the cattle in your pickup, or things like that you know to see if they were all right or if there was anything they needed. No, I can only remember the veterinarians if an animal was injured. Like Granddad had his own barn in Union. Like most of the houses...there would be a house on a block and they had a barn out behind where he always kept his milk cow. But if he had an injured horse they'd bring it down there where he could take care of it. The veterinarian I remember was Dr. Paddock when I was a kid. It was pretty scary sometimes what they'd do to themselves.

ES: Breaking a leg?

HF: Mostly cuts. You know a horse was usually destroyed if it broke a leg.

ES: Cutting themselves on wire fences, perhaps?

HF: That happened, I'm sure. I don't know how they got injured. But in my mind I see these great big work horse...[tape interruption]

ES: ... Were there snakes?

HF: ___ I suppose there were some, but I didn't ever see 'em...[tape interruption]

ES: Let's try it again.

HF: You were asking about snakes, uh-huh? I don't remember any problems about snakes when I was a kid at all. Later...[tape interruption]

ES: Alright. How about mosquitoes? Was that a bother in the summertime?

HF: You know, I don't remember that it was.

ES: Anything about this environment that was unpleasant?

HF: No. [laughs] Just the cold, I guess, in the winter. But we always walked to school. There was no such thing as a school bus. And I only remember two families that had a car to bring their children to school.

ES: Right.

HF: And I think if there were hard times, and there really were, I'm sure, for my parents, that we didn't know the difference because they were wonderful parents and we had so much fun. We had so much love and so much family. I had another Granddad that had the ranch up in the...on the Powder River. And occasionally I would get to go up there. We just...life was just good and rich and full.

ES: Of course during your growing up years there was a radio available...

HF: Yea.

ES: ...most of the time...

HF: We had a radio.

ES: ... so you could know from that means what was going on in other parts of the world. Were you aware in any sense of longing to know what was going on in other parts of the world or to be there rather than to be in Union County?

HF: Maybe not in that sense. Probably the thing I remember most about what was going on in our own country...we were on the main highway...and seeing the people come through from like the Dust Bowl.

ES: Looking miserable?

HF: Oh yes! And my dad had a little service station in town there so we were right on the main street. And the hardships. You were very aware as kids of the hardships of all those people.

ES: Were you able to talk to them?

HF: No, I didn't ever talk to anybody.

ES: You could just tell from looking at them?

HF: Yes and the things that the folks us and that we watched. And they would just...be destitute. And then even the hitchhikers. People just trying to go someplace. Walking. That left a big impression on me. And we did have our radio and the news. But it was...I don't know...in my very young childhood. I don't know... I'll tell ya what I thought about the world is the things that Dad came home from France and Italy and we heard lots about, you know, how impressed he had been with the things he'd seen.

ES: When he was a serviceman in the First World War, you mean?

HF: Yes, uh-huh. So we'd heard about all that. He loved...my dad's big interest is architecture and so he told us a lot about the buildings and things like that that he'd seen. So that was...if I ever longed to go see anything that might have been where it would've come from.

ES: You don't recall having any poignant feeling about wishing you were somewhere else?

HF: No. See, I've been here my whole life. It's been fun to go visit other places, but I think it's a wonderful place to live.

ES: Yes. I think you have much company in that opinion.

HF: [laughs]

ES: Now the Union Hotel was built shortly after you were born, wasn't it?

HF: Uh-huh, it was.

ES: Do you remember the first time you went in it?

HF: No, not the first time, but I remember many times. Many times.

ES: Why did you go?

HF: I probably don't remember having any reason to...I remember going...there was a doctor's office in the basement. I went for that. When I was a little kid I didn't get hurt much, but I can remember that. And I can't remember any other reasons until maybe I was a teenager. And going...they had a very lovely dining room, which is only part of what they have now. But, I mean, what they have now is part of what it used to be. So we did get to go over for dinner once in a while, very special occasion. And then...

ES: Was it a formal kind of dinner with white tablecloths...

HF: Oh yes.

ES: ... and waiters with white gloves?

HF: No, not that formal! No, no. The tablecloths, yes. But it was a nice dining room. And when we were in high school there was a big...what did they call it...a parlor, I guess. And then the lady that ran it then. The kids were welcome to come there and visit and it had one measly little old pool table, which was not standard, I'm sure. But it was a place, a nice place, where the kids could go just for a little fun. I remember our teachers...the high school...I remember going over there to see a teacher. And they rented rooms out to the teachers. And that's about all they had was just a room. But I remember a number of teachers did live there. And then on the third floor there was some little apartments. I had an aunt and uncle that lived there when they were first married and I had a friend that lived there when we were in high school. So it was just kind of part of the community in different ways.

ES: A major part I should think!

HF: Yea. I think my dad said that my great-uncle, Ed Miller, had some part in getting that started. But I just...if he didn't put it in the book I'm not gonna say it for print 'cause I'm not positive about everything like Dad is.

ES: What other sorts of entertainment did you find in Union?

HF: We made our own entertainment. Besides riding horses, swimmin' in the creek, roller-skating, sledding in the winter. There was a tennis court which was free. And I'll tell you, in the '30s that was pretty special. Right behind the hotel where I guess there still is one. And lots of people played tennis. And the kids got to play when the grown-ups weren't playin'. So those were the main entertain...

ES: Was there a movie house?

HF: Yes, there was, uh-huh. And it was...

ES: Saturday matinees?

HF: I remember that it was the silent movies at first and that there was actually an old...something that played music. It wasn't fancy enough to have an organ like the big city of La Grande. But we got to go occasionally.

ES: Now you mentioned the big city of La Grande. Is that way La Grande seemed from the Union perspective?

HF: Oh yes! Coming to La Grande was quite an experience.

ES: What did kids say about the desire to go to La Grande?

HF: You mean like teenage kids? Little kids you got to go once in a while.

ES: If you were little kid, say about ten years old, could you go to La Grande? Did you want to get ice cream or candy or go to a movie or what was the attraction?

HF: You know, I can't remember coming to La Grande when I was little for anything except to come to a doctor. And it wasn't usually for me, it was for my mother. But it was nice to get ice cream. And I can remember that Mom and Dad would go to a shoeshine parlor and get the shoes shined. There hasn't been such a thing for a long time! But it was pretty conservative whatever it was that we did. When we were teenagers it was...if you could go to La Grande to a movie or a ballgame why that was, that was pretty good stuff.

ES: When you were in teenage years did you hear that La Grande was a place where there was prostitution and taverns and all those sorts of things?

HF: Yes, yes, I did, uh-huh.

ES: What were the rumors?

HF: Oh, there were a lot of upstairs places that a lot went on. And you just didn't...you just kind of didn't really know.

ES: It was mysterious.

HF: But you did not...you knew it was a place to stay away from. You didn't talk about things this freely then. It was like [whisper] "Did you hear..." that sort of thing. [laughs]

ES: That's as far as your curiosity went?

HF: I didn't ever go take a look for myself.

ES: I wouldn't have expected you to. [laughs]

HF: Oh, shoot! You come for school events and things like that.

ES: There was some sense then in which La Grande was Sin City compared to Union?

HF: [laugh] Yea, there wasn't any prostitutes that we knew of. But there were...what did we call 'em...bootleggers.

ES: Oh yes.

HF: Oh yes. And you'd whisper around about that. I can remember this...two houses that distinctly were considered bootleggers. And one of 'em was just like two doors up the street from our house. And one of the funny stories was somebody...you didn't lock your doors or anything...somebody burst into the house, our house, in the middle of the night and thought they were at the bootleggers. [laughs] And my daddy was the kind that didn't ever take a drink his whole life of anything. He just...that was...so it was a big joke on Mertin Davis' house. His house mistaken for bootlegger. They probably already had a little and then they didn't know where they were. So, that was about as wild as it got.

ES: So I guess from your perspective at that time moral standards for most people were fairly high?

HF: They were pretty good, sure. Of course there's a lot of pretending. A lot of things went on that you pretended like they didn't happen. And I guess the biggest entertainment besides the things that I said when we were teenagers was dancing. And that went for adults too because every Saturday night there was a dance. And the kids and the adults they all went to the same dance. It was great fun! And if you could get...come to La Grande go to a dance that was great. And occasionally go to Baker. Wow! So that was, that was a big social thing for teenagers that long ago.

ES: Did you attend any vaudeville in La Grande? [pause] Or plays, touring plays? Or even operas?

HF: I don't remember coming to anything like that.

ES: Where you aware that such things were happening?

HF: Oh yes. Yes. My mother was a good musician and so was her sister. And times just didn't let you go do things that we would do now. But by the time my sisters were, ten and thirteen years younger, Mom took them to the opera in San Francisco. It was not that she didn't know about those things it was that the Depression years you just got along. So I'm sure they did a lot more of that sort of thing just that many years later.

ES: Tell me a little about music in Union. Teachers, recitals, other ways of performing.

HF: Oh yes. We had piano... That's another thing I came to La Grande for was piano lessons. And when Mother was young they did operettas and things. I still have a program someplace where she sang the lead in "The Pirates of..."

ES: Penzance?

HF: Yea. So they...and the family was very... her family...was very interested in music and they made their own music. And there were all kinds of musical instruments still laying around when I was a kid. Mother was really a vocalist and her sister was a pianist. And there was a French horn and Daddy played the trombone and there were other... I'm not musical enough to even remember the name of some of 'em. And then there were guitar and mandolin and ukulele. I mean...and they talked about when... Mother's group they all were musical and they all played together at home. But they also put on these plays. And I can remember when I was a kid. I don't even know who put on the plays in Union, but they did. Some of 'em were probably high school productions. And there was still a city band. And my mother made me go play with 'em. [laugh] Made me. That's the only reason I did. I had a saxophone. And you had to go upstairs in this old Oddfellows hall. And all the men that played were at least old enough to be my dad or granddad, you know, and it was just a little group left over. But I used to go up and practice with 'em. [laughs]

ES: So that you could play...

HF: She tried so hard to make me a musician, but I just didn't have it. [laughs] Oh dear. I think all the kids in our family got music lessons. That's for sure.

ES: What about use of the library in Union? Was that...

HF: That was another very favorite thing to do. I can hardly believe its still a Carnegie library! Yes, I loved that. That was about two blocks from my house and I spent lots of time there.

ES: Remember anything about the librarians?

HF: Yes. I remember Mrs. Baird because she was the librarian all the time that I was a kid. And she was just a lovely lady.

ES: Was she the school of thought that you go to the library and you don't talk, you don't make noise?

HF: I can't remember that we made any noise. For the younger children there was a table with lots of little chairs and you could go in and look for your books and I don't think we would have thought 'em disrupting anything. It was kind of on one side, the kids side, and then the other side. And it wasn't, I'm sure, too adequate. I remember when we were in high school that...I suppose money of course, always, but Mom, my mom, had more books and reference books than they had in the library and more current. Several sets of encyclopedias and all kinds of things 'cause she was great on books. So we didn't do much research at the library. But it was special spot when I was younger.

ES: It wasn't open all the time, was it?

HF: I suppose it had certain hours. I don't remember about that.

ES: Maybe not even every day.

HF: It would seem like it was. Like we could go when we wanted to, but I couldn't say for sure about that. This very nice lady who just lived across the street from us and so it was about two blocks down to the library and she was the librarian. I don't even remember if she had any help.

ES: Probably not.

HF: It's pretty simple.

ES: Were you aware when you were growing up of the OSU Agricultural Research Station?

HF: Oh yes! Of course!

ES: What was your impression of what they were doing there?

HF: I just thought they were doing work to improve...you know, research and anything that would improve the farming or the cattle raising. That's would have been all I would have known about it.

ES: Do you have any direct knowledge of what was happening?

HF: I don't know that I had any direct knowledge. I remember being taken down there a number of times.

ES: Were there tours for school kids?

HF: No, not that sort of thing. When I was in high school a couple of us used to go down and type for the...I don't even remember what we typed, but we helped the girl that was their secretary down there in that funny, little, old building. I just remember going to do that.

ES: Were you aware of the time when the Hall ranch was purchased by the ___?

HF: You know, I can't remember. It was after...

ES: It was about 1940.

HF: Yea, I was gunna say I think it was after I was married.

ES: You were twenty.

HF: Mm-hmm.

ES: Was that the year you in college, maybe?

HF: Mm-hmm. Right along in there. 1938 and '9.

ES: What was your understanding about why your grandfather might want to sell it or need to sell it?

HF: I really didn't understand and I didn't like it too much, but I'm sure that he did need to sell it. He was an old man. He died in 194...

ES: 3.

HF: Mm-hmm. He'd had a stroke. Made him hard to get around the last few years. You know, it didn't really lay him in bed or anything. But he was eighty-seven when he died and I suppose he just needed money. He'd survived out of the... And there was enough provided for that my grandmother was taken care of. She lived a lot longer.

ES: But it was a sad event for you that it was sold?

HF: Yes, it was. Yes, it was.

ES: Did you feel you were losing something?

HF: Oh yes. Definitely.

ES: Associated with your earlier childhood, I suppose.

HF: Sure.

ES: Pretty strongly.

HF: And I think...yea. You just think those things are always gonna be there when you're really young.

ES: Yes. They were so huge. It must have seemed huge to you at the time.

HF: Yes, it did seem big. But you know, you just grew up with it and so it was a part of your life. The Sunnybrook ranch was only three miles away and Catherine Creek was about eleven, I think. But yea, it was.

ES: One other thing I wanted to ask you about, because I only found about it recently, on the way up to the Hall ranch along Catherine Creek there's some ice caves.

HF: Oh yes!

ES: Tell me what you know about them.

HF: [laugh] Oh dear! They's a thing that if you knew it was there you had to go in a time or two.

ES: I should think so.

HF: Oh yes. And it was...as I remember, just really rugged getting' down into them. Somebody'd thrown a few big ol' timbers down so you could get down in. And then by the time I was probably twelve or thirteen, fourteen along in there, some adult had blocked off some of the channels that went back down in off of the main cave. And I remember that. And then I also remember a bunch of little Girl Scouts that were camped across the river from 'em and we went up and we checked that out and then we found a tunnel big enough to crawl in and I guess we had flashlights. But we crawled...several girls, three or four of us...crawled on our hands and knees back in. Those kids don't have any sense. We got back in there it was full of bats! You never heard so many squeeling girls! And there wasn't even room to turn around. We had to just back up, push each other out again. So I don't know how many caves there are still up there or anything.

ES: What is your understanding of their geological formation?

HF: I don't really have any idea about that.

ES: How much ice is there and how long is the ice there each year?

HF: I didn't think there was very much ice, but it was probably back in the areas they'd blocked off when I was a kid. So I don't know.

ES: You didn't actually see any ice?

HF: No, it just chilly. I supposed I might of seen a little. But it's not like going into Oregon Caves or anything and remember all this stuff you see. It was very primitive even getting' in. That's a long time ago since I was that age.

ES: I suppose that...

HF: Probably seventy years since I've been in that ice caves.

ES: I suppose at least among kids they were a pretty compelling attraction?

HF: Oh yes! You had to go at least once. But then after I went on to the bat cave I didn't have to go back anymore. Never anymore.

ES: Do you think that they are accessible now for visitors?

HF: I haven't heard anybody talk about 'em for years. I just don't know. You just climbed up...just before to turn into the Hall Ranch a ways it was right there. And I don't remember if they were on...I don't hardly think...I don't know if they were on Granddad's property or not. 'Cause the lines kinda ran across and then the top... I know a lot of that land right before you go in the gate now wasn't his. And then there was a place where it dropped down on the creek where there's a great big cliff down in the park area, upper end of the park area, there's a big tall cliff. They always told me that was the corner of Granddad's land. It's kind of an imaginary line in my mind.

ES: Anything else you remember about those growing up years in Union that seemed noteworthy?

HF: I don't know what kind of thing.

ES: We've been talking about several of them. They're all noteworthy in their own way. And they undoubtedly influenced your values and your impressions of the world.

HF: Oh yes. It was really a good neighborhood. I grew up with the idea...you were talkin' about going back and forth to La Grande...but my folks were very positive that you owed loyalty to your own town and that you shouldn't shop out of town for anything you could buy at home because they knew how hard it was to provide those services there. And so I suppose they'd been raised on that too. But you knew everybody and I guess we just maybe took it for granted. There was a lot of loyalty. Everybody would help you if you needed it. You didn't have to talk about it. It's just a good place.

ES: When you visit Union now or drive through, do you think the texture of life there has changed a considerable...in several ways?

HF: I'm sure it has. So many people maybe live there and work somewhere else which transportation makes a lot of difference. And I don't know... I know that they basic goodness hasn't changed a lot. I spent a lot of time taking care of my parents in their later years and that's only been...my mother's been gone ten years and my dad twelve...but they were old. They never had to leave their own home. There was always somebody to care about 'em. It was...and my friend Miskle. You can't believe the people that care about that dear Miskle and how could she live there at 104 by herself if it wasn't still a loving, caring community.

ES: Yes, indeed.

HF: So it's a good place. [tape stopped]