

Edith Scott

3/13/03, T1, S1

ESm: This is a test of the sound with Edith Scott on March 20...March 13th, 2003.
Please give me your full name, including your maiden name.

ESc: My full name is Edith Ebell Scott.

ESm: That's e-b-e-l-l?

ESc: Correct. And e-d-i-t-h.

ESm: And were born in La Grande?

ESc: In La Grande.

ESm: When?

ESc: January 6th, 1908.

ESm: 1908.

ESc: Correct.

ESm: And I think that your grandfather was what might be called a pioneer to this part of Eastern Oregon, would he?

ESc: Definitely. Granddad... Granddad followed the sea from Germany and their...their ship shipwrecked right out of San Francisco. And as far as he knows he's the only man that got...because he was a good swimmer he's the only man that made it to shore. And the...

ESm: Do you have any idea what year that was approximately?

ESc: Oh, in the late 1800s. And at that time the gold rush was just coming to an end in California and some of those men were headed up toward Baker Valley to the...because...

ESm: Baker had gold, yes.

ESc: ...they had discovered gold there.

ESm: Yes.

ESc: So my granddad came with those people up to Baker and he established a post for the trail he had at his ranch.

ESm: The Oregon Trail.

ESc: The Oregon Trail. And that was one of the stop places was at the ranch years ago.

ESm: Did they stop there to get supplies or to rest?

ESc: Supplies and to rest. And then he went on and he raised...had a huge vegetable garden, that's what he went into, and during harvest season he supplied all the vegetables for the city of Baker.

ESm: He didn't do any mining at all, apparently?

ESc: Apparently not. That was not his cup of tea. He could see the...and then he supplied things to the miners, too.

ESm: Do you remember hearing stories directly from him?

ESc: No. Granddad was older and he didn't share his life with his family at all.

ESm: How did you find out about what he had done?

ESc: Oh, Dad picked up some of the things. He shared enough of that, but he never shared these things with me because he was that upset 'cause I was a girl instead of a boy. [laughs] That I didn't carry the Ebell name very far. No, that was... And then, of course, we went up there on vacations all the time.

ESm: Now I gather that your grandfather once he got to Baker and got the vegetable garden going found a woman to marry.

ESc: Pardon?

ESm: That he found a woman to marry.

ESc: The thing that happened with Granddad he was married and he had three children and that they called it the Black Plague went through Baker. And he lost his wife and two of the children, he had a small a baby that lived. And Granddad, apparently, did not get it. My grandmother, whom I knew, and her sister came over from Germany to visit their brother who lived in Baker and here were these two women who really had the equivalent of a college education. They were educated in a women's school in Baker...Germany. And they...the train only came as far as Denver and these women from Denver had to come by stagecoach from Denver to Baker.

ESm: Why did they want to come to Baker?

ESc: To visit their brother.

ESm: Oh, I see. Their brother, yes.

ESc: To visit their brother that was in Baker. And it nearly scared them to death! Here were these two really refined women and Granddad happened to be in town and met Granny and she was afraid to go back to Germany so she married him. [laugh] She was a delight. I just adored my grandmother. She was just a sweetheart. And then her sister also married and stayed in Baker. So that was...it was a fun family background thing.

ESm: I thought you said that your grandfather's wife and children were killed by the Black Plague. Was that some...several years later?

ESc: That was... That was before... It was following the gold rush there in Baker. I have no idea the years.

ESm: One of these...the wife was the one...

ESc: Wasn't diphtheria?

ESm: Could be.

ESc: But they called it the Black Plague at that time and it killed off hundreds of people up all through this area.

ESm: But your father obviously survived.

ESc: He wasn't born yet.

ESm: Oh, there was another wife later?

ESc: I say my grand... My grandfather married my granny when he had this one baby left from the illness. And then that...

ESm: Oh, I see.

ESc: ...that I call my granny had my dad and the rest of the family.

ESm: I wasn't getting the sequence, but now I understand.

ESc: They had six children. My granny and Granddad had six children together.

ESm: So your father grew up in Baker.

ESc: That's right.

ESm: And what brought him...or...

ESc: Brought him here?

ESm: What brought him to Union County?

ESc: The thing that brought my dad...of course by that time all...and all of the hay my Granddad run in and his dad's older brother went into raising cattle and became a cattle ranch when the garden situation was over. And Dad hated working with horses and so he decided...he ran away from home when he was twenty-one. And he came down here and he got a job. They were establishing the telephone lines over at Cove and Dad got a job on that. And he was...happened to see this train coming through, it was coming down from Joseph, of course, into the lumber company here. And he went down and talked to the man about it 'cause he loved...he loved anything that was mechanical. Dad could make anything he wanted mechanical. He was a very creative man. Anything with wood or metal Dad can make it. And so he was talking to the man, he says, "You know, we're looking for men." Dad got on the train and rode into town with him and got a job on the railroad. And it was...Dad was...stayed with the railroad till I think he was seventy-two. He was railroad...became a railroad engineer.

ESm: Did he start as a section hand?

ESc: No, no. As a fireman.

ESm: A fireman.

ESc: That's where they started was a fireman.

ESm: That was wood, of course, at that time that they were burning.

ESc: Coal.

ESm: Are you sure?

ESc: Coal.

ESm: I've been over to Sumpter and I've seen the train...the engines they have there and they all still burn wood.

ESc: Those little itty bitty trains. That's right. No, most of it was coal at that time.

ESm: I see.

ESc: Yes. And then Dad, of course, was on the freight for so many, many years and then he became a passenger engineer. And he was a...he was a engineer on the branch, they called it, for a lot...for quite a while.

ESm: What was his first name?

ESc: Edward. Ed, they called him Ed. And he had a wonderful reputation for an engineer. I have a couple of letters that have written from the high executives complimenting him.

ESm: Did he talk much about his railroad work to you?

ESc: It was just a conversation around the house. And my mother was a fantastic cook. And Mother and Dad loved people. We had more people in and out of our house all the time. And so many of the railroaders at that time were not married men and they'd... Dad'd bring 'em home and it didn't make any difference what Mother was doing, Dad'd bring 'em home and Dad'd say, so-and-so hasn't had lunch yet and Mother'd stop whatever she was doing and fix lunch for all of 'em. [laugh] Our house was an open house to people. It was a happy, happy house.

ESm: And that was on what part of...in what part of La Grande?

ESc: There on Penn Avenue.

ESm: On Penn.

ESc: Uh-huh. On...between Sixth and Seventh.

ESm: Is the house still there?

ESc: Yes.

ESm: Has it been changed?

ESc: It's a little yellow house.

ESm: Has it been changed very much?

ESc: It's been changed quite a bit. It had a long porch...porch that went clear across the front when I was growing up. And one year...one time I came home from college and Dad had cut it down to a little porch and I was so upset! And he said, "I just..." He said, "I got tired of watching your mother have to keep that porch clean all the time so I cut it down to a small porch." [laugh]

ESm: Were you born in that house?

ESc: No. I was born over on 'T' Street.

ESm: Why there?

ESc: That's where I was born. They used to deliver babies in the homes instead of hospitals.

ESm: Yeah. But...

ESc: So they were renting a house over on 'T' Street.

ESm: Before they got the one on Penn?

ESc: Yeah. And they bought the house there on Penn when I was three years old so that's the only house I remember.

ESm: Do you remember hearing from your mother anything about your birth? The circumstances?

ESc: It was horrible. That's why I'm an only child. [laughs]

ESm: Why was it horrible?

ESc: It was so hard on Mother.

ESm: Without an anesthetic?

ESc: Oh, I'm sure. Heavens, no, they didn't use anesthetics then for them. No, it was a miserable birth for Mother. And so there were never any more children.

ESm: Never again, she'd do it?

ESc: No. They just decided that was it.

ESm: So did you move into the house on Penn before you had entered school?

ESc: I said I was three years old when they bought it. So that's been home to me all the time.

ESm: Sure.

ESc: And then, you see, I came up the hill to Central School and then high school.

ESm: Tell me from your memory, as early as possible, how Central School looked and felt to you.

ESc: Oh, I thought it was wonderful. It was a brick building and...I can't rem...it was at least two stories and... I haven't any pictures of Central School.

ESm: I have... I have a picture.

ESc: Isn't it three stories?

ESm: I think so.

ESc: I think it was three stories there on the corner.

ESm: I thought it was stone rather than brick, though.

ESc: And then the high school was three corners. Yeah, it was brick.

ESm: Was it?

ESc: The grade school was brick and so was the high school.

ESm: Okay.

ESc: And the high school had been three stories and the top story burned, that's while I was away from La Grande.

ESm: As a young child you remember that Central School was an inviting place?

ESc: School was fun. I loved it. And...did you ever meet Dr. Ingall? The two Dr. Ingalls here?

ESm: No. I've heard a lot about them, but not...I didn't meet them.

ESc: Dr. Ingall's mother was my first grade teacher and she was a love. We all just adored her. And, see, the college wasn't built then, of course, so that was all open field. And all...none of these houses were up here. When I was growing up, or was a kid, in the spring we'd come up here and pick buttercups in the field here.

ESm: There were buttercups here when I first came to La Grande. I remember them well.

ESc: Yeah. They were... They're so pretty.

ESm: Yes. Could you tell me a little more about being a young student at Central School? Any of the routines that you remember or interactions with teachers or other kids?

ESc: It was... It was a happy time. The kids... There wasn't... There weren't any problems like the kids have now. It went very smoothly. Now first the Catholic children, the grade school children, went to a Catholic school and then came over to the high school so we met them when they came to the high school. But, no, the grade school... And then the winters were such fun because...of course the college wasn't up on the hill and they always closed Sixth Street for sledding. And the white house at the top of Sixth Street, that two-story white house, that belonged to a family who were railroaders also. His name were Batey. And Vera and Howard Batey were the children. And Mrs. Batey was just a love. And the ones of us that knew Howard and Vera they would...Mrs. Batey'd invite us and the ones that they knew go in. Sometimes she'd have hot chili for us, or hot chocolate always. But Sixth Street hill that's where everybody did sledding. It was lots of fun. And then at that time Palmer Mill was still very active, which was out near the fairgrounds. And they used to take the logs out in the fall and we'd ice skate out there in the wintertime. It was a wonderful place. Those are the...kind of the memories of the wintertime. But in the summertime Dad and Mom we would take off on fishing trips and lots of fishing trips like up to Anthony Lake and that area 'cause we'd visit the relatives in the Baker area. We would be up all around Anthony Lake fishing or down on the Minam and all of that. So the summertime I was always...when Dad was home we were out in the woods someplace so I wasn't circulating with the kids in town. And then, you see, the Mormon church was down where the Observer office is now and they had a wonderful social hall behind that. And all of the young people there they were very active and they had lots of fun down there in that social hall. They would... After school so many of those young people would go down to the...to the Mormon social hall and they had dance classes. And then the YMCA was here and all of us learned to swim down there as youngsters. And that's kind of the activity that went on.

ESm: Did you regularly walk to school even from your earliest years?

ESc: Always. And then in grade school the ones that...where I lived, of course, it was downhill, we all roller-skated to school and then we would coast clear down, jump the curbs and go home on our roller-skates. And I went home for lunch every day, of course. And I say I became...because of the church being so close and Mother being active I became very active with the young people in the church. They had...the young people group then was called The Christian Endeavors. And that was a large organization. And see, at that time... Have you met Lee Johnson?

ESm: No, but I know who he is.

ESc: You must meet Lee. But Lee's family were active and then George Fleshmen... Have to talked to George?

ESm: Yes.

ESc: George Fleshman's family were very active in the community...or in the church. That was a church group. And then not the Conleys from Cove, but there was a Conley family here and Lois DeLong was a Conley and her family were very active. And see, it's Lois' son, isn't it, that's the mayor out at Island City?

ESm: I think so.

ESc: Yes. But their background is a Conley family that was out in the valley. And those were people... And then... And then I grew up across the street, of course, from Pat Fitzgerald that have the florist shop.

ESm: Sure.

ESc: Of course.

ESm: I've interviewed him.

ESc: Pat's great. [laugh] He's the baby of the family. He's the only one left of that big family. But they lived in that white house on the corner of Penn and Sixth. But he had the two brothers and a sister, but Pat was the baby. And they were there. And then on Sixth Street where the wrought iron fence is around that...oh, the lawyer has now.

ESm: Dale Mammon?

ESc: Dale Mammon has. That... The superintendent of the railroad lived in there for a long time. And then right next door was Hilda Anthony who taught piano lessons and I took piano lessons from Hilda. She used to scare me to death. [laugh]

ESm: She was fairly demanding, wasn't she?

ESc: Very demanding and she had such a strange way of teaching. I guess they taught piano at that time that way 'cause I took lessons, I think, for around eight years. She would play a piece of music for you and then you had to learn the right hand then you learned the left hand then you put them together. And you learned about two lines together. We never learned to read music. It was all memory. She was quite a gal.

ESm: Why did you stick with piano lessons for so long?

ESc: I had... My Uncle Pete Beaver and Mother's sister and husband, and Uncle Pete played the...in the La Grande band and he felt music was very important. And Uncle Pete felt that I should keep doing music. I enjoyed it when I was doing it. It was something to do.

ESm: Did you perform?

ESc: Oh, always at recitals, of course.

ESm: And where were the recitals?
ESc: At Hilda's house, in the house.
ESm: Never at the La Grande Hotel or the Sacagawea?
ESc: No. It was always... That was before it was built. La Grande Hotel wasn't built and the Sacagawea wasn't built then.
ESm: Do you remember how you felt about these recitals?
ESc: Oh, it was just something else to do.
ESm: You weren't nervous?
ESc: No, it never bothered me and I knew my music and that was all there was to it. I was... I've always been very independent person and very confident in what I can do. I think my dad taught me that. Dad's attitude was, "Of course you can do it, try it."
ESm: There's no shame in failure.
ESc: No. No, no shame in failure at all. Dad said...I'd say, oh, something and Dad'd say, try it. He never... He encouraged me in everything. But he was...he had a natural instinct, no training at all, but he could make anything out of wood or metal that he wanted. He even made his own screws and bolts sometimes just 'cause he enjoyed it. He had a fantastic shop down in the basement of the house.
ESm: During your early school years did you wander around La Grande much down by the railroad or along the business district?
ESc: Oh, of course we would go downtown to the...we had two movie theatres then. We'd go to the Saturday afternoon matinees, we'd do that. Yes, and I'd go downtown to shop for Mother to buy things for her.
ESm: What about the railroad yards?
ESc: No way!
ESm: You weren't allowed to go over there?
ESc: No way!
ESm: Why?
ESc: Dad just didn't approve of that.
ESm: Did he think it was dangerous?
ESc: He just didn't think that's where girls belonged.
ESm: Too many men around who might have some dangerous ideas?
ESc: Men didn't have those ideas then, or at least if they did it was under the carpet, it was never published or anything like that. No, women had their place and men had their place in those days.
ESm: Did that seem perfectly normal to you at the time?
ESc: I never questioned that. Never questioned it.
ESm: Not likely you would.
ESc: No.
ESm: You didn't feel as though you were being put down?
ESc: No. No, no. Not at all. And it...and it... Of course it surprised me so now because all of these women that are bowling. That was a man's thing when I was growing up. Women never went near the bowling alley. [laugh] So the world has changed.
ESm: Yes. Were there any overt ways in which females were taught their place or was it just by seeing what other people did?

ESc: I don't think... I was not conscience of it, I guess. Of course there were women that were secretaries of...for the different offices, business people and all. See, Lee Johnson's sister was a legal secretary. I don't remember whether she was with...with ___ or with Everheart. I don't remember. Lee, of course, would know. Lee Johnson. But his sister I know was a legal secretary and I admired her so she was a delightful woman.

ESm: Can you remember specifically what it was like to go to a matinee at one of the theatres?

ESc: Oh, it was always...then usually it was before the...when I was going to matinees then we didn't have any voices on it, it was...

ESm: Silent pictures.

ESc: Silent.

ESm: Wasn't there someone who would play the piano?

ESc: I was gonna say the piano player and I loved that piano player. [laughs] With that and those...and the serials were always on Saturday.

ESm: Oh yes. Tom Hicks.

ESc: I didn't go... I didn't go every Saturday. I wasn't allowed to go that much to the theatre. But I know when some of us would go. But I was always...if Dad was home I was doin' things with Dad and when Dad was gone I was doing things with Mother or whatever I was doing, practicing the piano. [laugh]

ESm: Did you go to the movies usually with a bunch of other girls?

ESc: Generally a bunch of girls?

ESm: Where did you get the money to go?

ESc: It was given to us by our parents.

ESm: Did you have an allowance or you just said...

ESc: I never had... I always wanted an allowance. Most of my friends had allowances. Dad said if I needed money I just had to tell him what I need it for. He didn't approve of... And of course to me it's a mistake not to have a child on an allowance because money didn't mean that much to me. I always had a good excuse. So I was never... When I needed money all I had to do is ask for it and got it.

ESm: I wonder if as you look back on your childhood you think that you were pampered?

ESc: I as pampered a great deal, I think, as an only child, but I never felt I was spoiled.

ESm: Did you have jobs you had to do around the house?

ESc: Take care of my own room. But Mother and Dad had...as children had had a pretty hard life of working and all and I think they didn't want me to have that as a child. They wanted me to have a happy childhood. So I really was not...I don't remember ever being requested to do things. One thing I remember I always did in the summertime Dad always had the most gorgeous sweet peas along the driveway there at the house. That was my job to keep the sweet peas picked because if you didn't they wouldn't bloom. [laugh]

ESm: Right.

ESc: Oh, those stems like that, these great big blossoms of those sweet peas. And that...things like that's all I had to.

ESm: How did you get your clothing?

ESc: Mother made most of my clothes.
ESm: Did she?
ESc: Dresses and things like that and the rest were bought at the store. See, we had N. K. West was a wonderful department store here in those years downtown.
ESm: Why was it so good?
ESc: It had everything in it and it had everything that anybody'd want. Of course people did not demand the clothes like they do now, but Mother made all of my dresses.
ESm: Was it strictly a clothing store?
ESc: General merchandise, men and women. So they could...women could buy yardage there and thread and things like that. And then they had one department that they catered to the railroaders. And then when Trotters came in they catered to the mill people and the railroaders.
ESm: It was called Trotters Men's Store, wasn't it?
ESc: Yes. Uh-huh. When it first opened. But they were wonderful to the working men.
ESm: What do you remember about the prices at N. K. West?
ESc: Never paid any attention to them.
ESm: You didn't every have to supply the money.
ESc: I never had to think about that, no. I didn't think...didn't think. I didn't think about what things cost.
ESm: Would you and your mother make trips in to select yardage for a dress that she would make you?
ESc: Oh definitely. And I could pick out the patterns and Mother made them. But Mother made all of my clothes.
ESm: What kind of sewing machine did she have?
ESc: She had... One of my granddaughters...my one granddaughter has Mother's sewing machine. It was a treadle sewing machine and...
ESm: A Singer?
ESc: Pardon?
ESm: A Singer?
ESc: No. It was called a Honeymoon.
ESm: A Honeymoon?
ESc: It was... And it had... The paint and all on it is...it's of course all metal...and all of the fancy decorations are still on it.
ESm: You still... It still exists?
ESc: Yeah. My grand...one of my granddaughters has it.
ESm: Really? Does she use it?
ESc: She has it sitting in the corner of her living room.
ESm: Good.
ESc: No, it was called a Honeymoon. And I think it was made by Sears, if I'm not mis... I think Mother told me that it was a Sears product. But Honeymoon in gold letters on it. [laughs] And it's the shuttle kind for the bobbin, little long shuttle, but I say it's a treadle.
ESm: What kind of a sound did it make?
ESc: There's not much of a sound to it.

ESm: Just a little gentle hum?

ESc: If you peddle real fast. [laughs]

ESm: Did you learn to use it also?

ESc: I sewed on it all the time till I had an electric sewing machine for when I was home 'cause Mother... I did a lot of sewing. I loved dolls as a child and I made all the doll clothes and things like that and then I ended up making all the clothes for my two daughters when they were growing up.

ESm: Do you remember in your childhood that the house had electricity?

ESc: Oh, we always had electricity.

ESm: And indoor plumbing?

ESc: Not when I was tiny. My memory of growing up we did have indoor plumbing, but when I was tiny Mother talked about that they were so pleased when they put the plumbing in the house. But I do not remember going out to the back to the toilet or anything like that. I only remember the plumbing in the house. No, we had electricity. And that was a thing with my granddad. He was very progressive. He was...in fact, I have the certificate over there, the number one certificate for the telephone out in the valley of Baker. I have that certificate. And then he had...it was called a Delco plant and out in the shed behind the house were all of these glass containers that had...that had the cells for the batteries. So even when I was little they had electricity up at the branch. It was great. Granny had electric lights and she had an electric vacuum cleaner. No, it was great.

ESm: Yes. There were automobiles, of course, from your earliest childhood.

ESc: Yes. There were... The first car that we had was a Dodge. It was an open...open, you know, the top that you could put down and put the side curtains on it and you can't see out. [laugh] That was the first car we had. And then I learned to drive the Dodge and then Dad bought a car that was called a King Eight and it was a sports car. It... I loved that car! It's just a shame we never kept it because it had the big wooden wheels, you know, the...instead of the metal bars. And it had bucket seats and it was brown leather inside and red on the outside. And it...the top would go down, it had side curtains, too. But, oh... A King Eight it was called 'cause it had a...it had a V8 engine in it. You could climb up telephone poles with that thing.

ESm: [laugh] It took the hills around here pretty well?

ESc: Oh, heavens yes, and at high speed. [laugh] And so I always... I don't remember of not being able to drive till now with my eyes I can't drive anymore. But I always had the use of the car. Mother never learned to drive. But I was never... I could always... And I don't know how many I taught to drive. I taught so many of my girlfriends to drive.

ESm: Did your father teach you?

ESc: Dad taught me. And I...as I say, I don't even recall how many I've taught to drive.

ESm: The streets in La Grande at that time, what were they like?

ESc: Of course there are a lot more streets than there were then.

ESm: I mean the main streets like Adams Avenue and Washington, Jefferson.

ESc: They were all paved as far as I remember. I don't remember it being any dirt...dirt roads down there anyplace.

ESm: Some of the people I've talked to, older people, say that they came in from farms out in the valley in the horse and buggy and that they recalled that the streets were dirt and that there were board sidewalks. Was that before you knew downtown La Grande?

ESc: You know, I don't remember... Some people have talked about that, but I do not remember. I guess I didn't pay that much attention to it. That didn't stick. It wasn't important, apparently, in my mind. They did come out with...and then, of course, Iron Stone Mary that they're gonna put up again.

ESm: Cast Iron.

ESc: Cast Iron Mary, yes. When they put her up.

ESm: You remember seeing her?

ESc: Oh heavens yes! And, see, she was put up by...oh, that women's group that are against...

ESm: Women's Temperance Union...[end tape]

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ESm: Okay.

ESc: There were... There were water troughs for the horses around the base of it.

ESm: Yes. Wasn't there a fountain for people, too?

ESc: Yes, I think there was. But I remember those trays for the horses.

ESm: Do you remember being up close to it?

ESc: Oh heavens, I went by it a lot!

ESm: Yes.

ESc: And another thing that we had here that I just loved, on Sunday afternoons down where the bank is now, there on the little square...

ESm: The credit union?

ESc: The credit union. That was a little park and it had a gazebo in it and every Sunday afternoon our band would play concerts down there. I used to always walk down from the house to listen to the concert. It was wonderful!

ESm: Yes. Of course people didn't travel away from La Grande as much then...

ESc: No. They were around town.

ESm: ...so there were...was more activity everywhere.

ESc: Yes. Right in town. My uncle Pete Beaver played the clarinet in the local band and then he went on and played...and then he became a Shriner and he played in the Shrine band from Portland. He used to go down and they, Aunt ___ and Uncle Pete, made several trips for the Shriners with the band cross country when they'd had their national convention.

ESm: Now this was a town band made up entirely of men?

ESc: Mm-hmm.

ESm: And they all had full-time jobs doing something else?

ESc: All had full-time jobs. No, it was... And they all liked to... Lindsey was their... His name was Lindsey.

ESm: Dick Lindsey?

ESc: Yes. He was the leader. But it was a wonder... But I say every Sunday afternoon they had the men that were in town that weren't out on the railroad.

ESm: Do you remember any of the music they played? Was it all marches?

ESc: Oh no, no. It was... A lot of it was classical music. No, it was great.

ESm: How much of a crowd would come on...usually on Sunday afternoons?

ESc: Oh, people'd be parked up the yard. People set down on the lawn down there. They were all around down there.

ESm: Maybe two or three hundred?

ESc: Oh no, no, no.

ESm: Not that many?

ESc: Maybe fifty to seventy-five or something like that.

ESm: A range of ages?

ESc: There were little kids up to seniors that enjoyed music.

ESm: Do you think that high school kids came to events like that?

ESc: Probably some, but not many. And then, you see, at that time too the Elks building it was three stories and they had apartments upstairs till it burned.

ESm: And a swimming pool in the basement.

ESc: That's right. And as I say, we had the swimming pool in the YMCA where most of us learned to swim.

ESm: Yeah. What were some of your favorite stores besides N. K. West to go in when you were young?

ESc: I wasn't a store person. I wasn't a shopper or anything like that. When I needed something I'd go get it or Mother'd get it. But kids didn't... I don't remember any of us... I think most of us I think most of our mothers made our dresses when I was...when I was a kid.

ESm: Kids sometimes are interested in candy or ice cream or things like that.

ESc: Oh sure, we had the ice cream parlors. And then of course the ice cream wagon went through town all the time.

ESm: Like the Joe's Wagon that goes through now?

ESc: Yes. But they always had ice cream cones and things like that.

ESm: Oh. Was that motorized vehicle or a horse and wagon?

ESc: Originally it was a horse and wagon and then way back the ice wagon, of course, went around town all the time delivering ice to people.

ESm: Right. And kids, I understand, would follow that and get the little slivers of ice that fell off.

ESc: Oh definitely. Definitely. [laugh] That happened. You've heard that story, too. You've heard both of the stories, I think.

ESm: I always like to get your version of them, though. Do you remember, well, every place had crime of some kind whether its petty thievery or worse. Now, of course, most of these things are reported daily in The Observer.

ESc: Never reported...

ESm: Were you aware of any kind of criminal activity?

ESc: No.

ESm: Not at all?

ESc: No. The only thing I remember was when they had the Chinatown...when the Chinatown was still down there where the La Grande Hotel was built when they had a gang war once. We all thought it was kind of funny. [laugh]

ESm: You did?

ESc: And then, of course, it was fun when the circus came to town, too.

ESm: That shooting on the post office steps occurred, as I recall, in 1917 and you would've been, what, eleven then?

ESc: Yes.

ESm: Thereabouts. Maybe nine.

ESc: Yeah.

ESm: Did you say 1908 you were born?

ESc: 1908.

ESm: Yeah. You were nine years old. Why'd you think of the gang wars were funny?

ESc: We just didn't take those things very seriously, I don't think.

ESm: What was your attitude toward the Chinese then?

ESc: They were fine. It didn't bother me any.

ESm: But if they were engaged in what seemed to be serious, possibly lethal, activity why was that funny?

ESc: It was just something that didn't happen around town very much, I guess.

ESm: Funny odd then rather than funny humorous?

ESc: Yes, funny odd. Uh-huh. It was strange to have something like that happen in our town.

ESm: I know that there were a number of Chinese in La Grande who sold vegetables and had laundries and that sort of thing.

ESc: And laundry, uh-huh.

ESm: Did you have any direct knowledge of them?

ESc: No. 'Cause Mother did all of her own laundry.

ESm: But no other reason to interact with any?

ESc: No.

ESm: Most of the Chinese, I think, don't...didn't speak very much English.

ESc: No, but see, I wasn't around them. And I don't remember having... I don't remember any of the Chinese children in our school. I remember the first time that we had one black man come into high school and we were all just floored because there were no black people around La Grande at that time.

ESm: You mean in the 1910 to '20 period?

ESc: Yes. There were no black people around. In fact, I think Dad has told me in later years that any of that came to town most of 'em they got ran off, they wouldn't let them stay over...they wouldn't let them stay overnight. The police would make 'em leave town. But that's something that shouldn't be published, I don't think.

ESm: It's a fact, though.

ESc: Yeah, it's a fact that happened.

ESm: In 1922 through 1924 the Ku Klux Klan was active around here marching around in their white robes and burning crosses on Table Mountain occasionally.

ESc: Yes.

ESm: Were you aware of any of that activity?

ESc: I was aware of it because Mother and Dad were very upset because for some reason or another Dad's name got on the list and he was not involved with it at all, I know that.

ESm: You mean on the list as invited to become a member?

ESc: I don't know whether he was invited or what, but one of...one of Mother's close friends wouldn't speak to Mother because she thought my dad was...had joined the Ku Klux Klan. And Mother was so hurt and I can remember this, the conversation between Mother and Dad and Dad had no part of it at all.

ESm: How might she have gotten that impression about him? His joining the organization? Do you have any idea?

ESc: No. I don't think I was really...I couldn't...I didn't know that much about it. I wasn't that interested in it. I was more... I think young people, when I was young, we were much more interested in our own little group and we could...you cared less what was on the other side of the fence. I don't think any of us were particularly interested in the politics. We didn't have the radio. We didn't have television. And the only... And I don't think many of us read newspapers. We had current events that we read in school, that was part of one of...I don't know...economic class or...

ESm: Civics, probably.

ESc: Civics. Could've been. That was...where did that supply and demand that we were taught go to. [laugh] They certainly don't practice that anymore.

ESm: What do you mean by that?

ESc: Remember in our civics classes that was such a point, everything was set on supply and demand.

ESm: That's the rule of the American economy.

ESc: Yeah, but not anymore. It's really turned around. But, no, I don't think... We weren't conscience of what was going on in the world.

ESm: Did you ever see any of the men dressed up in their white outfits?

ESc: No, I never did.

ESm: Did you never see one of the crosses burning?

ESc: We saw the crosses occasionally and very concerned about it. Mother and Dad were very concerned about it I know. They... They were not in favor of it at all.

ESm: What did it mean to them?

ESc: I don't know.

ESm: What did it mean to you?

ESc: I don't think I even thought about it.

ESm: It was bizarre, wasn't it?

ESc: It would be, yes. That...

ESm: Do you remember asking yourself, "Why are they doing this?"

ESc: Of course I wondered why.

ESm: And you never found out?

ESc: No. Because we didn't have...we didn't have the black people here.

ESm: It wasn't just black people that they were bothered with. They didn't think much of Catholics and there were a number of other kinds of people that they didn't have much use for. They thought that they were living by pure American principles and that excluded a great many people and ideas.

ESc: This is true. No, it... That was not part of my life at all. And then Su...my daughter Susie, who's living here with me now, she picked up that book about the Ku Klux Klan in La Grande and she was going through and I could not believe some of the people that knew growing up their names were in there that were active in it.

ESm: You mentioned earlier the name Everheart.

ESc: Yes.

ESm: He was...

ESc: He was active in it apparently.

ESm: Yes, he was one of the leaders. And I believe it was in his office that the minutes of the meetings were found.

ESc: I think that's... I think that's what the book said. Susie was laughing about it when we were going through it and "I just can't believe this." [laugh]

ESm: When you got to high school did your view of life in La Grande change in some ways?

ESc: No. Just... Just went on to a higher...

ESm: Just a continuation of what it had been?

ESc: Just went on to a higher grade in the next building over. And I think life stayed...became, of course, active. I did... I did not... I think two or three of the plays I was, but mostly I was interested in preparing and building and painting the stage pieces. I was always interested in that when they were having plays. As I told you before, Wes Brownton was in my class. Now he was one of our...I don't know whether he was president or vice-president of the senior class.

ESm: When did you graduate from La Grande High School/

ESc: '26.

ESm: '26.

ESc: Uh-huh.

ESm: You were there from '22 to '26.

ESc: Yeah.

ESm: Do you remember any of the plays? The names of the plays?

ESc: Oh heavens! I'd have to back and get the old mimirs out to do that.

ESm: I ask that because a number of years ago many of the high school plays that were put on were pretty light, trivial things.

ESc: Oh, most of these were, too.

ESm: Meant to be comic entirely.

ESc: Have you ever seen any of our old mimirs?

ESm: Yes. But tell me about your work with the mimir.

ESc: Marge Warnick was her name. Her dad was the sheriff here and they lived in the house just beyond the...I said the Bateys lived in. And that house was destroyed when they built that...the parking lot up there, now of course the new science building is coming in that direction. But Marge and I did all of the art work and all of this in our mimir.

ESm: Which included drawings?

ESc: Getting... Getting the letters together and the design around the pictures and all of that.

ESm: How much time did you spend on the mimic? Do you recall? Several... Several weeks of after school work?

ESc: Oh yes. Yes. And we always...which I feel sorry for the kids now...our mimics were always published so on the last day of school we got them and we could go around and they're all...had everybody autograph or write something in the back of them. And, see, they don't do that now anymore.

ESm: No. No. What's your memory of how it happened to be called the mimic?

ESc: I don't know. Never questioned it.

ESm: It's a strange word, isn't it.

ESc: Yes, but I don't know where the mimic came from now that you mention it. [laugh] I just accepted it.

ESm: Do you still have your copies?

ESc: I have all four.

ESm: Do you?

ESc: Uh-huh.

ESm: I'll bet there're some photographs in there that would be of interest to others.

ESc: There probably are. You say you've seen them?

ESm: I've seen some from a later period, the '40s.

ESc: Let me go get them. It won't take me long. I'll bring 'em up. [recording paused]

ESm: We're talking about Lee Johnson now.

ESc: Yes. And he had...you don't need that on the tape...he never was a railroader. His fam...none of the family was in it, but he was very interested in it so he has...he has a lot of history of railroad.

ESm: Yes, I'm sure he does. He was in high school with you?

ESc: No, he's younger. He was a professor over at the college.

ESm: I know.

ESc: Yes.

ESm: And he taught at the high school.

ESc: Yes, but I knew him... In fact, Lee and George Fleshman I had 'em in a Sunday School class at the church. [laugh]

ESm: I'd like to hear more about activities at the high school. You said you were interested in set production.

ESc: Yes.

ESm: And you worked on the mimic staff. Was that just one year or several years?

ESc: Probably my junior and senior year I was doing, but all through high school I was involved with the drama department. I was never interested in participating in the drama, I think I had a part one time, but I was much more interested in what was going on backstage and helping with costuming and that type of thing. We did...made all of our costumes and all. And then, as I told you, we had...the ones of us were in the home ec department that we did all of the work for the banquets and all for the...at the end of the school year for the different sports events.

ESm: The awards banquets?

ESc: Yes.

ESm: Yes. About the mimic, how did you...what...in what...how much time did you spend putting out a mimic...mimic during the year and when did you do the work?

ESc: After school. Stay after school...

ESm: For an hour or two after school?

ESc: Oh yes. Uh-huh. Or go early in the morning sometimes. See, the...one of the professor would kind of oversee it.

ESm: One of the teachers.

ESc: One of the teachers.

ESm: As an advisor.

ESc: Yes, as an advisor. There was generally an advisor that we worked with.

ESm: Did you start work on it in January or February?

ESc: I think we kind of worked on it practically all year.

ESm: Oh, you did?

ESc: Uh-huh, collecting pictures and getting it all together.

ESm: Even with an advisor did students have considerable involvement in making decisions?

ESc: Oh definitely. I think so. It always went very smooth as far as I remember.

ESm: How did you learn how to do it? Just by the experience?

ESc: Natural, I guess, by instinct, I guess. [laugh]

ESm: Was there any sort of master plan that you were working from?

ESc: No. We had the... We had the pictures of the seniors and the story...each senior has a story about themselves. And then the drama department and the athletes had a department. And then we had odds and ends of pictures in the back of caught it off at different times and that was about it.

ESm: Each issue had a lot of advertising, didn't it? Someone had to go around to all the businesses in town?

ESc: Somebody did that, but I've...I never got involved with that. I didn't have to get the advertising.

ESm: Were you involved with the layout?

ESc: Helping, yes. Helping with the layout, uh-huh. That's when Marge and I did most of that, put the pictures where they belonged and all of that.

ESm: Was this a paste-up operation?

ESc: Yes, quite a bit of it. And I don't remember who published it. I don't know whether that's in the front of the mimir or not.

ESm: I think it probably was published either at Palmer Printing or elsewhere.

ESc: Yes. It probably was Palmer's. I don't know.

ESm: It doesn't seem to have a credit line here for the publisher.

ESc: We didn't give people credits in those days. [laugh]

ESm: Did... How much did it cost, proportionately? Would it correspond now to ten dollars, maybe, do you think?

ESc: Oh, I wish I could tell you that one. I can't answer that.

ESm: I was wondering whether some students might not have had enough money to buy a copy?

ESc: A few student were never interested in buying one, I might say that. Whether they could afford it or not, I don't know. But that never entered my mind on those things. I never had... I never felt "they have a lot more money than I do" and "they don't have as much money." I never felt any class thing in there at all. I was never conscience of that.

ESm: You bring up the word class again. Tell me...this is diverging from high school, but I think you said that from a fairly early age you were aware that business people and railroad and mill workers were in separate classes.

ESc: Definitely.

ESm: Tell me about how you...how you became aware of that and what the effect was.

ESc: You felt it. If, for instance, I was amazed when I came back after being away that railroaders belonged to the country club. No way would they have ever been invited to the country club when I was growing up.

ESm: Suppose one had wanted to joined, what would've happened?

ESc: I have no idea. And see, the original country club when I was growing up the big swimming pool was up where the weigh station is now as you come down from Perry.

ESm: Pinecone?

ESc: Yeah. Pinecone swimming pool. And then on the hill across is where the country club was, the original one.

ESm: I think you can still see the foundation of one of the buildings.

ESc: Could be. That side hill was just a...

ESm: Did you go up there at all?

ESc: No. I was a railroader brat. [laughs]

ESm: And this country club...

ESc: I wouldn't been invited.

ESm: This country club, do you think that the members were exclusively from the business and professional group?

ESc: Definitely. Always. Yes. Definitely. Definitely.

ESm: And did your father ever say anything about wishing he could be included?

ESc: No, no. He was not... Dad was a down to earth man. He was a hunter and a fisherman and he was...he was a real he-man. But he had a heart of gold. And I have been told since that I did not know it when I was here, but several have told me that when men were coming to work on the railroad, starting, and Dad was still... If he felt they were really interested in learning the ropes he would bend over backwards to help them. But if he felt that all they were interested in was salary they were gonna get he wouldn't help 'em. He loved the railroad so much that it was...well, it was his life. And he was darn good at it. In fact, they said no one ever had to go get Dad if he had a breakdown or anything, he fixed it. They never had to go get one of Dad's trains. He always got it back to the roundhouse. And that's a crime they ever did away with that. That would've been the most wonderful visitors' attractions, that roundhouse over there.

ESm: You never actually saw it up close.

ESc: The round-up, sure, Dad took me over there once in a while.

ESm: No, I mean the roundhouse.

ESc: Oh sure! Dad took me over there once in a while, but I mean I did not wander over to the...around that area at all.

ESm: Okay. Back to this class difference thing.

ESc: It was a class difference.

ESm: Yeah. You apparently didn't ask many questions about it yourself at the time.

ESc: No, it was just a normal thing. You just accepted it.

ESm: And were you aware of it partly because of the way people dressed? The men particularly? Or did most of the business people wear...

ESc: It was the attitude. It was the attitude of people.

ESm: How... I'm curious to know how could you detect that?

ESc: It was just like some of the women that were the bridge players and high society of the four hundred, quote, quote.

ESm: Yes.

ESc: The way they would talk to Mother and all it was...I had a different feeling.

ESm: A little bit condescending perhaps?

ESc: A little bit, yeah. And my mother was a fantastic woman. She was sweet and darling as they come. But... But now the railroad women, the engineers, the women had their own little meeting that they met. It was called the GAR, I think. And they had meetings, but the neighborhood club women that was entirely two different worlds, entirely. And see, the neighborhood club that's there on 'N' Avenue at Sixth, there on that corner, that used to be the clubhouse for the men that was over by the depot and they moved it over here.

ESm: Yes. I'd heard about that.

ESc: You heard that one, too. You've probably heard all the stories. I'm not giving you any new information.

ESm: I like hearing them from you. I asked about clothing. Didn't most of the businesses wear suits, white shirts and ties all the time?

ESc: Yes. Definitely.

ESm: And they kept their shoes shined.

ESc: Oh, definitely.

ESm: Yes. And I suppose not many of the railroad men did that except maybe the executives.

ESc: The executives were always in suits, of course, but not like...

ESm: Were the railroad executives part of the other class?

ESc: Definitely. Yeah. But not like...oh, like Dad wore the bib-overalls, the blue and white stripe of course, and my mother she...they were just spotless and starched stiff. That Dad... Dad was always so clean and a lot of the railroaders that the engineers took pride in the way they looked. And the way I see these men now I just cringe. They look just awful. [laugh]

ESm: He must've had several sets of overalls.

ESc: Oh, definitely. But Mother would wash those things. She even went so far as making soap up at the ranch with lye in it so that she'd get all of those stains out of the... No, she was...

ESm: And she was doing this on a washboard?

ESc: We had a...it was a... Originally, I'm sure, when I was little she had to do it on a washboard. But later on Mother had a automatic...it was powered by water. She'd hook it up to the faucet in the kitchen and the water would run the washing machine. And then she'd drain it out into Dad's garden. Dad always had a beautiful garden out in the back yard with flowers, too. And so she'd run the water when she'd empty the tub she had a hose she'd attach to it and go out in the yard.

ESm: I guess that meant that all over washing was done with cold water.

ESc: No, she heated in on the stove and poured it into the washing machine for the...with the soap to start it.

ESm: I see. Cold water was for the rinse?

ESc: Yes, uh-huh.

ESm: She made...made the soap all the time? Did she ever use...

ESc: Not all the time, but that...when she...when Dad's overalls she'd make some of that soap up the ranch. We used regular soap out of the grocery store. But some of that for real hard stains Mother loved that homemade soap up at the ranch. Granny and Mother'd make that and Dad's sisters. They'd all make a batch of soap.

ESm: Is it your opinion, then, that this class divide that existed between railroad and mill workers and business and professional people was simply accepted by everyone without resentment?

ESc: It seemed to be. It just seemed to be kind of a normal thing. No one seemed to question it at all.

ESm: And you didn't ever detect jealousy on one side or the other?

ESc: No.

ESm: I suppose most of the...

ESc: It was just... It was just life in a small town.

ESm: Probably like life in many other small towns. I don't think that La Grande was unique in that way.

ESc: No, I don't think so either. But the business people were always just a little...and their families...were always...they were always maybe dressed a little better and lived in a little better neighborhood maybe, or not, I don't know.

ESm: Where did farmers and ranchers fit into this social class scene?

ESc: Isn't that strange? I have no idea. I think they were... I think they were out in the granges. I don't think they came into town to shop a lot, I suppose, but they weren't part of the community.

ESm: I think they came in on Saturdays maybe and left fairly quickly.

ESc: Probably. But I...they were not a part of the town.

ESm: And people in Cove and Elgin, did...

ESc: They lived their own life out there.

ESm: It was completely separate?

ESc: Separate entirely.

ESm: Did you ever visit any of those places when you were in your teens?

ESc: No 'cause I didn't know anybody out there.

ESm: You said you drove the car. Couldn't you drive out to Elgin or Cove?

ESc: There was no reason to.

ESm: I see. No friends.

ESc: No. They were all here in town.

ESm: All the teenagers, of course, went to high schools in those towns so maybe they...

ESc: They kept their... the only time...and I don't remember when we had basketball games or anything that we went... We went to Baker, I know, a time or two and to Pendleton, but I don't remember the Cove and Elgin and all those getting involved.

ESm: Others have told me that it was primarily the cheerleaders that traveled with the teams.

ESc: That could've happened. That I don't know 'cause I was never a cheerleader.

ESm: The Christian church that you were involved in from early years and you mentioned Christian Endeavors.

ESc: Yes.

ESm: And you mentioned teaching Sunday School.

ESc: Yes.

ESm: Did you start doing that when you were in high school?

ESc: I think I was only a freshman in high school or maybe an eighth-grader. I had no more business teaching [laugh] a Sunday School class than anything.

ESm: What did you do? Do you remember?

ESc: Probably just played with the kids to keep 'em quiet while the parents were in church was probably what happened.

ESm: Baby-sitting.

ESc: Kind of a baby-sitting job, I really think's what it amounted to. But George Fleshman every once in a while would say something. My Sunday School teacher [laugh] because there isn't that much age difference, really.

ESm: He's in his late seventies.

ESc: George is probably... George must be getting close to eighty, isn't he now?

ESm: Close, yeah, close.

ESc: I think so.

ESm: About the...the beliefs in the church, how did you have exposure to what Christian theology is?

ESc: I think I went along with Mother and I was involved with the Sunday School class and I say the Christian Endeavor and that. But it was a group that I was with. But as far as diagnosing the religion that never entered my mind. I never thought about comparing it with the Episcopalians or the Catholics or anybody else. It's just where I went...I went to Sunday School and church with Mother. I guess I just...those things I just didn't ever analyze particularly. I was more interested in what I'm gonna do tomorrow, if I'm goin' to a birthday party [laugh], or if I'm gonna have a new dress made or somethin' like that.

ESm: But you were considered to be a trusted member of the church?

ESc: Oh definitely. And then those...those women they would have potluck dinners down... And I can remember they'd be over at my...Mother's house and they were all making homemade noodles out in the kitchen and the kitchen would be full of homemade noodles that my Mother'd made for a potluck for chicken and noodles or something they'd have over at the basement of the church there when it was on...there on Penn Avenue. It was strange, the church...you came up to the corner of Penn and Seventh to get into it. You could walk up the steps on Penn or you could walk up the steps on Seventh to get into the church.

ESm: Now is that a different building...[end tape]

ESm: The old Christian church was where?
ESc: On the corner of Seventh and Penn.
ESm: That was a wooden building.
ESc: It was a wooden building.
ESm: Mm-hmm. Did it burn?
ESc: No. They tore it down.
ESm: Tore it down. What was the matter with it? Just old?
ESc: They decided they needed a new church so they built it up on...what, that's three blocks further up toward the hill, west, and built that big brick building up there.
ESm: You went to regular Sunday services with your mother?
ESc: Definitely.
ESm: Your father was away, I suppose, much of the time.
ESc: Dad was gone a great deal. Dad did not participate in the church that much.
ESm: Were you ever called upon to, oh, serve in any conspicuous way in the church?
ESc: Oh, I...just for the Christian Endeavor I was very ac...[recording interruption]
ESm: Were you able to go by Pullman car?
ESc: I think we just went in the chair car. I don't remember being in the Pullman...of course it's just a day trip down. We'd do that. And then of course you'd get on the train in Portland and you'd go on down to Eugene. They met there several times I think. We had... The Presbyterian church had a Christian Endeavor group and we had one. And sometime we'd get together for a meeting or something like that.
ESm: What did you think Christian...the words "Christian Endeavor" meant?
ESc: Never questioned it. [laughs]
ESm: What do you think now, then, it meant?
ESc: Oh, it was just young people getting together endeavoring to do something right, I suppose, as Christians.
ESm: That's why... That's what I was wondering, endeavor...
ESc: But I never questioned at the time.
ESm: Endeavor usually means try hard to do something.
ESc: I think this is what it was, to try...young people trying to do the right thing.
ESm: What was?
ESc: Just live a good life.
ESm: Oh.
ESc: But see, we never...in my generations drugs were never considered and there were very few of 'em that even smoked cigarettes.
ESm: There was alcohol.
ESc: But that...it wasn't available.
ESm: If you wanted to get it you could.
ESc: We had... But the young people that I was with that was never in their minds, not at all.
ESm: Out of sight, out of mind?
ESc: Yes, I think so.
ESm: What about all the saloons in town?
ESc: They... That was something that just men went to that they were the smoke shops where they sell cigars and cigarettes and they played pool in the back room.

ESm: Were you aware that the boys your age might not be living such a pure life?

ESc: Once in a while you'd hear something and you wouldn't pay any attention to it. But they...you didn't... Maybe it was going on, but we had...we didn't have the problems they're having in the schools now. And I feel a lot of this problems has happened because the family circle has completely broken down.

ESm: That's certainly true of many...in many cases.

ESc: In any community, any place now. After the war, World War II, of course I was conscience... That was another thing, at the close of World War I that was something when the soldiers came home school was closed and all of us all dressed up and we led the parade and sprinkled rose petals down the street while the soldiers marched by this... That was quite a parade when the soldiers came home after World War I.

ESm: And presumably these were all Union County residents? These soldiers?

ESc: Yes. Coming home. And they all came in on a train, of course, and we had the big parade. But all the school kids, the girls particularly, had baskets with rose petals in it that we dropped on the street in front of them.

ESm: Now you were about ten or eleven years old when that happened.

ESc: Just about that, yeah.

ESm: Did you have any concept of what they had been doing?

ESc: We knew they'd been to war, but we didn't know much about...I don't think we cared much about it except everybody was happy because they were coming home.

ESm: You didn't realize that it was one of the most vicious wars up till that date?

ESc: No. No. No.

ESm: Of course if you hadn't been reading the newspaper or listening to the radio you wouldn't have known.

ESc: We didn't have any radio, you see. We didn't have any of the television. It wasn't... It wasn't given to us.

ESm: Did some of the soldiers have missing legs or arms?

ESc: I'm not conscience of that. Not conscience of it at all. Probably did, but I wasn't conscience of it. None of the people that I knew that... I know my dad wanted to go and they said no, that he was married and had a family and they needed him to transport troops on the train. So Dad...a lot of Dad's friends that were not married did go, the railroaders, but Dad never went. They wouldn't take him. He would've liked to, I think, but they turned him down.

ESm: Tell me about your high school graduation.

ESc: We never had a big fancy deal like they do...an all-night party like they do now after.

ESm: No, I mean the ceremony itself.

ESc: It was in the high school and all of...I know all the girls we didn't wear...we didn't wear uni...we didn't wear caps and gowns or anything, we just...the girls, I think, were all in white dresses like that. And we walked across the stage and were given our diplomas and that was it.

ESm: There were speeches, weren't there?

ESc: Oh some speeches, yes. Probably none of us paid any attention to 'em. [laughs] And the ones that...like the outstanding seniors, of course, got...they were

valedictorian and all of that. I don't even remember who they were now in my class.

ESm: It's probably in the mimir.

ESc: It probably is. But we didn't have the caps and gown or things like that like they have now. And there was none of this night...the parents all getting together for an all-night party for the kids. There wasn't any of that going on then.

ESm: I imagine you did rather well in high school for...as far as grades were concerned.

ESc: Average. Average. I was too busy playing.

ESm: Playing? You mean...

ESc: Doing other things than classes.

ESm: Making sets and the helping with mimir.

ESc: Helping with the mimir and doing...helping on the background and the stuff of anything that was going on. Then planning all this and work...and we always decorated the gym when we had those dinners, too, and I always was involved in helping with the decorations. So school was just kind of that was something I had to do.

ESm: What did you think were the attitudes that adults that you knew had toward college? Was it... Was it important for everyone who was fairly bright to prepare to go to college?

ESc: Not particularly. Now I had...I had no desire to go to college particularly. Four years of high school I had no idea what I was gonna do. But I knew I wanted to do something along the art line. I...now... Old Anthony encouraged me to go on with music. That was for the birds. Then...what was her name...Miss Clark, was my art teacher and she encouraged me so much in my art work. And I was kind of torn in there. I wasn't sure what I was gonna do. And then a couple of my friends, Marge Condit and Elmer Cleaver, we were real close friends. They went on to college and when they came home I thought, "I'm missing something." So I got my grades all together and went down to the University of Oregon. I stayed out of school a year and then I went down to the University of Oregon.

ESm: What do you remember thinking that you were missing?

ESc: It just looked to me like they were having a lot of fun that I was missing.

ESm: Oh fun, uh-huh!

ESc: They were just havin' a lot of fun and they were having some experiences that I thought, hey, I'm just missing out on something. So I talked the folks in it, I said, "I think I've decided I want to go to college." So I got my grades together and then I went down and I decided I was gonna become an architect at that time.

ESm: Was this University of Oregon?

ESc: University of Oregon. They had a wonderful architecture department. And unfortunately at that time...I don't know whether they still do it or not...but when I registered for my freshman year I told the advisor that was registering me and all that I wanted to go be an architect and that's what I was headed for. So I signed up and I had all the art classes I wanted and the English and a history and I've forgotten what else. And then I went into sorority and that was fun. And when I went back the next year to register he put down Education and I said, "What's that for?" And he said, "That's... You're gonna be a teacher, aren't ya?" I said, "that's the last thing in the world I want to be is a teacher." I said, "I'm headed

for architecture.” “Oh,” he said, “that’s a five-year course and no woman wants to go to college for five years. We started you toward teacher.” I was mad as a wet hen. So I did go...finish the second year or so then I went...I dropped out of University of Oregon after the two years then I went to art school in Portland and I’ve had art classes and everything ever since. But I never got a degree. But it was just because of that first person that registered me at college decided no woman wanted to go to college for five years and be an architect. Now that’s where discrimination was shown in those years between men and women.

ESm: Mm-hmm. Did you come to think that that was the prevailing attitude, at least held by men?

ESc: It was in those days. Definitely was then.

ESm: But, if you’d...

ESc: The... It all changed with World War II when women started spreading their wings.

ESm: But do you think if you’d protested and said, “That’s your opinion, but I think I will go to school for five years” would he have allowed it?

ESc: Probably would, but I would’ve ended up going five years because some of the classes I should’ve been taking the first year I hadn’t had.

ESm: He said it would be five years and no woman would want to do that.

ESc: But I said I’d ended up with six years of college because...

ESm: I see.

ESc: It’s just like that first year was lost.

ESm: You could’ve done it, though.

ESc: Yes, but I didn’t wantta. I was mad. [laughs] So that was the end of that story.

ESm: So at the end of the two years, then the art...

ESc: I went to art school in Portland for a year.

ESm: Did you meet your future husband back here in Union County?

ESc: Here in La Grande.

ESm: Was this on a summer vacation?

ESc: No. I was home, I had dropped out and I was working at a dress shop, which is the Top Shop now, but it was called something different then. And my good friend Vera Heddick...that became Vera Heddick instead of Vera Batey...was the bookkeeper for the gas business that was coming in here, the butane, when they put the gas into the ground here, and sold gas. And Bob was sent up here from San Francisco and he told Vera, he said, “oh,” he said, “I need...” This was...he came up in... The thing that happened there was somebody else that started the job and they panicked because it was a job...a contract job that had to be finished at a certain date and we had one of those real winters when the ground was frozen down about twenty-four inches and they were having a heck of a time. The man that was overseeing it then was having a heck of a time and running behind and the man in San Francisco asked Bob if he thought he could handle it and get it done. He said of course he could so he came on up. And Vera at that time was the bookkeeper and secretary for the outfit there and the office was on the corner of the Sac Annex. And Bob said, “I need a date.” She said, “I know just the gal.” She was, “I can show you how you can meet her.” And he...Vera told her where he could come. He said, “I’ve got some presents to wrap to send to my mom.”

She said, "Take 'em down there and Edith with wrap 'em for ya then you can look her over." [laughs] So Bob brought his boxes down and I wrapped 'em for him and we had a New Years' date and six months later we were married. That's the way that happened. Yep.

ESm: When you married did you stay in La Grande just a short time?

ESc: We were here just a short time and then Bob was transferred to...we went to Portland then we went to Shelton, Washington, then we went...then we bought the plant in Anacortes, Washington. And that...the people that we...that were on the board and all were driving Bob crazy and we had a chance to...he had a chance to take a real good job in Tacoma so we moved to Tacoma. Then from Tacoma he was transferred and we were in Seattle. And then from Seattle we moved down to Portland. This is advancement all along the line. And from Portland the sales manager from the Honolulu Gas Company came over and had heard about Bob and talked to him and all. And he first turned it down and they came back after him and insisted on it so Bob took the job and we moved to Honolulu. And Bob became the sales manager for the Honolulu Gas Company and then he worked himself up to first vice-president. And then we...he was asked to be the managing director, which is now called the president, of the Pacific Coast Gas Association so we moved to San Francisco and that's where we were when he retired from the Gas Association.

ESm: Let's come back to the beginning of this. Tell me what's the difference between butane and propane.

ESc: I suppose it's in the consistency of it. I'm not sure.

ESm: But it was...

ESc: Butane...Butane was brought in in big tanks and those tanks were hooked up to the pipes that were in the ground here for the...for the people to cook with and heat and water heater and all of that.

ESm: What were his responsibilities when he was in La Grande when you met him?

ESc: He was building...he was getting... The pipes had to be in the ground and so he finished the project to get it going.

ESm: This was the first installation of gas service?

ESc: Here in La Grande.

ESm: I see.

ESc: And that was in '29 and '30. '30's when he came up.

ESm: Were these pipes buried two or three feet, do you think?

ESc: Yes, about...I think they were down... I think they were close to twenty inches down.

ESm: What was the place of origin? Where did the pipe system start?

ESc: The tanks were out off of Cove Avenue out that way, these huge big butane can...tanks that were filled when the railroad'd bring 'em and fill them. And then those were attached to all of these pipes that were all over La Grande.

ESm: And then when they were empty they'd be replaced by other pipes...or tanks?

ESc: The tanks...the butane would be brought in and then natural gas came in and took over so of course they didn't need the tanks anymore.

ESm: Did you witness any of the installation of the pipes?

ESc: Oh, I saw it all over town.

ESm: Were these mechanical diggers?

ESc: Most of it's men digging.

ESm: Was it?

ESc: Uh-huh. And of course that was Depression time and the reason Bob... when Bob took over he realized what the wages were and he... he was paying these men that were looking for jobs he was paying I think, oh, several cents more than the going wage so he got all the help he could get. And at that time, too, the old Zuber Hall was going with the dance... And some of this men played in the... in there. Bob and I loved to dance to the kiss waltz, which I don't even know if anybody even knows it anymore. And every time Bob and I'd go in to the... into the dance hall it didn't make any difference what the orchestra's playing they'd go into the kiss waltz for us. [laugh]

ESm: And of course you had to kiss when they played the waltz. [laughs]

ESc: It was fun. Oh, that was a fun time. And then Jack Wright was his name came in here who managed the theatres. And the one that was clear down on Adams had the most wonderful pipe organ in it and Jack Wright could play anything on that pipe organ.

ESm: Is that the one that was called the Liberty at the time or the Star?

ESc: Yes. No, the Liberty. And Jack was... I think Jack probably weighed around 250 or 275 and he was managing the theatres. But after the theatre was closed Bob and I'd go down and of course that was still Prohibition and we could... they had... Bob and Jack knew where to get some of the liquor and we'd have drinks and sit down there in the front row and Jack'd play the pipe organ for us. And then some of the friends I had here knew what we were doing and so they started coming down. There'd be couples all over the theatre down there while Jack was playing the organ for us. We might be maybe an hour after the show closed with Jack play... He'd even play the Bumblebee on the organ, you know, but oh, that was such fun! Those are fun memories.

ESm: Oh yes.

ESc: Yeah. But those... those are my growin' up years.

ESm: By the way, while we're talking about the Liberty, there were stage shows there periodically, weren't there?

ESc: No, the stage shows... let's see, were they there or were they up... There used to be a building which was the opera house.

ESm: Stewart's?

ESc: Yes. And that's where most of the stage things, I think, were. Yeah.

ESm: Isn't that on the... the...

ESc: Dick Hiatt would be good to talk to on that...

ESm: Right. I know...

ESc: ...'cause he has all that... Of course I knew Dick... I knew his brother so well, too.

ESm: His doctoral dissertation is about that subject.

ESc: Yes.

ESm: So you didn't... you didn't see any stage shows, just movies?

ESc: I don't remember seeing any of the stage shows here particularly. The ones that I saw were in Portland when I was at university I'd go down to...some of the men I was dating we'd go into Portland to some of the stage shows.

ESm: I know there was a period when there were many shows coming through, operas and vaudeville and plays.

ESc: Yeah.

ESm: Back, if we could, to the pipes and the...the laying of the pipes in La Grande. You said most of this was during the Depression times...

ESc: It was.

ESm: ...about '29...1929.

ESc: Yes.

ESm: And most of the digging was by hand.

ESc: That's right.

ESm: Were they going down the middle of the streets or over to the side? What was the layout?

ESc: They were mostly at the side down parking strips and things like that.

ESm: And how far had they reached at that time? Did they go up as far as Oak Street, say?

ESc: I was trying to think how far they did go. I know they went up our street 'cause we had...they put gas in our house, I know. The lines went up... I think they went up maybe...maybe at the top of Spring. See, Spring Street used to stop right at the head across the street from where the Stangg mansion is. And that was the end of Spring Street and all of that area was open. There was nothing up in here at all.

ESm: Right.

ESc: I've forgotten how much...how...all of downtown La Grande was pretty well had pipes put into it.

ESm: What was your experience with the quality of the heat you could get from this gas?

ESc: We didn't have gas put the house, I don't think, down at the house 'cause Dad had oil in at the house at that... We used to have coil...the coal and then Dad went into oil. Years later Dad had the gas, I think, put into the house. But it was the same as anything, it's just like I have now with gas. It was just regular... It worked like natural gas.

ESm: As good as natural gas?

ESc: Definitely. And with the gas ranges and all. Definitely.

ESm: What was the name of the company that your husband worked for?

ESc: Natural Gas.

ESm: Just Natural Gas?

ESc: Uh-huh.

ESm: But it wasn't natural?

ESc: No, but that's what they call it.

ESm: Oh, I see.

ESc: Are you...do you have a date or anything?

ESm: No. [recording stopped]

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ESc: ...furnish no call.

G: No kidding?

ESc: Uh-huh. And I still have some of the pressed glass that was in that house and my first granddaughter has the treadle sewing machine that Mother made all my clothes on and it was in the house.

G: Goodness sake.

ESc: And then one of the other granddaughters has the highchair that... And it...that chair had a lever on it you could put it down to a youth-size chair and down to a rocking chair. In the back that little lever it released it from the regular highchair. And then it was just called youth chair so it was just right for a child to sit on it at the table. And then down to a rocking chair.

G: What a wonderful thing! I bet that daughter...granddaughter is...

ESc: Susie... Susie's girl has it.

G: Oh.

ESc: Yes. Uh-huh.

G: That is fabulous.

ESc: But I was thinking back when we were talking, when I was growing up here in the school there were really three distinct units in town. It was a very thriving community, but the will...mill workers had their own life, the railroaders had their own life, and the business people and the professional people had their own life. It was just like three different groups that was living here in town.

ESm: And they didn't meet for social reasons?

ESc: No. They didn't intertwine at all. And then, of course, me growing up as an only child we...in the...it was school, of course, took piano lessons like most of 'em did and we learned to swim down at the YMCA. And then later on the pool was built up where the weigh station is now as you go up toward Perry and we'd go up there.

ESm: Would you describe the pool at the YMCA? I assume it was in the basement.

ESc: It was in the basement.

ESm: Yes.

ESc: And then...

ESm: Was it the full size of the building?

ESc: It was not an Olympic size pool, it was a smaller pool, but it had a diving board and all because I know it scared me to death because I belly-flopped [laugh] when I was learning to dive. It scared me to death and it hurt besides. [laugh]

ESm: The YMCA building was built in 1914.

ESc: Oh, was it?

ESm: Yes. And then it became the I.O.O.F hall, I'm not sure when, maybe ten or fifteen years later. At the time that you were in the swimming pool was it operated at the YMCA?

ESc: Yes.

ESm: Was it available for anyone in the community?

ESc: Anyone in the community we could swim there. As far as I know we all learned to swim there. And then later on there was a business school in there.

ESm: Mm-hmm.

ESc: And I wasn't that crazy about school. I enjoyed the activities and I kind of skated through school and high school. Was in all the activities in high school. And I decided I didn't want to go to college so I went to the business school down there.

ESm: In that building?

ESc: In that building. And then when my friends came back from college I thought, "I'm missing something" so I got all my credits together and went down to the University of Oregon.

ESm: What kinds of courses were they offering in the business school? Typing and shorthand and bookkeeping?

ESc: Typing and shorthand and bookkeeping, uh-huh. And I loved the bookkeeping, the shorthand was fun 'cause it was drawing things. I couldn't anymore...do that anymore __.

ESm: Do you think that these classes were taught by people who had been in business themselves?

ESc: No, they were just...they were teachers that...heavens know where they came from.

ESm: You don't know where they came from?

G: We've had several business schools in La Grande.

ESc: In here in La Grande even after...

G: They had real people who know what they're doing.

ESc: They were real teachers that ran it. They were business people that came in here as...so open a business school and had the training. Then I went down to the University of Oregon for the two years. Then I went into Portland and went to the art school there for a while. Then I came home and went over here to...the college was new then at that time so I went over there for a term. Then I was working in a dress shop downtown, which eventually became the Top Shop, and that's when Bob came up here. The Standard Oil Company were putting in the butane gas business here. And, oh, it was a hard winter that year! And the man... And it was scheduled to be finished at a certain time and it involved a lot of money, of course. So he threw up his hands because the ground was frozen and all. And Bob...they went Bob up here and...from San Francisco and he took it over and got the job done. And that's when I met him and then six months later we were married. And then, of course, he was in the utility business and from there we went on to...when it was finished here we went to Shelton, Washington and to Anacortes, Washington. Then to Tacoma and Seattle and then back to Portland. And when we were in Portland the people from the Honolulu Gas Company came after him to become a sales manager for the company in Honolulu so we moved to Honolulu. And then he worked his way up to one of the vice-presidents of the company over there. And then the Pacific Coast Gas Association came after him to manage the...that association work which was the seven Western states. And that was fun because what Bob's job was to set up the different conferences and they generally are about once a month, the different departments of the gas company, and then once a year it was the big convention.

And the board asked me to go with Bob to entertain the women that came with their husbands. And that was real fun. And he was in that for eighteen years. And then when he retired...just the year that he retired right after that my mother became very ill and we lost her and we were concerned 'cause Dad was still living in the house that I'd grown up in. And we decided that, well, as long as Bob is retired...and he knew La Grande 'cause this is where I'd met him and we came up every summer with the girls to visit the family...we decided to move back as long as Dad needed us. And then we were here a year and then we... And I was looking up...that piece of paper...I was looking up...we bought the house on May Day in '73 here, we bought this house, on May Day. And then just... We had only been in the house a short time when we discovered that Bob had cancer and I lost him seven years before I lost my dad. So I just stayed. And then after he was gone one of my friends in Olympia from Shelton days called and she said, "I'm going on a trip to China and I need a roommate. Why don't you go with me?" And I said, "That's a wonderful idea!" So we went all through... I went all through China, went into Beijing and came clear out at the end. And that gave me my gypsy feet again, I guess. [laugh] And from then on I did a lot of overseas traveling with a sorority sister that still lived and grew up in Pendleton, Berl Grilly. And I've gone to the __lands with her. And then my...we went to Kenya in Africa and Israel, Cairo. And then I took my girls... Oh, and then with Jean Cuthbert and her daughter I went to France and Germany with them. And then I took my girls to Austria to see the passion play. And then we left the group and visited a relative that we learned about in Germany. And then just came back here and got involved with hospital.

ESm: Could we go back to those months before you were married? Do you remember what your husband said to you about the problems he was running into in getting the gas service set up here?

ESc: Oh yes. It was because it was a very severe winter and we had like twenty below zero then. See, that was in '30...or '29...yeah, in '30. And the men just rubbed... And that was just the beginning of the Depression.

ESm: Had there been any previous work done to lay the pipes?

ESc: No. They were just getting ready to dig the ditches and...and of course it all had to be dug by hand.

ESm: That's what I was going to ask. There was no machinery they could use?

ESc: There was not heavy machinery like there is now.

ESm: It was all with a shovel and pick?

ESc: Shovel and pick. And Bob... Of course there were a lot of people looking for work, but the wages were nothing. And Bob convinced the company if he could pay...I think it was five or ten cents more an hour that he could get a lot of help, which he did. And, boy, they worked their tails off.

ESm: Were they mostly local men?

ESc: Mostly local men, yeah, that...

ESm: And how did the five or ten cents an hour addition pay induce them to work for the gas company?

ESc: It induced them to leave other menial jobs they had to work for him.

ESm: I see. They were...

ESc: And they liked working for him.

ESm: They weren't mill workers or railroaders then?

ESc: No, no. The railroad... See, the railroad was so...such a big business and people don't realize that that's still one of the big incomes in this town because the freight men still live here because of in and out of here. But see, when Dad was a railroader...and he took pride in his work... And Mother kept him...those blue and white overalls and blue and white jackets Mother kept them just spotless. He was always just clean as a pin. But he loved his work. He loved being a railroader. And of course he was gone a lot and me being alone as an only child when Dad was gone I was with Mom and I became involved with her in the church work, which was just next door to us, the Christian church. And then when Dad was home I was having fun with him with his garden 'cause the back yard was a garden. And then when Dad was home we always took off 'cause Dad loved to fish and he loved to hunt. We were always up the Minam, up in that area, or up to Olive Lake. You've been to Olive Lake?

G: No, I haven't, but I know where it is.

ESc: Oh, that is a gorgeous...

G: But I've always wanted to go.

ESc: Gerda, you and I are going to have go up there and see it.

G: Alright.

ESc: I found it for Susie. It's not too far from Granite.

G: Yes, that's...I know. It's...

ESc: It's about eight miles...

G: You know Dale is over here and Granite is over here and Olive Lake is right in-between, but there's a great big mountain...

ESc: But it's a gravel road from...from Granite into it. But it's much prettier than Olive Lake. It has an island out in it. But we used to go up there and maybe camp for a week.

G: Oh goodness.

ESc: But it was always Dad's friends and their wives, and Mom's of course. I was generally about the only child with the group. I kind of grew up with adults. But in the evening of course after dinner all of us down there in the neighborhood we'd play out in the street.

G: Play tag...

ESc: We'd Hide and Seek...

G: ...and Hide and Seek.

ESc: And marbles, we did a lot of marble playing, and...

G: Hopscotch.

ESc: ...hopscotch and Kick the Can, till it was dark. But then I'd go in home...in the house and practice the piano or do the homework I had to do 'cause we still had homework then. So it was a very easy life. And, well, I was thinking the other day, we never thought about boys at all up through the eighth grade and really early in high school. Very few of them were dating. We were a bunch of naïve kids up there, I think. Life... And in the winter we used to... Palmer Mill would keep...would take the lumber...or the...

G: Logs.

ESc: ...logs out of the pond 'cause it always froze and we'd ice-skate there out at Palmer which is out near where the fairgrounds are.

ESm: Yes.

ESc: And then we would... Sixth Street hill was always closed and that's where we all did our sledding up there on the hill. But I... One thing I... which a piece of history and it's here in this book...Dad in the orders, which I think few people would even remember...probably don't even know about. Here's some more high school stuff. And I don't know which of these orders are, I can't read it. This is more stuff. There's one of the orders here where when Hill died all of the trains came to a complete stop.

G: Oh really?

ESc: Yeah, in his honor. And imagine doing that now.

ESm: James J. Hill?

ESc: Is that the order there? Is that it?

ESm: Let's see, May 31st, 1916 number 23 engine, ENG 560, on siding and meet extras 2141 and 2129 east at Perry, eng 3802, run extra Kamela to Hilgard, meet number 23, eng 560 at Hilgard... I don't see anything about James J. Hill, though.

ESc: No. That isn't the one then. This was what...

ESm: This is the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company.

ESc: See, that's what it was, originally. And I don't know what year it became the Union Pacific.

ESm: Here it is. May 31st, 1916. In memory of the late James J. Hill all trains will come to a full stop at twelve o'clock noon and remain standing until 12:05 p.m. All work will be suspended during this period. Signed W. B. Would that have been the trainmaster?

ESc: Yeah.

ESm: For the Oregon-Washington Railroad and Navigation Company.

ESc: Yeah.

ESm: Hmm.

ESc: Isn't that piece of history, all of that? Imagine doing that now!

G: I can't. Boy, that is just fabulous.

ESm: And here's the certificate of examination for Edward Ebell.

ESc: Ebell.

ESm: Ebell, excuse me. Number 158...e-d...they got it spelled wrong in the first place, e-b-e-l, that's why I mispronounced it.

ESc: Yeah, always two l's, yes. There is an Ebel here in town that spells it with just one l.

ESm: This is June 20th, 1910, I think. Would that be about right?

ESc: Uh-huh.

ESm: This was his...

ESc: Probably become an engineer.

ESm: Yes. Qualified to fill a position of road engineer.

ESc: Yeah. That's for being a fireman usually to his engineer. I found these all the desk when I was cleaning out the house down there.

ESm: These are splendid. I would like to copy these.

ESc: You certainly may. But these...see these yellow...that you just read about that. When the men were on the...on engineers when they were like going up the orders were given this way and Dad would...had a stick that was about this long that had a hoop in it and he's put that out and the people at the helper station would clip those on with a clothes pin and he'd bring it back and take the order off and throw the hoop back on the ground. [laugh] But that's the way they took these...and those...these yellow orders were given that way.

G: Oh, for goodness sakes.

ESc: But... And of course now they do it all from Omaha with electronics.

G: Oh yeah.

ESm: And is this certificate that said that he is required to wear glasses while on duty.

ESc: Yeah.

ESm: And here's an airbrake certificate.

ESc: There's a few things in there that I...

ESm: Did you tell Eugene about the silk train?

ESc: No, I didn't.

ESm: A silk train? Let's hear about the silk train.

ESc: You know, I wish I knew what condition that silk was in. Dad loved to get...they called it the Silk Train. The only thing I know about it it was heavily insured and when the boats came in to...the ships came into Portland they were put on the train and it was given the right-of-way over everything. He could go as fast as he wanted and stop for nothing.

ESm: Where was he going?

ESc: Going back apparently to New York or back east someplace apparently to a manufacturing place.

ESm: Why do you guess that it had such a high priority?

ESc: It was so heavily insured.

ESm: Oh.

ESc: And Dad loved to get that Silk Train.

G: Now it was not pieced of fabric.

ESc: I think it must've been the raw silk.

G: The raw silk.

ESc: It must've been. That's...I say I'm assuming that, Gerda, because I never questioned it. I just remember Mother was always scared because she knew he'd go as fast as he could on the train, which he loved. [laughs] And another thing he loved was getting the snowplow. He just loved to run the snowplow between... And see, when they...when the railroaders were here they went from here west to Reese and back and then from here east to Huntington and back. And Dad had either way, whatever he was called. And then he'd always take time off when Uncle Frank was going to harvest hay and we'd go up to the ranch maybe for two or three weeks. But... And I say...and our...our pleasure was going out in the woods. And Mother loved to cook by the open fire. She was a wonderful cook.

ESm: Did your father say anything about the difficulties of getting a freight train over the Blue Mountains to Reese?

ESc: There was... They always had helpers, you see, and then the helpers go off at Camilla or they got...and sometime...and then they'd come back to La Grande.

But see, there was a helper station at Camilla. And then the one big problem was going east the wind lots of times was in the valley so the freight trains could hardly get up through the canyon. He said the tops blow off of the freight trains out there. And then, of course, the Hot Lake was out there. Another thing that Dad did, which I thought was great, Mother...he always had a...the way he whistled out of town. And I never did figure it out. He had a little quirk to it and Mother knew when he left town and she knew when he was coming into town. She could hear that whistle. [laughs] She knew when he was coming home. I always thought that was the sweetest... They were the happiest couple. They just had such fun together. But that was Dad's way of saying goodbye to her and I'm headed home.

ESm: Was he always on freight service?

ESc: No. When the...he graduated from that to the passenger. But another...what he loved for a while he was on the...from here to Joseph on the...

ESm: The branch line.

ESc: On the branch line. And he loved that. And he threw seeds all along the right-of-way. He had flowers growing all from here to Joseph along the right-of-way. He loved flowers and he loved vegetables and all. So he really...he was quite a guy.

ESm: When you said that he graduated to the passenger was that supposedly a better job?

ESc: It was a steady...you knew the time. He knew when he was gonna be in and out.

ESm: Less irregular hours.

ESc: It was regular hours, which he liked. And he enjoyed that. And as I say, he enjoyed that run up to Joseph too a lot. And it was a regular time, too.

ESm: Do you remember his talking about the men that he had to work with?

ESc: When Dad was... When I was living at home so many of the men, single men, came in here from Washington when they were trying to get more men on the road here out of La Grande. So many of them were single and they lived in boarding houses here in La Grande and they were at our house all the time. Mother was always cooking for a bunch of men. [laughs] But it was a happy house. It was just a... And all of my friends loved to come to our house. And Dad teased 'em to pieces. I remember one time I had a birthday party and it was in January so it was cold. So all of their shoes that they wore were in the hall in the front of the house. And Dad happened to come in and he went down and got one of Mother's big washtubs and he put all those shoes in and mixed 'em up. [laugh] So they all had to scramble...scramble to find their own shoes to take to wear home. Those are silly things that...that stayed in my mind.

ESm: Did you ever go down to the railroad yards yourself to watch what was going on?

ESc: Dad would come home lots...several times he'd bring the circus train into town. And Dad would come home and get me and take me down so I could watch them unload the...the animals from the train. Then, of course, we always had a gorgeous parade downtown. That was part of the... And then I think I told you before that where that credit union bank is there, that little triangle block, there used to be a gorgeous gazebo on there.

ESm: For band concerts.

ESc: And we had the La Grande Band, we had an active La Grande Band. My Uncle Pete played in that, played the coronet. And they'd have Sunday afternoon concerts and everybody walked down to see it.

ESm: When the circus came to town and had their parade were you allowed to follow them up to where they were going to perform and put up their tent?

ESc: When I was in high school a lot of us would go up to the circus.

ESm: Was that on the grounds where the university is?

ESc: Where the college is now.

ESm: Yes.

ESc: Where the college is now.

ESm: And they would parade up Fourth Street?

ESc: Yes. I think they went up Sixth. They would go up... Yes, I think Fourth Street.

ESm: Less of a hill there.

ESc: Yeah. Too much hill on Sixth Street. But... And I think Dad took me a time or two up to watch 'em set up the tent, but I don't remember that for sure.

ESm: How many people do you think from La Grande or the whole valley came to see the circus?

ESc: Oh, I... it generally... the tent was full.

ESm: Would that've been five hundred or a thousand people, maybe?

ESc: Oh, probably five hundred maybe. And then another thing, took, that happened, see, a few of the farmers wanted their children to come into our high school here in La Grande and the mother would move in into an apartment during the school year with the kids and then they'd all move back out the farm in the summertime. Did you know Wilma Gaskell Hiatt?

G: I didn't know.

ESc: Jack's wife?

G: Yeah.

ESc: Wilma's family the two girls always came to high school and she'd move into an apartment or someplace with Sally and...

G: That happened a lot in those early days, people moved in from the farms.

ESc: Yeah. They'd move in an apar... the mother would move in.

ESm: Why do you assume they wanted the kids to go to the La Grande High School?

ESc: It was bigger.

ESm: And that therefore...

ESc: Instead of the little high schools out of...

ESm: ...therefore better?

ESc: I think they felt they were gonna get a better education. I don't know why else.

G: And they always had a high school in Imbler. I was thinking maybe they didn't have one.

ESc: No, they had a high school and out at Elgin, you know. There were high schools out there, but they weren't very big.

G: When Julia Gilstrap was in high school I just assumed there wasn't one in Summerville or...

ESc: I think there was because there were very few of the kids that came to into town.

G: That's interesting.

ESm: Summerville didn't have one, but all the others did. Not Island City either.

ESc: No.

G: Julia Gilstrap lived in town too and I've heard her talk about...

ESc: Yeah. Uh-huh.

G: Especially for the winter because sometimes you couldn't get off the farm in the winter.

ESm: Right.

ESc: And then when I was in grade...very early grade school Mother took me back to meet her family in Trenton, Missouri on the train. I rem... I don't remember that too well, but then when I graduated from high school Auntie Cassie, Pete's wife...he was the one that played in the orchestra...in the band...we went back again to Trenton, Missouri. Then we stopped in Kansas City bec... Mother's maiden name was Carpenter and her cousins had the Carpenter Auctioneer College in Kansas City and that auctioneer school is still going.

G: Oh for goodness sake!

ESc: [laugh] I mean... And of course that was the first time...well, Auntie'd take me to Portland one time when I was younger, but that was the first big city I'd ever been in and I was really...and this was a beautiful home they had and I was very impressed with it even graduated from high school.

G: Oh boy.

ESc: Then when we came back and...well, I told you that I did the traveling that I've done.

ESm: Yes.

ESc: And then my friend Berl and I have done several...we got in...Berl got me interested in an Elderhostel program and we've done several...two float trips. First float trip we did was on the Grande Ronde River. We've done two on the Rouge and then we did...we did six day...that was not Elderhostel.

ESm: Oh, tell me all you can remember about the float trip on the Grande Ronde River.

ESc: It was delightful!

ESm: Where did you start?

ESc: At Minam and came out at Troy.

ESm: Ah. Now there's some fairly rough water along in there, isn't there?

ESc: Not... Not too bad, but it was fun. But the people that are interested in Elderhostel most of them are retired teachers or people that are still interested in wanted to learn things. So on that trip was a young man who was a student, a senior here I think, at Whitman and he adored rocks. He knew every rock by it's first name. [laughs] And he was... And he would talk to us at evening about all...all this formation. But the... And then there was a man on there who knew every wildflower by it's first name. And it was in the spring so the wildflowers are in bloom and he was so fascinated. And then there was a man on there that was the one that created the recipe for Smith's Swiss chocolate.

G: Oh, for heavens sakes!

ESc: And there was a man that came out, he decided he wanted to come West...and this is Elderhostel. He came clear out from New York City and made that trip.

ESm: Was this... Was this trip in the 1970s perhaps?

ESc: It had... Yes, in the late '70s. It had to be because it was after I'd lost Bob and I lost him...he only lived in the house with me a year when I lost him, '74. So...

ESm: Has the Grande Ronde been a favorite river for...
ESc: They don't do it anymore.
ESm: Oh, they don't.
ESc: No, Elderhostel doesn't do that and they don't come over the college anymore and I don't know why.
G: But they do do the float trips.
ESc: Oh, they still do the float...
G: Yeah.
ESc: The two Rogue River trips that we did they were just kind of on our own 'cause we loved it. And there was some young people from the Midwest on that. They were on another group than we were. And Berl and I were standing there looking at the river waiting for dinner...this is when Berl talked me into going again. I said, "I'm tired of sleeping on the ground." And she said, "We're gonna stay in cottages this time." I said, "Okay, I'll go." [laughs] But they came over and they said, "We know we shouldn't ask you this, but we are so interested in how old you two are." And Berl said, "Well, that's no question at all." She said, "We're octogenarians." And they said, "Oh." [laughs] "Oh." Berl laughed, she said...she said, "I bet they went and looked up a dictionary what that was." [laughs]
G: Yeah.
ESc: Then we did six days on the Grande Ronde...on the Colorado and that was quite a trip, a float trip.
ESm: What else have you done in the last twenty-five or so years within Union County?
ESc: Mostly activity up at the hospital with...I started out I was president in '76 and '77. I looked that up with that clam chowder thing when I started it. And then...
ESm: Now is that...is that the volunteers group?
ESc: Volunteer group, the auxiliary, hospital auxiliary, volunteer group, and I was president in '76 and '77. And at that time they were asking the president to sit at the board meeting so anything that the board was discussing that they felt the auxiliary should know about the president could take back to the meeting. So the year I was president they said, "Edith, we don't want all these women coming in, we want you to join the board." So I joined the...then I was on the hospital board for several years. And then I went on...and then they asked me to be on the hospital foundation board and I was on it for several years. I just... I thought twenty years was enough free at the hospitals and I kept active in the hospital auxiliary, too.
ESm: What were the satisfactions for you in being a volunteer and being...[end tape]

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G: ...so that's what made her valuable on the...
ESc: On the board.
G: Yeah.
ESm: What did... What else did you do in the service line at the hospital?
ESc: Oh just...

G: You did that sewing. You did several projects of sewing.

ESc: I... One day I was in...went into where the nurses were and these things were lying there. I said, "What are..." Bristo...what was her first name?

G: Ermie...or Ima.

ESc: Ima, Ima Bristo, yeah, and I said, "What are these?" And she said, "Those are the falsies that we give to the women after they've had mastectomies." I said, "That's the damnedest looking thing I've ever seen." [laughs] And at that time I had a very close friend here that was going through that problem. So I came home and designed and made this and took them up to Ima. And she said... And they were paying, I think, from the Red Cross I think they were paying five dollars a piece for those things. So I said, "What do you think about this?" She said, "Those are wonderful." And I said, "Well, forget those other things." And I made them in three sizes, large, medium and small. And I... And the hospital auxiliary bought the material, but I made all those. And I think...

G: She kept them supplied for several years.

ESc: I kept supplied for many years. I was going to say I think when I turned it over, since one of my eyes started to fail I quit, and I think I counted up that I'd made close to a hundred and fifty of those.

ESm: Did they call you the Falsie Lady?

ESc: The Falsie...[laughs] I made the falsies. They'd call me and say, "Hey, we're short."

ESm: Maybe there's some... Is there some other term for them?

ESc: No. Everybody just called 'em falsies.

G: And then she had another sewing project with the clowns or...?

ESc: Oh, the puppets that I made up.

G: Puppets.

ESc: Veda Fallows with the puppets that she made.

ESm: What were they... Were they for sale at the gift shop?

ESc: No. We gave them to the children that were patients in the hospital. They were cute little...Veda Fallows originated that.

ESm: Hand puppets?

ESc: Hand puppets.

ESm: Hand puppets?

ESc: Little hand puppets. They had the cute little clown head faces and then I made the hats and one of the bodies, too. And Veda would always assemble those things. And the last bunch I did...in fact, I have her all made...all made ready finished the last of those. Now they don't do those anymore. They haven't done them since Veda's...since I've finished the last ones.

G: Florence Palmer had some kind of a little gadget that she made that she gave people, but they weren't...they didn't compare with those clowns at all.

ESc: They were darling.

G: They were very cute.

ESc: And now they give kind of little animals things that they've...everybody makes.

G: Yeah, I was a volunteer. I actually worked on the floor so that whenever I was on the floor and there were children in there, why, then I was the one that got to give them to the...to patients. And that was always a special treat because...

ESc: There was that cute little poem with ‘em.
G: Yeah.
ESc: From the auxiliary ladies.
G: Something new for them to divert their attention from what they were suffering from.
ESc: And then since I’ve been here I was in... Mother was not active, my Auntie was very active in Eastern Star and I was initiated when I was eighteen in the Eastern Star. That was before I left here, before I met Bob. That’s after I came back to La Grande. And Dad had become a Mason and went on and was...belonged to the Shrine. But my Uncle Pete Beaver played in the Alcada Band, too, the Shriners in Portland. So Auntie and Uncle Pete would go with the Shriners a lot when he was in the band with his clarinet. And he’s the one that insisted I had to take piano lessons.
ESm: I see.
ESc: And I took from Hilda Anthony over there. And then I went from her to Mrs. Green. Her husband was... Was Green just an attorney or did he...
G: No, he was a judge.
ESc: He started out as an attorney, I think, and then went and become a judge.
G: He was in with Hess, you know, Henry Hess was a big lawyer.
ESc: Peggy was a friend of mine, Peggy Hess.
G: Oh, uh-huh.
ESm: What was your understanding or impression of the purpose of Eastern Star?
ESc: Just somethin’ to belong to at the time. [laugh]
ESm: Didn’t they ask you to learn certain information or say certain...?
ESc: Oh, I... They had officers and one year I was one of the points of the star in the ceremony. And of course women belonged to things like that, it was their social activity really in those days. Women are not interested in activities like that much anymore except like our PEO groups which I’ve been en...invited to join here.
ESm: What would go on at a typical Eastern Star meeting?
ESc: They’d have this regular program that they have, the ceremony, go through and then there was generally a social hour afterwards.
ESm: Can you... Can you tell me what the ceremony consisted of?
ESc: No. It’s secret. [laughs] It’s secret.
ESm: It’s secret, is that...
G: Yes. There are certain stations around, you know.
ESc: Yeah. Each star point has a station and there’s words that go with it.
ESm: But is that ceremony supposed to bring you together in some sort of beliefs?
ESc: It has a... It’s a part of the Masonic order, too, which is another...the organization that Dad was in, too. But it was an opportunity for women, I guess, to express themselves and to get out away from their homes. But see, women then were not working women. In fact, I can remember in college when the gals were juniors or seniors if they weren’t engaged and had wedding plans they were scared to death. They thought they were gonna be old maids or something. That was the future for women at those days. Very few women worked.
ESm: Apparently when you got married and left La Grande you didn’t continue with the Eastern Star?

ESc: No. I'm a life member because Mother always gave me my receipt as a birthday present so she kept me in...she kept me paid up till... And after fifty years you become a life member, you don't have to pay dues anymore, and here I've been a member for over seventy-five... Catherine Meran and I were initiated at the same time.

G: You were?

ESc: Uh-huh.

G: Oh my goodness!

ESc: That goes...

ESm: You give me the impression that a number of women join at least partly so they could get out of the house.

ESc: I think so.

ESm: Was it also so they could maybe dress up and catch up on gossip and have a party?

ESc: I think it could be a lot of that. Wouldn't you say so?

G: Visiting.

ESc: Visiting together.

G: They always...

ESc: And of course men joined the Eastern Star, too. There weren't too many men came.

G: It was kind of a social club.

ESc: It was a social club type of thing. And you know this building that's on the corner of 'N' and Sixth on the west south corner that has the porch on the front?

ESm: You mean the Neighborhood Club?

ESc: Yeah, okay. When the old depot and the big roundhouse was behind it that was the men's clubhouse.

ESm: Yes.

ESc: And they moved it up there. It became the new...

G: It was also the infirmary, wasn't it, for people who got sick on the railroad they'd...

ESc: They'd kind of stay...

G: ...they had a little station there with all kinds of supplies.

ESc: Yeah, there, but it was kind of the men's clubhouse there right next to the old depot.

G: But you know the Rainbow Girls were also part of the...of the Masonic.

ESm: Yes.

ESc: And then there's Job's Daughters and _____. But that was all after I left La Grande.

G: Oh, I see. They didn't start that until later.

ESc: No. That was all started later.

G: The YMCA was a big social organization, too. That was, you know, besides the swimming it was also an organized activity for other things. I can't tell you what because it was gone when I got here.

ESc: It was gone when you got here. [laugh]

ESm: Do you remember anything else about activities at the YMCA?

ESc: I don't. I just remember going swimming there. I was busy with my friends and... I don't know where the time went. And then of course I'd sewed a lot

'cause Mother'd made all of my clothes on that little treadle machine and taught me. And she... And then when Dad was gone Mother did a lot of...in the evening she did a lot of embroidery and things like that and knitting and she taught me how to do it because I was home with Mother a lot. But I was with Dad when he was home.

G: So she knew how to do carpentry, too.

ESc: 'Cause there weren't...Dad when he was home.

G: You're very clever with a saw.

ESc: Yeah. [laughs]

G: I was so impressed when the auxiliary needed something in decoration and she just sawed it up and put it together. Gracious!

ESc: I'd worked at... Dad was a natural. He wouldn't been a fantastic engineer if he'd of had schooling.

ESm: Another kind of engineer you mean.

ESc: A mechanical engineer type.

ESm: Yes.

ESc: Because he could make anything out of wood or metal that he wanted to. In fact, one time when I...and we came home to visit wherever we were during the summer for a short time. Maybe Bob'd be with us for a week on his vacation and I'd stay another week or two with the girls. Just... But we always went up to the ranch 'cause it was fun. We lived in cities and it was fun for the girls to have an experience out in the country. See, the ranch was at the end of Pocahontas Road out of Baker about eight miles.

ESm: That's the ranch that belonged to your family?

ESc: That my...where my dad grew up and Mother and Dad had that. So we were there... We never stayed in La Grande 'cause the little house down there. And the kids just loved it up there runnin' up around on the ranch. It was a wonderful experience for them. I can remember they'd go down when Uncle Frank milked the cows and Susie said, "I can't wait to tell my friends about milking the cows and all." And Marcia said, "Don't bother, they think it all comes in a bottle." [laughs]

G: Yeah, they wouldn't believe you anyway.

ESc: They wouldn't believe her. [laughs] That's when we lived in Seattle.

G: Several people around town would bring their children up to see Wes milk a cow because they had never seen a real cow being milked. Then of course that era passed and there were machines, you know. But it was fun.

ESc: I'm amazed you haven't been to Olive Lake.

G: I am too.

ESc: It's a gorgeous lake, clear as a bell.

G: They tell about huckleberries being thick up there sometimes unless they've ruined it now.

ESc: I don't know. But the Forestry Department have built a beautiful boat rack up there for the fisherman and all to get into it.

G: That's a date. We've got to go.

ESc: Yeah, okay.

G: During the summer before I get any older.

ESc: Before we get any older. [laughs] No, but then we used to go... And of course the old road going up to Joseph was down by the water, it wasn't up on the side of the hill like it is now. And one time when I was in college, going down to college...going home after Christmas we were down, oh, about to The Dalles yet and the conductor came through the train... 'cause I rode on the train of course. The conductor came through and said, "Is Edith Ebell in here?" And I said, "Yes." And he says, "Somebody wants to see you out the back of the train." And I thought, "Who under the sun wanted to see me?" I went back, there stood Dad. I said, "What are you doing clear down here?" They sent him on the snowplow from La Grande down there, they crossed the bridge and went up Washington side to Portland and came down this way to shovel the snow so the train could go on to Portland. [laughs] I can remember that, too.

G: That's not something that happens anymore.

ESc: No, that doesn't happen anymore.

G: A thing of the past.

ESm: You were talking about being a volunteer at the hospital in your later years.

ESc: Yes.

ESm: In your earlier years do you remember any experiences with any sort of medical care? A doctor or a hospital?

ESc: No. I never... I never was sick.

ESm: Did you accompany anybody to the hospital or to see a doctor?

ESc: No.

G: Or visit anybody in the old Grande Ronde Hospital?

ESc: No. That's where Marcia was born, in the old hospital. But I... No.

ESm: What do you remember about that experience? Not the birthing itself, but about the hospital.

ESc: Jimmy Haun delivered Marcia up at the old hospital.

ESm: Were you there for about a week?

ESc: I was there two days.

ESm: Two days?

ESc: Jerry was very modern.

G: He must've been.

ESc: I was only there...no, I was...I was only... Let's see. She was delivered early in the morning and I went home the next day down to Mom and Dad's. And, oh, I think she was only six days old and I had her downtown in a buggy.

G: That's not unusual for today, but it was for then.

ESc: It was then. Oh, so many women down here thought we'd lost our mind.

ESm: What did the inside of that hospital look like, at least the parts you saw?

ESc: Just sterile. I don't remember that detail of it particularly.

G: They didn't decorate hospitals.

ESc: We didn't decorate. There weren't pictures all around.

ESm: Pretty bare?

ESc: Pretty bare. White, everything was white.

ESm: Usually more...

ESc: And the iron beds then, sure.

ESm: Usually no private rooms just a row of beds?

ESc: No, we had...I was in a private room.
ESm: You were?
ESc: Yeah.
G: Yeah, I think they had private rooms.
ESc: Yeah, we had private rooms.
G: But sixty years ago when I had Carol I had to stay in the hospital two weeks.
ESc: Isn't that amazing.
G: And so I must not have had a very modern doctor.
ESc: No.
ESm: I think it was customary at that time to stay in the hospital at least a week.
ESc: Jimmy was brand new in town and he had all these modern ideas. No, I was...
And Mother couldn't believe it either.
G: I stayed in the hospital...the bill was eighty dollars. [laughs] For two weeks.
ESm: Do you remember the hospital being drafty?
ESc: Oh no.
ESm: Or did it have...
ESc: It had steam heat in it.
ESm: So it was...
ESc: The radiators, you know.
ESm: ...plenty warm?
ESc: Yeah. It was warm.
ESm: Do you remember any particular smells?
ESc: No. No.
ESm: How was it lit?
ESc: Electric lights.
ESm: What sort?
ESc: Oh, I...
ESm: A ceiling light? A single ceiling light?
ESc: I don't remember that.
G: I bet they were hanging down.
ESc: It could be. I know that was what was in the house down there on Penn Avenue.
And then we had just the wood stove in the living room and Mother had the wood
stove in the kitchen, I know. And then when Dad dug the basement, all by
himself, dug out and put the basement in that's when he put the furnace in. The
coal furnace in first and then it went to gas.
ESm: Do you remember anything about the food at the hospital?
ESc: No. There are no memories of that. [telephone ringing]
G: The only thing that women could remember... [record stopped]