

Marj Parker

6/13/02, tape 1, side 1

I: And your married name?

MP: Marjorie Howell Parker.

I: And you were born when?

MP: October 27, 1918.

I: Where?

MP: In the old Imbler home in Imbler, its original home.

I: And you grew up in Imbler and went to school in Imbler?

MP: Yes, yea.

I: What do you remember about your early days going to school in Imbler?

MP: Well, the first grade, I think, there was snow drifts over the fences, and I cried because my hands are cold. We stopped at Krauser's, who was the next house up and warmed my hands. We stopped at the store. And my dad took us. And then later, when he...he'd take us in the sled. It was just a flat bed with the sleds on the bottom...if it was real bad. But we did a lotta walkin'. It was a mile over the railroad track.

I: Well, in growing up in Imbler what were the things that you remember in your grade school days?

MP: Well, I was one of the smallest in the first grade. And I think by the third grade I started gettin' pretty chubby. And I thought bein' chubby ...I was chubbier than the other girls and I remember that. One of my favorite teachers was Miss Nielson in the fifth grade. Do I tell names? Can I put names in?

I: Yes.

MP: OK. Chase Loucrowser [?] and Chase McCoy were naughty. I don't know what they did. Miss Nielson...they wore overalls and she took 'em in the cloakroom and hung them by [laughter]. Every time I see Chase I mention it to him. I said, "Do you remember?" And he said, "I sure do." And then she cried. She was so...and I just saw him at the Imbler reunion and he said he loved her. "She bawled me out a few times, but we just adored her."

I: That's the best teacher.

MP: But she's the outstanding one. And then in about the eighth grade Morris...I think it was Morris or Maurice Wise was our teacher. He had one leg taken off. We went to Cove swimming pool and he took

- that leg off and just swam like everything. And he started a ukulele band. And I think there were five or six of us girls that learned to play the ukulele. We went over to...when they had basketball games and stuff. In Union I remember a tournament and we went and we played here and there. But those, yea...those in the grade school were outstanding things.
- I: And then you went on to high school.
- MP: High school was just upstairs and I was scared to death 'cause I'd never been upstairs. I guess the only time you went if you was called up to the principal's office. [laughs] But...
- I: Did you have any particular good friends while you were going to high school?
- MP: Well, there was a group that we'd gone clear through grade school and we were, you know, good friends. I never dated in high school, but we went to dances. My folks...Saturday night we went into La Grande, the boys played in Dick Lindsey Band. They bought groceries and Dad'd go to the show. We'd wait in the lobby of the Sac Hotel 'til the dance started. Mom would sit up in the balcony and I danced. [laughs] That's where I met Walt was there. That was a wonderful time. That was so much fun
- I: I forgot to ask you, how many were in your family?
- MP: Just Bill, my younger brother, he's nine years younger, and then Dick was two years older.
- I: I didn't know Dick.
- MP: You didn't know him?
- I: I knew Bill, of course, plays music in Zuber Hall for the dances.
- MP: Yeah, he started so young. But the dancing part, I want to say, that little Mormon church in Imbler was were I first went to dances. And, oh it was ... My mom always went with us. You'd have pie socials and potlucks. Then we'd walk home that mile. You know, we never, Dick and I never drove the car, 'cause, probably couldn't afford it and that's why we made a family night on Saturday night.
- I: Well, that's the advantage of a small community. Everybody knew everybody. Every holiday was at the school, all the activities. Was that the way it was?
- MP: Yeah. But Mom always went to the dances with us and stuff. Dad though liked the basketball games so he took us to the basketball games. [laughs]
- I: Was there any outstanding thing that happened during high school that you remember more than others?

MP: The only thing that for me, that was...I think most kids go through in English class having to get up in front of people. And I'd just be terrified. They had declamation contests at that time. Through the English class we had to pick either humorous or nonhumorous and give it. Well, I learned a humorous one. And, lo and behold, I went clear to the college and I won the county, I guess. I got a little medal in there to show. But, I can remember going completely blank, but it came back, you know. But, and then I cried when it was all over. I did win that, and that was outstanding. Then we had some school dances, too, but not very many that I remember.

I: Was there any disappointments that you had during those years?

MP: Not particularly for me. I felt I had a good life. Of course it was Depression and Mom made all my clothes and everything. But, when we were seniors there was two girls that were really for valedictorian. One was my special friend, well they were, the other was, too. But, they started a rumor about her that she cheated. She didn't. I don't remember just how it all came out. But, I stood in that line graduation night crying because they'd had all this trouble. It was too bad. Because it wasn't...I'm not sure how many was in our class, maybe twelve. It was small, a lot smaller than it is now.

I: Well then, what things did you like to play when you were young in times that you played games, or things that you liked to do, read?

MP: Oh, my goodness. Probably we played a little Kick the Can and some of those kind of things. There was lots of music in our home. I can't remember little what we played too much. But the Westenskow boys--there was four boys--that worked for us in the summer and they were all musical. I can't...Melvin, everybody remembers Melvin was the oldest. I don't think that he played music. There was Clifford and Pete and Lester. Lester and I grew up like brother and sister because his family run the garden because my mother was cooking three meals a day for the hay crew. And she didn't have time. I have memories of Lester's folks and the little kids out in the yard dividing. Mom had lots of berries and vegetables, and sittin' there dividing them up. And eh..

I: They kind of sharecropped.

MP: Yeah, they did the gardening. One time Lester and I...I must have put on the boy's jeans, because girls didn't have jeans in those days...We went over to the slough, which I think was maybe a half a mile. It was on our land. You crossed the Grande Ronde River and then walked over to the slough. There was carp in that slough. Lester took

a pitchfork and a gunny sack and he went down in that slough. He'd stab the carp and he'd throw them to me. I'd grab like this. [laughs] My daughter says she can't believe I did anything that dirty. We laughed all the way. He took that sack home to his mother and she canned them.

I: Canned carp?

MP: Canned carp.

I: I always heard they were very bony.

MP: The bones were soft. That's what I understood, that they were soft enough when they were cooked. Now, That might be wrong.

I: Salmon bones are soft.

MP: But she, you know, it was hard times. In Christmas, let's see, I think there was about eight children there...we exchanged Christmas dinners. Lester's mother, Mattie, said she fed her children before they came because there were so many of them. The four older boys worked for us and they just run me ragged getting 'em water at noon, you know. A lot of fun times they had. The younger guys had water fights during the noon hour.

I: People helped other people. It was a good time even though it was Depression time.

MP: Oh, yes. 'Course, the good old days. But a lot of it I'd like to go back to. Things have changed so much. We didn't know it was rough. We didn't know any different.

I: Being on the farm, that was an advantage.

MP: Well, I never was hungry. My goodness no. There was no ...We had always raised...I can remember Dad making the ham. I didn't like the ham very well. He put it out in the woodshed, I guess, and hang it or something, I think...

I: Smoke it.

MP: Smoke it. Mom canned all the deer meat. I don't care a lot for deer meat, but Mom canned the deer meat and it was good. We'd set...

I: You probably had a cow.

MP: oh, Daddy had Holsteins. Before he could get a milking machine and afford 'em...It seems like there was about twenty-five, but I might be mistaken on that...Why, my older brother couldn't take sports because he had to come home and help Dad milk. Well, by the time Bill came along they had the milking machine and Bill was very active in sports and everything, whereas my older brother didn't get to. But he, Dick passed away in '76. He wasn't very well. I guess, maybe, he had scarlet fever when he was little.

I: I didn't know him.

MP: He played the clarinet and the sax. But he, Mom was so, wanted us to have music so bad that they...he had a correspondence course. And he got some free lessons...I believe her name was Mrs. Robinson, I'm not sure...through this. But Mom had enough music that she could help him with the correspondence course. He had to fill out questionnaires and then they'd correct 'em and send 'em back. Guess what? I had to take the second handed ones and learn to play. [laughs] But, I learned the piano, the keys and that. When I was in high school and Dad said, "We can afford you to take...What kinda lessons do you want to take?" I decided I wanted a guitar. Now, I don't know why. Guess who was my teacher? Lauren Blanchard. He was down in Kiss's [?] and Mom, well we'd come in and give lessons. Then he moved to a one-room apartment, not apartment, one room. It had a dresser and a bed and a chair. And he said, "Now, Mrs. Howell, I want you to come with Marjorie so there won't be any talk." So, that finished up and I got so I could chord. He'd say, "Can you stay a little longer?" And he'd play the banjo and I could chord to it. So, I just really loved it till I got married and had children. [laughs] Well, you have to keep your fingers toughened up to fret.

I: I never played. My youngest son does. When you graduated from high school then what was your first job?

MP: Well, I went to Draper's School of Commerce, which was up above Lawrence's Jewelry. Then, I got a job at *The Observer*.

I: What year was that?

MP: That must...let's see...I graduated in 1936, let's see, in the spring and that fall...I spent the nine months...'37...I can't remember just when I, whether it was late '37 or early '38.

I: Then that commercial of La Grande, you said that was one of your first days at *The Observer*?

MP: Well, I don't know if it was the first day. I remember taking it. I kind of remember it more than it was a dress my mother had made. It was kind of a boil or wispy. I just kind of remember that. I don't know that it was the first day, but it was while I worked there.

I: What was your wages at that time?

MP: I don't remember. I know it was enough that I wanted to eat out. [laughs] Eat out...

I: Where did you like to eat?

MP: Top...what did they call it...across from the Sacajawea. What was that little restaurant? It seems like it was Top...that isn't quite right.

Wimbys was over here. That was a bar. Then there was this restaurant.

I: Board had one later, but I'm not sure if he had one that early.

MP: No, he, that was later.

I: Charley Carther had a number of restaurants.

MP: That was down on Adams. The Nook, no...

I: The Fountain.

MP: Fountain, that was it. And then the Lavender Lunch.

I: Then the Shakeswood Shop.

MP: Was that on Fir?

I: That was on Fir right behind where Zimmerman's were later.

MP: OK. Yea, This one just right there by Wimbys. I went there mostly.

I: When did you and Walt start dating?

MP: I was living clear out across from the highway shops. Rosyln Knight was her maiden name, and I bached in a one room place with a kitchen stove and a bed. I think the people's names was Rhodes and they had lived in Imbler. And so we stayed in town and we bached there. Well, I had met Walt at the Zuber and he wanted to date. And so my mother said, "Oh, he's such younger than you." Oh, I wasn't going to go with somebody younger. So, anyway, I found out he was two and a half months younger, but that was all right. So he asked for date and I was living out that far. I'm like this, I pray he's got a car because I was wearing heels like that, you know, high heels. Well, of course he didn't have a car and we walked all the way to the movies...

I: That was a long way!

MP: Yes. Then he didn't, we didn't go out and eat. And I thought, "Well, you know, they take you out to eat after you go to the show." On the way home he says "Well, I spent all my money on the show. Didn't have enough to go out and eat." Well, that endeared him to me that he acknowledged it, you know. But, that was oh, in '38. We went together about five months and we broke up because I didn't, wasn't sure. Well, I won't go into detail. I knew then I did care about him. Oh, I just suffered till we got back together again.

I: When were you married?

MP: In October the 29th. I was just twenty-one.

I: What year?

MP: 1939. Why I wanted...there was a fellow that worked for Dad, his name was Frank Brown and he had never married. He said he'd give me a horse if I'd wait till I was twenty-one and I'd have better sense than to get married. But he came through years and years later he gave

me a horse, but course Dad had it out there. That wasn't the main reason, but we always laughed. Walt said, "Well, I wanted her to be twenty-one so we'd get that horse." But we never had it. That was kind of a fun thing.

I: When you were married then what was Walt doing at that time?

MP: He was apprenticeship for Melville's. He started in high school. He woulda never had a chance to go to college or anything. I can't remember the teacher that got ...at that time they had this work deal. He went out for football. The coach said, who was the teacher, said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I come to play football." And he said, "You go back to the job that I got you!" So he was still...and he was makin' I think he was makin' seventy or seventy-five dollars a month when we got married. We bought a little house on M. Walt had ten cents in his pocket. And he got, his step-dad signed for him. I think it was a hundred dollars down payment. The house and lot was a thousand dollars.

I: I can appreciate.

MP: Just off M and Cedar, I think. There was a ditch ran through there that they filled in later.

I: People don't realize how hard it was during those times.

MP: Well, we didn't know how, you know, until he lost...both Melville brothers went to the shipyards. Walt was without work and I was pregnant and sick. By golly we had to load up and get outa here in the middle of the winter to get work. His brother was living in Portland and we went there. One day it was too bad a blizzard to even leave. We left the next day and there was cars in the ditches, but we got through. They went to the union and he was only off work three days. They sent him out daily.

I: His experience with Melville's really paid off.

MP: And he was good in that type...what they call drawings in high school.

I: Mechanical drawings.

MP: Mechanical drawings. He was very good at that. And of course, he had to do a lot of that--adapting the metal when he came back here.

I: Then, when was Walt drafted?

MP: 1943. Let's see, I was expecting Laddie. We bought a little place in Portland finally when we got settled. We were in Kelso for a while, a few months. Then he went to Texas and he got home on a ten-day leave. No, I'm sorry, it was 1944. He got a ten-day leave and Laddie was born in October of '44. He saw him and then he was gone. They

sent him right out to Germany. He didn't get back...in fact...well, he was gone sixteen months, but when he came home he had two months he was on leave and that counted. But, we held our breath until he got discharged because they were sending so many to the Asian places.

I: Pacific.

MP: Yesh. Uh-huh.

I: During that time that Walt was in the service, where, did you live in Portland?

MP: We bought a little house for um...it was \$1900 and it was in such bad shape. Walt said, "What'll you take off for the shape it's in?" And they took a hundred dollars off. [laughs] But he had time. He papered and I painted. We didn't do a lot of remodeling, but it was clean and it was a sweet little house. We didn't have a lot of furniture, and he had a second cousin around the corner that loaned us furniture. Eventually we got furniture. That was before, let's see, ...I don't know if I had a date that we left here...let's see...'41, I guess. Patty was born in April, '41...no, it was '40 when we left here. So we had time to do those things before he went to the service.

I: While he was in the service you took care of children.

MP: Well, George McClure was Walt's best friend and he married Bethel Parker. So, we were just like that. They'd come and spend weekends. They lived at Oregon City. They'd spend weekends and they just adored Patty. And so George went in the service...first I think he was in the Navy. And anyway, Bethel and I lived together, and she had Carol, the oldest girl. But, I was so sick with being pregnant with Laddie that she kinda had to take over. She was like a sister that I never had. We lived together.

I: That's when friends really meant something.

MP: Yea. We'd been close you know, through the years because Walt and George being best friends.

I: You spent a lot of time writing letters to Walt while he was in the service?

MP: Yea, but I couldn't, wasn't hearing from him. My mother sent a letter to Red Cross I think, or something, and of course they got a hold of his...who have the powers to be. He wrote, "Don't ever do that again." They must of chewed him out. He was writing, but it wasn't getting through to me.

I: They were censoring the mail at the time.

MP: It just wasn't coming through and then I'd get a bunch. Yea, we mailed. Then, when he got back we hit up here on the train. Well,

we'd sold our car because I wasn't driving...I can't remember...we went out to the farm. We were looking...we wanted to come home and he wanted to open a sheet metal shop. Somebody had moved in...there was no place downtown at all. I think it was Craigs said to come down there and Lyon's, but.. so anyway, we ended up buying this place. There was a one...two car garage out there that was really old. He started in out there that first winter. Well, you couldn't get metal. It was too cold. But, the first job he got of roofing and he could get the metal out at Elgin something, a metal roof. He put on and oh my goodness that was the height of it. We were on rocking chair money. Whatever it wasn't very much from the service for year. That's what we...

I: Fifty-two dollars, as I recall.

MP: What we lived on. But, the little house in Portland we sold for, it seems like around \$5, 750. I thought that's robbery because we only paid... but then we got...this was almost two acres that we bought for the same price.

I: That was neat.

MP: We got, borrowed the down payment from his dad, but we paid it right back as soon as we got the money from our house in Portland. We paid him right back. But, we kept some of the money out to get started. But, I wanted to say too, this was a Parker, no relation, a Parker dairy in years past. This place was a milk house. It was about two stories high. Walt tore all that down because it was deteriorating. The cement is still out there. Then he built that little place where the fire place is out there. It is getting kind of old now. I've been here fifty-six years.

I: That's quite a while.

MP: Yea. [laughter]

I: Besides Walt doing sheet metal he got in that glider plane...

MP: Oh, wasn't that awful! 1959. Pattie was graduating. There was the Junior/Senior Dance that night. I had worked so hard to make her dress that I insisted she go. She'd asked Kenny Blanchard...she wasn't going with anybody and we were just good friends. Of course Kenny was up at the hospital with me because when he went down Lauren was pulling him, you know. You probably know all...

I: No, I didn't know that Lauren was...

MP: Lauren was towing him...

I: So they would know, they pulled a glider behind a car until it got in the air and he was supposed to disconnect, but it didn't do that.

MP: They worked the tow. I don't know if it was the first time when the car would go this way and pull it up so the car, that car could see. But it didn't release.

I: And it pulled him right into the ground.

MP: But he had safety belts all around. It just...that one leg...the ankle was just demolished.

I: Shattered, you might say.

MP: Shattered. And the hip or thigh bone and his ribs were broken and a cracked pelvis and the other heel was broken. Walt didn't give up on many things.

I: When I come down to see him he was in a complete body cast from his heels right up to his neck.

MP: He was four and half months. They put him in a body cast after he was on a wheelchair and that leg fell off. This thigh bone, instead of the doctor operating again, why, he just put him in that body cast for four and a half months. Then, it started...[end of tape]

6/13/02, tape 1, side 2

MP: ...five months.

I: In Walla Walla?

MP: Yea, in Walla Walla because that osteomyelitis he almost lost his leg. The doctor here knew that he hadn't done what he should have done. We won't go into...

I: That's why they call them practicing physicians. They're still practicing.

MP: Yea. It was bad, but he didn't let it get him down. Six years later he had plans to build airplanes. That was devastating because I never thought he'd go back to it. So, he built a hot little number. I remember he knew how to fly it. Then he went . . .this little...well this little, the gas gauge showed it had gas in it. Well, he got over Elgin and run out of gas. He flipped over in a muddy field. It didn't hurt him, but even his billfold had mud in it. And I said, "Maybe somebody up there's telling you something." Well, yea, but that didn't stop him. He and Roy Kneeler rebuilt a plane. Then his lungs got bad and he wasn't supposed to be flying. I think he did. People said they saw him out. I said he better not be, but I knew he was. Finally he sold his share out. But that was...he loved it and it was in his blood. I think all flyers are more or less that way if they really get into it.

I: What did you keep busy doing? Pattie was pretty well grown and Laddie was...

MP: Well, I wouldn't fly. We were up at the lake and I had a lot of company and we was taking everybody flying around, you know.

I: You had a cabin at Wallowa Lake?

MP: Yea, we built in 1954. That's another story. But anyway, I thought if they're trusting him to do that I'm going to be a bitter old lady. The kids are gone and I better start flying with him. It was just a little old puddle jumper. We flew to down on the coast. We flew to...in California...the desert...I can't say it...

I: Palm Desert?

MP: Well, no, it wasn't Palm Desert. Anyway, they had the hotel up on the hill and the golf course down below and also a motel down below. It was one of the lowest spots. I can't say the name, but anyway. We flew there. I think we stayed all night along the way someplace. So I flew. Then when he decided to sell it and he was building this with Roy. I said, "Now I've done it. I've been there. I don't want to fly anymore, so don't worry about it." It was a two-seat...I can't tell you the name of it either. I used to know the names, but I've forgotten. But, the cabin. We didn't have money for a cabin. It had always been a dream of ours. Walt sold his chainsaw to young George Ambrose. And in turn, George had bought logs, half logs, to start a house. He decided he didn't want to build that. That was what Walt traded for him. Then George loaned him the chainsaw to work on his cabin. [laughter] We spent every weekend that year we started. Cooking over a bonfire. There were some trees that we could get under. We'd get wet and cold and we'd go into the movies to dry out. Believe me, those people dressed up and here we were just like Indians, you know. A lot of friends came and we pot-lucked mostly. I learned...I was very active in Girl Scouts and I'd learned a few tricks of bonfire cooking. Finally, I said to Walt, "You've got to fix me a table and a bench." It was just doing it so rough. Finally he threw something together and we used that for years and it was just an impromptu thing. Yea, we have oh wonderful memories. He was happier when he was building, when he was doing something. We bought a lease...let's see, I think the ninety-nine year lease was a \$150. When we bought it it was \$300. That was where the cabin was. The next one, on the west, was \$750. We thought, well the way they are moving in here we better get it. The next one, to the east, that we got was \$1300. Now...

I: Kept going up.

MP: Well, I think they're probably \$10,000 now.

I: I don't know. Didn't the Grahams have a cabin close to yours?

MP: Well, Powell Grahams had one on the east across the creek from us. And then Leal and Leif built on the west after we were there. But they are not related.

I: Lee and Leal went to high school with Links. My very good friends. Jim Evenson's cabin was just...

MP: Yea, he was across the road katy-wompos. He was in Drapers when I was, so he was a good friend. Jim's not very well, I guess.

I: No, he isn't. They're real good friends.

MP: It is too bad that old age you, getting something, but we all have to go through it.

I: So a lot of your time was spent up at Wallowa Lake when you had leisure time?

MP: Oh yes! Well, we just leave here. If he hadn't he'd of been working all weekend. That was our salvation. We'd go up there and work, but it was different. I would be kind of uptight getting everything ready and getting the food ready and everything. Just as I...like about getting out of Elgin, I could just feel that leveling off. We had so many good memories up there.

I: Your daughter grew up to be the county assessor now.

MP: [laughter] Yea. Well, she was a Fair Maid in 1958. I got involved with them because she was a Fair Maid. She played the accordion real well. That was her talent. I was taking girls all over and I stayed in that with the Delongs for nine or ten years. But Up to that time I had worked in Girl Scouts from the time she was a Brownie. We'd go up to Anthony Lakes and I enjoyed that. I spent quite a few years in that. No, I thought maybe this was going to be more history of Imbler and stuff, not just me.

I: Anything that you want to tell about Imbler would be fine.

MP: Well, when I was probably about four or five the old grain elevator burned. That was outstanding in my life. We stood up on the hill where the Bingaman place is. You know, you just turn off the main highway there. I remember on that hill it burned. About what Imbler used to be is on this other tape.

I: Used to do a lot of fruit packing in Imbler.

MP: Just where I was...Yes, the Gales and I don't know what Gales it was. They built, they had a place there in Imbler. I wasn't working at the Observer and I was going to get married in the fall so I packed

cherries. That belt, a belt went by and you were stationed here. I said to Donna, Donna Watson is her maiden name, I said, "Is it getting awful warm in here?" She said, "No." The next thing I knew I woke up. I had passed out! [laughter] Evidently from that belt going by.

I: The movement.

MP: I earned enough money for a cedar chest. I guess I thought that everybody should have a cedar chest.

I: So that was your hope chest.

MP: Yea.

I: I used to ice cars...ice after the fruit had been packed into the refrigerator cars. They iced them from both ends and then the railroad would pull them out and ship them east.

MP: How old are you?

I: Seventy-five.

MP: You're Bill's age then.

I: Yes.

MP: Will be. August is his birthday.

I: I always knew Bill you know, because of the dance bands and what have you. Even though he was from Imbler. This whole community everyone knew everybody else.

MP: I still think I should know anything that comes out about Imbler and I don't. [laughter] Did you ever dance? Did you ever hear him play at the Zuber.

I: Oh yes!

MP: You did?

I: When we were kids you had to go.

MP: Oh, wasn't that wonderful! Bill run it straight. It was a good clean place to go.

I: You can't hardly find a dance anymore.

MP: Well, the senior center was having good dances and I hope they go back to it. They kind of lost it because of canned music, I think. If they're going to have live music maybe it would get back. I can't think...you've probably asked me every question there is.

I: I well, haven't asked you everything. [laughter] What do think of the changes of Grande Ronde Valley over your lifetime here?

MP: Up to know it's been...a few years back, been fine. We, Walt and I, would have liked to have kept...and maybe this is just because I'm old...kept the temperature kind of a downtown...have a lot of things downtown like it used to be. I'm very against Wal-Mart coming in...the big one. Because if I went...of course now it's different then

when I drove, but...I would get lost and I would not enjoy that big of thing. It's going to wreck what little we got left of downtown.

I: It's sprawling with Safeway moving.

MP: Yea. I like it way it was, but everything has to change.

I: ...Trotters and all those places you used to shop.

MP: ...I shop quite a bit at Penny's and the drugstore right across. I'm a pink lady and I get benefit...I only have one prescription, in fact, that I get.

I: You're lucky, Marj.

MP: Yes, and I know. I can't...somebody said the worst thing that can happen to you is losing your eyesight. I said, oh no, if you're in pain all the time. I'm not in pain and I have to adjust to this. I'm very outgoing about...I try to get a person before they get away...who am I talking to? [laughter] I don't know right or wrong, but that's the way I feel. I need to know who I'm talking to you. Some people you want to give a hug you know, and then you've just kind of said hello. I tell them that.

I: You recognize voices, too?

MP: Not as...I'm trying. Sometimes a silhouette coming in...like up at the hospital I can tell.

I: Well, at church you always recognize me.

MP: I do, yea. I didn't, though. I don't think I did in the beginning. I think I learned...and Pattie. Well, I've enever known, I've known you better than Pattie because of working with cans.

I: Walt used to let me work in his shop. Do you remember that?

MP: No.

I: Years ago when he was a customer for Hanford Sales. We were trying to build their house and Walt let me come down and do some metalwork in the shop.

MP: Oh he did? Good. Lot of people who were out there that didn't know or they would come to the door when Walt wasn't home, but I didn't remember. One of the things that he stayed with and work with George.

I: Wasn't he a peach?!

MP: He would just visit with Walt and says, "Before you let any changes let me know" or "We've got this in." So Walt bought everything there.

I: George worked for Craig Brothers. Up there when he first came to La Grande.

MP: We were one of the first people George came. They had a van type, a wooden paneled type. Those sweet little kids and they came here because of sheet metal work. So, we knew them from that time on. Maxine and I are good friends. We'd go out and see George when he was so sick. Oh, it was so bad, so bad.

I: Really hard on Maxine.

MP: Yea. She came through it. She's a sweet lady.

I: Then she lost two of the children.

MP: What she's been through! Jan was Pattie's age. And Jay was young.

I: Yes, when he had his heart attack.

MP: Terry...they'll come and get Maxine and take her here and then bring her back.

I: Terry's a pretty nice boy.

MP: I think they all are.

I: You know Walt and I were both active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

MP: The what?

I: Veterans of Foreign Wars.

MP: [laugh] Yes. I had to laugh because he was vice-president and Ray Snider said, "I'm going to turn the meeting over to you, Walt." And Walt got up there and adjourned. [laughter] He was not, not a leader in that respect. He couldn't go on...he didn't go on to president.

I: I remember him up there.

MP: He and George and Bethel and I, we just thought that was the thing to do as soon as we got home back there.

I: And Less Westenskow was also your good friend. He was with the VFW at that time.

MP: Oh yes. Walt kept going to the meetings. Bethel and I quit. I still belong. I still pay my dues.

I: It's a nice organization. It's too bad their all getting old.

MP: Now, do you go to the meetings?

I: Yes. I'm the adjutant. I write up the minutes of the meeting.

MP: I see. I know Leo and Paul Nice still go, too. Their friends of mine.

I: Yes, Paul was there last meeting night.

MP: Yea, she had surgery on her hip, but she's getting around now with a walker. We joined the American Legion, VFW and, you know, you're just patriotic and want to. We belonged to the American Legion until, oh, a few years before Walt died. We both stayed in the VFW.

I: It's a nice town to live in.

MP: That's it. It seems like it's just grown about as much...

I: Is there anything that you'd do different?

MP: Do different. Well, my step-mother used to say...worry about she didn't do this with her son. Maybe, she worked so hard and so forth. I said, "Dolly, I think we'd be the same person if we had it to do over." Maybe, I used to make resolutions not to yell at my kids. [laughter] Every year and then I'd do it.

I: Maybe probably you might make worse mistakes if you had it to do over again.

MP: Right. Yes, if I had it to do over, I think, I think, I would back Walt to fly. [laughter] Because that was trauma.

I: He really liked that.

MP: Yea and he just had to do it, he had to do it. It wasn't what killed him, you know, it was lung disease and all that. Maybe that would be something. I have told my son's step-daughter...she was ah, married a pilot and he flew...I said, "Honey, accept it because I said, it's in their blood and they're going to do it." Oh, I suppose that you might make other mistakes if you had your life. I've had a good life. The farm life growing up was wonderful. There was something I thought about. My grandmother...my dad and uncle had typhoid fever...so Grandma prayed. She was very, very religious and was left a widow with three babies. My dad was the oldest. She prayed for a well and got an artesian well. Now, I've heard that story all my life. That God gave her that artesian well. When I was growing up it run all the time. The river being so close or something maybe that got in the water. So I am, I went to visit Nell Stephens who grew up with my dad.

I: She's 108.

MP: She was about 102 when I went to see her. And I said...Daddy had a sister that died when she was six. I said well, I think she died with quinsy or something like that. She said, "Oh no she didn't!" Now I don't remember what it was she died with, but Nell told me. Her mind was good.

I: It's still pretty sharp.

MP: My grandfather did die of quinsy. That's a phlegm or thickening in the throat. They don't have that name anymore for it. That was what he died with at a young age. He was twenty-eight. We looked that up on the tombstone. Instead of twenty-five. Now do you edit this, then?

I: Well, we'll transcribe it and write it down. Some things they'll leave out.

MP: Oh yea, because what we're...[laughter]

I: I didn't know a lot about Imbler other than I worked out there one summer. It seemed like a nice little community. Ruckmans.

MP: Ruckmans, yea. Garnet and ...what was his name that had the nice house there in Imbler...his folks owned it first. I remember as a little girls going and visiting her. She was real heavy and I don't know that she walked very good. She was always sitting in a chair. I'd go visit her little girl.

I: What was the man that always had cider on his front porch there?

MP: Old Lyle Wilson.

I: Wasn't that the neatest thing! And then they got so he couldn't sell it.

MP: Nita, his daughter Nita, was in my class. She had store-boughten clothes! Most of us had what our mother...'Course Mama sewed nice and I had, but thought that would be the height to start school every fall with store bought clothes. She was real pretty Swedish. Lyle and Clyde Wilson had such a sense of humor. Shirley Wilson was in Bill's class. They said she had died. We just had our Imbler reunion and they said she had passed away. He sold that until they said he had to purify it, I guess, or something.

I: All the regulations. It was so good. In the fall you would always stop by and take a gallon of cider and pay him and it was there on the porch.

MP: I can still see the twinkle in his eye. Right across the road from him was Fox's. Of course, he still lives there. I can't say his name either, but Fox...Clayton Fox, he still lives there. But when I went to school there was just the brick building. But they built the Wade Hall while I was in school. That was really something. I don't know if that was Mrs. Wade from Elgin that donated money, a lot of money, toward that. I couldn't figure out why, you know, to Imbler, but I'm sure that was what happened and they named it after her.

I: Must have been a reason.

MP: A lot of changes there. They're talking now about tearing that down, too. In the paper...

I: They seem to tear everything down.

MP: Yes.

I: They don't keep the things that you remember.

MP: They always say the mortar isn't good in these brick buildings. The mortar isn't good...

I: The high school here in La Grande.

MP: The Sac they didn't say that. They couldn't say that. They had a heck of a time tearing it down.

I: Remember they put a Caterpillar on the top floor and tore it down from the top floor by floor.

MP: That was in those pictures, wasn't it?

I: Yes.

MP: We saw that at one of the reunions. That's sad.

I: The changes that they've had.

MP: That was a nice restaurant in there. I can remember going there. It was one of the nicest. By the way, we went to the Elkhorn yesterday for lunch and it is, the dining room is really pretty. I sure hope they make a success because it's a really nice dining place to go.

I: He wanted to compare it to the Haines Steakhouse. He wanted to have a good place to eat in La Grande. It would be nice if he is successful.

MP: Even lunch was not sandwiches or soup. The three of us got the hors d'oeuvre and it was asparagus with cream cheese and a ham slice wrapped around it. There was four of them. I said, "My goodness, that's a lunch!" It was our lunch. She said, "Well, we're thinking of putting that on our lunch menu." It cost as much as the shrimp salad which was like this. That was \$5.95 and I think shrimp salad. We expected to pay a little bit more, but you know. Sandwiches are about five dollars. I don't think you can hardly get by anymore...

I: A hamburger at Denny's could be as much as seven dollars!

MP: Is that right? I really hope they can make a success out of it.

I: Well, I hope so too. In the old days they had the Liberty and State theater, Granada theatre and we all went to China Marys.

MP: That was the first place we went out to eat. Walt...we ordered hamburgers. Walt poured ketchup on his plate. I thought, "Is that kind of uncouth?" I learned that was pretty good! [laughter] To put ketchup on your plate. I was so green. Oh gosh, I was so green. Well, I didn't have sisters and I was raised on a farm. In the first grade I was so scared to death, just scared to death. You know, what are you scared of? I just hadn't been out in the world very much.

I: Living on the farm did you come to La Grande much?

MP: No. Dad tells in here how long it took in the early days. About going across the mountain, my mother was from Walla Walla and she got real sick. Going across Tollgate and they fell asleep and the horse stopped. It just stopped. They woke up and finished. They left I think at four o'clock in the afternoon and got there the next morning. And stuff like that. But no, I was tickled pink if something broke down on the farm and Daddy had to go into town. Boy, I got ready

real quick to go into town. I remember him giving me a dime or a nickel or something and I bought little round perfume...it had...the bottle was round and the top was black square. That's what I'd spend my money on. I could probably get it for a dime. I never wore make-up. My mother didn't like make-up. I was in several plays in high school because I think the only reason was I could smear on that make-up and I loved it. [laughter] One time Daddy and Bill and I...I don't think...was in a county or a PTA or some kind...all of us were in a play together out there. My mother said, "I just don't know how you can do it!" She was more timid. I told Pattie after she asked me I didn't hear the sermon very good. I kept reminiscing through the sermon [laughter] and thinking back. It was a good life.

I: How much has Bill's farming changed from when your dad was farming in the early days?

MP: Oh my goodness! Now, he has a cab that's all enclosed. Other than that, I don't know. He's changed a lot, I know. There's been lots of changes, but I'm not close enough to what he does to say.

I: He raised grass seed.

MP: Yes. Daddy had...well, he raised wheat and they...what they put them upright...tied them

I: Shocks.

MP: Shocks. I tried to do that and it was a little heavy. I didn't last long doing that. One year the front of the house...I don't know how many acres that is...he had watermelon, Cove had, and this isn't watermelon country. I don't know how it came out. One of the natives in Imbler, one of the preacher's kids...[end of tape]

Marj Parker

3/18/03, T1, S1

I: ...the 18th, 2003, Marj Parker.

O: So the first thing we wondered about, Marj, was this little...you said...you say, "the first grade, I think, there were snow drifts over the fences and I cried because my hands were cold. We stopped at ___'s, who was the next house up, and warmed my hands and stopped at the store and my dad took me. And then later when he'd take us in the sled it was just a flatbed sled." Flatbed is the sleds on the bottom?

MP: Yeah.

O: If it was real bad.

MP: Yes.

O: You did a lot of walking and it was a mile over the railroad tracks. So probably maybe a little bit more about what the sled was or how the sled was made maybe?

MP: It was just the bottom flatbed and then just like we use on the farm. Then they had the...what do they call those? The slick...

I: The runners.

MP: Runners.

O: Right.

MP: Yeah, they had... Dad put the runners on.

O: I see.

MP: And he didn't like – I don't know if I told this before – but he didn't like to leave the horses with their harnesses on. I can remember going up – we had a neighbor that the horses would stand maybe all night with the harnesses on and, oh, it just upset him terrible because that wasn't good. Maybe down the line I told – my mother loved to give parties – and he'd have to go to town to pick up the kids with this sled type and bring 'em back and then the horses had to stand 'til the party was over and, you know, he didn't like that, to leave 'em like that.

I: So it was pulled by horses?

MP: Yes. The sled was... Yeah, we had horses, just work horses. I always wanted a riding horse, but couldn't afford those, you know. We just had the work horses.

O: How cold do you suppose... You talk about it being cold, do you have any idea what the temperature'd get down to?

MP: I doubt that we had a thermometer to know. I don't remember. But one time after I lived in Portland and my dad...I came home on the train, Patty was a baby, and he had to come and get me. He got the neighbor boy to drive into La Grande to get me and he scraped off the windshield so he could see it was so cold. And it froze everything in Portland that year.

O: A lot colder that it is now.

MP: Yes. Everything's changed, the weather has really changed.

O: Yeah, a lot.

MP: Because I got...when the chill in my hands and then my knees... I've heard other people walkin' to school, you know, chilblains? Is that what they called 'em?

O: That's what they called it, yeah.

MP: It was cold.

O: And there was... There were times when you walked to school?

MP: Oh, most of the time. Oh yeah, most of the time. No busses. [laughs] And most of the time... And I remembered that first grade, you know, that was quite traumatic walking to school. And I thought how important he thought...he must've thought that was to walk, my brother and I. Of course my brother was already in school. He was two years older. But it was my first experience.

O: That's probably kind of what we had...what we wondered. And then, oh, and then here's one, this is about school. I think it was Morris or Maurice Weis was our teacher?

MP: Yeah. It was spelled m-a-u, I think, m-a-u-r-i-c-e.

O: Weis.

MP: Weis and I think it was w-e-i-s. Now I'm not positive on the Weis, how it was spelled. Maybe would the old-timers would contradict the spelling, but I'm sure Maurice was more that.

O: You said that "we went to Cove swimming pool and this fellow he'd lost a leg."

MP: Yeah, he had an artificial leg and he swam.

O: And he started a ukulele band.

MP: Oh yes. Now is that all together?

O: Yes.

MP: That should be separated.

O: Separated. He's the one that started the ukulele band?

MP: Yes. But he swam the...also with that leg the Wallowa Lake.

O: Oh my!

MP: He was very...he had a real good build and he could swim. And it was quite shocking for him to take that leg off, you know. But he swam with the kids and... Yes, he started this ukulele band. I don't know if he was musical otherwise. There was about five or six of us that was real close friends and we all sang and played the ukulele, he taught us. We'd go to basketball games in the big gym. I remember going to Union and during the intermission we'd play, you know, and it was... That would've been about the eighth grade. He was the seventh/eighth grade teacher.

O: Was your family real musical, Marj?

MP: Yes.

O: I know Billie, of course.

MP: Now I think somewhere in there I told about my older brother – of course we were depression and hard times – Dick took correspondence course for the piano. That was one thing my mother got, I don't know, I think it was new and the only piece of furniture I think that was ever new and it was a player piano. So he got the correspondence course, learned to play the piano. Then I had to study... He'd sent it in and they marked and then Mom made me learn the piano, the keys, from that. I always thought he was gettin' the best of the deal. But that was alright, I did learn that. Then later when I took guitar lessons from Loren Blanchard, why, I knew the basics, see, of the keys and stuff and learned real quick. Bill – and I don't know if I told this before too – we had company, cousins, come stay the summer with us in Portland. This one boy had a trumpet and Dick and I both tried to blow that thing, well, we couldn't. That little old eleven or twelve-year-old kid picked that up and just blew the... And that was it, boy, and you know, he was a natural, he really was. But we didn't play, any of us, by ear. It was that Mom wanted us to have music. But Walt's family all played by ear. Walt played the accordion by ear. I may be repeating things that you already got down.

O: That's okay. No, you're not, I don't think.

MP: He played as long as he could breathe enough to play. He would play everyday and play by ear.

O: Did your kids then inherit any of this?

MP: Patty, I started her with piano lessons in the second grade. It was kind of young, but I thought because I was raised that way you had to have music. So then she

took piano lessons 'til Walt came back from the service, which he was...well, no that's not right. She took about five years from Mrs. Combes. And then when Walt got an accordion during the war in Germany and he wanted to bring it home, he always wanted her to play accordion. The guys played it so much they ruined the bellows so he couldn't bring it home. He bought an accordion then later and she had several years of accordion. And then she played everywhere, I mean, many a night I'd chaperone for other things through high school and then the fair maids and all that. But she read music just real good, but not natural. And then our son wanted to play the drums. We would not buy him drums. He had...waited 'til he could buy 'em himself. So he played with bands and toured Wyoming and Canada and...gray hairs here...[laughs] made the grey hairs. But he was older, he was of age. He played off and on then until about a couple, three years ago and he isn't anymore.

O: I remember about Patty playing the accordion. I remember prior fair days...the fair...

MP: Yeah. But it's not a priority anymore. So maybe when she retires next August...

O: Is that when it'll be?

MP: That's what she said.

O: Oh, bless her heart.

MP: She'll be sixty-two next month and she'll have some time left. But, you know, that's the way she started was she was a deputy.

O: Good for her. The next thing that we wondered about was you talk about the high school. "High school was just upstairs and I was scared to death 'cause I'd never been upstairs." [laughs]

MP: No, I'd never been called up to the principal's office.

O: So probably maybe tell a little bit about the building, the high school...the building.

MP: It's still there.

O: It is, isn't it?

MP: It's the square brick building and that was all that was there. But the Wade Hall was built while I was in school, that one gym, the small gym, was built. And evidently Mrs. Wade...I don't remember much about it except that she must've donated the money for it and it was named after her. But it's still there. So far they haven't...they use it and have added to it. But there is talk, I've heard, of tearing it down.

O: Yeah. And the whole... So the high school then was up on the upper floor?

MP: Upper floor and the grade school was down below, yeah. I still can picture it. But it was just like the kids here probably goin' up to junior high from Greenwood kind of almost a country school and then going up to... 'Cause I could see my son...I'd take him to school and he just kind of __ himself and I'd think, you're going through what I... [laugh]

O: That's right. I think everybody does it sometimes.

MP: Yeah, you're scared.

O: Yeah, I'm sure probably that's what we were wondering about. I love this part, "Saturday night we went into La Grande, the boys played in Dick Lindsey Band, they bought groceries and Dad'd go to the show. We'd wait in the lobby of the

Sac Hotel until the dance started. Mom would sit up in the balcony and I danced. That's where I met Walt."

MP: [laugh] Did he want something added there?

O: I just maybe wanted to know, I don't know whether he maybe wanted to know more about the Sac, or Dick Lindsey's Band.

MP: Dick Lindsey's Band...of course...I don't know how old you guys are?

O: We're old enough to kind of remember Dick Lindsey's Band.

MP: It was a big band. What would you think... I can name quite a few, but there were several...Clark Wheeler, Clark Ruckman, Avery Milreen, Merl somebody, Dick, my brother Dick, and Bill and Dick Lindsey and there was probably some more. So that's seven anyway. But I would guess eight or nine members.

I: Was that Zuber Hall or the Sacagawea ballroom?

MP: Yeah, it was called the Zuber Hall and that's where the parking lot for the bank back there.

I: U.S. National Bank.

MP: Yeah. There was Orella's Garden years later. Of course we were gone...I guess that was...I guess must've been during the war because I don't remember too much about Orella's Garden...well, I was married, we weren't doing like...yeah.

O: You grew older.

MP: Yeah, and having babies and things. But it was wonderful. Mr. Buel and his wife ran the Zuber Hall, it was private, but he ran it good and didn't stand for any nonsense. But where that kind of runs together there of where we'd all come in before Bill started playing in the band, why, he'd go to the show with my dad, but that may be beside the point. But Mom and Dad'd go get groceries, it'd kind of run together there.

O: That was your running into town.

MP: Yeah. But it was a family affair and it was...I didn't date very young because I was havin' a good time without it and the folks were quite strict and didn't want me in cars and driving into La Grande. Once in a while'd drive in with the Westenskow boys that were... I've probably in there told about them.

O: You said something about Melvin, yeah.

MP: They all worked...the four older boys worked in the hay for us and I just grew up with Lester, was the closest to my age and he was like a brother. We were real good friends.

O: Did they live just real near?

MP: Just in Imbler.

O: Oh, Imbler itself.

MP: At Christmastime, why, Mom would have 'em all for dinner and I think they had us. But she had such a big family that his mother Mattie said she fed the kids before they came and of course they still ate the whole...[laughs]

O: How many were there in that family? Do you remember, Marj?

MP: There was four older boys that I knew real well and probably four girls and then there was two younger boys that I didn't know very well, real young. There must've been eight or ten.

O: Bernile was the one...

MP: Bernile was one of the younger ones.

O: ...young near my age.

MP: Yeah, he was one of the young ones. And, my gosh, I think they're practically all gone. The younger ones, it seems like Lester told me, died. But I kept in touch with Lester. He did so wonderful after his wife Ruth died that I thought he'd go within a week, you know. But he wrote poetry and everything and songs. He kept a good attitude.

O: He was a nice fellow. I remember him. Another little thing that we wondered about was, well, first of all, it says that Bill played music in Zuber Hall for the dances, we know that. And then you said, "yeah, he started so young the dancing part I want to say that little Mormon church in Imbler was where I first went to dances. My mom always went with us and there'd be pie socials and pot lucks." We wondered... I guess we kind of wondered about was that a real active little Mormon church?

MP: Oh yes! Oh, very much. It's gone now. I can't... Do you know where ___ lived?

O: Yes.

MP: It was across...up toward...this way between ___'s and the other building up across the street. I don't know what's in there now. But it was just a little Mormon church. One of the Westenskows...older...Pete was about six years older and he'd say that, if you'll come to...do you remember what the youth group's name was?

O: No.

MP: Anyway.

O: All I can think of Relief Society and that was the ladies.

MP: That was the ladies, this was the youth group. He guaranteed that I'd be queen of the Green and Gold Ball. No way that he could guarantee that and I didn't want it and I didn't want...I just grew up with, you know, them that I didn't want to do that and beside...

O: You didn't want to be queen of the Green and Gold Ball? [laughs]

MP: No way! It wouldn't have been any, but...

I: But you really weren't Mormon?

MP: No, but a lot of people thought I was.

I: What church did you belong to?

MP: That little Methodist church as you're going into Imbler. Now there's a square one that belong...Bingaman's there that was a school, but that wasn't...the little church as you get in the city limits to the left there was the Methodist. And I went to...my dad, depression, worked Sundays a good share of the time so all my girlfriends when to church there...to Sunday school.

I: Did Mormons put a pressure on you, the Westenskows, to join the Mormon Church?

MP: Just always that with Pete. He thought if I...

O: ___ at the Gold and Green Ball.

MP: He wanted to date me from the time I was thirteen and no way. He went on a mission and when he come home I was engaged to Walt. He said that ring didn't mean anything. Oh yes, that ring did! [laugh] But Melvin, yes, when...he was the oldest of the four boys and he'd preach to Mom a lot. Yeah...but no...

O: Did your mom have any particular church?

MP: No. Grandma... My dad's mother was radically religious and when they were...her husband died in there at twenty-eight and she had three little babies, Daddy was three-and-a-half, four years old, and two below him. Grandma gave her last ten dollars to the minister and prayed to be taken care of. My dad remembered that and he had...that ruined him for church, it really did. He said there was only one good minister he knew and he worked in the hayfields to make his money and didn't take money from a widow. And that really... And Depression and he worked so hard to try to make ends meet. I know it would've pleased Grandma so much, you know, but Mom and Dad didn't go to church. We went Christmas Eve, I remember, as a family.

O: That's understandable.

MP: Yeah.

O: So these pie socials and potlucks and so forth and so on then were probably at the Mormon church?

MP: At the Mormon church, yeah. We were, you know, we were real good friends with the Mormons and everybody...like I say, they thought I was, too, was a Mormon, here in La Grande.

O: The next thing is this part about the declamation contest. Let's see, "I think most kids go through an English class having to get up in front of people. I'd just be terrified. They had declamation contests at that time through the English class. We had to take humorous or non-humorous and give it. I learned a humorous one and lo and behold and I went clear to the college and I won county, I guess." Do you remember that?

MP: Oh I sure do! [laughs] Oh I sure do! Now what else would he...

O: He probably kind of wanted to know a little bit about how this declamatory contest was organized maybe, Marj.

MP: I don't know. It came into the schools and...through...that was part of our assignment in school, we had to learn that. I thought, well, I could do it – and that was hard – in school. It was humorous and I can remember on the stage in Wade's Hall givin' it and I went blank. I thought I was gonna die! [laugh]

O: And you had to memorize it?

MP: Yeah, you had to memorize it. But it was humorous and I could jump and down and keep sayin' what I would've 'til my mind kind of got... And then I went home and cried and cried and cried. [laughs] But, yeah, I've still got my little medal, about yea, and you can wear it, you know. I should put it in an envelope and mark what it was.

O: I think that it must've been a whole county-wide thing.

MP: Yeah. I don't... It evidently wasn't state because if I won county then I'd gone on to state.

O: Right, Marj. 'Cause I know that it was – I was in it one time from Telocaset – so I think it must've been something that the whole county took part.

MP: Yeah. That's...you know, I just don't know. The teacher said we had to do it so we did.

O: Let's see. Then "it was Depression and Mom made all my clothes and everything." So probably... Did she make all your clothes? Literally sew your clothes?

MP: She made my coats. She had what she called the rag bag that it had nice either older clothes that she could remake and... I had when I was ten an aunt of my mother's looked us up. She was an aunt by marriage and she had divorced my mother's uncle, but she had named my mother. She found out where we lived and looked us up and she had remarried and was quite well-to-do. She would send me suit boxes of clothes that she was threw with that was lovely material and my mother would remake those. That was when I was in business college, still, you know, times were still hard. She would remake... I did, I think, when I was about twelve maybe got a boughten coat. Now underwear I can't remember too much. I think I had, when I was little, had the black satine [laugh] and bloomers and probably Mom made those. You know, I can't quite remember.

O: So a store-bought dress was...

MP: It was out. Mom would... We'd come in, she'd go like Penny's and look at a dress, she'd go home and make one.

O: Oh boy!

MP: You bet. She was very talented and I had some really pretty dresses that Mom made.

O: I'll bet.

MP: So I never was without pretty clothes. But that was high school and business college.

O: Let's see. I think probably we talked about the Westenskows and I think probably that takes care of that one. Oh, this...this is something about your gardening. I guess did the Westenskows kind of sharecrop?

MP: Yeah. When Mom was cookin' three meals a day for the hay crew and just wasn't time to have a garden so they did, yeah, and that's, uh-huh.

O: "I must've put on the boys' teams because girls didn't have teams in those days."

MP: [laugh] Oh yeah! About the car.

O: "Went over to the slough, with I think was maybe half a mile, it was on our land. You crossed the Grande Ronde River and then walked over to the slough. There was carp in that slough. Lester took a pitchfork and a gunnysack and went down in that slough and he stabbed the carp and he'd throw them to me. I'd __ like this. Then..."

MP: I had the gunnysack. He had the pitchfork and I had the gunnysack and he'd throw, but I didn't have the gunnysack up here, I'd grab 'em and then put 'em in the gunnysack and laughin' all the way.

O: And then your mom canned 'em?

MP: No. Mom didn't can 'em, but his mother did.

O: Oh, his mother canned 'em.

MP: His mother. My mother...no, no way would she do that carp! Carp was a dirty fish, you know. But with her big family and, you know. The bones, they said, were soft and they...yeah.

O: Food was food.

MP: And a big family.

O: There here there's something about you getting... "the four older boys worked for us and they just run me ragged getting them water at noon." [laughs] See you with a water bottle...

MP: Oh yes! I think... I remember because I think they did it on purpose, but I don't know how in the world they drank all that water, but that's what I remember.

I: Was it a canvas bag or a bucket? How did you get the water?

MP: No. This was... We had a big dining room table and they came in the house and the big meal and we had the kitchen – they'd remolded this old house and there was a big arch, the dining room and it was all together there. We had just a cold water in the kitchen and an artesian well ran all the time, so I'd just have to...it seems like I'd just go fill a glass up, you know, I don't remember a pitcher for water. But they just run me ragged doing that.

O: But you didn't have to take water to them when they were working out in the field?

MP: No. They evidently filled up what you say canvas, it'd be canvas, with...at the outside of the house was the run all the time, too, and they could...

O: Oh, here's another thing that he wondered about. "I went to Draper School of Commerce which was up above Laurence's Jewelry. Then I got a job at The Observer." I guess maybe he kind of wondered about where the...

MP: Where The Observer was?

O: It was in the building. They tore it down.

I: What he was interested in was the subjects that you took and what support the Draper's Business College gave you.

O: Yeah, the school. What all was goin' on at the school?

MP: Typing and shorthand and basically bookkeeping is what I did at The Observer, was the bookkeeping. La Grande girls that went were way ahead of us Imbler girls. I had taken typing in Imbler, but they were quite a bit ahead. But it was just basic stenographer...I don't know what you'd call it.

O: How long... How many weeks, months did you go?

MP: I think it was nine months to a year. Because I went to work...I graduate in '36 in the spring and that fall I went and...

O: You graduated from high school in '36?

MP: In '36. Then that fall I went. Dad wanted me to be a teacher and I didn't want to do that. He though, boy, they had it made, you know...[end tape]

3/18/03, T1, S2

I: Did Draper's give you any help in finding a job when you completed your course?

MP: Not that I remember.

O: Now they call it placement, you know, at college.

MP: Yes, but I don't remember that he did and I don't know...I cannot remember how I got the...

O: Was this one person that was... Was there a Mr. Draper who was...

MP: Mrs. Draper taught, too, the two of them taught. We liked her a lot. You knew Ed Draper?

I: Yes.

MP: That was their son.
I: Oh. How many students were in the class?
MP: Gosh, I... Probably twenty or so. I went...__ was going and Edwin Gooderham and Faye...
O: Weimer.
MP: Yes. Then there was out of town...quite a few out of town, Catherine...well, you wouldn't know her, but a friend of mine. I can't even remember her last name.
I: Do you remember how much it cost to go to?
O: Your aunt __ [laughs]
MP: No. No, I don't. But it must not have cost a fortune or my dad couldn't 've afforded it.
O: And they did put you in school? I mean they...
MP: And I did stay... After I graduated I stayed and did shorthand and typing for people coming through or just wanted something done for a while. So maybe...they probably did help me get a job because I did stay and I can't remember how long I stayed doing that, typing and shorthand.
O: When you were going to school... When you were going to Draper's you still lived at home, though, didn't you?
MP: Oh yes. I rode in with a fellow that was going to business...or to college. He was a couple of years older.
O: Did you get any kind of...was there like a certificate or a diploma?
MP: Yes. We had graduation. It seems like we went out to Hot Lake for banquet. All I can remember about that, I went with Jim Eveson, he was in this class, and he took a carload of us gals out. That was our graduation out there, but I can't remember a thing about it only... I don't think I've run across... It probably is in the trunk.
O: But there was a graduation.
MP: Yeah, there was a graduation. It was like a regular school. He was very thorough and... Oh, another one, Connie...what was her name? I remember she chewed gum all the time. [laughs] And Jim Eveson set in front of me and we were always gettin' in trouble 'cause he'd turn around and talk. [laughs]
O: Another thing is, let's see, when you were married then what was Walt doing at that time and then you said, "he was apprenticeship for Melville's." So me Melville's just means a __ store.
MP: Oh, and I didn't go in detail about it.
O: No.
MP: Okay. The Melville sisters run the what they call the depart...or the...
O: Melville's, yeah.
MP: In the back was a sheet mill shop that the two brothers run, the Melville brothers. When Walt was in high school they had placement...job placements and they sent Walt there. Then the next season he went out for football. The coach – and I don't remember his name then – he said, "what are you doing here?" And Walt said, "Came out to play football." He said, "The hell you are."
O: And that was that.
MP: Yeah. [laugh] He said, "You get back to that job." It was a godsend because there was no money for him to go to school even and his dad was raisin' him and

I don't think he cared very much what the boys did. That was where... When we got married he wasn't quite finished with his apprenticeship, but that was his livelihood. He took... what kind of drawings and I...

I: Mechanical drawing?

MP: Mechanical drawings – and I have them somewhere – just beautiful in high school. That worked right in with this... what he did out there making rounds to squares and odd, you know, with that mechanical drawing. He was good at that.

O: So this is... This apprenticeship was the same Melville family that...

MP: The whole family runs...

O: ___ ...I can't even...Meville's Gift Shop, they called it.

MP: Gift Shop, yes. That was the way I remember it. But the boys were brothers so...

O: I didn't... I didn't know that. I always just thought Melville's was a gift shop.

MP: They probably... See, they left...the two brothers left. We were married and he had gone from seventy-some dollars to ninety-some dollars so we...a month...and thought we were... And I was pregnant and, by golly, they closed shop and went to work in the shipyards. We had to pick up and leave. There was no jobs here.

I: It looked like there was going to be a war, people had to do those things because men were drafted and men with families had to earn livings and the shipyards was one of the big places that people from La Grande went.

MP: But we were scared. We'd hear of 'em fallin' off of scaffolds and doing this, so Walt didn't go right into the shipyards. We went to his brothers and they left the next day to go to the union. With his background of sheetmetal work they sent him out every day, every day, every day. Then he sent us to Kelso and we were there several months. Then we came back to Portland and Patty was born in Portland. So we weren't too many months in Kelso, but several. Then he went in the shipyards. We weren't so frightened that he was going to fall off the scaffold or somethin', I guess. So then he was in the shipyards and Patty was three and I was pregnant with my son and he was drafted. My sister-in-law asked me recently, how come? I said, I don't know. But I said, all of my area in Park Rose were mothers with children and their husbands were all drafted. Some were older than Walt. Walt was twenty-five and he was considered an old man. So have misgivings about what's going on now. I just watch the news and watch the news. But I know what he went through and it wasn't good. So I have that in my mind and... I don't know. I'm not smart enough to know what's...

I: Walt went through the Battle of the Bulge, didn't he?

MP: Not quite.

I: It was close.

MP: It was close. He was a Ranger and he was – you know what they were, they went in ahead of the troops. He volunteered for it because... And it was much more dangerous. He was in a house... They go in... They German people left their homes and left when the boys came in. He was up in a German house fighting the German's comin'. When he got...started to walk out he couldn't walk. He had what they called battle fatigue. They had to carry him off. Then I get the news somehow, maybe from the pastor, the chaplain, that he was in the hospital, and those kind of things and not hearing from him and not knowing. It was... War is terrible. It's a terrible thing. And they come back changed, you know.

O: Yeah.

MP: They go in as kids and come back as...

O: As old men.

MP: Adults.

O: I know. It's hard.

MP: It's a hard thing.

O: Yeah, it was. One other place he's got...wondered about...let's see, "I never wore makeup. My mother didn't like makeup. I was in several plays in high school because I think the only reason was I could smear on that makeup and I loved it." [laughs]

MP: That's true!

O: It didn't have anything to do with being an actress.

MP: No. Talking about me fearful of getting up of and giving a speech, was entirely different than play acting.

O: Was it?

MP: Oh, absolutely! That didn't frighten me at all.

O: Bless your heart.

MP: But just to be you and get up was different than play acting. I don't know if I said that my brother and my dad and I were all in a county...or a PTA play together.

O: Oh yeah.

MP: Yeah, I think I told that.

O: Yeah.

MP: And my mother'd say, "I don't know how you do it. I don't know how you do it." [laughs] She wasn't...

O: But you could just move yourself into...you're somebody else?

MP: Yeah.

O: It wasn't Marj...

MP: Yeah. And one time my brother Bill was in a play later years and he took the part of a woman or something and said he looked just like me. [laughs]

I: One thing you mentioned about Loren Blanchard, Otissis. Otissis was the La Grande radio music store where you could buy music, instruments and things like that.

MP: You remember Tassis, do you?

I: I remember, but it wasn't explained in your interview.

MP: It was a music store. And in the basement, now, where Loren gave music lessons.

I: It was right there by the First National Bank.

MP: Yes.

O: A little, long, narrow store.

MP: You know, it was and probably want to put that in there that it was a music store.

O: And they had sheet music. I...you know...he was...so much sheet music. We have a lot of old sheet music that came from...their stamp Radio and Music Supply or whatever it was.

MP: Oh, and I can still see him, you know.

I: Did you ever buy anything from Midge Wright? She sold music also at the drugstore.

MP: No. Yeah. All I remember about that is goin' in and havin' a milkshake or something.

I: At the fountain.

MP: Yeah, at the fountain. No, most of anything the boys bought or anything, I think, was at Tassis.

I: Did you listen to the radio much?

MP: Not growing up. I can remember the folks trying out radios, but we didn't have electricity and didn't have a radio for... I hear 'em talk about a lot of the programs the kids watched, but we didn't. But I remember 'em trying 'em out. I remember 'em trying out Montgomery...no...washing machines...Maytag...out in the yard that run gas motors and it had a ball out here and that thing'd get to goin'...[laughs]...but they never bought it. We had the old machine that you did, you know, this to wash the clothes.

I: It worked by hand.

MP: Yeah. We'd take turns doin' that. Them Mom boiled the clothes in the boiler, the whites, and get 'em clean.

I: A big copper double boiler like you have in your front yard.

MP: It probably wasn't copper. It probably was metal, in my memory. I don't know where that came from, but it wasn't from my home, the one I have. Then I have another one that I think Walt painted copper out in the back and I thought I ought to get and fill it. [laugh] But, yeah, and probably this don't need to be put in either, but just visitin', my mother her niece got killed in a fire in Olympia. My mother had had her teeth pulled the year before. She had gone without teeth that year 'til we went to the funeral...to this niece's funeral. She had heard evidently, on the radio or some about this guy that made false teeth for...I don't know what price, but it was a good price. And they went and he made those teeth that day and I don't think she ever replaced 'em. He said, "Now don't leave these in very long." She did, for the funeral and everything. Well, she had a sore mouth. But that was really something. My goodness, look how the teeth are now, you know. Who would go without their teeth nowadays. I don't... Why, I wouldn't go outside! [laughs]

I: Did you feel that by living on the farm that you missed out on a lot of things?

MP: Maybe at the time. I can remember when I was a teenager if Daddy broke down, boy, I was ready to go to La Grande. This time it was in the spring and the water was running down and it was...I was trying to get up to the car and I slipped or something and got water in my shoes and I didn't go to town and I cried because living out on that old farm...[laughs] But by the folks like goin' to town and going to the Mormon church and takin' us and doin' those things I didn't...and as far as dating I probably was kind of scared to date anyway. [laugh] I remember one of the fellows in my class came and we had the separator on the porch. Our front part was what the...was the back part when the house was built so the separator was there and that. He got so flustered when he came to the door and I said no I couldn't go and he turned and he fell over the bucket there. Another one I remember came to ask me to go and I remember he smelled so good, he had so much on, and I didn't go. He stole things. I was so glad I hadn't gone with him because he stole things and got caught.

O: Was your mother still living when you met Walt? She knew Walt?

MP: Yes. Mama died in 1959.

O: I couldn't remember when it was.

MP: And we were married in '39. The house burned in '44 and they lived... Dad had a new shed that they just put up housekeeping in it for, well, burned in '44 and they built in '53 or '54 the nice home. So they were in there nine or ten years.

O: Yeah. Were they... Was your Mom... Did she like Walt? Was that a good thing?

MP: Yes.

O: That's good.

MP: She was a very good mother-in-law. Dad and Walt really got along. I was gonna be the best mother-in-law in the world, but I'm afraid I wasn't. [laughs]

O: Your heart was in it anyway.

MP: Things come up, you know.

I: You spend a lot of your time now helping at the hospital with the Pink Ladies.

MP: I still can and I will as long...

I: How long have you been doing that, Marj?

MP: Oh, probably... Let's see, Walt's been... I always go back to how long Walt's been gone. Nine years. It took me a couple, three years, so six, seven years. Marj Goodwin in 1980 – she belonged to a little club I did – and we were going to take hand-in-hand and join the Pink Ladies in 1980. That night, the night before we were gonna do this, why, my dad got real ill and Walt was already havin' problems with his breathing and I never joined. Marj did and was there for years. But I... When I first joined Miriam Holman was on the desk and they didn't tell me that she left forty-five minutes before her time was up and that I was to do the desk and I was never trained on. But I did... was able with the magnifying glasses and bigger print to read the room numbers and stuff. I could do that and learn where to tell people to go. Then a year ago this winter I lost my vision and I couldn't do that anymore. I just cannot, no matter... They made the print as big as they'd go, but I can't do that. But I can do the coffee, I can do the flowers, I can do the cards and then go over to the business office if they need to. I can still manage and I'm awful careful walkin'.

I: It fills a spot in your life with something to do.

MP: Twice... I go every week Monday mornings and then twice a month I still can go to Seniors and work and I wouldn't mind working more. I don't pour coffee, but I can set the tables and wash and help clear up. I do that and...

O: ___ what group, Marj?

MP: TOPS. I did this long before Walt died until this eye happened and I just quit because I knew I couldn't pour coffee and I just quit. Then they...one of our cooks is in our TOPS group and she asked for help and I said, "I'd like to do it again if I don't...I can't pour coffee." So I table hop. While the girls are pouring coffee I...several tables I know who's settin' there. Then sometimes I can't tell if I know the person. Now see, I wouldn't know who you are at all across the table. So I will go up close to 'em and a lot of times I don't know 'em, but maybe I make a new acquaintance.

O: That's right, Marj. And it makes them feel welcome.

MP: Yeah. At this party for Jesse a gal in red set down and she was visiting with ___ and pretty soon she says, “You don’t know how I am.” I said, “No, I can’t tell.” Well, it was Sigrid Jones and we...you know, but I couldn’t tell and I couldn’t hear her voice good enough to tell. I think if I’d ‘ve heard her voice I would’ve...

O: I know I can tell at church that you recognize voices.

MP: Some, yeah. And certain postures I can tell, but not always. But anyway, you know, you just got to keep interested. What was it I asked Patty? Oh, I asked Patty who the district attorney was. There’s a case going on that I know about. She said, “Why do you want to know?” Was it about this case? I said, “No, not particularly. It’s just that I... How does the system work after a person’s arrested, you know.” I knew the district attorney could tell me – but I didn’t call him. One time when we built the duplexes and we rented them and I couldn’t get this fellow to leave. So somebody mentioned call the district attorney. I don’t even remember who was in at that time. That was years ago. But he told me exactly to write the letter, what to put in the letter and register and...

I: An eviction notice.

MP: Eviction and what... That was just wonderful. So I thought, well, if you really want to know something, call the...

O: Right.

MP: So I found his name the other day and wrote it down. I don’t intend to call him, but I was just curious. Can still read the paper. You didn’t see machine.

O: I did as I went by.

MP: I’ll show it... I showed it to you, John, didn’t I? I’ll show you how it works.

O: Marsh Smith, Eugene’s wife, has just gotten a machine.

MP: Oh, she... You know how it works then?

O: No, I don’t. He was so happy because he said she was liking it. I think he’d been a little bit worried about whether she was gonna adjust to it.

I: It’s really helping.

O: But it’s helping her a lot.

MP: I would be helpless here. I couldn’t see my mail. I can’t read anything. Patty would have to do so much more. Gosh, you just don’t want to impose on your kids, they’re busy and doin’ things. So I try to be independent and I hire a lot of work done. I hired a guy that cleaned some in the front, but I wanted to leave some that I’ll go out and rake and wheelbarrow because I love outside work. But I don’t know, it’s just hard to tell weeds from flowers anymore. [laughs]

I: But you’re doing great.

O: Yes, you are, Marj.

MP: I don’t know where I get it, maybe it’s in the genes, you know. [laugh]

O: I think those things are in the genes. Can you think of anything else we need to ask her, John? I can’t.

I: I think we’ve covered most everything.

O: I think we did, too.

MP: I don’t, you know, some of the gals just said no and I thought, well, I didn’t have that much to tell, you know.

O: Isn’t it surprising, though? When you live a lifetime there’s a lot in a lifetime.

I: Everyone has a story. This is what people know how people went through during Depression and war years and things like that because those were hard times.

MP: Yeah. But you know, but if you've never had it, like bein' poor... We never went hungry. If you never had it you didn't miss it. We didn't have...

I: And you had a lot of friends.

MP: We didn't have telephones in Portland. Here... And I know my mother must've been worried sick. I was pregnant and Patty had...she did come...Patty had to have appendicitis operation before I had Lattie. This was during the war. Of course I thought it was the end of the world almost and then my mother came and stayed. But for her to be here and no communication, only by letters. She was a worry-wart and I bet she... You know, you don't realize that.

O: I bet she did, too.

MP: Somebody, oh, Jean Bean comes and reads the Bible, study, maybe I told John. She said about me being outgoing and she said, "Where did you get it?" I said, "I didn't used to be." I don't know where it came from, but I'm not near as scardy-cat as I used to be like it's come out in those things. Part of that probably was not being around girls or sisters and not many females just to play with even.

O: Right. Living away from people. It wasn't like you could run outside and play in the street with other kids.

MP: Yeah, with kids, you know. I wasn't around a lot of kids. So it was a whole new world when I started to school.

I: During those hard times we all cultivated friends and they were in the same position as we were so that made life worthwhile, was your friends.

MP: Like these like at the church and everything that we went to. It was...looking forward to those things.

I: When did you start going to Presbyterian church?

MP: Cleaver was just there for a while. So I can judge by Kevin was a baby. So he's, what, fifteen or sixteen. I didn't look for another church because my kids...I didn't go to church with my kids to speak of. But when Hendricks Methodist shut down and we were home long enough I took the kids to the Presbyterian church. I don't know why I picked that church. But anyway, I liked what they taught. I didn't like... Patty went with a friend to the Nazerence church when she was in the first grade. She came home crying because they wanted the little ones to come up and to confess their sins. They portrayed hell as fire and brimstone and here was heaven over here, water and flowers. It scared her to death. I didn't want any of that. Whoever her teacher was – I don't remember now – but they explained...she came home and told me that God will take care of you, but you don't run out in front of a car that God will take care of you. In other words, it was like you've got a brain up here, you know. I thought, boy, I like that! [laugh] And it had... That impressed me enough that when I decided to join... Walt was ill and I thought I was handling everything and something came up that I couldn't handle. I had a...Walker...Betty Walk had invited my twice to the ladies' luncheon and I laughed said to her, "If you keep inviting me I'm gonna have to join this church." It was just... It was really odd, this happening with Walt and his illness and everything. I thought, I can join anytime, why am I...why not? But I didn't try any other churches and I said, "You'll come first, Walt. If you

want to do anything..." We were always...we were building cabin and things in years and we were always gone weekends. But I said, "If you feel...do anything you first." But by that time he was not wanting to do very much. I'd try to get him to go for rides and things like we used to do. He'd study the map and say, "I'd like to know where that road leads" and stuff and we'd go. I never pressured him to go to church. He'd say, "Honey, you look awful nice. Who are you meetin'?" I'd say, "If you want to know, why, come go with me." That was the extent of it. I never pressured him.

O: They don't... The Presbyterians are very good about not pressuring.

MP: Just like I learned from my dad, you'll turn people away, you know, I think. I think we all know it's there for us. Are you still listening to me?

O: Yes.

MP: On that? [laughs]

I: I find it interesting what you have to say.

MP: _____

I: No, they won't put everything in...[end tape]