

Betty Peck  
Interviewer: Eugene Smith  
Place: Grande Ronde Retirement Center  
May 3, 2002

Tape 1 Side 1

- JT: Well what I've heard about Slater was, he came here and when the railroad came in 1884 he was told that the railroad depot would be across from his building; is that correct or is that erroneous?
- BP: Well there is a building, Slater building on Jefferson, that must have been the building they were talking about.
- ES: Jefferson and what?
- JT: Fir.
- BP: Fir, yes.
- ES: Is that a two-story building?
- BP: Yes.
- ES: Is it gray now?
- BP: I think so; it's a concrete building isn't it?
- JT: Kind of gray, mhm yeah.
- ES: Somebody told me there was a brothel upstairs there.
- BP: Oh there could have been that was far before my time.
- JT: {Laughter} I don't know about that, I know Getty's [?] and Lynch had their car dealership there and the building next door.
- BP: Well the building where the old Safeway building is I understand that has had an underground tunnel I think because it was on the edge of Chinatown.
- ES: Did you ever hear very much about the Chinese that lived here?
- BP: No. No I didn't. My grandmother taught school, first grade at Riveria. She was one of their first...she was their first teacher and principal. She had quite a few

Oriental in her school and she has lots...in her head, lots of things that were given to her as Christmas gifts, out of the ordinary.

ES: What did she say about those children?

BP: Well um I can't remember, I know she got an awful lot of gifts and things like that from them; silk handkerchiefs and I know she has a beautiful one that lines a tray that she has. [?] They did such beautiful work. The reason that...Mr. Slater was not only important to LaGrande but he was important to the State of Oregon because he repre...well you can read in that article the number of things that he had done, had been, positions he's held and legislation that he was interested in. He had come from Illinois I believe as a young man, I think he was probably 19 years old or so. He drove Oxen for a family that was coming west.

ES: That would have been what, in the 1860's or so?

BP: Well in there. Some of them decided to go south to the gold deals and so he was there for a couple of years. Then he went up to Oregon to Marysville, which is now Corvallis. Eventually after being in Oregon in that part of the state he came to Austin, which is in Eastern Oregon; is it in Grant County?

ES: Yes.

BP: It was a gold mining town. And then eventually to Eastern...I mean to LaGrande.

ES: And again we are talking about James Slater who was your great grandfather.

BP: James H. Slater. Harvey; James Harvey Slater.

ES: And he was your great grandfather on your mother's side.

BP: On my mother's side. And while he was in Marysville or Corvallis he married and he married Elizabeth Gray who's brother also came west but I don't...I think they came from Tennessee but I'm not sure. There's other family in the valley that you can talk to about the Gray's. Because Mrs. Gray or Mrs. Slater's brother George Grant Gray settled in Cove and there's lots of...they had ten children too and there's lots of relatives out there.

ES: Do you know about when that would have been?

BP: No I don't...I'm not familiar with all of the \_\_\_\_\_ [?]

ES: Do you think this article states all of what needs to be known about what James H. Slater accomplished?

BP: No...well it does in a general way. He was an attorney but he didn't go to law school as such I don't think. His son...they had ten children, five boys and five girls; three of the sons were lawyers, three of the girls were teachers. It talks in there about what the others did.

ES: Do you have other letters or documents that would say more about him?

BP: Not at hand no. But I think if you...since my mother was president of the Union County Historical Society for quite a long while; I think the Union Museum might have more.

ES: We'll look there. Now would it be appropriate to talk about your experiences as an employee at the Eastern Oregon State College? Do you want to talk about that?

BP: Well it was uh the most important thing in my life except my family.

ES: How did you happen to be hired there?

BP: Well I graduated from a two-year junior college program and thought I'd go on to Oregon State or someplace to school but my family couldn't afford it. I got married instead.

ES: Did that include some secretarial work?

BP: Yes it was nearly all secretarial work.

ES: So you were qualified to accept the job.

BP: Well I didn't have any secretarial training except what I had gotten in high school.

ES: Oh I thought you said the college included it; some secretarial training. No?

BP: Not at that time. They do now, but not at that time. It was teaching course or junior certificate.

ES: What year was that Betty?

BP: Oh I graduated in 1936 in June; and I was hired in August. I was sort of jack-of-all-trades at first. My time...FDED called it full time \_\_\_\_\_ [?] was divided about three ways. But in 1955 I actually was appointed full time as secretary to the President; though I had worked for all those so far except one.

ES: All of these people you worked in, or offices you worked in, were at Inlow Hall were they?

BP: Yes.

ES: Could you describe how Inlow looked at that time on the inside?

BP: Well it was a very nice building and at the time it was built it also, besides the college faculty, included the elementary school.

ES: Mhm I know. And the library and the theatre and the labs. [Laughter}

BP: And the gym, I mean where you took your showers after being out on the field. And then the first building that was built after Inlow Hall was built was the Ackerman elementary school. And the little gym that was attached \_\_\_\_\_  
[?]

ES: Would you describe Inlow Hall at that time as very modern inside?

BP: Well for that time, yes.

ES: It was a comfortable place to work?

BP: Yes it was.

ES: It wasn't air-conditioned was it?

BP: No, I'm not sure it is now. {Laughter}

ES: I think it must be now. Do you recall some of the, maybe most memorable, activities that you were involved in there; especially when you were in the President's office?

BP: Well um...

ES: Were there crisis's or emergencies or...

BP: Students getting called in, yes there was some of that.

ES: And you experienced it directly I suppose.

BP: Well not really, I...Until 1955 when I was actually spent full time in the President's office I was involved more with student concern. [?] I worked in the registrar's office and the business office and the alumni office, of course there was one then.

ES: What did you do during a typical day in the President's office?

BP: Well I'd come in and...depends on which President. The last one, I made...first thing I did was made coffee.

ES: At 8:00 in the morning?

BP: At 8:00 in the morning, I made coffee; because he drank coffee all day. But oh...open the mail, make calls, make appointments, answer the telephone. We had the copying machine; I did my share working with that.

ES: You had the purple ditto?

BP: Yeah at that time it was.

ES: Did you do a lot of typing?

BP: Yes, quite a bit.

ES: Did you have to make carbons for everything?

BP: Lots of carbons. And we used onionskin paper.

ES: And so if you made a mistake you had to go through and erase every single one individually?

BP: Wait on callers; make appointments, all that sort of thing.

ES: Now what was interesting about all that?

BP: Oh um, the contacts with the people, the faculty. The faculty's mailroom was quite handy, so it was where people standing around visiting that sort of thing. It didn't do much for my concentration, but... {Laughter}

ES: What was interesting about what they said?

BP: Well most of it was oh, professional talk \_\_\_\_\_ [?] discussing a student or two or things like that. I had to be sure that I didn't repeat what I heard.

ES: You heard a lot of confidential information I suppose.

BP: Some, yes.

ES: Would that be more interesting to you than say attending some women's club meetings downtown?

BP: I think so, yes.

ES: You weren't a women's club joiner much?

BP: Well I have been, but more so after I retired. I didn't have time then. During those years I had four children and my husband was a railroader, he was a conductor whose schedule was very erratic and so we worked around it.

ES: Were you paid well?

BP: Well it was a State position; it was the going rate for State Employees, which was \_\_\_\_\_ [?]

ES: And you had retirement from it I suppose.

BP: Yes. \_\_\_\_\_ [?] these days is in trouble.

ES: Who were some of the faculty members you remember best?

BP: Well um...Amanda Zable who is...one of the newer buildings was named for, Zable Hall.

ES: Yes.

BP: Ralph Badgley [?] who also had a building named after him. Miss Zable was an English teacher; literature teacher and I liked that. Ralph Badgley was a scientist and I took a couple classes with him.

ES: Tell me more about what kind of people they were; what their personalities were like.

BP: Well most of the people that came here, I can't say most. But several of the people that came here in the early years stayed. Ralph Badgley came here from...I'm not sure now where he graduated from college but he had gotten a doctors degree. He came here early, say like he was 1932 around then. He and his wife came to LaGrande and they lived here all their life. They loved this country. They liked to um...mountainous areas and \_\_\_\_\_ [?] quite a bit, traveling in the mountains. He and a fella by the name of Steen [?], he was a psychology professor, in the summer time led trips into the high mountains \_\_\_\_\_ [?] and I was \_\_\_\_\_ [?] to go a couple of years.

ES: In the Wallowa's you mean?

BP: Mhm.

ES: Or the Elkhorns?

BP: Yeah. \_\_\_\_\_ [?] Anyway I've got my name on a paper up in the top of Eagle Cap.

ES: Why is that?

BP: Because that's what we all did, we got to the very top and signed a paper...

ES: I was here. {Laughter}

BP: Yeah that sort of thing.

ES: Do you think it's still there?

BP: Yes.

ES: Is it kept in a box or a container of some type?

BP: I don't know I just know I signed the book.

ES: I see. That would have been about what year?

BP: Oh 1937-38.

ES: Did many women go on trips like that?

BP: Oh yes. Dr. Steen and Dr. Badgley were good horse wranglers. They \_\_\_\_\_ [?] provided that trip actually, the food and all that; all the pack train.

ES: Mhm. So you didn't have to cook?

BP: No. It would be about 25 people or so.

ES: Was Ralph Badgley a gruff kind of man?

BP: No.

ES: No. Gentle?

BP: Well he had a really good sense of humor and he was a man who inspired his students. My brother stayed on after he finished his two years of Pre College and there was a time that the college had students there that were training for going into service and future air force people and that sort of thing. My brother stayed on and tutored some math for them and then when he went away to the war he was in a officer training program for a while at the University of Tennessee. Which was canceled about half way through it and my brother went into some other program. But when he came back to LaGrande after the war all the western

schools that he would have wanted to go to had their quota of G.I.'s so he asked Ralph Badgley what he thought he should do. He said well why don't you go back to the University of Tennessee; you've got credits there. So he did and he graduated there and he signed on with the National Laboratories at Oak Ridge and spent his whole life there. But that's the kind of person that Ralph Badgley was, he was thoroughly interested in his students and he gave them \_\_\_\_\_ [?]

ES: Mhm. Were you involved in any way in the decision to name the science building after him?

BP: No but I was really pleased. I want to make sure if I could that the name not be changed; because he really deserved that honor.

ES: Do you think he gave money toward it?

BP: Yes he did. In fact...well I don't know about money but he and his wife left their land, they owned some woodlands back here in the mountains and they left that to the college.

ES: Do you think the college still owns it?

BP: Yes.

ES: Do they use it for anything?

BP: Well I don't know, um...do you?

JT: I don't either.

ES: Do you know where it is?

JT: It's up close to Roy Skeen's place. I've been up there.

ES: Is it just open forestland?

JT: Yeah but I don't know what it's being used for.

ES: Why do you think he bought it?

BP: Because he loved the land, and probably as an investment.

ES: Except apparently the investment didn't pay off.

BP: Well he had a cabin up here, he lived...well they spent their summer days up there and I think he thought of \_\_\_\_\_ [?]



JT: He owned land right through here, back of Grande Ronde Retirement Center too.

BP: I didn't know that. Well their home wasn't far from here.

JT: Very nice people.

ES: Tell me about Amanda Zable, what kind of person she was.

BP: Well I never knew her as well. I enjoyed her very much as an instructor, professor. She never married; she was a very attractive woman and very interesting in the classroom. She taught \_\_\_\_\_ [?] English literature. But she a lot to do with the \_\_\_\_\_ [?] of the school. They had an Eastern \_\_\_\_\_ [?] program they had in the spring at graduation time called Evensong [?] and they had just the right place for it with those steps \_\_\_\_\_ [?].

ES: And she was involved in that.

BP: She was in planning that.

ES: How often did you attend Evensong?

BP: Every year.

ES: Every year? Well you're one of the few people I've talked to who was actually there. I talked to Alice Moorhead about it and she said (falsetto voice) I don't know I don't know what they did, I didn't ever go.

BP: She's my tablemate here.

ES: Is she? Well tell me what you remember about Evensong; I'm really interested to know the details of that.

BP: I just got through opening a box upstairs that I got those papers out of; it has an Evensong program. And uh let's see...It was a musical program. When the program started, at the top of the stairs, at the very top of the stairs, was...they put the seniors in \_\_\_\_\_ [?] and as the program progressed there was lots of \_\_\_\_\_ [?]. The seniors came down to the Queen who was on the first level; and their flashlights were lighted by a torch. The seniors went out into the \_\_\_\_\_ [?] by going down on either side and then the students, the regular students, would fill in the top. It was very um...oh one of the songs about *the day is dying in the west* and it was about 7:00 so it was, in the evening when the sun went down. It just was wonderful.

ES: Did it last for about two hours or so?

BP: Oh an hour and a half or so.

ES: Because this was in June wasn't it, so it would still be light by 8:00 or 8:30.

BP: Yes uh huh. You'd see these seniors in their caps and gowns with their torches going on down \_\_\_\_\_ [?].

ES: I suppose there were speeches?

BP: Oh yes.

ES: Who would talk?

BP: Well they had a regular...their program was all written out it was the same every year.

ES: Same speeches every year?

BP: Mhm.

ES: Really?

BP: Well more or less I guess.

ES: How was this different from a college commencement; or was it the same thing?

BP: Well it was part of the general program for commencement but it had an Evensong Queen in attendance.

ES: I'm just wondering though if there was also a commencement?

BP: Oh yes on a separate day. \_\_\_\_\_ [?] with all the flurry.

ES: The seniors had to go off into their future twice.

BP: Mhm.

ES: Was there a religious service in connection with the graduation?

BP: No. At least I don't...I don't remember there being baccalaureates, I think of that as high school.

ES: Some colleges have it but maybe not the State Colleges.

BP: Probably not.

ES: What was your understanding of the opinions that other people in the state had about Eastern in relation to the other colleges on the west side?

BP: Well uh we were the only one of \_\_\_\_\_ [?] because Ashland down in the southern part of the state had Southern Oregon and then in Monmouth which is down \_\_\_\_\_ [?] was the Oregon and that \_\_\_\_\_ [?]. But I don't know, I never felt uh...I wasn't aware of any feelings particularly of isolation or anything. We were assigned eleven counties in Eastern Oregon \_\_\_\_\_ [?] and Southern Oregon also had it's share. In fact at least two or the Presidents at Eastern went on to be President of Oregon at Monmouth.

ES: Now was that considered to be a step up?

BP: Well I don't know.

ES: My understanding is that Eastern over the years has had a hard time getting the support that the west side colleges had. Not as many students, not as much money and maybe some complaints about it that maybe to save money it should be closed. Did you ever hear anything about that?

BP: Oh that's come up but I don't think they ever really took it seriously. Maybe that's because I myself thought that was \_\_\_\_\_ [?] thing. But it seems to me that particularly in the years when we had a very active President who was getting out around the area, sort of drumming for students and that sort of thing; we held our own pretty well.

ES: Do you go up to visit the campus now occasionally?

BP: Well I was up there about a month ago to a meeting of the foundation which I'm still a member of. I almost got lost up there, because it's changed a great deal. Especially when it comes to parking. I went up the day before to make sure that I knew where I was going. {Laughter}

ES: Did you by any chance go up to the dedication of the Baker tree a few weeks ago?

BP: No I didn't.

ES: Do you know where it is?

BP: No.

ES: It's on that little knoll between Inlow and the former Dorian Hall, the first dormitory. There's a very old tree there. I was talking to a couple of people up there who, one of them was David Yurgis from Mitres Touch downtown. He says that area was a cemetery, a burial ground.

BP: Right.

ES: Do you know about that?

BP: Yes.

ES: What do you know?

BP: Well just that they had to dig up the graves in order to make place for the school.

ES: Do you know why it became a gravesite?

BP: It wasn't, as I understand it, it wasn't the regular cemetery. Of course a cemetery is a cemetery, but it was...there was a large number of people buried up there who had died because of a flu epidemic.

ES: During the 1917-1920 period?

BP: Yes. During the time when there was kind of a national...

ES: Well LaGrande had a cemetery by that time didn't it?

BP: Yeah I know.

ES: Well why weren't they buried up there?

BP: I don't know.

ES: Do you think they...somebody thought their bodies would infect other people?

BP: Could be.

ES: But Inlow was there at that time wasn't it? No it was in '29. There was nothing there.

BP: It opened in 1929.

ES: Were there other buildings up there before?

BP: No. Well um...

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ES: Do you think it's possible that the Indians used it as a burial sight?

BP: I never had heard that.

ES: David said he thought there was some evidence that bodies were just buried any old which way and there weren't any markers, not in rows like other cemeteries.

JT: There probably weren't a lot of records.

BP: And I don't know how many people were buried up there. At that time...well I really don't remember because I just came to LaGrande to live with my grandmother and go to high school and we lived down where the city library is now.

ES: On Penn?

BP: A couple of doors...on Penn and we were never up on that hill.

ES: By the way that reminds me, I've heard a number of people say that for a long time and for many reasons many people who live in LaGrande don't want anything to do with the college or university, was that true when you were working there?

BP: Well, have you got a copy of that insert...there was a competition between Umatilla County and the town of Pendleton and LaGrande to get the college. The governor of Oregon at that time was Walter Pierce who was a Union County farmer. Well he...I don't know how it all worked out but Governor Pierce was able to talk the other people into letting it come here. Mr. Inlow, who was the first President, was Superintendent of Schools at Pendleton and of course LaGrande people were so happy about having the college and everything that they wanted to be involved in everything. He was pretty standoffish, not because I think that...over ill feelings; but this was a State College, not a Union County College. So he was not as involved in community affairs and things like that as future Presidents were. The man \_\_\_\_\_ [?] Charles Howard had been State Superintendent of Construction before he came and he was an outgoing type of person. He was getting involved with the rotary club and all the things that go on downtown. And he was taking speaking engagements everywhere \_\_\_\_\_ [?]. And because of what he did to sort of get the college into town, working together again, he was then sent on to Monmouth to be the President there.

ES: Was it your sense when you were working at the college that there was a close friendly relationship between people at the college and people in the town?

BP: It was beginning to.

ES: Beginning to.

BP: He was only there a few years.

ES: You were there for a longer time, what was your sense of the relationship?

BP: Well um...you know people downtown came up to college affairs and things like that but they were not invited to be on committees or anything like that you know. Frank Bennett who...well he was quite a bit later, I went to work for him in 1955 and he was there for more than 12 years if I remember right. But he was the kind of a person that finally got college people on rotary club committees and all this kind of stuff; and people downtown on college committees. He started a foundation \_\_\_\_\_ [?]. The Bakers were on it, you know what I mean?

ES: Yeah. I know you haven't been connected with the college for a number of years but do you have any assessment of what the relationship is between now the University and the town currently?

BP: I think it's fine. I still belong to the foundation; I was secretary of it for quite a while after I retired but it got...not only are the connections good with the town but they're good with the whole Eastern Oregon Community....communities because they have people from other parts of the state on our Alumni.

ES: There has been a lot of effort in the last few years to make that happen. What else should we ask her about John?

JT: You didn't mention Keiser and Geyser and Quinn.

BP: Well I should have. They were among the first early faculty. Quinn was a coach for how many years? Twenty years?

JT: A lot of years. It seemed like there was more prestige in the earlier professors like Dr. Lee Johnson and Keiser and Geyser and...more than now. Outstanding people.

BP: Yes it does. Bob Quinn was an outstanding coach and he coached everything. Basketball, football, baseball and he had outstanding teams. For the most...they weren't for the most part shipping them in; they were taking them from the Eastern Oregon area. And uh we have some awfully, some very important people on our faculty right now, especially in the music department.

JT: Dorothy Winters did a lot with her musical group to go around and recruit people to come to Eastern Oregon.

BP: Yeah what did they call them?

JT: I would bring that up and I can't... Tony, my youngest son was a member, the...

BP: Well anyway she was the dean of \_\_\_\_\_ [?] and sort of had charge of the dormitories and stuff. She was an excellent person, very attractive personally and professionally. She'd take the other group of students together and they'd go and visit other towns for skits and things like that. Her group of people did quite a lot to get students to come here.

ES: Of these older faculty members and staff members that you knew, which one of them might be the best choice if a new building were built and to be named after one of them?

BP: Well I personally think that when they named... they named Ackerman Hall after some well-known educator, but it should have been named Miller Hall because John Miller was here from the very beginning. He was head of the education department.

ES: Wasn't he the first principal of the school?

BP: Mhm.

ES: And isn't the current principal named John Miller too?

BP: Yes.

ES: Now how about that!! {Laughter}

BP: Well he's the new Superintendent now isn't he of the district?

ES: Not the school district.

BP: Oh no he's the head of the education department.

ES: So we need a Miller Hall.

BP: We need a Miller Hall. Of course nobody around remembers John anymore. He was a very kind man and in the early years when I felt myself getting in maybe what you would be called trouble or something, I'd go to John. He was sort of a mentor.

ES: Now did you know, or know much about Kate Halks? [?]

BP: Yes I remember her.

ES: You do? What do you remember about her?

BP: Well uh let's see...she was the first principal at Ackerman. She was a very intelligent person; she has relatives here in Cove at the present time.

ES: She's buried in Cove too.

BP: Is she?

ES: Mhm. I saw her grave.

BP: She was quite matter of fact. She's hard to describe. I uh...well my sophomore year in college I was working on the \_\_\_\_\_ [?]. We got 25 cents an hour. I worked with her, with Kate, she had an office down...she didn't have an office in Ackerman then...Ackerman was being built I think. She was very nice; she didn't work me too hard. But she was...

ES: What did you do? Office work?

BP: Office work, yes.

ES: Somebody told me she was too smart for her own good.

BP: Well I didn't say that, but I might have. Well she was a little bit bossy. Well I think I can understand her because she was very intelligent and she had quite a bit of good experience. Well she just wasn't going to be \_\_\_\_\_ [?].

ES: She didn't hesitate to tell people what she thought they should do?

BP: That's right. Or what she thought.

JT: You mentioned the \_\_\_\_\_ [?] when the cadets were here. About how many cadets do you remember?

BP: I don't think I ever knew how many they had. But they took up almost the whole Sacajawea Hotel, which is no longer here; with their cadets, air force cadets.

ES: And I understand they would march up the hill from the hotel to the college.

BP: Oh yes and they marched up the hill to the college about a block from my mother's house and my children got scared and would cry. {Laughter}

JT: Well how did it work with the college classes and then the cadet training going on at the same time?

BP: Well the college enrollment was quite a bit reduced at that time as far as their regular students were concerned. Because all of these fellas and some of the girls too were going off to war. The cadets were \_\_\_\_\_ [?] in certain classes,



not in...as I remember not in...they weren't taking regular college courses. They weren't having to bother with English and some of this other stuff you have to take.

ES: Math and Science mainly probably.

BP: Math and Science mainly. They hired special faculty too. Now Carl...that's how Carl \_\_\_\_\_ [?] came to LaGrande. Oh he's another one that I should mention... not in...he wasn't one of the first ones that came in the '40's when they had cadets. \_\_\_\_\_ [?]. He has just retired in recent years you know \_\_\_\_\_ [?].

ES: I know him.

BP: Oh do you? He's a charming \_\_\_\_\_ [?], one of my favorites. In fact I used to treat him with respect until I found out he was only a month older than I was. {Laughter}

ES: I suppose I should tell you that I was a student at the college when you were working there in 1951. I didn't meet you though. I don't think I ever went into Inlow Hall. I was here for just 6 months as a student, getting a teaching certificate.

BP: You're the son in law of Florence Miller.

ES: Right.

BP: She \_\_\_\_\_ [?]

ES: Yeah.

BP: Well I'll tell you they...while Dr. Gilbert was President, he got me to, on one of my trips down to Ft. Stevens in the summer when my husband and I were park hosting, volunteer park host of the state. At the state park at Ft. Stevens and John Miller was living down the coast a ways. President Gilbert got me to go down and interview him because maybe we'd have history at the college someday. I had the most interesting visit with him. He told me a lot of things about \_\_\_\_\_ [?] and some of the people that I never knew. I've still got the tape.

ES: You didn't write about it?

BP: No I didn't. Nobody...well there was a student a couple years ago that wrote about the first \_\_\_\_\_ [?] and I gave her all the information that was on tape.

ES: Have you shared the tape with anybody who's at the University now?

BP: No I haven't. Would you like to...

ES: Would you like to let us listen to it?

BP: I don't know where it is, I just moved three weeks ago up here. I shut up a house I lived in for 52 years.

ES: Did you store a lot of the stuff that you had there?

BP: Well there's...the tape recorder was there, I don't know...see my family, my four children, moved me out. We took 3 loads of \_\_\_\_\_ [?] but I don't think was in there.

ES: Well could you get them to help you find it?

BP: I think so. It may be in that box I opened this morning.

ES: We should not lose it. That would have been when that you did the interview?

BP: Well let's see, we retired in 1978 so it was in the early '80's.

ES: I sure hope you can find it. Is it labeled?

BP: Yes.

ES: Good. Just one tape?

BP: Mhm.

ES: And he's dead now.

BP: Yes.

ES: That tape is valuable. Did you know about it?

JT: No I didn't know about the tape. I knew John Miller, in fact I ran into him down at the coast one time while we were down there, can't remember the name of the town down there. I went to use the telephone and here was John. We had quite a conversation down there.

BP: Well he was living with a sister then.

ES: What other people do you know of who are still living and spent considerable time at the college? Either as staff members or faculty.

BP: Oh I'd have to think about that. Uh Jack and Dorothy Evans are ones that come to mind.

ES: Yes.

BP: Just off the top of my mind I can't...

ES: Lee Johnson of course is still here.

BP: Oh yes Lee's been a friend of mine for years. In fact I think I lost my temper at him one time. He uh...he was always... \_\_\_\_\_ [?] office was on the left side of the hallway and the mailbox was on the other side \_\_\_\_\_ [?]. Every once in a while Lee would come in and sit down and relax for a little bit. One day he came in and he was just furious because I had put out a notice \_\_\_\_\_ [?] the classes were going to be changed. He hadn't looked in the box lately and he didn't get the notice...he was giving me a bad time. Finally I stuck my finger in his face and I told him to shut up, that I had put that notice out as doing a favor for Roy Skeen and I wasn't going to take the blame. I got to thinking later then that you know, I really shouldn't have done that. So that afternoon I went up to his office and knocked on the door; he came to the door and I said my little apologies. Then he said don't you EVER do that to me again, you nearly scared the life out of me. {Laughter}

ES: This big man?

BP: Do you know Lee?

ES: No I have not met him.

BP: Oh you must introduce him.

ES: Do you think he would talk to us?

JT: Right now I'm not sure, Betty is real sick in Wildflower and Lee has fallen lately down at his house. I'm very concerned about him. I just was down there this last week. You know how Lee is; he's quite emotional. I just don't know, I wished I could say Eugene...

ES: Sounds as though you are the person to achieve it if it's possible.

JT: Well, Dick Hermans and I have been real good friends and so was Jack Evans you know, you might talk to Jack about it.

ES: \_\_\_\_\_ [?] knows him quite well too I think.

JT: But Lee like Betty says is a very opinionated man. You know he used to write newspaper articles under different names and send them to the newspapers around the locality.

ES: Cantankerous ones?

JT: Well, told them what he thought. {Laughter}

BP: He's a LaGrande product, not many of our faculty are. He was...taught in LaGrande high school for...I don't know anybody that's quite like Lee, do you?

JT: No. I'm glad he's my friend; I would not want him as my enemy. He always wanted to be a railroader.

ES: I know he made a specialty of the history of railroads.

JT: I'm sure sorry he's having problems.

BP: Oh I am too. His wife had to have a foot amputated.

JT: We were fortunate enough, with his first wife Claris [?], before she died, Herman's family and the Turners and the Johnson's spent that New Years, just before she died, together; it was a special time.

BP: I can give you an address if you are interested, of somebody who has been heavily involved in...Slater family history. His wife who is now deceased was...her mother was my grandmother's sister; so she was one of the ten children that came from the Slater family.

ES: What kind of information do you think she would have?

BP: Well they've got a computer and they've traveled back and forth across the United States and they've given quite a bit of information recently to the Salt Lake...the Mormons.

ES: Our project is not concentrating particularly on geneology; it's more on how people lived and the contributions that they made. It sounds as though James Slater and then what did you say was his son or nephew was the architect?

BP: John.

ES: John?

BP: John never married \_\_\_\_\_. Think about that.

ES: Well that's ok.

BP: Well I meant...

ES: I think I know what you mean.

BP: I didn't know him at all. I have a lot of pictures that are not labeled, I've got some albums...and there's a man in, who's on the college faculty, maybe he's retired I don't know. His name's Doyle Slater and he came from the Midwest and I don't think they're related, I think his family came...were Mormons when they came here to the United States. But anyway he received a telephone call from someone in California who said that he was a truck driver and in cleaning out his truck he ran across a box with an album in it and it had the name Slater. So he...the man offered to send it to him and so he said well send it ahead. Well after he'd received it, when he opened the box and opened the album here was a picture of James D. Slater of LaGrande Oregon \_\_\_\_\_ [?] who was an attorney who was...who had been appointed mayor of LaGrande. Well I knew as soon as he opened the book and I saw the picture of Mr. Slater and that was my Uncle Jim who I used to do a little office work for once in a while before he died. Judge \_\_\_\_\_ [?] had bought his practice, or taken over his practice in 1935. But anyway here was this beautiful album with the nicest looking people, not a name on anything. My uncle Jim Slater had no children. Now whether this was...now they didn't look like his side of the family and I didn't know his...I knew his wife but I knew nothing about her family. \_\_\_\_\_ [?] so I gave the album to Doyle to see if he could...to do what he wanted to. But uh my...there's another part of...My grandmother was married to Alfred Taylor Neil from Tennessee and how she met him and everything, I don't know. But anyway when...From the beginnings of Union County, the town of Union \_\_\_\_\_ [?] and my grandfather was a recorder for the...for the county. When they moved the county seat to LaGrande he moved his family to Newbridge Oregon which was a little town that no longer exists I don't think; it was in Baker County, which is out near Richland or Halfway somewhere. He had a farm up there, well in November 19...they were married in 1883 and my mother, their oldest child was born in 1885. But in 1895 he came from Newbridge to Union in November to get winter supplies and he never got home. They found his body caught in \_\_\_\_\_ [?], the supplies were not there. There's always been this mystery about what really happened to him. So my grandmother came back to LaGrande, her family moved her back to LaGrande; and she had four children. Her brother built her a house \_\_\_\_\_ [?]. She taught school and gave music lessons and put three of her children through college. She retired a year early because \_\_\_\_\_ [?]. She had quite a full life. She taught school and she gave music lessons on weekends.

ES: Mhm. Nothing but work.

BP: But I've thought sometime I ought to go over to Baker and see if they've got any kind of news or what was released in the paper at that time. But this...there's not any clippings or anything that I've ever found.

ES: Well I'm just about at the end of my tape so maybe we should say, we'll stop this time, but if you think of other things that you would like to tell us; about the university especially, we'd be glad to come back.

BP: Well I don't have... my memory is not as good as it was...

ES: We can all admit to that.

BP: Well I might have some other things that you don't have.

ES: Particularly if you find the tape of John Miller.