

Ray Buckley Edited

Early Years

RB: I am Robert Raymond Buckley, born in 1912 in Montana. My family moved to Union County in 1917.

I: Why did your family moved here?

RB: I guess you would call it not a dispute, but a breakup of the family. My Dad was a miner. His family had come from Dakotas over to Montana and he had worked in the copper mines. He died in Montana and there were some family troubles.

I: What are the first things that you remember about La Grande?

RB: I remember that World War I was going on. One time Spruce Street was changed to Victory Way. They planted trees on both sides of the street all the way down to the Park and called it Victory Way. That was in dedication of World War I.

The streets were gravel; the sidewalks were wooden. All the stores, everything was on Main Street. There weren't any highways then so everything came by train. The major roads were gravel and few people drove them, going to Pendleton or Baker was a real trip.

I: Where did you start school?

RB: I started at Central School. The winters were rough; you had to wear your clothes in the classroom to keep warm. They made you take off your overshoes so you wouldn't get chill blains. We had some hard winters. You could walk over the fences and not know that you were even walking over them. I remember the wind blowing, you could hear it coming--whirrrrrrrr.

Out here where we are right now at the Senior Center, there were cherry orchards and farms.

I: Tell me what in particular you remember about grade school.

RB: The kids on this side of the town were enemies of the other side of town. I don't know why. You had to go home to do your chores to do and you didn't get to run around uptown. The railroad tracks were the dividing line between the two sides of the city.

I: When you came to La Grande, you lived on N Avenue?

RB: Yes, at 1310 N Avenue, it was a gravel street. That was a great day when they started paving that street; that was really a highlight.

They used to have cattle drives in the spring and the fall. They come along and tell you to keep your kids off the street the next day because there was going to be cattle coming down from Deals and Canyons. Us kids thought that was great.

High School

I: When you went into high school, what activities did you do?

RB: Unless you were big and husky, you didn't stand a chance of doing any sports because you weren't big enough. The fellows who played football and had graduated, they would come back the next year for post-graduate school so they could play ball again.

I: Did you have dances or other activities at school?

RB: No, there wasn't much of that going. Kids had to get home after school. There wasn't much of that fancy stuff for kids to take part in.

When you went into high school from grade school, they told you what classes you were going to take. You didn't get to pick out what you wanted to do; they told you. We had Latin class and a poor teacher. She was really cross-eyed. The kids made an awful lot of fun out of her. I think it really hurt her; she was a heck of a nice lady. She never failed anybody. The rest of the kids got to take French or Spanish. It was all figured out what you were going to learn.

I wasn't too hot in arithmetic in grade school, but when I went into high school, algebra and geometry were a cinch.

I: You said that the high school burned twice while you were going there. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

RB: One of the Nelsons was an assistant fireman. The more calls the firemen got, the more money they made. Nelson worked at the school as well. He climbed up in the attic at the school where he set the fire -- he had it all timed out--how long it'd take a candle to burn and get going. Come to find out, he'd been setting fires off all over town. They caught up with him because he was always the first one there to the fire—he always knew where it was.

The next fire was supposed to have happened off the stage when the kids were practicing for a play. Something was wrong with the wiring and a fire started. It took two fires to get us out of school.

I: Where did you go when the fire damaged the high school?

RB: We went all over town to school. It was in the wintertime and we went from building to building in La Grande.

We had a lot of fun going from building to building, having snowball fights and whatnot. We were pretty well scattered around town. We graduated in the Mormon temple, where *The Observer* is now. It was a beautiful place and it held a big crowd. We had a regular ceremony for graduation. That was in 1931.

I: After you got out of school what was your first job?

RB: Well, I had a job while I was going to school. Most of the kids had paper routes and whatnot, but I had a job at the Piggly Wiggly store. I had enough credits so that I didn't have to go to school a full day, I went to school in the mornings and worked at the store in the afternoons.

Piggly Wiggly

I: Where was the Piggly Wiggly store located?

RB: Mackie bought the ground and built the building for the store on Adams Avenue. Previously, it had been Jerry's (?) horseshoe shop. Then Goss bought the building.

I: Did you like working at the grocery store?

RB: Yes, it wasn't bad at all. I was working and didn't fool around much.

I: What did you want to do after you graduated from high school?

RB: I really didn't have any plans. A lot of kids didn't go to college and if they did, they started up at what is now known as Eastern Oregon University.

I: After you left Piggly Wiggly, what did you do?

RB: When I was at Piggly Wiggly, they moved me to the Baker store. I worked at the Baker store until they closed. I came back to La Grande after four or five years, I think it was 1935. I had met my wife Maggie and had gotten married in Baker. We moved back to La Grande and my wife worked at the service station while I worked for the Railway Express.

REA

I: The Railroad Express Company was the major method of sending packages and things of that day, wasn't it?

RB: It was quite a business. They didn't have all the truck line delivery services that they have now. Everything came on the railroad. We had four or five trains a day going each way through La Grande in those days.

I: How many hours a day did you work?

RB: Eight hours.

I: How many men were employed there?

RB: Must've been the 4 of us, outside of the boss and assistant boss. I had a pretty good-sized route to deliver every day. You had to be good to the people, or you'd lose their business. It wasn't just running to the door to drop something off and saying, "Here's your package," and run out again. You had to give them a little service.

I: You had a delivery truck?

RB: We had two trucks. You know clear back in the early days Depot Street was the main street because it came right up from the train depot and everybody traveled by train.

I: Wasn't the mail one of the jobs for the Railroad Express?

RB: Yes, it was picked up at the post office, taken it to the depot and put on the train; it worked in reverse also -- you got the mail off the train and took it back over to the Post Office.

I: There was a mailbox on either end of the depot?

RB: Yes, there was a box and you could put mail into it, or you could wait till the train came in and pit it on the train.

If you got a letter out of Portland on the train in the morning, you could have your answer back in the mail to Portland that night. Trains were coming and going all the time..

I: There was a man right on the train that sorted the mail?

RB: Oh yes, they had a mail car on the train, with two or three mail sorters right there sorting the mail.

I: Do you remember how much you were paid?

RB: No, but it seemed a good wage, I know that. What got me was that they were still on the gold standard. I was working and I couldn't wait to get paid in gold. They put a stop to that and I never did get my gold.

When I was working at Piggly Wiggly on Washington and Depot, there on the corner in the Sommer Building, with J.C. Penney was across the street, they paid their help in gold with a bonus at the end of the year. I thought that was the greatest thing in the world. I never got it because the government put a stop to it.

I: Jobs were pretty hard to find in the 1930's in La Grande.

RB: Yes, that was before the war started. There wasn't anything going on then. Of course they had the mill—Bowman-Hicks Mill—going. Interestingly, where Boise Cascade is now was the fairgrounds, and the mill was over across the track. Then they switched, and the fairgrounds are over there and the mill is over here.

Before Bowman-Hicks went out of business they put in a beautiful well, and I think the fairgrounds people are still using it. When the Senior Center moved to that area before the fair moved there, one of the Hart brothers, (they were construction people) used to bring his jug and get a jug of water because he knew the well was still there.

I: What was your first car that you owned?

RB: Model T Ford. It had to be rejuvenated and this fellow helped me do it. I got rid of that, and our first real car was a Ford V-8 I bought in Baker. We had it for quite a while; in fact, we drove clear back to Chicago and back with it with only one flat tire.

World War II

I: While you were working for Railroad Express the war came along. How long was it before you went into the service?

RB: We had an exemption working for the Railroad. But I gave up my exemption and went into the service. The troop trains used to come through here by the dozens.

I: What part of the service did you go into?

RB: I went to Marine Corps and ended up in transportation in the 4th division.

I: How did you ever get in the Marines, you're not that tall?

RB: They were taking anybody I guess, anybody that was dumb enough to sign up.

I: When you were in the Marines, what did you do in Transportation?

RB: For a while we drove gravel trucks since they were building another section of the camp. Then they as put me on driving officer of the day. You were on 48 hours and then you were off 48 hours. I drove the officer of the day, whoever he happened to be. I had quite a few privileges. I didn't have to stand at inspection, except on Fridays at the officers'

quarters. I got out of doing a lot of stuff when I was the driver for the officer of the day. We'd get some funny requests; one call we got was to get over to the Officers Club on a Saturday night. There was a woman running around there naked. One time I got a call, about an officer and a woman down in the shower room at the camp, taking a shower together.

I: That was in the United States, before you went over seas?

RB: Yes, that was in this country at Camp Pendleton in California. We were called out on a fire calls too. One time on a Saturday they had a brush fire and didn't have all the help they needed. They would call the soldiers or whoever they could get a hold of. There was 110 of us that went out and we were strung up the hillside, one fellow would have a shovel, the next guy would have a pick, the next guy a shovel, the next guy pick all the way up and down the lines.

I: You were making a firebreak.

RB: Yes, I guess that's what we were doing. You couldn't tell there in California, the wind would blow one direction one minute, the next it was going in the other. We would get trapped; we would lay down in the ditch we'd made, pull our caps and coats up over our heads to trap whatever air we could. Hundreds of us went to the hospital and ten died, got burnt to death. One kid from Texas went up a scrub oak tree; he climbed up and they pulled him down. They said "You can't go up that tree, you'll get burnt to death". He said "Oh no", and he climbed back up there, and he got burnt to death.

I: When you left the US, where did you serve?

RB: I just had one invasion, Iwo Jima. We were in the first seven minutes of the invasion and were there for 30 days. You didn't take your clothes off, except to change your underwear and socks. That was something else. I got hit with a motor shell and received a purple heart for it. I don't think I'd do it again.

I: Were you sent home after that ?

RB: No, I was there for pretty near 4 years before we came home. After that, I signed up with the reserves and we were called back for the Korean War. I was there for 3 months and then they sent me home—I was too old to fool around in the war.

I: When you came back from the service, what job did you have?

RB: I went back to the Railroad Express Company and worked there until they closed. From there I went over to the car department at the railroad. We had a big car department over there—we repaired cars and inspected them. I stayed there until they wanted me to move to Hinkle. I had a short time to go before retirement, so I couldn't see moving over to

Hinkle and then in a couple years coming back to La Grande. I got a job with the school district as head custodian in charge of old Central School until I retired.

I: What year did you retire, Ray?

RB: I think it was in 1975. That was a great day! I always told them when I retired and if it came at midnight, I was through right then and there. I wasn't working another hour. Retirement is the best job -- you do what you please when you please.

I: You got very active in the senior program after you retired, didn't you?

RB: The seniors were down at the Salvation Army at one time, then we moved over to the fairgrounds. From there, we moved here to the new building on Albany Street. I had plenty to do--go to the hospital and call on people, drive people around and do different things like that.

The Senior Center has grown into quite an activity in the last few years. I have worked 21 years, helping serve meals and things like that. I was in charge of the dining room for all that time.

I: But you really haven't quit. You're still doing it.

RB: There's still a lot to do. There are still a lot of changes I'd make, but I'm not in charge anymore.

La Grande

I: Tell me about some of your memories of La Grande.

RB: There were a lot of Chinese Restaurants. I can remember the Sommer Hotel that had a dining room with their big window on Washington Street. Us kids would go by and look in that window, the tables were set with linen and fancy silverware. Boy, we thought that was great. If you got to go out--your parents taking you out to lunch--that was really a treat, because that didn't happen very often.

Baker and La Grande, they were enemies in football. After the football games in the old stadium over here, there was always two or three good fistfights going on. There was a lot of competition between the two cities.

There was one Mormon gentleman, quite a businessman, and he had a dream of having a mall from the depot right straight up Depot Street clear to the library. It fell through, it never happened. He was ahead of the times, but he had a good idea.

I: In the early pictures it does show all the window displays facing Depot and not too many facing Adams.

RB: If you were a merchant, you didn't think of getting off of the main streets. You have your business on Adams Avenue. You just didn't go to the side streets like they do now. That was a big thing for the highway to come right down through town. People got to see your store or see if something was going on.

I: What do you remember about the Depression?

RB: The County had a welfare program going on. At that time, I was working in the store. People would bring in their warrants from the County and you'd fill their order.

I: Was a warrant like a check?

RB: No, it was just a slip of paper entitling them to so many dollars worth of groceries.

Teachers were paid in warrants. That's when L.C Smith showed up, he had the Dodge Garage. He had enough money that he could cash their warrants-- the teachers paid in warrants—he'd cash their checks without taking a discount. They all came back to him and bought cars from him when things were better.

I: The Eplings discounted at their grocery store.

RB: Some of those places did, yes. Farmers would bring in their eggs; we'd give them ten cents a dozen for eggs and sell them for twelve cents a dozen. Bread was a nickel a loaf.

I: What happened during prohibition?

RB: There were bootleggers all around. The fact is, we lived next door to a taxi man that did the peddling for the bootleggers. We found out where he used to hide his little suitcase of liquor on his back porch, people would drive up and get it. I guess they'd leave their money in the suitcase there, and us kids took part of that.

One time the folks had us bring the bottles over to the house; they dumped the liquor out, put tea in the bottles and put them back on the porch. The taxi man the next day or two was complaining and said, "Those fellows wouldn't pay me for that liquor. They said it was nothing but tea." Oh, boy, those were good times.

I: Do you remember when George Noble hit Cast Iron Mary?

RB: Yes, it was on 4th street there and Depot, before it was down on Adams Avenue.

George was the town bootlegger. It's funny, women who were against liquor put up that statue of Casst Iron Mary and George was the one that hit it--broke it all to pieces.

One fellow told me that 4th Street was one of the first paved streets when they started paving streets outside of Adams Avenue. I guess that was quite a thrill to the people

driving automobiles. Before everybody had wagons or horses; they delivered groceries for Eppling and other stores.

There was the China Garden up there in Old Town. A Chinaman used to come down the alley with his little cart, stop at your back door, and peddle vegetables. We used to switch the reins on the horses; he couldn't figure that out for a long time.

The iceman used to come down the alley, too, with his ice wagon. People had refrigerators but they weren't electric. They were called an icebox. Us kids, we would try to sneak in the back of the wagon, get a chunk of ice just to chew on. We had one ice man that was really ornery. He had his whip for his horses that he had on his wagon, and he'd take after us kids. "Get out of that ice! Get out of there, get away from there!"

I: Do you remember when the Chinaman was shot and killed on the post office steps?

RB: Yes and Peg Leg Pete, the colored gentleman that washed windows for all the different stores. He had his little dog with him. He'd leave his equipment -- the bucket, and the dog. Boy, you didn't go near and touch that; that little dog would get you. Then one night Peg Leg Pete got in trouble with the Chinaman, chased him round and round the old post office building that is City Hall now. There was Peg Leg going around and around with the Chinaman after him.

I remember they used to have a lot of tailor shops. The tailors would set in the front window with a mouthful of pins, and be sewing away. Us kids would be standing in front of the window, making faces, doing all kinds of stuff--teasing them. We didn't make the tailors very happy.

I: There was a Zweifel that was a tailor, wasn't there?

RB: Yes. The ladies of course, they had a millinery shop. There was a lady there she could just take a piece of cloth and make a hat out of nothing. She had quite a business. In those days, the ladies had big hats and their hatpins. Their hatpins were their protection. They would carry those, and if anybody approached them and they had trouble, they'd pull that hatpin out.

I: Was the Stuart Opera House going then?

RB: Stuart Opera House, yes.

I: Didn't they have the Rex Theater after that?

RB: We had three theatres in the end, Sherry's and the Arcade and then it was called the Star Theatre, where the Granada is today.

I got to go into the show for free, because the lady who played the piano was our neighbor. She had a couple little kids and had to take them with her because her husband

was on the railroad. I 'd get to go set with the kids, watch them, and I 'd get to see the show. The show was silent those days.

We had one young fellow from Old Town who stuttered quite a bit. I can remember one of the pictures—this Tom Mix picture. He was going along. This fellow jumped up. [in falsetto voice] “He’s right behind you, Tommy. He’s right behind you.”

Then the Legion had a convention here, too. They had a state convention and they had maybe a dozen drum and bugle corps.

I: Do you remember what year that was?

RB: I don’t remember the year, but they had a big contest up on the old high school football field for the drum and bugle corps. The drum and bugle corps would get up in the middle of the night and go down the street. During the show time at the movie house, they would come into the show, go down the aisle and around and back out, playing their drum and bugle corps. They were a pretty welcome sight.

I: Do you remember when the La Grande Hotel was built?

RB: That was where we had our junior/senior banquet. It was a beautiful building. That was the first time I 'd ever seen where they parked cars underneath the building. At the back end of the building, it was raised up, and you could drive your car and park it underneath the building.

The Foley Hotel was the oldest and the first one to have hot and cold water running in all the rooms. The La Grande Hotel was supposed to have been one of the nicest between Portland and Boise.

I: Do you remember Pat Foley who owned the Foley Hotel?

RB: I just remember him is all, not much about him

I: I heard that he dropped nickels and dimes down to the kids.

Railroad

RB: The _____[?] Building now, across the street from the old hotel, was where the railroad offices were. That was quite a sight at quitting time, all those people pouring out of that building getting ready to go home; they had quite a sizeable office there.

I: When they built the depot, didn’t they have a lot of offices there too?

RB: They did upstairs, but they finally moved it over into Portland.

I: Didn't they have a time keeping department there, where the checks and stuff were made out for the Railroaders?

RB: Yes, they had quite a business office.

I: When you were working at the Railroad Express Office do you remember how many people worked at the Roundhouse?

RB: There were quite a few, because they had the Water Department, Electricians, they had the Roundhouse Foreman that repaired the Engines. La Grande was mostly Railroaders, they changed crews here, changed engines, and had the helper engines.

I: When you were working on the rip track, what things did you do?

RB: You had to inspect the cars, and fix whatever was wrong with them. Some might need new wheels, or the brakes fixed; the inside of the car might need repair so it would be fit to use for shipping. We inspected all the safety hazards on the car, the handrails and footsteps, they all had to be in good shape. I finally got out of working at the terminal and got over to the yards. We had to inspect every train that came to town, they had to be air tested before they could leave town.

I: Now in an air test, what is that for someone who doesn't know about railroads?

RB: The Engineer pumps the air through the train and it registered in the caboose, it had to be at least 70 pounds before you could give an air test.

I: They had air brakes on each car?

RB: Yes and that would set them up; then you would give your signal and he'd release it and if everything was ok, you'd tell him to leave town. The Railroad employed a lot of people and at one time they had their own coal boys.

The old time telephone too wasn't like it is now, you'd pick it up and Central would ask you, "Number please". You'd have a signal, red number so-and-so, or green number so-and-so, black number so-and-so. Then she'd ring it for you.

I: What were the red, green, and black?

RB: Well they were signals for the phone company, depending on what part of town you lived in or were calling. I have no idea why they had that, but they had it.

I: Having lived in La Grande as many years as you have Ray, what are the things you like the best about La Grande?

RB: Well, it's just a nice town, a lot of nice trees, and the town is pretty. Of course then La Grande isn't like it is now. Then, you could go out and leave your house unlocked and never worry about anybody bothering it. You don't dare go across the street now without locking your house.

The kids had things to do after school, they had chores to do and they didn't run around the streets like they do now. I look out our kitchen window and it's getting dark, and here's these little kids 5,6,7,8,9, 10 years old walking down the street, all by themselves; I don't think their parents have any idea where they are or what they're doing.

Back then, your parents wanted to know where you were and what you was doing. There was a curfew at night and the kids would get off the street. The old fire department too was different; they used to have fire boxes that covered certain districts. Then they had the big bell there on the City Hall that would toll. If it was box 42 they'd ring four, then they'd ring two, that was 42. Us kids, away we would go to see where the fire was. Of course there was a lot of roof fires in those days, because everybody burnt wood or coal and a lot of sparks from the chimneys caused a lot of fires.

In the wintertime, the city would plow the streets. They'd have a horse and a V-shaped plow they'd go up and down the sidewalks clearing it off. At the end of 7th street there was a stairway going up the hillside.

KKK

I: What do you remember about the Ku Klux Klan?

RB: Well, they used to burn the cross up on the hillside. They would march downtown and they'd have their outfits, their hoods and sheets they covered themselves with. Us kids didn't quite know what it was all about.

I: Did you know any of them?

RB: Yes I knew some of them, but you didn't dare tell anybody who they were.

I: Did they demonstrate against people?

RB: Of course they were mostly against the colored people as near as I could figure out.

I: How about the Chinese?

RB: I don't know about them, we had a pretty good-sized China Town back on Jefferson Street and 4th Street behind the La Grande Hotel. There was a sizeable community. I knew a couple of Chinese Gardeners who were around town.

I: Were they pretty nice people?

RB: Yes, real nice. They were pretty prosperous in their restaurant businesses.

I: One who comes to mind is Pork Chop the Chinaman that used to go down the alley.

RB: I don't remember too much about him.

I: What outdoor activities did you like to do?

RB: Well fishing was probably the most important. They had a nice little park up Ladd Canyon where you could go up and catch crawdads.

The wheels on the cars in those days had wooden spokes and in the summertime they would dry out pretty bad. In the summertime you'd drive up there with your folks and they would drive right into the creek, let the wheels soak up the water and get swelled up again. Shame they ever done away with the Ladd Canyon Park, it was a nice little park.

I: Did you ever fish for Salmon on Catherine Creek?

RB: I never fished, but I went with a fellow who did. He used to take tennis balls that came in a long narrow tin. He'd cut the bottom out of the can and put a piece of glass in. He'd lay on his belly and put that in the water, and he could spot the salmon down there, and he'd yank them out. They weren't supposed to but they did.

I: Little bit against the law.

RB: The Indians used to come up there every year, pick berries and fish salmon.

I: Do you remember before the war, when the Indians came over to pick camas out on Gekeler lane?

RB: I don't remember that, but I do recall they had a sugar beet factory here at one time. They gave that up, because they didn't have enough water. There was supposed to have been a flax factory out there at the foot of Mt. Emily.

I: Did you ever go out to Hot Lake at any time?

RB: Oh yes, Hot Lake was quite a pretty popular place. They had their own train station with a mail drop. Trains would stop there, pick people up and let them off. Doctors from Seattle and around would send people to Hot Lake for treatments. It's a shame that it's setting out there like it is now.

I: Did you ever go out there for dinner?

RB: Yes, we had a nice dinner out there and it only cost a couple of dollars. I remember in 1934 when half of the big building burned down. That was a shame. They had a little railroad too, a narrow gauge railroad that ran out of Union, around across through the

valley, back to Cove. Cove had their own packing plant for cherries and fruit; they had big prune and cherry orchards. The Union Stock show building burnt down one time, they lost a lot of animals and stuff. Oh boy, did that ever stink.

Church

I: You've been a lifetime Episcopalian.

RB: I started at the Episcopal Church here when I was five and I've been there ever since.

I: Would you go out to the Ascension School in Cove?

RB: Yes. They first started out with tents and they ended up with little cabins. There wasn't any water in the cabins then, just light bulbs. We would go out every year, clean them up, get them ready for camp. It was a lot different then than it is now.

I: Do you remember Bishop Remington?

RB: He was quite a guy, well thought of. They had one Bishop who came here from Idaho and he was really a nice guy. He used to ride a motorcycle. In Boise, he said he had a lot of fun riding his motorcycle and calling on people from the church.

I: Motorcycles were a lot different in those days than they are today.

RB: There were motorcycle clubs here; they had Indian Motorcycle Club and the Harley Davidson Motorcycle Club. At one time they used to have quite a 4th of July celebration out at Riverside Park. They'd have these motorcycle races that went around the backcountry and back to the park. They would sell pretty good-sized buttons all year to support the races. On Decoration Day, they'd have quite a celebration out at the park. Biff Nelson would make a boat with flowers on it, take it up the river a ways, and he'd float it down to Park.

We'd go to the Roundup in the fall, to Pendleton Roundup, that was always a big deal. Later on up in Baker, they had the Miners' Jubilee on the 4th of July which was a big celebration.

I: I think one of the nicest celebrations was in '85 when we celebrated La Grande's 100 Anniversary. I was real proud at how many people really took part in the parade.

President Harding at Meacham

RB: In 1923 when President Harding was at Meacham, they ran special trains to go up to shake hands with the President. When they had the dedication at Immigrant Springs, they built kind of a little city there with false store fronts. I believe the stone monument is still up there. The highway bypasses all of that, you have to go into Meacham to see it.

- I: There were hundreds and hundreds of people there.
- RB: The railroad ran special passenger cars up there. Everybody dressed up like pioneers, it was a real celebration.
- I: What do you remember about when the war started and guards being put on all the bridges out of town?
- RB: That was necessary to protect everything. If the railroad had been sabotaged it would have tied up traffic all over the country.
- I: In the early days when the carnival used to come to town, didn't they block off Jefferson Street?
- RB: Yes, Jefferson Street was where the carnival was. The circus used to be up on the hill where the College is now. The circus trains would come in, unload and go up Greenwood Street, then onto 8th street, then onto N, then up the 6th street hill. There was nothing but grass up there, there weren't any buildings up there at that time.
- I: Did you get to go to the circus?
- RB: Yes, it was quite a thrill to go to the Barnum and Bailey Circus, with sideshows in the tent.
- I: Did you ever go help set up and take down?
- RB: No, I was never big enough to do that. You had to be pretty good sized and husky, carrying water for the elephants.
- I: Do you remember some of the large fires we had right here in La Grande, especially the one in the 30's in South La Grande?
- RB: Yes, at night you could see the flames and the colored sky. They would sprinkle the streets in town; they had the water wagon with the horses going down the gravel streets.
- I: Do you remember when we used to have the street sweepers in La Grande?
- RB: Yes. What they need nowadays is a CC camp again. I went to Chicago on a train for the fair and they had these CC kids, they were moving them back and forth all over the country. They did a lot of good.
- I: They had that one CC camp up at Hilgard. Those CCC guys did a lot of good, they built roads and buildings. You remember the Art Center where the VFW is now?

RB: They had the Art center in what used to be the Garland Hotel. It's gone through a few changes -- there was a plumbing shop there, a wood working shop there, and an electrical shop before we got a hold of it.

I: What you're talking about is the Veterans of Foreign Wars bought the building. They had started a basement over there at Chestnut and Jefferson.

RB: It turned out to be the Ford garage, later

JT Later, but they went broke trying to build the building.

RB: We bit off more than we could chew. Yeah they tried to build a building there, they finally sold it and bought this other building from C.J. Shorbe.

I: So you have been very active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars for many years.

RB: Oh I've been fifty some years in the Veterans.