

JAMES G. VOELZ

March 8, 2005

Interviewer:

Transcribed by Micheal L Minthorn

I: The date is March 8, 2005. Can you please state your full name for me?

JV: Jim Voelz.

I: Okay. And can you spell that for me? Last name?

JV: V as in Vera, O-E-L-Z, as in zebra.

I: Okay. And, do you have a middle name?

JV: G is the initial.

I: Uh, middle initial G. And, when were you born?

JV: Four (April?), 1918.

I: Where were you born?

JV: La Grande.

I: Okay. Do you recall being told if you were born at home or in the hospital?

JV: I don't know that.

I: Okay. And who were your parents?

JV: Lela (?) and Arnold (?) Voelz.

I: Were your parents from this area?

JV: My mom was, but Dad was from Minnesota. He had come (?) from in that area.

I: So, your mother had grown up in this area?

JV: Yes.

I: And, how did they meet? Do you know?

JV: No.

I: But they must have decided to settle here in La Grande, before your birth?

JV: Yes.

I: So, where- your mother had come; where did your parents come from before they lived here?

JV: They were from La Grande also.

I: They were?

JV: Mm-hm.

I: You have a long history then?

JV: Yes.

I: Family here on your mother's side anyway.

JV: Mm-hm.

I: Do you know the circumstances of your grandparents coming to this area, then?

JV: No, I do not.

I: So tell me about, uh, growing up here. Some of your earliest memories.

JV: Well, the earliest memory is about when I, uh, the area where Western Equipment office is now. And Adams Avenue. My granddad's home was on that lot where the building is now.

I: Did your grandfather have a, a ranch, or a farm area there?

JV: Uh, we owned clear to the railroad then, but he did not farm, and he was a conductor on the railroad.

I: Okay. Did he ever talk about his work?

JV: No.

I: Do you recall hanging out at grandpa's place?

JV: Yes. I do.

I: Okay. Can you tell me more about that?

JV: Well, there- there was, the house to the west, is still there. It's that rock-faced house. The people that lived there was \_\_\_\_\_. He was a railroad, uh, professional. They had a sister and a brother that was my age. His name was Burnett. On the corner to the east there was a white house, and people lived there was the name by, of Hough. H-O-U-G-H. And, the next house over was Lizzy Hough. She was an elder lady. And uh, I used to talk to her quite a bit. And, she was alone at that time. Across the street a man by the name of Benning live right in the white house directly across the street at that time. And he, uh, run Benning Tractor Company. Which is now Western Equipment. There was, a block down there was a jeweler, uh, \_\_\_\_\_ Reynolds (?), uh, yard is now it was a jewelry repair shop.

I: Now where did you live?

JV: Uh, my- I lived, as near as I can remember the first place that I can remember living was here on this farm. And uh, dad bought that \_\_\_\_\_. I was four or five years old when he bought this place.

I: Mm-hm. So, you grew up on a farm?

JV: Yes. \_\_\_\_\_.

I: Mm-hm. Can you tell me more details about what that might have been like growing up on a farm?

JV: Well, in those days it was a lot different than today. I remember in our house when we moved out here, we had a- in the wintertime we moved into the main part of the house. And in the summer we moved out to what they called the summer kitchen. It's where-

I: -why is that?

JV: Uh, it wasn't heated. And uh, the rest of the house, of course, was wood heat. But, uh, it give ya' a lot more room and uh, we had access to the main part of the kitchen. Uh, the bathroom facility was the old type outhouse.

I: What do you mean by "old type" outhouse?

JV: Two-holers!

I: Two what?

JV: Two- holer.

I: Oh, two holes in the-?

JV: <laugh> Well, yeah! Uh, got the moon in the side, you know, you've seen pictures of them. And uh, it's very uncomfortable when it's zero degrees.

I: I-

JV: <more laughing>-

I: -so that was situated, uh, outside, uh, quite a distance from the house?

JV: Yes. Probably hund'erd- a hund'erd and twenty-five feet.

I: Do you recall how that was maintained or cared for?

JV: Yes.

I: Can you tell me more about that?

JV: <chuckling> It was not maintained for cared for! We got- whenever it filled up, ya' dug a new one.

I: And then what happened to the old one? It-

JV: -made it a shed! Yeah. And move your shed and put it over a new one.

I: Pretty simple process.

JV: Yeah. <chuckling> I remember it, uh, we had lots of chickens. I remember cleaning chicken houses when I was- I did what I could do when I was six or seven years old. In those days everybody has a chore to do.

I: And what were your chores? Besides cleaning the chicken-

JV: Well, anything that I could do, I helped get wood in. Uh, and I was about, uh, nine or ten I started milkin' the cows. And, feedin' the pigs and chickens, cattle, and horses.

I: Did you have siblings?

JV: No.

I: An only child.

JV: Yep.

I: So, who did you share the chores with?

JV: Me! <laugh> Dad and mom both worked, uh, on the plot (?). Uh, it was a, a family affair. We had a, oh two to three thousand laying hens. And we sold eggs at that time. And the main place was Joe's Grocery. Which is now, uh, long gone.

I: Where was that located? That was a local store?

JV: Yes. Uh, oh gees where was it-... There also was a little store at Greenwood Grocery, which was directly north of the main building and- now, which is now Greenwood School. We sold, uh, eggs to them also.

I: Then most of them went to Greenwood School (?)?

JV: Yes.

I: And you were saying that that was in the northwest part of town?

JV: Yes.

I: Uh, and you had also mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Old town. And, I, wasn't it-you had over here actually \_\_\_\_\_.

JV: Yes.

I: So that was- it must have been like living in the country then.

JV: It was. Yes. It was- oh, there was some houses out there. You know. But it was in the country. It was- (artifact) turn that off- (pause)- in those days the railroad track was the dividing line between the people uptown and the, what was the \_\_\_\_\_.

I: Um-hm.

JV: And uh, it wasn't to the advantage of the people on the north side. It became quite noticeable at times. (background voices) The area that we have today, that we live in is one of the most fluent (affluent?) areas of La Grande. It has responsible people and some well- homes, nice homes. And still has a rural atmosphere.

I: Mm-hm. So, you don't feel that sense of \_\_\_\_\_ today?

JV: No, no, no, no way.

I: Where did you start school?

JV: Uh, Central School.

I: Mm, you went there for what grades?

JV: Through the fourth, I think.

I: Okay.

JV: Then I went to Ackerman, a couple years. And uh, in the meantime, our living address had changed to where we are now. Which required me to go to finish the seventh and eighth grade in the Fruitdale School.

I: Before we talk about the Fruitdale School, um, how did you get to school when you were going to Central? Were you grew up enough to walk?

JV: Yes.

I: Did most of the other kids walk as well.

JV: Yes. There was no busses. In fact we walked, uh, oh high school we always walked to high school.

I: Did you pack your lunches home (?)?

JV: Uh, not very often. You could get a hamburger for a nickel at the school so that was generally- got a hamburger instead.

I: It was always a hamburger everyday? Or did they-

JV: Well, it wasn't just for us it was- they served hamburgers period.

I: Oh. So, it was a restaurant?

JV: Across from-

I: -across from the school?

JV: Yes.

I: Okay. Now, when you moved back onto- uh, when you moved to the farm initially then, you must have been- (artifact) seventh grade?

JV: Uh...the \_\_\_ (unintelligible). In 1924. And, I think Dad bought the place in '22.

I: Okay. So tell me more about going to school out on Fruitdale Lane.

JV: It was a, uh, one building. It was on, uh, it was a long building, two-room school. One to fourth in one room, four to eighth in the other room. The teacher was Mr. and Mrs. Bennett.

I: A couple teaching, huh?

JV: She taught the lower grades and he taught the upper grades. Our activities were what we could play out in the yard. We played softball and things like that.

I: That must have been quite a change to come from Central, though, into a smaller country school?

JV: It was different. <chuckle> I think we had about, uh, in my class I think there was six or eight kids.

I: Tell me now, moving back on to the farm. Tell me what, what it was like to farm the land during that time.

JV: Generally, when we \_\_\_ it was all done with horses. Uh, we raised at that time- dad raised a lot of \_\_\_ to feed the chickens. And uh, we had hay. Uh, 'course we had a big garden. And uh, mom would always butcher in the fall. And uh, we'd butcher up- butcher a hog. And mom made fried eggs that would make sausage and ham and bacon. And mom fried the sausage and put 'em in crocks (?), and seal 'em in lard. And the hams, uh we hung in that cooler after they were cured. Uh, 'course there was no electric, uh, refrigerator then. We had a big icebox. Dad had made an icebox. It sat in the kitchen.

I: Where did the ice come from?

JV: We bought it from, uh, Tyler. Tyler Creamery, Which is right straight across from, well, where the parking lot is across from the Elks. That was Tyler's Creamery at that time.

I: And they sold ice as well?

JV: Yes.

I: Did you have electricity?

JV: Yes. We always had electricity. We did not have running water for the first year or two. But we- very soon after that we did.

I: Did you carry water from a well then?

JV: We had a well underneath the house there with a \_\_\_ pump. It's what we started with.

I: Do you re- do you remember that day, the first day of getting water pumped into your house?

JV: No.

I: No?

JV: No. That was- I was too young. Yeah, yeah.

I: So you didn't have, um, water for a while but you always had electric living out there?

JV: Yes.

I: Tell me a little more about life on the farm.

JV: Well, at seven (started)- early in the morning 'til dark at night. I remember, uh, getting up and milking. We had five or six cows to milk. And we would milk those. And we had-

I: -did you keep that milk, or did it- was it shipped off to the creamery?

JV: Uh, the milk was sold to the creamery and the cream was- we had a separator. A hand spun separator. It was one of my jobs. And uh, the cream was picked up by the creamery in Union and, uh, we sold- we- took uh; the skim milk was fed to the hogs. And 'course the cats and the dogs always liked 'em.

I: Sounds like nothing went to waste.

JV: Nothing went to waste, that's correct. And dad, uh- we sold lots of fryers. Uh, and weekends, we quite often, uh, dress up two or three-dozen fryers in the spring and take 'em to the different stores. And people would come and pick 'em up.

I: Those were the store sold (?), and-

JV: Yes. Yeah.

I: Sold fresh in the stores?

JV: Yes.

I: You were talking about a team of horses for the farming. How many in the team?

JV: Two.

I: Two.

JV: Yes.

I: So, did they pull the farm equipment?

JV: Yes. Yes.

I: What did that equipment consist of?

JV: Well, we had a claw (?) We had a, uh, spring tooth (?) Uh-

I: What does a spring tooth do?

JV: Uh, spring tooth is used, was used in the alfalfa bit (?). In the spring to uh, uh, kill what weeds you could in the alfalfa. So we wouldn't have so many weeds. And of course we had a mower. Uh, the hay was put in the barn by a derrick that used the horses to pull it up in the barn.

I: And that was in big piles, or was it baled?

JV: No, it was loose hay. No baling in those days. And when I was a kid I was probably seven or eight years old. I remember going to the neighbors and haying, and I got a dollar a day for driving a team for the derrick. And I got a dollar for the team. And I thought I was doin' pretty well, I got two dollars a day for- dad let me have the money for the team and what I made. That was...

I: Were you saving for anything special?

JV: Well, you bought your clothes and that's about it.

I: Did your mother sew any of your clothing?

JV: No.

I: And she- she was busy canning? And gardening? And-

JV: Uh- uh, her big job was candling eggs. All the eggs that was sold had to be candled.

I: Candled? What do you mean by candled?

JV: Candled is putting under a light to show there's no blood spots within the yolks. And uh, the candles can determine that. And 'cause you didn't want blood spots to be sold.

I: What happened to ones that did have a blood spot?

JV: Uh, there was nothing wrong with the egg. If you wanted to, uh, cook it all you had to do was cut the blood spot out, and the egg was all right. Honestly we had,

uh, didn't never did have very many. You get one or two or three a day. And uh, sometimes mom fed 'em to the cats and the dogs for somethin' to eat. We had quite a few cats because we had so much poultry feed around, that helps with the, uh- mice. Some of the things that- I think was prob'ly the most interesting to the neighbors, and to, um, me, and my- and dad and mom. I was prob'ly six or seven years old, maybe eight- sometime in that period. I went out and got a baby magpie. And we, uh, brought it home. We had handfed the thing 'til it could grow. Then it become a real pet.

I: Really?

JV: Uh, it would say- it would talk. It would call the, uh, dog, "pooch." Uh, it would say "hello." It would say "goodbye." It could laugh just like a human being. The bird listened to people laughing, when, the bird would say something and people would laugh. It got to mimicking the laughing. Or when it would say "come in" or let her in her cage at night. We'd leave it outside during the day and at night it would come to the, uh, kitchen door. And mom let it in and it'd jump up in its cage and roost in the cage.

I: It never would fly away during the day?

JV: No. And uh, I think one of the funniest things that, that I remember. But, these people would come out selling chicken feed to dad. And uh, when this stranger come on this bird would just come to the stranger. And it, got to fussin' and talkin' and- one day a guy was there, had sandals that had woven toes with holes in the top. And he'd see something like that and that was a- that was real fun to him 'cause he'd get up, he'd eye that hole and then he'd take that big long beak and he'd just drill it, right between the hole. <laugh> And, one day we had a, a transient come by the front house in the road. He had his pack on his back and this bird saw him. He was sittin' in one of the trees by the road. And, he laughed at this guy as he walked by. And, the guy stopped. Kind of pre'turbed somewhat 'cause somebody's laughin' at him. And he looks around, he didn't see anything, so he started out, and this bird laughed again. And, dad and I were sittin' back at the, back at corner of the house watchin'. And, the guy threw his stuff down on the ground, come in the front gate, and went toward where he saw the sun, and then he got over towards this bird and looked up in the tree and there was where this darn bird was, and the bird laughed at him again! <laugh> He turned around, stomping his way out the yard! It was an- the bird was, uh, he never bothered anything, but he was kind of mischievous. If you went through the gate there was a crossbar above your head there. And she didn't watch him, and he was sittin' on top of that gate, you went through, he'd fly down on your shoulder and nab you behind the ear. So, uh, you had to be kind of careful, uh, if young kids were around. He wouldn't intentionally hurt 'em but if it was just his way of sayin' "hi," and, uh it was a lot of fun. And that's what he- that's the type of amusement we could afford and we could do.

I: I've never heard of a \_\_\_\_\_. That's a first.

JV: Is that right?

I: I've never heard of one that talked, either.

JV: Oh, he'd- he'd- what he'd say I \_\_\_\_\_. Uh, were, uh, gone and, uh, Charlie Goodwin was a, uh deputy sheriff. And he come in to see dad one day. And uh, he come up to the back porch and knocked on the door and Maggie says, "Come in." So, he opens the door and walks into the kitchen. Maggie turns around and says, "hello." <laughing>

I: That scared him a little bit?

JV: Yeah. <laughing> I don't know whether it scared him or not, but he, oh he was quite impressed with the bird.

I: You had mentioned transients coming by. Was that a common occurrence with the train-

JV: Not very. No. No.

I: Never mem- remember seeing them in town, or \_\_\_\_\_ the railroad-?

JV: Yes. Yes. Uh, when we lived on Adams Avenue there, uh, they had some way that they marked a house that would give a handout to 'em.

I: Oh.

JV: And there was a- I don't know how they did it. But, the bums all knew, and when they would recognize this mark, they'd go to this house for a handout. And I remember that.

I: Do you remember what the feeling was for people like that passing through?

JV: Uh, most people at that time helped. They weren't uh; there was no antagonistic atmosphere to them. They were- that was hard times. And uh-

I: Why do you suppose they traveled through most of the time? What was their purpose?

JV: Findin' a job.

I: Now, as you, um, grew up, were you involved in any activities at school?

JV: High school.

I: In high school you were?

JV: Yeah, I was in the band.

I: The high school- you went back into town?

JV: Yes.

I: To La Grande High School?

JV: La Grande High School.

I: Okay.

JV: I was in- I, uh, I was in the band all those years. Uh, I took part in other activities. I never could play sports 'cause I was too small, but, uh, I remember band because we had a lot of nice trips out of the band. We uh, at that time the band director was Andy Loney (?). Uh, he was an excellent instructor. And, we would go to Portland for a band, uh, concerts and uh, contests. And we did real well in the state contests.

I: Did you listen to the radio much, or other forms of music?

JV: Uh, I remember mom, uh, when she was candling the eggs would- and uh, we'd listen to Amos & Andy. Um, I don't remember too many of other programs, but I do remember the Amos & Andy. They was one of the better programs on the radio at that time.

I: Do you recall the station you were listening to?

JV: No, I don't.

I: Was there only one at that time?

JV: I don't remember.

I: 'kay. And, what did you do after you finished school?

JV: Well, I went to Eastern Oregon- after high school, you mean? I went to Eastern Oregon for three years, and uh-

I: What did you study there?

JV: Uh, just, uh general math, and physics, and other required courses. And I-

- I: -tell me more about, um, your days in college here.
- JV: Days in college was, uh, we had- our activities in college was, uh, seasonal dances.
- I: Were those held on campus?
- JV: Yes. In the ballroom. Uh, in the main building, there was one building at that time, and that's where the, uh, Ackerman offices are now.
- I: Ackerman or Inlow? Where Inlow is now.
- JV: It was one building.
- I: Okay.
- JV: At that time, and that was the main building on the face of the hill.
- I: So, there was a ballroom in there?
- JV: Yes. There was a ballroom- there was facilities there. The teachers were, with one or two exceptions were excellent. Uh, I had a number of courses on math and physics. And chemistry from Ralph Badgely who was a wonderful person. Uh, I went after- 'course we had, uh, football and basketball. I played in the band in the, in college. Went up there three years, I went to third year because I didn't have enough money to go down to Corvallis. Uh, I worked-
- I: -did you notice sort of separation between students on campus and the community at large in La Grande?
- JV: No. No separation of- the people in La Grande were ver---

End of Side A

Side B

I: We're talking about your college days, and, and you were telling us off tape (?) how you financed that. Can you tell me more about that?

JV: Well, my uh, financing of the college was done mostly by helping dad here on the farm in the mornings, and he and I would go up in the afternoon, and we had a little fish and timber up at the top of the hill. And uh, we would cut wood and haul it down. And then in the fall, I would, uh, deliver after- in Christmas and Thanksgiving and those times. Uh, getting them the wood down from the hill was a problem. And when I started I went to, told the senior M J Goss, and told him what I was tryin' to do. And told him I needed something to haul the wood down off the hill on. He says, "well, I gotta' truck out here, I- I'll sell it to you for twenty-five bucks." I said, "I only got twelve bucks." He said, "Take it." So that started my wood cutting career all through the college days. And when I come back from Corvallis on Thanksgiving and Christmas I would deliver the wood with old truck.

I: Would did you do with the college degree?

JV: What?

I: What did you do with the college degree? You went down to Corvallis and finished and, and became...?

JV: Oh! I- I were- I took, uh, agriculture engineering. I went to work for the Soil Conservation for ten years. After I got back after the war. Uh, Corvallis, Corvallis in my senior year the air force cadet board, uh, come through Corvallis looking for cadets. And I had draft number 96, and I said I don't wanna' be a draft, so I went to the college counselor (?) on the cadet board, and I was accepted. I went to, uh, Oxnard, California for, in uh, June, uh 1941. Uh, I left directly from Corvallis. Dad and mom come down to Corvallis and see me off on the train. And I went to, uh, Oxnard, California and that was primary. And I went to, uh, Bakersfield for basic. Then I finished up at, uh, Phoenix, Arizona at Luke Field. That's where I got my wings. Uh, my experience after I got my wings is I was an instructor for gunnery. Uh, I was sent up- I went to Las Vegas, Nevada. From there I went to Truman (?), Arizona and uh, I started out as a gunnery instructor there when the field opened. I became Assistant Base Operations Officer and I did test work on the planes. I flew, uh test hops and everything that come out of the, uh, maintenance shop before it went on the line. And uh, my job is- was testing the planes, uh, before they went on the general line. And we had B-26's, B-17s, B-25s, AT-18s, AT 6's, AT-11s, and some others. And it was a fun job. You were, uh, you were kinda' your own boss. You go up to somethin' you didn't like about the plane, you didn't think was working right, ya' put a red line on, and told

'em to check it, er, be sure before it was all right. The only thing that ever happened to me was that I checkin' out a B-26 one-day, and they managed to hook the trim tabs up backwards. And that wakes ya' up for a minute. Um, had quite a bit of time 17s. Finally went to B-29s. I remained in reserves and retired. I retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

I: And when did you come back to La Grande?

JV: Uh, was in '45.

I: Well, but when you came back from your time in the service, is that when you worked for the S-s-soil con-, con-

JV: -soil conservation, it was.

I: Soil Conservation.

JV: Yes.

I: Okay. What did that job entail?

JV: Uh, it was land leveling. Uh, small concrete stretchers. Uh, we built one dam on the \_\_\_ (name) place, uh, \_\_\_ (name) Potter. Uh, drainage work. That was about all of it.

I: Is the equipment that- what they use now, for such a project. Is it quite a bit different than it was then?

JV: Oh yes. The- they've got better equipment. Not a lot of difference. Uh, one of my sidelights when I was workin' for the SDS I run a snow survey for, uh eastern Oregon. Uh, on the first of every month you run your stations. We went as far as Seneca, Baker, and-

I: -so you were just checking the snow levels?

JV: Yes. You was measurin' it for water and content.

I: What did- what did you do with that information then? Was that hoping to determine what was needed in your own area (?)?

JV: That information was sent to, uh, Jack Frost. It's a guy's name in Portland. And he put out the forecast for water for the following year.

I: Were there any other real memorable projects, any buildings that you worked on that really stick out in your mind?

JV: No. No, there's nothing. It was all minor.

I: Were you involved in the freeway coming through (?)?

JV: No, nothing like that. It was all agricultural work.

I: Mm-hm. So you went to \_\_\_ a lot for the local farmers?

JV: Yes. To help the local farmers, yes.

I: Well then, you remained on the farm all of those years?

JV: Yes.

I: You had come back and lived in the family place (?) that you had grown up on?

JV: Yes. Mm-hm. Yes.

I: What was that like? To come back and to be in the same spot?

JV: It was very relieving! <chuckles>

I: Relieving?

JV: Yeah!

I: In what way?

JV: Well, I'd traveled- there was only two or three stations that I wasn't in. And uh, I was ready to come home. I didn't find any place that I liked better. I did enjoy the desert. Uh, there's a lot to do in the desert. People don't think so, but there's a lot to do in the desert. Uh, I enjoyed hunting old, uh, mining claims and things like that. It was a lot of fun.

I: Did you build your own home on this property? Or did you live in the old farmhouse?

JV: Uh, I built this house. \_\_\_ (Name-wife?) and I built this house.

I: And the other one remains?

JV: Yeah.

I: That- that you grew up in?

JV: Um-hm.

I: So, you- you came back and you returned to farm work? At the same time-

JV: -well, no, after, after ten years I went, uh, uh, I went into petroleum. And I was a jobber 'fer an old oil company I bought out, uh, one of the oil companies here in town. And, Bernie (?) and I run that for 39 years.

I: And Bernie was your wife?

JV: Yes.

I: Did you meet her here in town, was she from here?

JV: No, she's from Las Vegas, Nevada.

I: Okay. And you had met there, and-

JV: Yeah, I met here when I was a-

I: -brought her also to your hometown.

JV: Yes, that's right.

I: Did you have any children?

JV: I have one boy. He's now a deputy sheriff here in town.

I: And he I understand also lives on the family farm?

JV: Yes. He lives in the original house.

I: So, then what did you do after the petroleum business, or, actually, tell me a little bit more about the petroleum business.

JV: Well, the petroleum business is, we took over the weakest distributor in La Grande at the time. And uh, it was a task. My wife run the office, and her help in the office. She paid all the bills. She did all the bookwork. She sent out all the billing. Did all the handling of the money. I did the outside work. I delivered. And then later on I was able to, uh, uh get into motor oils. And uh, I started out- Pennzoil did not have any outlet here for Pennzoil. And uh, I started, uh, selling Pennzoil. And uh, then a fella' up in Nampa, Idaho, uh, came in one day, and he wanted to buy carload lots of Pennzoil. So that started a real oil business. I was very fortunate. I started, uh, selling motor oil in quantity. I had accounts in Grandview, Washington to El Segundo, California. It turned out to be real nice to us. \_\_\_\_\_ (?). Oh, thank you! <chuckles>

I: So that was a very satisfying job for you, then? Did that require that you travel very much?

JV: No.

I: You had other people to drive and to ship out your products?

JV: Yes. Yeah. And uh, it was, uh, it was a tough go for a while, but it turned out, uh, to our advantage. Very much so.

I: Did you ever return to farming?

JV: Oh, yes, I still do! I still run the, the acreage that we have here. I uh, I was very interested in specialty products. Uh, I started out raising onion seed. And, I had contracts for the onion seed. And uh, I had that for two or three years, then I had to stop because of the disease that got in the ground for onions. And then I went in and tried flowers. I raised pop choy (?).

I: What is that?

JV: Uh, that is a green that's used a lot in Japan, and so forth. Lettuce type thing. Uh, I raised lettuce seed.

I: But these would then be harvested and sent out of the area?

JV: They were all under contract, yes. I had different contracts.

I: And, you didn't go back to the team, I'm assuming. To do the farming?

JV: Oh, no. We're at- uh, our first tractor, uh, was fer bad. (?) I bought in Winton (?), Washington as a surplus. As a, uh, veteran you could buy products. And I went up and bought a, uh, a tractor. For dad. And uh, I got- I also bought a pick-up. And that was our first mechanical for the farm. Dad worked on the railroad during the war. He was a pipe fitter and, and they called him back and he worked on the railroad until after the war. Until he retired.

I: Did you ever miss those days of working with the team?

JV: No! <chuckle>

I: \_\_\_?

JV: Awful hard work- I mean it, you have to take care of them in the morning, and take care of 'em at noon, and take care of 'em at night. <chuckle>

I: So then don't you have to mechanic on the tractor?

JV: Well. When ya' get done at night you turn the key off and go eat.

I: But with the team you had to go feed- take care of their needs first?

JV: Yeah and you water and feed and take the harness off. Take care of them...

I: What your- what does your crop consist of now?

JV: Uh, I raised alfalfa hay for a number of years. And the hay run out, I've got wheat this year. I don't know where I'm goin' from here.

I: And do you sell this wheat locally?

JV: Yes.

I: And how do you determine what- what you're going to try? Sounds like you've tried a lot of different things.

JV: Well, you kinda' gotta' jest \_\_\_\_\_. And uh, you hope you guess right.

I: How do you- you say guess, but do you use any kind of information that-

JV: Well, uh, right now, for instance, hay. When I was in hay that, there wasn't a lot of hay being grown. The price was good. The price was so good that a number of farmers went into the hay market and the bottom fell out of it. Uh-huh. It's, uh- it goes in cycles. People get out of hay, and then it'll be good priced again, just like cattle and anything else. But uh, it works in cycles.

I: You told me your date of birth, so, I'm assuming I can ask you how old you are?

JV: I'm 86.

I: 'kay, and still active on the farm itself? You're still doing that work yourself or you hire that out?

JV: Yes. Yes. No, I do it myself.

I: What does that require?

JV: Well, everything's mechanical now, we have a irrigation system consisted of pushin' a button. You \_\_\_\_\_ a line so it doesn't take long to set it. And uh, we control- it all done by spray. So that's not handwork. And uh...

I: So we're talking about, um, farming, and that you have still continued on with that.

JV: Yes.

I: And you, um, is this a pace that you will continue?

JV: Yes.

I: But you don't know for sure what you'll put in next year?

JV: No, I don't.

I: And we were talkin' about how you sort of decide how the markets are in?

JV: That's right.

I: Did you ever rely on things like the old Farmer's Almanac that \_\_\_ talk about?

JV: No. No.

I: No.

JV: No.

I: So you think that was \_\_\_?

JV: I think it is, yes. Some people wear by it.

I: But you never relied on it.

JV: I never relied on it, no.

I: How much of it- how much of your acreage in farming has come from growing it that way, or, or information that came from your father and grandfather?

JV: Well, I'd say my interest has always been in farming. I have always enjoyed it. It's one of the things that I- I always wanted to do. I had- I told my wife not too long ago, there's- I lead three lives. After the war I was invited to come to TWA for a, uh, interview for pilot. It- much as I had B-29 time, they were interested. And uh, I wanted a career in farming. And uh, I wanted a career in business. Instead (?), do all three.

I: Are you happy with the decision that you made to do farming?

JV: Yes. Yes. I just seem to do what I did was, uh, excellent.

I: So what about your decision to do that here in Union county?

JV: That's where I wanted to live.

I: Did you ever consider that there would be another place?

JV: Yes. My second home is Las Vegas. That was my wife's home and our second home beginning in 1942. We maintained it until last year. And uh, it would be real easy for me to live there. But I, I never will. I made my home here now, so this is it. But uh...

I: Have you reflected back, reflected back on your time in Union county, is there anything else that really stands out that you really wanna' talk about?

JV: Well...my uh, experience here has been complete. I've never, uh, wished to live any place else. Uh, there are times that there's things that happened here that are- when I was a kid that shouldn't have happened, but did pretty well iron things out now. Uh, the town has changed from the standpoint of, uh, buildings. Uh, people I used to know- ever' body that walked down the street today, I know very few. Because I'm not in business, not in contact anymore. It changes rapidly. Uh, some of the old churches are still as they were. Uh, the college has been a tremendous increase in personnel and buildings, and subjects. The railroad has changed a lot. This used to be a, a big terminal. The railroad. And, uh, it still is a crew point. But it doesn't have a- there used to be a big railroad track here. \_\_\_\_\_. Big round house and everything here. That part of it is all gone. Yeah, there used to be ten to twelve different lumber mills in town. And uh, today the small ones are all gone. Uh, the- there used to be a mill up here and they floated (?) the logs down from up the...Starkey. On the river. At one time. I would say that La Grande would be nice if you could take it back as it was thirty years ago. I get preturbed when people are in my old fishin' hole.

I: Can't blame ya' there. So there- isn't there more people here now?

JV: Yes. There was about 8000 here when I was a kid. And uh, what is it? Ten now?

I: I think twelve-

JV: Twelve?

I: So, in your- in your opinion then, change is good or change is bad?

JV: It depends on how ya' look at it. There's people that, that uh, 'course want more business. Are prone to look only at the business aspect. And some of us our age look at the quiet place to live. They're not interested in, in uh, installing big new businesses. So it, it depends on your- where you are in life. And I was, early life when I was business- of course we looked for more business. And, now I look fer doing the things I want to do. Without harassment from \_\_\_\_ and all the rest of it.

I: Then you definitely notice then, kind of an ebb and flow, depending on where you are in your life?

JV: That's right.

I: Are there any other things about your \_\_\_\_ that you'd like to tell me \_\_\_\_?

JV: Well, I think fishing is the, is one of the things that has changed. When I was a kid you could over to Wallowa and catch thirty fish, and uh, as a, your limit was 30 fish. We used to go into big \_\_\_\_ when I was a kid, and, take cream can; \_\_\_\_ on a cream can, and sell them down right there. And today you're allowed five fish. It been brought about by influx of people fishing. And influx has caused other problems by- over fishing. So uh, here again, it's- it's a increase the population decreases your livability in later life.

End of Side B

Transcription completed Tuesday, June 12, 2007