

Wayne Williamson

9/12/04, T1, S1

EC: For the record, this is Wayne... Middle name?

WW: A, Arlo.

EC: Wayne Arlo Williamson being interviewed on the date of September 12th by daughter Ann Williamson and her husband, yours truly, Eric Cain, c-a-i-n.

AW: 2004.

EC: Okay, Wayne, where were you born?

WW: I was born in La Grande, Oregon.

EC: And how did your parents come to live in La Grande, Oregon?

WW: They both came through their parents to live in that part of the world. My father's family came out in a covered wagon. There were stories about how they suffered through the plains and arriving in the Grande Ronde Valley, which was a very beautiful valley, green and flat. The story is that they thought it was so great they decided to stay right there instead of doing what a lot of the pioneers did in those days and that was to go on to the Willamette Valley. So they just stopped there and got by as best they could. They talked to me about living in sod houses. I don't know if that's true, but nevertheless they just made due with whatever was available at the time and got going and stayed there. I was born in 1921 and they were there in 1890-something or other, it was when they started.

EC: These are your parents?

WW: My parents.

EC: Had they come with their parents also?

WW: My father was born in La Grande so his parents came to La Grande to that Grande Ronde Valley on the wagon train. My father was not in existence at that time. He was born later. I can't remember when he was born, it was 1830-something or other. So he was born in La Grande like I was born in La Grande.

EC: And your mother?

WW: She was, of course, of a totally different family and they came out later. I'm not really too sure about my mother's forefathers, but they came somewhere from the Midwest and settled in and around La Grande, bought land there and had a farm. That's where my mother...there, but I don't really know much history about my mother's family prior to their arrival in La Grande area.

EC: So about what date do you think your grandparents got to the Grande Ronde Valley?

WW: I think it was... We have on the wall in there... What's the date? Look on that...it's 1890-something.

AW: I thought that Tom and Susan Williamson came in 1862 on the wagon train.

WW: This is earlier than that. This is when they...when they left Ireland. The date...Lois is looking up the date that they got from their pastor in Ireland. Coming to this foreign land on the letter from the...to tell that these were married people in the church, whether they were nice good citizens. What's the date, Lois?

EC: Here comes the entire book.

WW: No, I wanted this off the wall in there.

LW: Oh, when they left Ireland?

WW: When they left Ireland.

EC: Had your grandparents come from Ireland?

WW: No, great-grandparents. They came from Ireland and as far as I know settled in Philadelphia for a while.

LW: These documents were written in 1839.

WW: Okay. That's when they were in Ireland.

AW: 1839.

WW: In 1839. And they left there and they came to this foreign country, the United States of course, and lived... I don't know exactly, but they ended up in the Midwest somewhere. It was... They had a farm, my immediate ancestors, and apparently they chased out of there or became very unhappy because of the anti-slavery views and the neighbors apparently didn't like that and chased them out of the country. So they left with practically getting nothing for their farm and then started on to what turned out to be Oregon, which would've been in 1840-something.

EC: We can find... dig up those dates later and write them down. Let's go to La Grande. Do you have an earliest childhood memory?

WW: The earliest childhood memory I have is when we were living at what was then called Third Street, which is quite a few blocks from where we ended up on Oak Street. On Third Street I remember I was just a little kid and the thing that sticks in my mind – and I can't remember if I really can recall this or I heard the story so many times that I think I recall it – but across the street from our house there was a little creek that ran there with water and some way or another I got hung up — the water, a big danger of falling into the creek and drowning. My sister raced over and got my mother and came back and got me, supposedly saving my life. My earliest memory [laugh] that I can remember. Then at that same area the ice cream man going around ringing his bell and calling people to come buy ice cream. I would hear that bell and I would just become frantic to get an ice cream cone and I usually got one. So those are the earliest memories I had of living in that area.

EC: Now you said here your parents may have lived in a sod house at some point...

WW: Not my parents.

EC: Your grandparents.

WW: Grandparents.

EC: But by the time you were born I imagine pretty civilized...

WW: Oh yeah, they were living in a house and paved streets and the whole ball of wax. There is a... Even today you look at La Grande and it will say Williamson Addition, which is a designated geographic spot on the city of La Grande, which is where my forefathers first settled. They had quite a bit of land around there, around their place, and built a house. The house is still there as far as I know. My grandmother lived there. Now that house was built – I'm not sure as I sit here now – if it was built by my grandparents or their forefathers. I think it was built by my grandparents. That's where my Grandmother Williamson lived after her

husband died – he died in 1920 or something like '18 – and lived there until she passed away in about 1920.

EC: Do you remember your first address?

WW: On Third Street? No, I can't remember the address. I remember it was on Third Street, which was just out of downtown La Grande about four or five blocks.

EC: What did your parents do, your father?

WW: I think the first thing that my parents, my mother and father, did, as far as I know, after they got married they homesteaded in an area around Baker, Baker City. My grandfather really was engaged in real estate at that time. He's the one that went to Alaska. I don't know if you want me to branch off onto that right now or not?

EC: Just briefly, why'd he go to Alaska?

WW: Hunting for gold.

AW: He went up there during the 1890 gold rush.

WW: That's right. He was up there and left my grandmother and her kids in very desperate straights after two years. He had to give up the gold mining thing and came back to La Grande and got busy doing work. But the kind of work that he was doing was almost like in real estate. He was selling information to where people could go and homestead. He traveled all over the eastern Oregon country and knew it very, very well and sold information to people who wanted to go and homestead. My parents when they started out that's what they did. They went to one of those places that my grandfather had told 'em would be a good place to start and got the land and built a residence on it, just a little shack-type thing, and commenced living there. My mother made my father promise that when they got pregnant that they would leave the homestead and come to La Grande or someplace. So he lived up to his agreement and when she got pregnant with my sister they came to La Grande. He worked for the railroad in the railroad yards that they had there. They're gone now, but where they would work on the engines and the cars and put them in shape. My father worked for them for a while. Then he got into the real estate business as his father before him has really been in the real estate business. He then branched off into insurance with his real estate business and that's the business that he created and worked for for the rest of his life until he sold out to his brother. So worked in that real estate office when I was in high school and so on. But earlier than that I started grade school and my mother was a second grade teacher. I was not doing well in school. I was in grade school in La Grande, the first grade, and I was having a very hard time in school which my mother, being a schoolteacher, recognized. I think it was probably due to the fact that I had eye trouble. I later wore glasses. They got me glasses. But that first grade was very difficult for me. So my mother – which you could do in those days apparently – took me out of school, at Central grade school where I started with all my usual friends, and she transferred me to Greenwood, which was on the other side of town. So she took me over there for my second grade and actually that Greenwood School is quite a ways from where we were living. We left, at some point along in there, Third Street and moved to Oak Street. When I would leave Greenwood School I would go with my mother to get there. But then I would leave school – as near as I can remember – pretty much by myself and walk home, which was quite a walk for a kid in the second grade.

EC: How long a walk?

WW: I don't know. I don't know if it'd be a mile, or what. It was on the other side of the track and it must've been six to eight blocks on the other side of the track. Then you get the tracks go through downtown La Grande and then over to where our house was.

EC: Was it a ___ walk? Were you in any kind of danger?

WW: Not in those days. Nobody thought about it that I was in any danger. But it was a fun walk. I enjoyed the walk because I can still remember going that route. I would go by a blacksmith shop, which was right next to the railroad...where the railroad went by. The blacksmith had nothing to do with the railroad, but his shop was located there. As I'd be walking by I loved to go by that blacksmith shop and watch the blacksmiths in there doing whatever they're gonna do, shoe a horse, make horseshoes, or things of that sort. I remember that. Even today I remember very much being there to watch the blacksmith doing his work. It was fascinating all the sparks flying and such. Then I would walk across the railroad tracks and there was a bakery there. I can still smell the wonderful odors coming from the bakery. From then I would walk on home. Those are my earliest memories of my first, second and kindergarten grades. I didn't mention that I do remember kindergarten, which was before I even started at the grade school. I remember my parents taking me to this little place where we'd have kindergarten. I remember the location of it and I remember vaguely about doing something in kindergarten, I can't tell you what, but little kid type stuff. I just remember being there. So I had supposedly a good start. Then I got into first grade and I was not doing well in the first grade. As I say, my mother took me out. She worked with me at home and of course I got my glasses and I think that probably helped. She spent a lot of time with me so that I...by the time I went to the third grade I was much better off and better prepared than I would have been had she not taken me in the hand.

AW: She took you out of the first school and put you into her grade, right, because she was your teacher?

WW: She was my teacher in the second grade. She taught second grade. She took me out of where I started in first grade and put me into her class and then worked with me at home as well as at school. So after she got me up to speed then I went back to the school I started and took third grade and stayed there from then on.

EC: I want to ask more questions about your childhood, but a couple things before we get too far away from 'em. Where was the homestead that your parents?

WW: It was up around Baker. You go through... I went to that homestead with my father. He took me there when I was probably about eight or ten. I can remember the visit because it was just he and I and we went up there to camp. He wanted to see what was going on over at the homestead. When he had left there... It was still his, he owned the land. He had homesteaded it and did the necessary things to acquire title to the land. He heard there were some people living on his land up there and they were hunting for gold. So he wanted to go up and check and find out what they were doing. I didn't really appreciate all this. All I knew is we were gonna go see the homestead that I'd heard my parents talk about for so many years. It was up in the mountains type country. As I say, it was a nice spot up there. I can see why they selected that spot to try to homestead it and raise...he

- was raising cattle is what he was doing. So we went up there and checked on the people. We'd go there out of Baker and you'd go by Halfway. That's a little town...
- EC: I know where Halfway is.
- WW: You'd go through Halfway. Mother said she could remember in the wagon going up the homestead and looking at the lights in Halfway as they went on up the road.
- EC: Does the family still own that land?
- WW: No. My father sold it when I was... First those people that were looking for gold on the land my father encouraged to stay there and look. [laugh] He was quite sure there was no gold, but if they wanted to look he was all for it. Then later on my father sold that land. There are other Williamson family members who also did the same thing, went to that same area to establish homesteads. My uncle Joe did and my Aunt Margaret on my mother's side she went up there and created a homestead. I don't know if she ever got the land or if she ever stayed to do the necessary things you had to do to earn the right to a title. But my father did and he kept the land and finally sold it for something. I must've been in high school by the time he sold it, I think.
- EC: So getting back to being a kid in La Grande, I'm curious if you had any – kind of abstract question – but did you have any sense of where you were in relation in relation to the rest of Oregon and the rest of the U.S. early on?
- WW: No, I really didn't. I didn't get out of Oregon until quite late in life, actually. I can't remember how old I was when we got to Portland, but that was a big trip to go to Portland from La Grande. So I was just pretty well isolated in La Grande and the surrounding little towns. I knew a lot about Wallowa Lake and Baker and both little towns, but I was pretty isolated for my experience and my knowledge in La Grande.
- EC: Was it a nice place to be a kid growing up?
- WW: Wonderful! Absolutely wonderful! Our house where we moved from Third Street was on Oak Street and you'd walk out and... It was a nice house. My father built it, had it built. You'd walk out the backdoor of my house and within a couple of blocks you were in the foothills that surround La Grande. From then you would walk wherever you wanted, go up on top of Rooster Peak – which was a small mountain there – or you could walk to what they called Dutch Springs – which was a spring up...you go up a different route. And as a kid we did all those things by ourselves, nobody supervising us. The friends I had in the neighborhood would all go do those things. I can remember before I started hiking up Rooster Peak or to the spring trying to take a lunch in a paper sack and walking up those foothills in the spring and it was muddy. [laugh] You'd get your feet so full of mud you couldn't really walk. But I was just a little kid and we'd do that and go up there and get buttercups and other flowers. Then as I got older we were free to do all those things all around in those foothills and rather mountain type country, really, not like you were in the Wallowas, but nonetheless you were in small hills.
- EC: When you went there as a kid were you just hiking and walking around, or were you hunting or fishing?

WW: We fished and hunted. I didn't do much fishing and I didn't do much actual hunting in those days. I have a shotgun that I got when I was twelve years old. I've given it to Sam. Before I got my own shotgun I hadn't even hunted. But in the days that you're talking about when it was earlier than that when we were hiking in there we'd just take a lunch or a sandwich or something and go off hiking and play games. I can remember cutting rods out of small trees and using them as spears and throwing them at each other. [laugh] Dangerous, really, but we did it. So we just were free to go and not worrying about crime or anything of that sort and on our own, as I say, just as little kids. So it was a wonderful place to grow up and do lots of walking.

EC: What kinds of games did you play?

WW: We played those games where you're on the foothills up there chasing each other and throwing spears at each other and so on. Then in the wintertime of course we did sledding. There was a pretty good hill it was on a paved street of La Grande. They usually had snow in the wintertime. They would close off this hill for kids to use their sleds on. It was only... I only had to walk about a block from where we lived to where this sliding hill was. We spent a lot of time doing that for ___ in the wintertime. Then there was a pond not too far down the road which was called Dutch Pond at that time. It was just natural. Later on they made it into a swimming pool area and kind of a playground. When I was a kid it was just a natural pond. You couldn't swim in it, but in the wintertime the ice would form on it and you could walk on the ice and so on. So we did a lot of that kind of stuff.

AW: You mean like ice skating?

WW: Yeah, we did some ice skating – tried to – on those ponds. But I never did become very good at ice skating because there wasn't any real place to ice skate. But as kids we just played around in the streets there in the wintertime in the snow.

EC: How about organized more classical sports?

WW: Of course I joined the Boy Scouts. First I was a Cub Scout, now that's before you're twelve. I can remember wanted to join into the Boy Scouts and I was only eleven and my friends were already in the Boy Scouts. I'd started school...my birthday was in November and most kids were six by the time they started to school and I was five. So I was behind them a little bit that many months. So they were able to be Boy Scouts before I was. I was so anxious to become a Boy Scout that I knew all the things to do to get my Tenderfoot and Second Class and First Class. So as soon as I was twelve years old I zoomed right into First Class because I had already planned on doing it and I knew everything that was required to do that. So I got to... I think I got to be a Life Scout, which is the next step up from where I was, and about that time we didn't care much about the Boy Scouts anymore. We went into a different club where we had dances with girls. That was the beginning of association with some of the boys, pretty much. That was after I was twelve. So before I was twelve it was just my boyfriends and I running around La Grande and all those things. I learned to roller skate at a very young age and actually roller skated to school after I got going in Central School again. Later on I rode my bike to school. I would come home for lunch. It was

still ten, twelve blocks from school, but everybody walked or rode their bike or roller skated or something and my mother would fix me lunch. That would take me about fifteen minutes or so to get from school to home. She would have a sandwich there ready for me. I would eat the sandwich, go back and get along with some of the other kids in the neighborhood doing exactly the same thing and go back to school, which seems ridiculous when you carry a sandwich in a paper sack if you wanted to, and I suppose I did part of the time. But I came home for lunch for a long time. And then after I got into about the eighth grade I started playing baseball and basketball. I loved basketball and baseball and, later on, football. So during those early years even before high school I was spending a lot of time engaged in those sporting activities.

EC: I think we have another question left. I'm really curious that you really did not have much to do with girls before age twelve?

WW: Very little. [recording interruption]

EC: We'll start that last sentence again...[end tape]

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WW: ...about ___ we didn't have anything to do with girls until I was about twelve years old. To about twelve, maybe a little bit younger, Marcella Gardener used to have these parties that she would invite us all to. We thought they were wonderful parties. Girls would come and boys would come and we would play things like Spin the Bottle. They'd have a milk bottle there and you'd spin it around. A boy... I can't remember exactly, but it would be like a boy would spin the bottle and if the bottle ended up pointing at a girl you had to go and kiss her. [laughs] That brought lots of laughs and was lots of fun and one thing or another. Later on it got more serious and you had to quit doing that sort of thing. [laugh] Then in the early days we didn't have much to do, very much with girls. They were there at school all the time and the girls...and I was friendly with a lot of the girls and so on, but we didn't really do much with them. We were in the Boy Scouts and so we were, as I say, I guess what it was I joined the ___ after I was about twelve. They had dances and that's where we started really having dates and going to the dances. So the Spin the Bottle stuff would be fun right up until we got into the ___. So we didn't have too much... It was mostly a man's world as far as I was concerned.

EC: I'm going to go something else to drink while Ann talks.

AW: One thing we skipped over was your memories of the circus.

WW: When I was a kid the circus would come to town and it would come on the railroad train. I would be taken down to watch the unloading of the circus train, which was a wonderful event to watch with the horses and the donkeys and the elephants. They'd always have an elephant or two, maybe even a giraffe. I don't remember... I'll have to back off on that giraffe. I think there maybe was a giraffe. The thing that was really great for me – and I was still just a kid – it wasn't too far from where we were living on Oak Street out there by Dutch Pond. There was a big vacant area out there and they would erect the circus tent and of course the circus tent was a big tent, particularly for a young man like I was, boy.

We'd go and watch them... After watching them unload the animals from the train then we'd go out there and watch them erect the circus tent. I can remember them pounding the stakes for the circus tent into the ground. There'd be three or four, maybe even five men who would have these big mallets. They would pound in these thick stakes into the ground and they would just go in a circle, bang, bang, bang, around the circle, each of them hitting the mallet...the stake with their mallet and having the stake be driven in slowly into the ground. As I say, it was fascinating to watch. I'd enjoy watching it even today. That's the way they worked it and then they would erect the tent. Then you'd go to the circus and you'd be sitting on bleachers. They all the things that you associate with circus, they had acrobats and clowns. I loved going to the circus. They'd usually have also a sideshow which was separate. It would be erected and it'd have these big banners showing what you could see at the sideshow. For the most part they were just poor freak people. I can remember a native with a great big lip they put...like from Africa they have these rings that they would put in their lips to stretch them out. They would have other poor people there that you'd go and gawk at. It wasn't really... You'd get in there and you'd wonder why you spent the twenty-five cents so you could go in. Sometimes they'd even have a black was all fit to take on any local boy or man that wanted to and you'd try to get somebody to come in and go through a boxing match which were never any good. But they would have suckers that would sometimes go in. But I liked to watch the circus. Particularly I enjoyed watching them erect the circus. Because when they pulled it up after they got the stakes all in place that was quite an event. They would have the elephants doing various things – I can't remember exactly what they did – but the elephants were working. They used them to help them erect the tent.

AW: Were you skipping school to do this?

WW: I suppose I was. This was when I was still in grade school that I am talking about. I first started going to the circus when I was probably in the third or fourth grade and then later on into the upper grades in grade school. I can't remember when the circus quit coming, but eventually it did. I don't know if it was going other places and just not stopping in La Grande or not. But the whole town would enjoy having the circus come there, something different.

AW: And so you were there with all your friends?

WW: I'd be there with my friends.

AW: Not your family?

WW: Oh, I'd go with my parents, yeah. But watching the circus be erected I was with my friends and my parents weren't with me at that time. I can't remember going to a sideshow with my parents.

AW: There were stories about...there's one that I just remember you talking about was the riding with somebody's – I can't remember now – somebody had a car...somebody had a car?

WW: Oh yes! That was in high school. Dickey Norris, one of the neighbors, had this big old sedan, but it was a convertible sedan. They certainly don't make them anymore and I don't know how many years they made 'em. But it was big just like a regular passenger car except it was a convertible, had a backseat. He lived somewhat close to me in the neighborhood. He would drive to school. I didn't go

with him in the morning, but I tried to go with him in the afternoon because he was coming home for lunch also. All of us that lived in that neighborhood would try to run out and jump into that convertible and it was just hanging on every part of the car we could hang onto to get there and get a ride home for lunch and then try to get back in time to get into the convertible to be taken back.

AW: So he would be driving down the street and everybody's running and jumping on?

WW: They were running and jumping on as he was getting out of the school parking lot. He was very generous if you could get on. He didn't try to boot you off. It was dangerous, of course, but his attitude was "if you can make it, make it, if you can't, good luck."

AW: We talked a little bit about your grandfather John Williamson.

WW: Who I don't remember. He died before I was born.

AW: In 1918 it looks like he died.

EC: Did you have refrigeration or did you use ice to keep things cold?

WW: We had ice. I can remember that was quite an event when I was a kid, too. The ice man would come around in his truck. I can't remember if it was horse drawn or not, it might have been. But in any event, he'd come and he'd have this truck all full of ice. He'd come to your house and check your icebox to see how much ice you had left, if any, from the last time he'd been there. Then he'd go out and cut a block of ice to fit the place in your refrigerator that was accepted. He would cut that with a crosscut saw. I can remember being a kid and standing around his truck as he was sawing the ice and trying to catch the snow from the...as he used his saw it'd be like sawdust only it'd be ice, pieces of ice, actually snow by the time he got through carving it, and then eating the ice. Then if he felt in the mood he'd chip off a chunk of ice and give it to you so you could suck on it. So I loved to see the ice man come. There was a guy that also...I think he must've been like the postal service. He had a one-horse buggy that he would...I guess you would call it... What is a one-horse...? Anyway, he took one horse and then he would stand on the back of it and it would have a box in front of it, a pretty good-sized box. He would put all his parcels in the box and then he would just trot around town with his horse and stop and deliver the merchandise being purchased and sold out of his box. Everybody liked him. His name was Toots, Toots Curtis. Everybody loved Toots and when he'd come by everybody'd say hello and "give me a present, Toots," and so on. He was just a good fun person to see coming around the neighborhood.

AW: Then your aunts and their orchard and your mother...

WW: As I say, I don't have a very good memories of my mother's family coming out to Oregon. In here it tells somewhere where they came from the Midwest. But then they settled around La Grande and they had two farms, small farms, I think about twenty acres apiece, but maybe even less. One of them was for my grandmother and grandfather who lived and my mother and sisters and brother.

AW: And that would be the Adlers?

WW: That would be the Adlers. They lived there. Then on the adjoining farm my mother's sister, Ella, married a man by the name of Hall. So the two farms, the Adler farm and the Hall farm, were adjoining. Before I was born I guess they were created because all I know is when I grew old enough I'd go out there to that

farm and work on my grandmother's farm and also on Ella's farm later on. Ella usually...she had an orchard. She had apples and peaches and apricots, cherries, but mostly apples. On my grandmother's farm they had the same thing, but they also had berries and so on. I would go and work there for my grandmother. And Ella Hall's husband had died by the time I can remember. So Ella had her place and my grandmother had her place and, as I was saying, they were adjoining. They jointly had a hired man named Henry they took out from the poor farm who came and worked and helped them around with the orchard. They also hired a man by the name...who's name was Andy. I can remember working with Andy on the farm. My father wanted me to have the pleasure of working and earning money so he would give me fifty cents a day to go and work on the farm and I would work on either Ella's farm or my grandmother's farm and I'd be working with Andy. Andy was being paid a dollar a day. He thought that I was being overpaid. I remember having discussions with him and him saying, "You think you're doing half as much work as I am?" I certainly did. I thought I was being underpaid because I was doing at least half as much or more than Andy did. But a lot of it had to do with irrigation and he would get the well working and the pump and pump the water. The water then would run through ditches and would direct it to the orchard. Worked like a devil, but it was really a lot of fun because we'd be building dams and having to stop leaks when the ditches were flowing slow and be going in the wrong direction and you'd be running around with your shovel trying to get those fixed up. I can remember... I don't know how many years I did that, but I think I did it for more than one summer. My father was paying me, which I wasn't really quite aware of, and my grandmother and the aunts would give me lunch, gave Andy a nice lunch, too.

AW: And then they had a grocery store.

WW: The aunts had a... Ella and Margaret, my mother's sister, had this little grocery store which they were barely able to keep in existence. It was Margaret's idea 'cause she wanted to have a store. The idea of the store was to sell the produce that they were growing on the farm, corn and berries and apples and other products, fruit of various kinds. And then of course to make the store go they would have other things for sale, canned soup and other things that were around there. But it was just a little store and they had a little place in the back where they could stay. They didn't stay all night there, as far as I know. They'd go back and forth from the farm to this grocery store which was never successful and just barely went by. One thing that I can remember about that grocery store, which is kind of off to the side, but that was where my first and only can remember Uncle Sam. Sam was a brother of my grandfather John. When they came out as pioneers John and Sam were young men. There were tales about how they had to work very hard to get the pioneer wagon through the prairie and across the rivers and so on. I didn't really appreciate the fact that the old man that I was looking at, Sam, was that much of a forefather like my grandfather was who had already died. I can remember my uncle, this Uncle Sam, with a white beard, a big white beard, and driving a buggy with a horse. He stopped at Ella and Margaret's grocery store and bought some kind of candy – I can't remember what it was. He maybe bought some other things, but I still have this vision of him

being in the store buying candy, getting back in his wagon and then trotting off down the street. That's all I remember about Sam. But he was a...I have wonderful stories about Sam. Growing up he was very strong and they tell the tales about...my uncle told me about at harvest time the men would gather around and they'd wrestle and do things like that for entertainment. The idea was to see if they could get two guys who could put Sam down. He could put any one of 'em down with nothing flat, so they'd try to get two of 'em that'd be big enough and strong enough to lick him in a wrestling match. But he was quite an athlete, I guess. Some stories that I can't really remember about him doing a hop, skip and jump and doing it with Indians involved in the farming. He supposedly...he could go hop, skip and jump in a plowed field amazing distances. That's all I know. As a kid they said how far and I wouldn't know how far it was. So he was a real character in his youth. As I said, he died... I think when I remember seeing him I was in grade school because my grandfather'd already died.

EC: He was your grandfather's brother?

WW: Uncle...brother.

EC: He was your great-uncle?

WW: I don't know. He was the brother of my grandfather.

EC: You called him Uncle Sam?

WW: Everybody called him Uncle Sam, that's why I called him Uncle Sam. I don't think he was my uncle, but... And I don't know why everybody always called him uncle, maybe because of United States of America. I don't know.

EC: He was somebody's uncle.

AW: He was your father's uncle.

WW: Yeah, I guess that was it. That was why he called him uncle. [laugh] But I know they referred to him as Uncle Sam.

AW: And he was the son of Tom and Sarah Williamson that came across the plains.

WW: I guess that's right.

EC: Can I ask a question?

AW: Yes.

EC: Are there other people that you have strong memories of that really stand out that made an impression on you?

WW: When I was just little, or after I grew up a bit, or both? I liked all the Williamson men in the family. My father had five brothers. I didn't care much about Joe. I am very fond of Kenneth, liked Robert very much. Ellis I didn't really know. Ellis was...went into the Army. He went to West Point and ended up a colonel, not a general, but a colonel. Those people, my uncles, I have distinct memories, very fond. I can remember I had several coaches when I was in grade school and later on in high school that I was very fond of. I had some teachers that I liked very much. I liked one in about the fifth grade I can remember. And I had a fourth grade teacher...

EC: Do you remember their names?

WW: No. Mahaffey was one of them. She was one of my teachers that I can remember. And when we were in high school in the Boy Scouts we put on a play. We still have pictures here of the people in the Scout play of Tom Sawyer, all boys. I was Aunt Polly and dressed up. We have a picture of me as Aunt Polly.

Then we had Tom Sawyer and Indian Joe and the whole mess of 'em. As I say, we have a picture here showing all the various people. I think that was maybe in the freshman in high school, somewhere along there. Before that – I guess it was still in the Boy Scouts – one of the member's mother produced a play of Robinson Crusoe and we produced that play. So we spent a lot of time on those two plays and a lot of energy, of course time to...so we had a chance to do acting, which I enjoyed a lot.

EC: I wonder if that had anything to do with your eventual career?

WW: It might have. I liked acting. When I got into high school I was in plays. When I was going to Eastern Oregon College in La Grande I acted in plays. I always liked doing it. So the idea of becoming a lawyer and trying cases in court appealed to me from a fairly early age. That may have had something to do with it.

EC: You've mentioned Indians a couple times. Was there an Indian presence in La Grande?

WW: Not so much in La Grande. There certainly was in Pendleton. But they were really kind of curiosities to me. We'd go to Pendleton and you would see these Indian buck standing around, obviously Indian, and really people that you'd feel sorry for. I can remember one time my father, maybe my mother, at least my father, took me and some other people and we went to Pendleton. Pendleton had quite an Indian population there. They were putting on kind of a show. I can't remember... It was inside and I think it probably was inside a big tent, although, as I say, I can't really recall. I found it rather dull as a kid because the Indians they were doing dances and they were just kind of shuffling around and not doing very much in the way of real dances that you were there to see, the genuine Indian dances. They weren't spectacular at all. They were really dull. I can remember my father saying that he was talking to an old buck Indian there at that place – because my father had taken me – and my father said the old buck Indian was very unhappy with the fact that the younger Indians did not want to continue to do the old things that they had been doing, the dances for example. They didn't want to learn the old dances, the performances, that had been done before. At the Pendleton Round-Up there's always a lot of Indians, maybe even so today they would have an area where they would put up teepees. They lived there year-round, but the Round-Up there'd be an area that people could come and meet 'em and talk to 'em and so on. But from my point of view they're really just curious people that I didn't really know and had very few in La Grande, just like La Grande had very few blacks. They had a few Chinese people. I remember there was a Chinese laundry just like you might think they took in laundry and did laundry. There were... There was a black couple who had a restaurant that my father took me to once, maybe more than that. Very inexpensive place, but they were trying to make a go of it. But they were very, very few Indians or blacks or Chinese in La Grande. It was almost just plain old white people.

EC: And even there weren't any or many kids of there's that you contacted?

WW: The only ones that I can remember was of the black couple that had two children, as far as I knew, a girl and a boy. The boy, Willie, was his name...Torrance was their last name. They were both athletic. Willie particularly was athletic. He was

in everything. He was, I don't know, four or five years older than I was and I absolutely idolized him because of his athletic talent. He played football and... We would stand on the sidelines in those days. They didn't have a grandstand so you just lined up alongside the field. Every once in a while Willie's helmet would come rolling over on the sideline 'cause he didn't like to wear a helmet. [laugh] The people would say naughty things about black kids and hard heads. He doesn't like to wear a helmet. But everybody would laugh and make fun of the fact that he didn't like his helmet. But he was a wonderful football player and everybody admired him. And he was a wonderful basketball player and everybody enjoyed that, too. Later on I can remember one of my coaches who had coached Willie Torrance in high school saying how much they all liked Willie. As he put it – you kind of cringe at hearing this today – but the coach was very proud of the fact that when they went on trips they'd have to have two boys in one bed, couldn't afford to have single beds...[end tape]

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EC: ...frankly because I would have guessed that ____.

WW: As I grew up, as I look back on it, I was not associated with prejudice in hardly any way. That includes people of color or people of different nationalities. And one of the illustrations I gave you about color was that they were of course very few black people in La Grande and really the only ones that I can remember were one family who had a restaurant that my father took us to at least once, which was fine. The other was the two children that I was acquainted with, Willie Torrance was the name of the man, boy, and his sister. I thought the world of Willie. I just thought he was a wonderful person. He was such a fine athlete and he was so nice to me. I was so in awe of him because of the expertise as a football player and as a basketball player that when I had a chance I just followed him around. I couldn't follow him around as a football player, but I followed him around as a track man. In football...did I tell you about how he would take off his helmet?

EC: I don't know if we got that. Tell us about that.

WW: I was still just a kid and we would stand along... The football field did not have a grandstand, you'd just stand along the edge of the field. They'd have a rope up there to keep you from getting on the field. Willie every little bit his helmet would come rolling across the field. He'd take his helmet off and throw it over to the fence. People would say, "Oh, those people have such hard heads" – of course referring to the blacks. As a kid that didn't really register with me. I wondered if they were telling the truth or what. Of course it was just that Willie didn't like to wear a helmet. They were referring to the fact that he had a hard head which was one of the few times I ever heard of any disparaging – if that's what you want to call it – remarks about black people. So Willie was a wonderful football player, but he was a wonderful bask... He was just a wonderful athlete. He was a great basketball player. I can remember the coach – the same coach that I later had, who coached me – telling about when Willie was on the team that he coached and how this coach said how wonderful the people were about no prejudice on the team against Willie and that, in fact, he took in pride in the fact

that when they went out of town everybody would have to sleep with somebody – they couldn't afford to have a single bed for each athlete so they'd have two athletes to a bed. He said that everybody on the team took turns sleeping with Willie to show that there was no prejudice on his team. Willie was a great shot in basketball. The coach said he had to encourage Willie to shoot. He was reluctant to shoot the ball. He'd pass it off to other people, which again... I'll tell a story to illustrate how there was a lack of prejudice that I was associated with in La Grande at that time.

EC: Now you told a story earlier about his being on the track team

WW: Also he was a wonderful track man and he threw the javelin. As a little kid when he was on the field practicing in track I could get up close to him and watch him and follow him around. He was just nice as pie to me, didn't have to be. But I was idolizing him. I can remember him throwing the javelin and I was standing there by the...in an actual meet with the principal and all of a sudden the principal and whoever he was talking with, "That's a record!" Cause he'd seen where Willie had thrown the javelin and it was out beyond where the record was shown with a little flag showing the record. So Willie broke the record in the javelin. Then later on, as I say, went to college. I just absolutely adored walking around behind or close to Willie. He didn't shoo me away or anything. He talked to me and be real nice to me. Later on he went on to college, athletic scholarship. I can't remember if it was Oregon or where, but I think it was the University of Oregon. Some way or other he was hurt very badly. I don't think it was on the football field, but maybe it was. Maybe it was some other kind of an accident. But anyway, he had to give up school. He couldn't play athletics anymore. Later on I learned that he was working for the railroad. I felt very sorry to hear that because I'd been told that after he went to school he was gonna become a doctor, or at least that was his dream. So that was kind of a sad ending, as far as I was concerned, to this person that I thought so highly of.

AW: That he had lost his scholarship.

WW: Yeah, that he lost his scholarship and that all his natural abilities in athletics had gone for naught as far as after he got out of high school.

EC: What's this we hear about the Ku Klux Klan in La Grande?

WW: ___ Bealer, one of Lois's close friends, from The Dalles and a historian and worked down for the history center here in Portland gave a sheaf of papers to Lois to have me look at which had to do with a chapter of Ku Klux Klan in La Grande. I don't know if they were actual meetings, I can't remember, but it listed a lot of names of people in La Grande who were in the Ku Klux Klan. Elizabeth wanted to know what I thought about her releasing these papers with all the people's names on 'em as to what the consequences would be and would I recommend she just burn them or throw them away or what. So I looked them over and I was amazed to know that obviously there was a very active chapter of the Ku Klux Klan in La Grande. I never heard about it. I don't think my parents were involved. I looked through the names that were there to see whether or not I recognized anybody and the only person...name I recognized was Walter Pierce who was a congressman. His name was listed prominently there in the Ku Klux Klan. But I didn't recognize any of the other names. So my advice to Elizabeth

was, “don’t throw them away, just let ‘em go as they may be. I don’t see any point in destroying them. They are historical documents.” I don’t know what she did with them. As I said, this was just recently. I was shocked to find that there was a very active Klan in La Grande.

EC: How could you have missed that?

WW: I just... There must’ve been when I was young. They must’ve become inactive probably – I don’t know, I’m guessing now – I would guess when I was in high school. Must have because I surely would have heard about it in La Grande if it had been active at that time. So I think...all the dates and so on that I looked at on these papers were earlier than that. I think it just died out, I guess. Anyway, I was just absolutely amazed to find out we had a Ku Klux Klan in little old La Grande which I’d always felt was free of prejudice.

EC: In summary, what was your experience of prejudice or racism, that kind of stuff, growing up?

WW: There just wasn’t any. I mentioned about Jewish people, for example. We had one of my friends who grew up with us and participated in all these things, Merrill Rosenbaum, who, looking back on it, was obviously a Jew, not only because of his name Rosenbaum but just because of the way I can now see he was a little...he didn’t go to our Sunday School and things of that sort. The first thing that I knew about Jews being any different than Presbyterians was during Christmas. A bunch of us were going from house to house in a car to go and visit each other and maybe going out and pickup and see what presents they got and so on. We came to Janet Turner’s house and there wasn’t any Christmas tree in sight. I remember somebody – maybe it was me – asking, “There’s no Christmas tree?” And being told, “She’s a Jew.” What does that mean? They don’t believe in Christmas. I was shocked to find that the Jewish people... I knew about Jews just very generally like you know about Methodist or something, but I didn’t...that they don’t believe in Christmas? I found that hard to believe. I didn’t really appreciate how there was prejudice in the world against Jews until I went to the University of Oregon and found that there were no...they told me that there were no Jews in the fraternity system, that the Jewish boys had their own fraternity, which they did. But I didn’t... Even then I was surprised to find that they weren’t generally in the other fraternities, that they had to have their own fraternity. I was surprised about that and that was when I was in college. I do remember – here’s another thing about Jews in La Grande and so on. I was in the high school band and in the springtime we would go to different places and participate in what you would call events, scholarship type events. You would be judged... The band would be judged on being good or bad. La Grande had a wonderful band, a very good one. We were playing up in Seattle. I remember the principal...standing next to the principal just chatting and he looking down a street in Seattle and I can...I don’t remember the name and I was surprised at him making the statement, but the statement was that there was a lot of Jewish names in the advertising on the street for the store that they were in there, obvious Jewish names. Not to me, but to him. He said, “Look at that. Boy, what would Hitler think about that?” I thought that’s an odd thing to say. I wonder why he’s saying that to me. I thought about it all these years because that was one of the few

times, just like at Christmas and at the fraternity visit, I found out...I was made aware of the prejudice that some people have against the Jews. Of course later on I heard all about the Holocaust like everybody else. But it showed that even at that point of time in high school I was unaware of prejudice that was flying around everywhere else. So I felt I had grown up in a prejudice-free society and now, as I look back in it, it was just me that was in the prejudice-free society. It was going on all around me and I wasn't even aware of it.

EC: What year was that trip to Seattle?

WW: That'd been in high school, probably, what, '29...no

AW: '30? 1930?

WW: It'd be in the '30s while I was still in high school. I remember distinctly there was the high school principal who made the comment to me. From his point of view he wasn't being prejudiced – it wasn't his idea – it was just “look at all the Jewish people we have here in Seattle who are successful businessmen and wouldn't Hitler go to town on that.” I didn't get it at the time.

EC: In La Grande were there people that were...people you didn't like or people that the community had identified as people to avoid, problem people?

WW: Sure, people you didn't like. There were lots of people I didn't like. But I can't remember them being in a so-called group or religion or sect or anything of that sort. Individuals, but I don't remember disliking a group. I was very surprised to find that the Mormons were very secretive about certain things. 'Cause there was a Mormon boy on the basketball team and there was something that came up about the fact of him being a Mormon having to do with his underwear or something of that sort, which I never did really find out. There wasn't any prejudice against them as a group. In fact, they were admired for the way they took care of their own and the way they made their tabernacle and the gymnasium available to us. There wasn't any feeling against the Mormons that I was aware of. There wasn't any... I can't think of any group of people that I was prejudiced against. I had lots of Catholic friends and Episcopal friends and so on. Religion didn't enter into it.

EC: Now you left to go to college. Did you come back after college?

WW: I went my first two years in college were at La Grande, which was Eastern Oreogn College. I went to Eastern Oregon for two years, played football and basketball and baseball in Eastern Oregon College and got a Junior Certificate, in other words I graduated from Eastern Oregon at that time because they didn't have but two year available so I got a graduating certificate after two years. The next year after I graduated they increased it to a four-year school, which it is now a four-year school. They call it Eastern Oregon University, but then it was Eastern Oregon College. So then I went from there to Oregon and from then joined the fraternity and went there for two years.

EC: Then did you return to La Grande after college?

WW: Only to come back for vacation. I would come back... When I was at Eugene I would usually come home for vacation. I can remember coming home for hunting. I enjoyed pheasant hunting and I remember doing that. I was still at University of Oregon when I joined the Navy. I visited again La Grande at my

- parents' house at that time. But actually after I left La Grande to go to University of Oregon I had no further association with La Grande except through my parents.
- EC: Why was that?
- WW: I don't know, just nothing to go back there for except to go visit my parents. I worked during the summertime and lived at home, so I guess you'd say that was association with La Grande. Of course it was 'cause I was living at home. I worked during the summer, I worked where they were building the railroad they were building a big storage tank of some sort. I worked with the men who were putting rivets into the tank to make it work for me. So the guy didn't like the fact that this non-union person was working there on that tank and they raised...some people tried to raise a fuss about it, but the guys that I was working with, who were good union men, but the recognized I was just a college kid trying to earn money for school so they just overlooked the fact that I wasn't a union member. I think I skipped by on that one, but I did get by and I worked and earned good wages with those guys.
- EC: Your growing up in La Grande sounds idyllic as you described it. It's curious that you wouldn't want to go back.
- WW: I was ready to move on. [laugh] Just because I had an idyllic childhood didn't mean I wanted to become a dolt. I wanted to do adult things. One of the things I wanted to do was I wanted to live in other places than Oregon. I wanted to see other places. I wanted to see New York and I wanted to live in California. I wanted to do all... And I got to do all of those things. I've been very fortunate in life to be able to do that. So while I had a wonderful time growing up in La Grande I was ready to graduate and move on.
- EC: Was there any time when you were still in high school or in junior college and still living in La Grande that you became aware of another world out there?
- WW: Oh yes, absolutely, and I wanted to join it. I wanted to go see and live it.
- EC: Do you remember any particular thing that happened that you found out?
- WW: When I was going to University of Oregon and talking to other people in the fraternity, for example, I was very curious to talk...we had a lot of people from California, for example, and I would be interested in talking to those people from California about what their life was like, what San Francisco was like, Los Angeles, and gathering information, storing it away and just waiting until I could get out of here and go down there and find out for myself. I had planned to go to Stanford going to law school, going back to when I was in La Grande, and that idea originated, I'm sure, from the fact that Judge Green, who was the judge in La Grande, thought highly of Stanford, sent his daughter to Stanford. Talked to my father endlessly about how wonderful Stanford was and me anytime he had a chance to be around me. So I'd been thinking about going to Stanford Law School from the time I'd got to Oregon. I took my first year in law school at Oregon not because I wanted to go there, the war was on and I had joined the Navy and I had to get a year of schooling there before I went into the... I joined the B7 program which meant...and I joined it as a junior in college...that gave me an additional year to get my bachelors degree before I became an officer in the Navy. So I had a choice of...at that time you were permitted after three years of undergraduate, which I had – two at Eastern Oregon and one at the University of

Oregon – to enter law school and get my fourth year or go ahead and not go to law school and take my last senior in college outside of law school. That was a big decision for me. I thought, well, I've planned on going to law school all these years, but what do I know about it? Would I be good at it? Could I do it? Should I wait and enter law school fresh out of the Navy? I didn't know when I was going to get out. I didn't know how long it was gonna be. If I started law school then maybe it would help me to stay with that plan to go to law school. So knowing I couldn't finish I took my first year of law school as my fourth year to get a bachelors degree so I could fulfill my Navy obligation. So I graduated with a bachelor degree and immediately went into the Navy. Then after I got out of the Navy I had to go back and start my second year in law school at Stanford, which was exceedingly difficult, very difficult, because I was joining a class in progress who had been going there for three years and I was joining as a second-year student. To take my last two years there was tough. But that's the way from La Grande.

EC: Did you stay in touch with any of your old friends from La Grande?

WW: Oh sure.

EC: Did many of them stay, or did they also leave?

WW: Went into the service one way or the other. Even today Lois and I have been doing this annually for the last six, seven years have been going up to meet...one of the guys I grew up with in La Grande by the name of Bill Freeze who lived about two blocks from where I lived. I think I first knew Bill in the first grade, while I was struggling through the first grade, but I certainly knew him from there on after I came back to school in the third grade and was with him all this time. We have been going up to The Dalles because he married a girl who's mother is living in The Dalles who is very old, she's over a hundred. But Bill and his wife were going to The Dalles to meet with Jane's mother. Bill decided it'd be a nice idea if some of his old La Grande friends could come to The Dalles and meet him and kind of have a little reunion. So he got about five or six of us to go up there and meet in The Dalles and talk about old times and everything that was happening in La Grande. Several of them have now died since he started this. We went... Once a year we went up through...stay at Wallowa Lake, we stayed in Joseph rather than Wallowa Lake, but all of us went up there and stayed in a motel. I can't remember how many of us there were, but there were probably five or six at least from here there, all of who were La Grande friends from the old days, most of whom I'd joined the grade school with. We did that last year. There weren't so very many of us left then. There was just... There were two widows and three other people, men with their wives, who met again in The Dalles and renewed old acquaintances and were tentatively planning on maybe all going to Wallowa Lake next year. We picked up a new one, a doctor by the name of John Copp who was also one of the original La Grande friends who joined in The Dalles this last year. So I still have an association with those people in La Grande, but really I don't have hardly any connection with La Grande anymore except these few friends, one of which lives in La Grande.

EC: When you get together and talk about old times in La Grande what... Or is that what you talk about and, if so, what do you say? What is it you remember amongst yourselves?

WW: What do we talk about, Lois?

LW: The girls talk about who went with who in high school.

WW: No, we don't talk about that.

LW: And the fellows talk about the silly things they did as teenagers.

WW: Yeah, things of that sort. Just old reminiscences and...[end tape]

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AW: ...teachers at Eastern Oregon Normal School.

EC: Yeah, that's a good story. Can you tell that one?

WW: Sure. Right now?

EC: Yeah.

WW: You're talking about my mother who was a teacher. I had a lot of teachers in my family. I think I counted them up at one time or another and there were about seven or eight. My sister was a teacher and my mother was a teacher, as I have said before. At the time we were talking about she was a teacher in the second grade. I wasn't sure about where she had gone to school to get her credentials, but I know that she went to a school – it's in here in the book – San Jose. I don't know if she went there just one year or more, but she did go there. She got some kind of credential there. But she didn't have a bachelors degree, for example. But she taught in grade school while I was going to school and later on during the Depression they wouldn't let her teach because they were only gonna let men teach who had families. If you were married you didn't get to teach. So she was out of school there for a while. But she loved to teach. Later on she was asked to come and teach at the Eastern Oregon College, then a Normal School, as an instructor, more than just as a teacher. I think maybe she just plain taught school there for a while and later on they had her as an instructor teaching other people how to teach the grades that she was in. So it was really quite a distinctive honor for her to be teaching at this college level without having the credentials that normally you would associate with. I know she was regarded as a very good teacher, excellent teacher.

AW: And that was...

WW: She was doing that after I was in college.

AW: When she first was doing it it was Eastern Oregon Normal School, right?

WW: I think... I can't remember just... That school started out as Eastern Oregon Normal School and it was only a two-year school, like when I went there it was only a two-year school, but they were to teach teachers. It was a normal school. That was what they were doing, they were doing teacher... I think that you probably could stay there and take more than two years as a teacher. I went there for just two years because I was not in teaching. Later it became a four-year school. But when she was there I don't remember if it was...probably a normal school at that time, but it became Eastern Oregon College. I don't remember if

she was teaching there when it's name was Eastern Oregon College or if it was still Normal School.

EC: You mentioned your sister several times, what became of your sister?

WW: My sister, who was two years older than I was, she also went to Eastern Oregon College and then she went to the University of Oregon and joined a sorority there. Then after she got out of school she started teaching and she came back to La Grande to teach in La Grande. While she was teaching in La Grande she met her husband and they were married in La Grande. She continued to teach there for a while. Then they moved to Medford and she is still – her husband is dead now – and she still lives there. She taught there for several years, I can't remember how long. But she had quite a long teaching experience herself.

EC: What kind of... This is a silly question, but I'm really curious what kind of food people ate in La Grande when you were growing up?

WW: Like I was mentioning, there was a farm, my grandmother's farm and her sister's farm, and they would always produce a lot of food of the type that we would eat and can. My mother was a great canner, for example. I can still... And when she canned she would get her sisters, if they were available, to come and help her because they were big canning. They would can corn and string beans and beets and jams and jellies of all kinds, cherries were canned and they would have the basement of our house with a lot of vegetables and fruits that were canned that we had there. We ate a lot of canned...mother-canned food. We didn't eat much fish. I can remember my mother and her friends talking about how much they loved crab and they would make Crab Delight. They were making it out of canned crab. There wasn't any fresh crab. Then, of course, we had lots of beef, some of it grown in the area. My mother with her pioneer-type background couldn't stand the thought of pink beef. It had to be thoroughly cooked, and I mean brown. Everything __ a pot roast. My father liked rare meat, but not my mother. Then we had some lamb. Mother didn't really like lamb too much. We had a lot of pork. So our fresh vege... We had not only the canned stuff, but we'd eat the fresh vegetables that I have mentioned as well. So that was about it. We weren't raised... I wasn't raised on venison, for example. While we shot and ate pheasant certainly that wasn't part of the diet, just an occasional treat that you would get, if you want to call it a treat, from doing that. That's pretty much...

AW: What about chickens?

WW: Lots of chickens. They raised chickens on the farm. I can remember them chopping off the heads of the chickens then sticking them in boiling water to pluck the feathers and so on.

EC: How 'bout salad? Did people eat salad?

WW: Yes. My mother was quite a... She tried to make me eat lots of vegetables and salads and things of that sort. I remember her trying to get me to eat spinach, which I hated. The only way I could eat it would be to put a lot of catsup on it. As I was a kid I was sitting at the lunch table all by myself because I hadn't finished my spinach and I wouldn't get dessert unless I had spinach and I definitely wanted dessert. So I was sitting there and she went out of the room and there was a window right there in the kitchen where I was eating. So I stood up and opened up the screen and dumped the spinach out onto the ground out

through the window, shut the window and waited for my mother to come back and have my dessert. Later on my mother went outside and low and behold [laugh] there on the ground was my spinach. I diverted from the question. That's the kind of food we ate.

EC: Did you have favorite foods as a kid that you liked?

WW: I just loved dessert, cookies and cake, and pie, yes, but cookies primarily. I just loved the cookies. From a point of view of meat I liked the pot roasts and that kind of well-cooked beef that we'd have. We didn't eat much fish, very little fish. I think part of it was because of refrigeration.

EC: Casserole kinds of things?

WW: Lots of casseroles. Corned... Hamburger type dishes, meatloaf, casseroles of various kinds. So we ate a lot of... All which she would cook herself. Nothing like going down to the store today and buying all these ready-made foods. They were all home-cooked.

EC: Did your family go out to eat much?

WW: Not much. Usually we'd... Sunday dinner would be somewhere around noon, one o'clock or something like that. Sometimes we'd have relatives over to have Sunday dinner. But that would be the big meal of the day would be Sunday dinner which, of course, would be after church and probably around one o'clock or two o'clock or something of that sort. Then after Sunday dinner at night come along and then you'd get hungry again, why, at our house everybody would go out and make a sandwich. If we'd had pot roast you'd make a pot roast sandwich or whatever it was that you wanted to have. After Sunday evening dinner was just come and catch as you can, fix it your own way. I can remember my father going out there and my mother, he thought, had fixed herself a meatloaf for her to eat. So he thought he'd be real smart and snatched it away from her and started to eat it. She was telling him, "No! No, don't! Don't do that!" But she was laughing so hard that she couldn't really spell out why. He was laughing so hard he wasn't paying any attention to her and thought she was just trying to make him stop eating her meatloaf. Finally it came out she was trying to get him to stop eating the cat's food. [laughs] Or dog food. Of course he found out what it was and he couldn't spit it out fast enough. That was our Sunday snack.

EC: Do you still order your steaks well-done?

WW: No. I like 'em rare. Lois has taught me all these things. She's taught me to eat... She hasn't taught me to eat meat, any spare parts of food, I don't like that. Can't get me to eat heart. She tried to trick me when we were first married into eating tripe by telling me it was a fish. [laughs] So when I found out what that was I've never forgiven her. But she's taught me to eat rare meat and to love seafood. We didn't have fresh seafood in La Grande. I just wasn't acquainted with it. I can remember when I was first in the Navy sent to Florida. I went to Florida before I was really into the service, while I was still waiting to be assigned. I had shrimp, fried shrimp. That was so delicious I couldn't get enough of it. Everywhere I went I ordered fried shrimp. The same with lobster. We were in Portland, Maine when I first learned about lobster and loved that right off the bat. I had a little more difficulty to eat raw oysters because I wasn't acquainted with raw oysters

from La Grande. But I got so I loved them, too, and still do. So we had practically no seafood unless it was canned and lobster.

EC: What do you think? Flip it off?

AW: Flip it off.

EC: Thanks, Wayne.

WW: I can't believe you want all that stuff. [recording paused] ...this write-up in the paper about my uncle.

EC: I'm recording this just in case you say something really profound.

AW: This was your Uncle Bob, your father's...?

WW: Brother.

AW: Brother. From 1985, *The Observer*, La Grande, Oregon.

WW: This is this article in the paper about my Uncle Bob, my father's...one of my father's brothers.

AW: August 21, 1985.

WW: It tells about how Bob is looking at a volume of centennial history of Oregon, which includes the name of his father, my grandfather, John T. Williamson touted as "father of the La Grande water supply," a member of La Grande city commission in early 1900. John Williamson was influence in the selection of the Beaver Creek watershed as the La Grande water supply. The article goes on to tell about how Bob Williamson is from pioneer stock. He was born in 1864 where her family is...his mother's family ran the Wilkinson's Grocery Store. Now that's an entirely different store from Margaret and Ella. This store that we're talking about now by his Wilkinson Grocery Store was in a totally different part of La Grande. It was way far from the railroad tracks. Because that was...the town was... When the railroad came in the town was really moved away from the railroad track... No, I want to say that again. The town was moved close to the railroad track when the train came in. Before that it was up at the far end of the town, which is where this Wilkinson Grocery Store was. And it said here that his father came across the plains from Philadelphia to settle in the Williamson Addition in La Grande, now the site of the Boise Cascade sawmill. The original homestead ran from Cove to Z Avenue with First Street as the west boundary. 1903 Bob Williamson was born. They're asking him about his memory as a child growing up in La Grande. He said in his article that "twice a week I delivered eggs and fresh milk to my grandmother, rode on my bicycle. When the circus came to town it was an event of record." He goes on to tell about the circus coming to La Grande just as I have told when I was young, how the animals were in cages and pulled up the hill to put up the big circus tent. They would have a parade through downtown La Grande with all the animals and so on. So for entertainment when he was a boy they went fishing and swimming in the river. Of course I didn't mention that, but I did the same thing. We went swimming in the river. Then he talks about ice skating on Dutch Pond, just as I mentioned earlier that we did also. He talks about putting up ice and delivering ice during the summertime. And about how the Williamsons when my grandfather died my grandmother lined up all the kids, her children, and told them if any of them wanted to go to college she would find the way. She said, "if I can teach you all the difference between getting a little interest and paying a little

interest I'll have done wonders." That's one of the statements that I have grown up with all my life is to know the difference between getting a little interest and paying a little interest. The result being that I've always tried to avoid paying interest. And so ends the lesson. [recording stopped]