WILLA CUMMINGS CARLSON

Part 1

Interviewed by:

Sam Schrager

Oral History Project
Latah County Museum Society
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I. Index
Young people would gather at the parsonage of the Swedish Methodist Church. Thoroughman, the presiding elder, and DePartee, the minister. Ada Harland's leg gets pulled with comic results. Many years later Ada had completely forgotten the event.

Mrs. Carlson's husband Paul came in very late one night, after hanging out with the boys in Troy. A tall veiled woman dressed completely in black had got off the evening train, came to the garage and asked to hire a car to take her to Beulah Cemetery. Shorty Myklebust was volunteered and reluctantly drove her to the foot of the hill, where she slogged off. Mrs. Carlson believed she might be a man. (cont.)

Nobody ever heard of her again.

Dick Condell was killed, his wife and Ed Ramsdale badly injured in a car accident. Mrs. Carlson believes that her knack of predicting events like this by using cards is wrong. Lee, her daughter, recalls how her mother's prescience gave her hope before an operation. Mrs. Carlson accepts the things that come to her without asking, and telepathy with her children.

The Kimes family. Ed Ramsdale grubstaked Kimes in return for work. Mrs. Carlson dreams where they would find him, lost in a snowstorm. Thorwald Haverburg also has a dream, and they find Kimes dead.

Mrs. Carlson renounces fortune telling. She believes in the Bible. She explains what she means by "characters". (cont.)

Boarding in Lewiston while going to school. She learns about reading coffee grounds, tea leaves, and cards.

On an excursion boat trip on the John Teel to the mouth of the Grande Ronde River, the young people get her to tell their fortunes. The captain gives her a free dinner for telling his.

(*Starts at minute 6 on Side B.*)
Dr. Melton, a teacher in Troy, taught children instead of subjects. He teaches a woodcutter's son who'd got in trouble.

Mrs. Carlson impersonates a gypsy in a fortune telling exhibit at a Troy high school fair, at Dr. Melton's insistence. (cont.)

(cont.) She disappoints a man who wants to be told he will marry again. No one recognizes her, or realizes she is absent from school. In later years people keep prodding her to tell fortunes.

Emil Watts, a butter maker, comes to Troy to run the Pine Creek Creamery. He is very popular. He sends for his wife and children from Europe, and the evening they arrive the town has a pound party for them. Next morning the creamery was started up as usual, but he had disappeared. They sift the ashes of the furnace, look for tracks, check the trains, and search in the canyon, but there is never any sign. It remains a mystery. S. A. Anderson takes care of the wife. (cont.)

(cont.) Watt's wife goes to Spokane and works. The incident becomes a matter of speculation for the Carlson family.

with Sam Schrager & Mavis Lee Utley* April 23, 1974

* Mavis Lee Utley is Willa Carlson's daughter.
II. Transcript
Willa Cummings Carlson has had a lifelong interest in local life, especially that of Troy and her native American Ridge. As a child she heard and remembered the adults' conversations, and she passed many of the stories on to her children, including Mavis Lee Utley, who takes part in several of these talks. Mrs. Carlson speaks of the strange disappearance of a butter-maker in early Troy, of the strange appearance in Troy of a tall, veiled woman, of church socials, and of some of her experiences with predicting the future.
MAVIS LEE UTLEY: Well get back to the veiled lady, I think that's where you started out.

SAM SCHRAGER: Oh yeah, what about the veiled lady, what is the story about the veiled lady?

WILLA CUMMINGS CARLSON: There is no story. There can't be a story because...This is such a queer thing. My husband, of course it wasn't anything new that he'd go to town and never know when to come home, because he was a great talker—he was worse than I am, if that can be possible. But he'd sit and talk and talk and talk and talk and forget..."Oh well, she'll know that I'm home when I get there." And I waited and waited one night, and oh it was a stormy night. And I didn't like it a bit, oh I did not like it that he was out. And I seemed haunted by everything, and to make it worse, it was Halloween night. I don't remember what had taken him to town, but he could go on the least excuse imaginable to get to town. Well when he came home of course I was angry and he knew I'd be angry. I'd sat up and kept the light burning...This would have been 1919 or 1920. Well he came home way late, and I was waiting to find out why in the world he hadn't come home. Well he always liked to rig up some big thing that had happened that kept him busy. And I was kind of used to that too. But he said "Well sir, I stayed, I did, I have to admit it, but" he said, "I just had to see how something came out." He was in there with the boys,
and that meant that he was in Dick Condell's garage, and he was the one that had sold Dad his car. It was a Chevrolet and of course it was a new model, the first and only new car he ever owned. And he had working for him a fella named Myklebust, and they called him "Shorty" because he was a little short fellow, very short and kind of heavy, but he was full of the dickens...And then somebody else worked there, I don't recall who it was, maybe it was that McGahan, I'm not sure.

We still had an eight-thirty train that came through town, and ordinarily everybody flocked down to the depot to see who came in on the train. That was one of the big things of the day, go down to meet the eight-thirty, go down to meet the twelve o'clock, and the one o'clock, and every other train that came in. Everybody flocked down to the depot, especially on a day when nothing else was going on, and at night. Oh there'd be big crowds down there on the platform waiting for the train to come in, for the two or three people who came in. And of course it was all over town the next day who came in, and especially if somebody new came in, or if somebody had a relative come to visit. That was news, and that's what made up part of the news of the little town, and there was lots of drama connected with that, believe me. And sometimes very dramatic events came out of those visits (chuckles). So he said that nobody went down that night because it was so awful stormy. Oh it was a terrible storm! It was raining cats and dogs and black and cold and everything else. So nobody went down, or they forgot and they let the time go by. "Well, did so-and-so go down and get the mail?" Well they had a great big car, it was kinda like a wheelbarrow, it had one great big wheel out in front, and that's what they got the mail in. And they wondered if so-and-so had gone down to get the mail. Who did go down and get it? Oh they had kind of a funny fellow that went down to get the mail and brought it back up. And nobody had seen him go down and get the mail, and nobody knew whether he'd gone down to get the mail or not, but
somebody said, Oh of course he did, he never did miss. So they waited for him to come by, and he did come by, and one of two other stragglers that had dared to go down.

And then a woman—a great, tall woman! Paul said she was taller than he was—that's my husband—and he was five feet ten. Well I said, "You didn't measure though?" No, he hadn't measured exactly, but he could tell, he knew that she was taller than he was. And she had a long black coat on, a cloak. (At that time they called 'em cloaks more than they did coats. She had a long black cloak and he wouldn't know a cloak from a coat anyway.) Anyway it was a long garment, it was black. And that's all I can vouch for that my husband would know, because he wasn't very particular about colors (chuckles). "Oh what difference does it make?" he'd say. "It's just about purple or something like that." And she had a great big black hat on with a big black veil. "A crepe veil?" Yeah, he believed it was when he come to think of it. Of course I realized I was putting words in his mouth. It was a thick veil. I said, "Well, you can tell a crepe veil or a mourning veil because it would be crepey, thick." "Yes," he said, "you couldn't see her face, a great big veil," he said, "a great big one, just covered her." And he said she came in and stood by the stove and shook her veil, shook the water out of it, stood there and shook herself. Dick of course went up and greeted her some way, and asked her if he could do anything for her. And she said, "Yes, you have a garage here. Do you rent out cars?" I want a man and a car to take me out in the country." "Well whereabouts in the country?" he said, "we've got bad roads, you know. It's been raining all evening, it's just been pouring." And he said, "You know, we don't have any paved roads down here. And our roads are bad. They're pretty muddy. I can't say whether we can go very far out in the country or not. But" he said, "if you'll go on the main highways, why we probably could go a little distance, but we'll not go far." Well, she said she didn't know exactly how far it was,
but she wanted a man and a car take her to Beulah Cemetery...It is in what is known as Big Meadows--I don't know whether you've been around enough to know where Big Meadows is or not. But to us, we called it "above town". (That was a silly way to denote it, I know, but that's what, as a child, I got used to. Everybody said it, "above town". We were below town, because we were south of town. And you know the old way, we used to think that water couldn't run uphill, so therefore the rivers all had to go south, they couldn't possibly go north (chuckles). I remember what a start I got and I said, "That river isn't flowing south!" I remember that.)

Well he said, "Beulah Cemetery!" And somebody else said "My God, woman, nobody can take you out there, that's a terrible place to go! We never could get you there!" "Well," she said, "as far as you can get me." And he said "You'd have to have overshoes and be prepared for it." She said "I have them. I'm prepared." And "Well, let's see," Dick said, "Shorty, it's your turn." "Oh no, no, it isn't my turn!" And Paul said that Shorty began to shake, and he thought it was gonna be his turn and he wasn't going to get out of there.

And then he said, "Besides," I think it was Bill McGahan, but anyway, the other fellow hadn't had it--"by the way, Dick," he said, "you haven't gone the last two or three times, it's not my turn." Well, Dick had business that had to be taken care of tonight, had to be taken care of, he couldn't possibly go. Well the other fella couldn't go. "Shorty, it's up to you, you'll have to go." Oh, he begged not to but he got the car out. He had to have it chained, and so they chained it. He started out with it, so then Paul couldn't come home until Shorty got back, so they knew. "Well," I said, "that was a great way. A couple of you ought to have lined up in the back seat to protect Shorty instead of waiting around to see if he got home." They always did have the crookedest ideas that I ever heard of down there. Well he said, "Would you have wanted me to go out there as a bodyguard?" "Yes!" I said,"I would have. I don't
like to think about Shorty, poor old Shorty going out there, and being laid out
by somebody."
I said, "Why didn't you make that woman take off her coat so you
could see whether she was a woman or a man?" Why he didn't think about her
being---I said, "Did she have a heavy voice or a low sweet voice?"
"Well, she
had a kind of a heavy voice all right, but it was a low, a very low voice."
I said, "It was probably a man dressed up as a woman!" He never thought of
that. "Well, I would've." "Oh," he said, "you've read too many detective
stories."
And I acknowledged the fact that I was a kind of an addict to detective
stories, but I was that. I said "That's what I am." I didn't deny that
I was.

SAM: So he took her out?

W C: Well, he took her out, and he got down to the bottom of the hill down there
below, where you turn up the hill to go to the cemetery, down below Sundquist's,
Sundquist's house was up on the hill. And he said, "Now there's a house up
there," he said, "maybe you can go in there. There's an old man and his son
live there. I know that, and I'll take there but," he said, "I can't go any
farther. I'm stuck here. I'm gonna to go back to this fellow that lives
back of us and get pulled. I'm gonna have to be pulled out." Well he didn't
have to be pulled out, but he said that. And she said "All right," and she
got out, and he said she went slogging off in the mud up the hill. And I said,
"Well didn't you stay to see if she got up the hill or got to Sundquist's?"
Well he said, "You've got me all confused, I don't remember." And he didn't,
he just couldn't remember what she done. He got out of there as fast as he
possibly could. He revved up the engine and got going and rolled out, he
wasn't stuck. And he came on back. "Well we know one thing," Dick said, "that
anytime we've got a hard show in the country, we've got our man to send. It'll
be Shorty. Shorty'll have to go, because he can take the car anywhere." Well
they were gonna watch the paper, and they were all gonna watch, so Paul said.
They were gonna watch to see if they saw anything about anybody having a visitor, in the paper.

(End of Side A)

They asked Sundquist, the young man that lived there, if anybody had visited them. And they didn't know of anybody, and nobody ever did hear of that woman again! And she didn't come back to Troy to take the train. She had a little suitcase, he said, she had a little suitcase.

MLU: But there was something about the atmosphere she packed with here that made her mysterious or something, as she arrived?

W C: Yes, it was. It was this aura she carried of mystery. She was covered over, covered completely.

MLU: And didn't give her name or anything.

W C: No, she didn't give any name. She asked him how much it would be and she took out the cash and paid him, right then and there. She said, "Cash in advance."

Oh, Dick discouraged her every way he possibly could. It would have to be cash in advance and he did make it an awful big sum of money. I don't remember what it was, but it was a big sum of money. Of course it took a big sum to go any place in a car in those days out in the country. I don't know how much it was, that's a detail I don't remember. Well that's all there was to that. It wasn't much of a story because nothing did come of it.

MLU: She just vanished, that's what made the story.

W C: Yes, for us.

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SAM: Lee, what was it you were telling me about the guy that was missing, who was Ed's help?

MLU: Oh yeah, old man Kimes, how you helped locate--

W C: No, I didn't get to help locate him. But I did something, all right, that worried me half to death. This old man Kimes had worked for us, and I knew
what kind of a man he was. I don't know whether it was from age and he'd aged young or not, but he was a pretty good looking man in the face, physically he wasn't a bad looking man. And he had that beautiful daughter, she really had a beautiful face in one way, beautiful complexion and good features, but no expression there. It wasn't an intelligent face. And her husband took care of everything, took care of the kids. I think they had five girls, five daughters. They lived up there in that Sundell house for awhile. And his name wasn't Kimes of course, Kimes was her father.

MLU: Yeah, their name was Pierce.

W C: Oh yes, Pierce. And the oldest girl, she was getting to be such a handy girl. Just a beautiful child, she could just do everything. Daddy was teaching her, she said. And daddy just taught her all kinds of things, so she was learning to take care of the mother, that is do all her housework, and one thing another. But the mother was around with them, and talking with them and playing with them like one of the girls. Funny. And Kimes went to work for Ed Ramsdale that winter cutting wood. Ed always gave employment to a lot of fellas that were hanging around town, didn't have anyplace to go. He'd give 'em a grubstake and an axe, whatever tools they needed, and tell them they could go up in the hills. And there were cabins up there, and of course they could go out and chop plenty of dead wood around anywhere that they wanted, and burn it, and there was an old stove in the cabin, and so on. And they could make a living that way through the winter, and frequently did. And he nearly always had four or five guys up there cutting wood for him. That's the way Ed's made his money, and knows exactly how to make it off of the other fellas—exactly. He's a regular financier. Oh they used to drive me crazy to read their palms and everything, tell by cards I think, and I had told Ed's fortune once all right. And old man Kimes was in town and got a sack of groceries and left town, and there was a snowstorm hit, and he got lost and he never did get to the cabin. So
then somebody went around horseback or however they went around to the cabins to find out if they were all right, because Ed didn't like to leave 'em up there and not keep track of 'em. So he found out that Kimes had been in town and had wandered out in that snowstorm. He could take care of himself in one way, but he wasn't a man that would plan ahead, you know, that had that kind of a brain, he wasn't that kind of a man. He couldn't plan out things, and Ed knew this. So he got worried when he heard that he wasn't at his cabin, and he hadn't been seen since that time, and there were no tracks leading in to the cabin. And Ed got excited and got a posse out to look for him. So then just as soon as the snowstorm cleared away, the men all went to looking, and they looked for several days and failed to find him.

Well Paul, my husband, was in town and he heard about it. Well Ed came and Ed was worried. And he came to Paul, and I believe he'd promised me to never bother me again, about telling him all this stuff. I did make 'em promise, those people, that they wouldn't come to me again. I didn't want to feel like a gypsy. But anyway, he wanted to know of Paul if I had ever located anybody, located missing people. And who did dad think I'd located? Who was it? I don't remember, but I'd said, "Well, why don't they look—"when they were looking for somebody, why don't they look somewhere. Paul said, "You said why don't they look for him, and that's where they found him." "Well," I said, "I wasn't locating him, I wasn't thinking of that." I said, "I was just using common sense," because most of this locating people is common sense, and cutting away the rubbish, the little foolish things. Like I've been doing today now, get off on other routes instead of the one that I'm supposed to stay on, on that road. And I said, "That's what most of this is, a lot of it," I said, "maybe some of it is really prescience, something that comes from outside, but much of it's that." Oh Paul thought I could do anything I wanted to. He was always telling me that. And still I never did anything of that sort.
Well I said, "I don't want to. Makes me just feel creepy. Poor old man, I just feel awful bad about him. If I knew where he was I'd say so, but I don't."

But, when I went to bed that night, could I think of anything else but old man Kimes? No I could not. I could see that old man's face all the time. And I thought, "Well now, he went with that sack on his back and it was heavy and he was an old man, and he's sat down out there to rest maybe, and maybe the coyotes got him," or something like that. (Or did I think that. Maybe I didn't think that about the coyotes—let's forget that, because that came out with somebody else, not me.) But I woke up and I said "Paul, I haven't been able to sleep yet. I haven't been asleep. You told me about Kimes and I got to thinking about him." I said, "I don't know whether I went to sleep or not. Either I've had an awful real dream or I haven't been asleep—it seems to me I haven't been asleep. But you can go to town tomorrow and tell Ed to look up. They've been looking in the wrong spot." I said, "Instead of looking around on the ground for Kimes, look up in the tree. If as they think, the coyotes might have come and howled—somebody had told this, said that they were out in force—I said, "he might of been afraid." I said, "He would have done the first thing, and he would have done the simple thing, and that would have been right for anybody that was lost in the hills, if you follow." And I said, "He is such a natural man because he doesn't have a lot of forethought, human forethought—he'd have climbed that tree." I said, "Did anybody say they looked up in the tree?" "No." They looked under the tree, they'd raked the snow, and they found a place or two where the animals had dug in the snow, but they hadn't found any trace of a man. Well I said, "You can just tell 'em to start looking up." So he went to town.

MLU: You told 'em more than that.

WC: I don't think so.

MLU: Yes you did.
W C: My kids listen around too much.

MLU: There'd be a fire under the tree, they'd find evidence of a fire under the tree. And you told them the location of the tree.

W C: Oh yes, yes, I did remember that—I did say that. There'd been a fire.

MLU: And that they'd find his body in two pieces.

W C: Yeah, I told 'em that. I did say two pieces—you're right there, but I don't see why you had to be snooping around.

MLU: I always listened to the interesting things if I got half a chance.

W C: Well anyway, he went to town intending to tell this, but when he got to town, the news was that they had found his body underneath the tree and it was broken, and the coroner was out about that time. I don't know whether the coroner was in town already or whether he came through town soon afterward, to Troy, but—

MLU: I thought they went out on your information.

W C: No, not mine, not mine. They'd already done it. Thurwald Haverburg had had a terrible dream. He had dreamed that there was a tree afire and that he heard the coyotes howling. And he dreamed that he got up and went to hunt for the tree, and all he could hear was the coyotes howling, and he'd come back. And he had decided it was a dream, but the next morning he knew it was more than a dream. So he got somebody to go out with him and they looked over. He'd seen a place where the animals had dug. And they got up there where the animals had dug and got out some of the groceries that had fallen, and a limb was broken. The limb had broken and gone into the ground. So they looked there and the tree had been afire and the fire had run up the side of the tree, and the fire had caused the limb to break. That is, that's what they deduced from what they saw. And they moved that, and they found that the body was there and they called help. And when they got there the body was broken in two, and they reasoned that the old man was sitting up against the tree and it caught fire—
by his smoking? That's what they thought, I think.

MLU: No, the fire he'd built underneath for warmth.

W C: Oh yes, I guess that was it. He'd built a fire and the fire got away from him and it entered the tree, burned up the trunk of the tree to a certain distance to this big partly dead red fir limb, it was partly dead, made it easier to catch fire. He woke up and went to run to get away from it, and the limb had caught him across the back and pinned him to the earth and broke his back and that was the end of him. So they never thought of anything else. I said "Didn't they think of looking?" And Herman Ruberg said, "By gosh, they didn't..." He said they took that, they just made up their minds that that limb fell. "No," I said "he didn't. He wasn't crushed by the limb, he was ON that limb. He was trying to get away and he hung over the limb and the limb broke." And of course he went on both sides of the limb and fell into this five feet of snow under the tree, went into the snow and the limb went along with him. And being charred, it broke all to pieces. They said the limb was in many pieces, and Herman was there—

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(The following took place while Mrs. Carlson was living at a boardinghouse while going to school in Lewiston:)

W C: One day after the boarders had gone, I'd been slow about getting up that morning, we were all sitting out there drinking coffee, I guess it was a Saturday morning. I think Mrs. Cameron said, "Mrs. Clark, why don't you read the coffee grounds for us?" "Oh," I said, "Oh yes, do. That's lots of fun." I was just like Mavis at that time, I was eager for everything. "Well," she said, "I'd rather tell the tea leaves." "Oh," I said, "I wouldn't, I'd rather tell
She said, "Does your mother do that?" And I said "No. But I had an aunt that did," and I said, "she was a great aunt," not meaning great aunt, but she was great as an aunt. And that was Aunt Nora, Aunt Nora read tea leaves and coffee grounds and everything else—cards too. And she was mysterious and everything else that I wouldn't really want to be. And yet, I loved her because she was different. And I used to ask her and tease her like you did me, "How do you tell that? How do you know there's somebody coming today? How do you know that? How do you know it's a tall dark stranger? How do you know that?" I soon found out she didn't know, but I soon found out I could tell (chuckles). I never did know how Aunt Nora told. Well, we told each other on coffee grounds, see. And Mrs. Cameron said, "Have her read the cards for ya. She reads the cards well." "Yes," she said, she'd be glad to. So they got out a deck of cards and she told 'em, and it didn't amount to anything. I watched her and I saw what she did. She put 'em aside. She told a little, what she read in a certain set, according to your complexion. I think I've mixed it up since. But the black ones, the spades—there's an awful lot of evil in the spades, but not all evil, there was some good. And not all good in the hearts either, there was some bad. So I just, from little things that she said. Aunt Nora, if she ever told it with cards, she never let me see it. She didn't want me to know anything about it. But her tea leaves and her coffee grounds, I did know that Aunt Nora did it, and I'd seen her tell them. So I've seen that. I was like Mavis, a kind of a snoop around such things as that, you see. Mavis has seen a lot of things that I didn't realize she did, you see. She tells me every now and then that she heard things like that. But then about this fortune telling the cards—oh I thought that was great! I was going to learn to do it right away. So I did go over there. One time I went over and washed a horrible stack of dishes, Mrs. Clark called me and I was working.
Mrs. Eastwood, by the way, came, my old friend, came and wanted me to come stay with them. What did I come to Lewiston and go and board out for? If I wanted to board I could stay over there and my board wouldn't cost me anything. Well I wouldn't board that way with anybody—of course she was a very generous woman, Mrs. Eastwood was. So I went over—she had a girl working for her and I didn't want to rival that girl. Well, he said, "Agnes wants to go all the time and so now she can go two nights a week." She hadn't always let her, but she'd let her juggle them around if I'd be willing to stay a couple of nights a week with the kids. Well of course I was willing to stay, because I stayed in most of the time. I didn't run around at night, I was getting my lessons. And I stayed with the kids, and I sewed then, made little boys' suits. She had a pattern, and I went by the pattern, sewed 'em up on the machine. I never made little boys' suits in my life, but I suited Mrs. Eastwood on those little pants.

I went down the river. They gave an excursion on the John Teel boat. And I wondered how in the world I was going to make the money, the dollar for the excursion. How I was gonna get a dollar to go on that boat was more than I knew. And I knew I couldn't afford to eat on the boat. So I said to Mrs. Eastwood, "Is it okay if I take a lunch?" "Well, of course," she said, "you don't have to ask me that." I said, "Well I wouldn't have taken it without asking." "Well," she said, "you don't have to ask me. Take two lunches if you want, you're gonna have to have something for supper." Well I took just a little lunch, not much, and figured I'd get along all right. But in the meantime, Mrs. Eastwood rented out her rooms upstairs to women around town, and one school teacher named Sylvester—I won't forget her. And so one Sunday afternoon they were lounging around and came downstairs in the Eastwood home. And I'd told Mrs. Eastwood about Mrs. Clark reading fortunes. She said "Did you catch on to it? Well, you tell mine." So I told Mrs. Eastwood's. I
could do that pretty easy. She didn't know it, but I knew it so's I could tell it to her pretty easily (chuckles). And of course the more I told, the more I wanted to tell. And I became very glib.

Well I was on this boat, and Miss Sylvester, you see, was a penmanship teacher, and she was on the boat, on this excursion. We went up to the mouth of the Grande Ronde River, and there we disembarked, and made a great ceremony of it. And then we could go in three states—Oregon, Idaho, and Washington. There were little foot bridges and we went across them, a wonder we hadn't broken them down. And then we climbed the hill where they said we could look over into the three states. Well I suddenly became very popular—I never had been popular. I didn't have pretty clothes, I was lucky to have anything to wear. Although I had better clothes that spring, I taught five months and I had better clothes than I'd ever had in my life, when I went to school. But I'd never been popular and then I couldn't spend money; I never had any money to spend. I was only popular because I could furnish a lot of data that they'd like awful well to have in some of the classes. And I was smart enough to make 'em pay for it, in various ways, not money. But I saw to it that I got the proper kind of pay all right. They couldn't snub me, I wasn't the kind of person they could snub.

SAM: You told her fortune that day?

WC: Yes. Miss Sylvester came and said, "I want to ask a special favor of you, and that's to tell my fortune again. But these are friends of mine, real good friends." She wanted Jack Butler to have her fortune told, and I said, "I will not tell Jack Butler's fortune." She said "Why not?" And I said, "I don't like her." And she said, "Well, you're frank about it." "Oh come on now, Willa! We're friends!" said Jack Butler. "Well, I'll not tell your fortune." And I said, "Listen to me, you don't want me to tell your fortune. You'll be sorry if I ever do." And she said "Why?" And I said, "Do you need to ask me
why?" She blushed, said "No." She was a neighbor to Stacys, and she was a mean one, and I knew about some of her meannesses. And I am sure there were a lot of 'em I didn't know anything about and wouldn't want to know. But she let me alone, scared her out. But I went ahead and told two or three, and first thing you know I was running a wholesale parlor. Sitting there, they got me a table. I said after awhile, "I'm not seeing any scenery at all, here I am sitting here telling fortunes. This is no fun." Well they were giving me stuff for lunch. You never saw such a sack. I was awful popular that day because I had so much lunch. (Lee chuckles.) I had a big sack of bananas and oranges and everything that they could bring up, you know, because they had them for sale on the ship. And candy bars—oh I had a great big paper sack just crammed full of stuff. And they all gave me that. And I timed them, and only told them a few minutes, you know, that was all. Finally I said "Well, I've got all the food I want—I don't want any more food." I started charging dimes.

So finally, the captain of the ship, he thought that was pretty smart. He was up there looking on, and all the men standing around that were on there wanted their fortunes told. But the captain, he said, "Well I'll tell ya. You tell my fortune, you tell my past, and if you hit one—no," he said, "if you hit two things that are true in my past, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you dinner, the best dinner that the ship serves," he said, "on the boat." Well that was fine, and so I undertook it, I was so sure I could tell him things from the past. I don't remember the captain's fortune, but I told him a number of things, and he said "Stop. Don't tell me any more about my past. I know about that, and it's bad enough and you're getting into it." He said, "Let's go to the future." So I told him a few things, and he said, "That's fine." He said, "You know, you come the nearest to hitting things of anybody that ever told my fortune." Well I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't
believe it! I could not believe such a thing! And he said it like he believed it and like he thought it was true. He asked me where I'd learned it, and here this was just that same year, the year I'd gone down there for that last quarter, I only had seven weeks left of it. And I'd never tried such a thing before.

So that's how I got to telling 'em. It was easy, it was simple, it was like falling off a log. And I don't think it was very smart, and I've never been proud of it. Well anyway I got my dollar back, you know, it wasn't long until I had ten dimes. I got my dollar back, and I'd been worried about spending that dollar. And sitting at the captain's table—that was the spot, even on the little old riverboat, the John Teel. I'll never forget the John Teel. You wanted the background of my telling, that was it, that's where it started. And then well, you know, I was always running into it, always running into it—always and always and always.

Then the last year in high school, I came back to Troy, and my folks talked about going to Michigan that year. I had a tender feeling toward my kid sisters, I always did have, I always loved 'em. There were three of 'em, they were a whole lot younger than I was. And they loved me and they liked to have me come home. And I felt sorry for 'em because they were having a hard time too. My folks weren't very sympathetic with little kids. They wanted to go back to Michigan but they hated to leave the children. Momma said she hated to go off and leave 'em and I'm sure she did. She thought I ought to stop school and stay home. "No," Poppa said, "No." I had started to school and he didn't believe in anybody backing out. He was so right! And I certainly agreed with him, and I said, "No, but I will do this: I'll stay in Troy and take high school. I can do that. I can take the subjects I need in high school this year, and then I'll come out on weekends and stay with the kids, I can come out every Friday night, go back Sunday night or Monday morning." And my brother
was big enough to take the buggy, he said, "Yes," he could take me in on Monday morning. So that was agreed, when they went to Michigan. They didn't go to Michigan. That trip blew up, I didn't think they'd go in the first place, but yet, it was just a possibility that they might, so that's how I happened to go to Troy. Well toward the end of the year, there was a man named Melton who was a very smart guy. And he was out West for his health, teaching by chance in Troy High School, and he did a lot for a lot of people there. Now there were some of his methods that were not good, I know that now from the viewpoint of a teacher, but then he did a lot for a lot of children, and put a lot of children on their feet. He was a doctor, he was a trained doctor, a physician that lost his health. He wasn't trained as a teacher so he did a lot of unorthodox teaching, but a lot of it was awful good teaching.

SAM: I'm curious, what was it that he did that was good, just to sum it up.

WC: He taught children instead of subjects. Some kids came in that couldn't do it, and so he would find out what they could do, and the first thing you knew, they were doing other things. And he'd have them doing work and maybe writing stuff about what they did. One boy, I remember, that came in from the hills up above Troy, he was a woodcutter's son, and he was a kind of a woodcutter. He was in trouble with a girl that had said he wrote crazy notes to her, and certainly obnoxious notes, but I don't think he had written them exactly. But anyway there was an awful fuss about it, and the girl's mother raised a big howl. And goodness only knows, I'm sure that it was fouled up. And he'd gotten expelled, that was from school the year before. I wasn't there and didn't know about what happened at that time, I was told and I could see what happened. Well Melton took him back into the school and gave him a course in bookkeeping, and he was good at it, an awful good bookkeeper. And he was such a good penman, my goodness he was a good penman. He taught for years at Lewiston, he used to be an English teacher. And Keith said, "My aunt said she knew you
when you went to school in Troy." He says "Who's your aunt?" He said "Well, she's Willa Carlson now." "Oh, Willa Cummings, yes!" said Lenis. "I should say I'll never forget her, she passed my Latin for me." (laughs.) He wasn't any good at Latin, that was a cinch, but he was good at a lot of other things.

SAM: OK, so what were you going to tell about the teacher.

W C: Well, he made a man out of Lenis, and Lenis became a good teacher. And Melton had a penmanship class.

SAM: There was something he did for you?

MLU: The fortune telling thing.

SAM: Oh, the fortune telling had something to do with it?

W C: Oh, that was a funny thing, yes. We had at the end of the year an exhibit. And then he taught plays during the year. He never did cast the plays the way I would have cast them, but you see I was at the beginning of my career in high school, I wasn't at the end after I'd had several courses in drama and all that stuff. And I had a flair for it in the beginning, but a flair doesn't give you the basic knowledge. Well, he taught me a lot about that, and I got a lot of things from the Meltons. Mrs. Melton taught algebra, and she taught me the easy way to get to algebra. So as far as that's concerned Mr. Melton was very good. I didn't suffer, nor a lot of my friends didn't suffer, but I thought there were some of the lower classes that he neglected terribly, and some of the basic things that he didn't seem to bother to teach, skimmed along on. But for anybody that really wanted to learn, why he seemed to have it. And he did teach children. He'd have 'em there, "You come in after school and I'll help you with this, and I'll help you with that." If they mentioned that they couldn't get along in something and they needed help, well Melton gave it to 'em, or Mrs. Melton. They were very good that way. As I say they taught children, they had a heart for children.

But this exhibit, we never had anything like that before, that I knew of,
in Troy. "For entertainment," he said, "we should have a fortune teller. That always takes well," he said, "at any kind of a school exhibit, and we should have a fortune teller." "Oh," they said, "well who could tell fortunes?" "Well," he said "we'd have to import a fortune teller." Well did he know where we could import a fortune teller? I remember Art Olson scratching his head, the school wag, scratching his head and saying (in a deep voice): "Well, Dr. Melton, do you know where we could import a fortune teller at the school? Well that would cost money wouldn't it? Who's got the money?" "No," Dr. Melton said, "I don't think so." He said, "I have friends who can tell fortunes, and we'll import one." "Well, my goodness, can we have our fortunes told?" "Oh sure," he said. Well, I was just as excited as all the rest of them, going to have a gypsy fortune teller at the school. I supposed that Mr. Melton knew gypsies. I had no idea that I was the imported fortune teller!

So I was staying overnight in town with Ellen Shoemaker, a friend of mine. And he came down to see us, Mr. and Mrs. Melton, and they told me I was to be the fortune teller, and that they wouldn't take no for an answer. "Why I can't tell fortunes," I said. "Oh yes you can! Some of the kids have told me how you've told fortunes." And so they drilled me on using a lot of Z's and making my language a jargon of fraction gypsy. "Iz zat zo?" And I really had it down pretty good. And I didn't forget it all day long. Afterward—he believed in hypnotism, and I wondered if he'd hypnotized me. I asked him if he had. I said, "I don't think I can be hypnotized, but did you hypnotize me so I could talk that stuff and remember it all day?" And he laughed. No, he hadn't hypnotized me. He had told me, and he said, "We don't have to hypnotize you to get you to learn something. All we need to do," he says, "is to suggest it and you get it." He said, "That's the way you learned fortune telling, you said. Well," he said, "all I did, I don't deny that I suggested it to you, but" he said, "I did not hypnotize you." I was afraid I'd been hypnotized, because
I could go through this routine.

Well they put up a wigwam and put me in it, so that I looked unnatural. I was in an unnatural setting and nearly smothered to death, of course. It got real hot those Maydays, it was early in May, and I got terribly warm in there. Mrs. Wallner had all the gay looking petticoats in town, at that time. They wore lots of petticoats, the women who dressed up around town, and wore long dresses of course. Kids wore just ordinary dresses, halfway between the knee and the shoetop, I guess. They didn't have this many skirts, they had one or two. But the women would go rustle their petticoats. And changeable silk was a very common thing to have, green and red together, and blue and green, and so on. And Mrs. Wallner had a lot of 'em. So they said, "Well we'll go to Mrs. Wallner and borrow her skirts." Mrs. Melton was the one that did all that, I don't think any other teacher but Mrs. Melton knew anything about it. And I was to dress at Ellen's apartment, not go around my place of residence, where I was living. I got dressed up, and I don't know how I got down to the depot, but I got down to the depot. And I came in early, and I was driven up in Earl Duthie's car. Mr. Melton and Earl Duthie—Earl had no idea what he was bringing up. (Lee laughs.) He was introduced to me as Mr. Duthie, and this Madame Zephronia, I think, some name with a Z.

(End of Side C)

Well I told everybody what he wanted to know. Oh they'd say, "Am I going to get married twice?" the old men would say, the businessmen: "Oh don't you see a second wife for me?" I didn't realize what I was saying, and I was sorry, oh so sorry afterwards, that I had said what I did to one man. He came in, and he was a businessman in town, the jeweler, and I didn't really realize that they considered he had a very termagent wife, although I knew that she was kind of a bossy woman. That's what we called women who did those things. And he
said, "Oh now come. Come, come, you haven't seen very many things I did yet."
Oh I took their palms, I didn't tell by cards. He said, "Don't you see some
nice young wife here for me? I understand you told so-and-so that he was going
to have a second wife, a nice young girl." "I didn't say that and we're not
here to discuss his fortune," I said. "That means bad luck to you. You'll
have a piece of very bad luck because of asking for that about your friend.
No," I said, "there is no such thing as a second wife in your hands," I said,
"one wife has been entirely too much for you!" Well, I didn't really realize
what I was saying to him, and I was very sorry afterwards. Because they just
 kidded him, and he never lived that down!

SAM: Were you recognized by many people that day?
W C: I wasn't recognized by anybody! And what made me feel kind of funny was that
I wasn't noticed as being absent from school! That really made me mad. I
thought I was more of a student than that. But toward evening several people
said, "What was the matter, Ellen, what was the matter?" "Oh," Ellen said,
"she had to go home today." "Out in the country?! Oh my goodness! Well we
wanted her for this and we wanted her for that." Suddenly when they realized
I was gone, they wanted me for a dozen things, but that was well toward evening
of the first day. We had it two days. And I went the second day dressed up
in that, and I was painted. I don't think I ever did get clean. I was painted
with ochre, brown ochre, and I was just as brown as anything you ever saw. No
Puerto Rican ever looked browner than I did. And then orange colored paint on
me, oh I was painted up, you never saw such a sight, and strings of beads. And
if they'd have noticed—well they didn't take anybody's beads connected with
the school. I think Mrs. Melton had a couple strands of beads that she could
take out, long beads. And Mrs. Wallner dug some, and they kept a store and
they had a lot of things. And she entered into it with Mrs. Melton, and was
so happy because she'd never been able to do much for school, because people
left her out of things.

MLU: Was this Bertyl Wallner's mother?

W C: Bertyl Wallner's mother. But Mrs. Melton had a lot of charm about her, and she brought in people who had never cooperated with anybody before. The Meltons were great people, and they did get cooperation from all kinds of people. Well too much cooperation from me. And I didn't dare wear any of my own clothes, because I'd worn all of 'em so much that they would have recognized them right away. Of course Ellen was all prepared to say, "Well, it isn't Willa's, because she took hers home with her."

MLU: Well now, when was it discovered in Troy that you could do this, 'cause I remember as a kid then you were always lined up in the booth to tell...

W C: Oh yes, lined up for every program that ever was, they always lined me up, and I used to do it. And never quite feeling right about it, and yet not hardly daring to refuse them. I'd done it for one, I'd have to do it for the next social gathering.

MLU: Well your booths always earned a lot of money.

W C: Yes! I earned lots of money. (Lee laughs.) So I said one time, "Well I'm not going to do it for a dime anymore, it'll have to be a quarter." Well that didn't make any difference. They said you can just as well charge a dollar, you can get a dollar.

SAM: People must have liked pretty well the job you did.

W C: I remember that Ed Ramsdale told Dad that I told him for ten cents—he'd had his fortune told by a lot of people, he'd even had paid out $5 to gypsies—and that I had told him more things that he knew were right and true than he'd gotten for $5. Huh, funny. Those were times when Dad thought it was all right, I should do it. He never objected to me doing it. He thought it was funny. I never told his. I used to laugh at him, and say, "Well I know my husband does believe in me, because he's never allowed me to tell his."
(Laugh.) I used to tease Dad, but he never objected.

And then, oh toward afternoon I said, "I want to clean up at noon, so only 'til noon. I'm out of town, friends are gonna pick me up." OK, so they smuggled me out the back way out of the schoolhouse, and we went down over the hill, and we could do that and keep out of sight of the school to go to Ellen's apartment. When I got to Ellen's apartment I got a bath, and she helped me clean up, and I cleaned up. And then I came in, I was here from the country, I just got in. "Why weren't you here yesterday?! You should have been here! We had a gypsy fortune teller and oh, she told me this and she told me that, and she told me this and she me that!"

All over the house, the kids, and they never knew me! (Lee laughs.) I thought that was the funniest thing! And so finally somebody told it. "Oh, were you the fortune teller!" "The very idea--no wonder you told me that! You knew all about it!" (Laugh.) Oh shucks! That was fun. I admit that I had fun at that, that was fun. And then after that, oh the Spanish Club and all the clubs. And then I'd been at parties, and they'd want me to tell a fortune with cards. And I remember once at Marvin Chaney's, and they were having a little dancing party, dancing games first and then they went into dancing. And everybody left off dancing and they came and stood around and crowded around to hear their fortunes. That's how much attraction it has for people. But it isn't good.

SAM: Well let's change the subject.

W C: Yes, let's do.

SAM: Would you tell--

W C: Yours? No!

SAM: No, no, I'm not asking you that!

W C: Well, I was afraid (chuckles).

SAM: Gosh, no. Would you tell the story again about Emil Watts' disappearance?

That's such a good story. That was his name, right?
Yes, you have the name right. Well I suppose you ought to have a real oldtimer who was in the dairy business tell you this story because they certainly ought to know it better than I, because I was just a little girl. I don't know how young I was, but I know that my husband was old enough to be in the posse that looked for him. He was very young, not over 15, but I think more like 13 or 14 so it was a long time ago. We should be able to get the dates of that from anybody who has any notes on that undertaking, the Pine Creek Creamery. And the farmers were coming in to sell their cream. And they got a big thing going, and had to get a buttermaker, so they got Emil Watts, a man named Emil Watts, a fairly young man. As I understand he was about 28. Mind you, this is all hearsay and hearsay at a later date. Of course I was an ardent listener because I was very much interested in the story. And I was little, but I was old enough to take an interest in it. So they got this buttermaker and I remember seeing him. We did not sell our cream to the creamery, the folks didn't, or the milk, and I didn't get to go to town very often. And then this little man, the buttermaker. I was very much interested in the buttermaker. I'd read a story too about a buttermaker from Denmark, which of course gave me revived interest in the story, in looking for the man. He was a very good looking men, and he had that fresh, clear colored complexion that comes from the Scandinavian countries. But he had black hair as I remember it, it looked black to me at least. He had dark hair and I think dark eyes, and he made a hit with the Swedish Congregation at the Lutheran Church and was taken up immediately. He sang in the choir, he was a good singer. All the young ladies were dancing in attendance upon him. But I don't believe that he ever sailed under any false colors; as I understand it he told them right from the start that he had a wife and two children, and he was bringing them over as quick as he could make money enough to bring them over. I don't believe that he tried to impersonate a young man or anything like that. But I remember that they said
there were different girls that really were crushed on this young man.

I don't know how long he was there, but it wasn't too long before they were working hard to get business from Coeur d'Alene. And they were expecting to hear from Coeur d'Alene any day, and they had an unusually large lot of cream that had come in, a big lot of butter to be made. And one morning, I believe it was early in May, that there was a skiff of snow fell early in the morning, quite a little snow, and the ground was covered with snow in Troy, as it usually is with those little skiffs of snow, but they're usually gone by noon. And the farmers were getting in, of course they began coming in at about seven o'clock from the country. They'd get milked and come in from seven to nine, that's when the milk was delivered. And he would empty these cans, he would empty them, and they were taken back by the farmers. And they expected to get them when they came back from the bank. They'd go up to the bank with their check from the week before, and did their other little errands in town. So they kept coming in that morning.

They didn't see him—but they had known of course that this was the day following the arrival of his wife and children. They had just come from Sweden. A girl and a boy, or at least there were two older children. And they went up on the hill to see her because he wasn't there. But the creamery was all steamed up and going, and the butter was being made and it was being more than made, it was being splashed around in the big vats. And everything was in order, everything had been done, and his cap was hanging there on the wall. Well that wasn't anything, because he had two or three of those caps he wore around the building for changes, white caps with a black bill, I think. But everybody had gone from all over, not only all the butter people and the Swedish people, his friends—Swedes and Norwegians in town, and there were lots of them, had gone to this big party, pound party. And everybody had sent things. My folks didn't go but they had sent something. As I remember they sent lard,
a bucket of lard.

SAM: This party was for them?

WC: It was for him and his wife. It was a goodwill thing, and it was done very often for people who were new in a community, or sometimes if they'd had had a misfortune or something of that sort, they'd give them. Sometimes it was called a pound party. I remember the people out on American Ridge had said a pound party, and somebody took in from there, and everybody in a community contributed something. Now they didn't mean just one pound, but by the pound— they measured out something in pounds. Someone sent a sack of potatoes, and a sack of this and that in the way of vegetables. And you know, they could bring them enough food to run them for months' supply. And they took lots of things, she just had all kinds of food there. The crowd didn't break up early, and then finally they got to thinking they might be staying too late. So they hadn't broken up very early; I don't remember how late it was when they all left, but it seems to me it was around midnight.

They said "Well let's go up and see if he's still at home, he might have come down and got the creamery going and went back up home." They thought that was possible, went up for breakfast. So they went up to see, and she was getting up or had gotten up. And she said, "No," he hadn't come back, but that he had told her the night before when they retired, he said, "Now don't you get up in the morning. I'll get up, I always do. I go down to the creamery and get my breakfast down there. I have a package of rolls and I have oh some coffee. My coffee pot is there and I make my coffee there every morning. That's where I always eat my breakfast, and I can eat there one more morning. It won't hurt anything at all, and you don't have to get up, and then I'll come up later. So don't you get up. You just sleep as late as you want to, and rest as much as you can, and don't get up 'till the kids make you." So she hadn't gotten up early, and she said she wondered at him not coming, but she
didn't really expect him 'till lunch, and she thought probably he'd gotten awful busy. He'd made the remark that there'd probably be a lot to do.

Well, he wasn't there. S. A. Anderson, the cashier at the bank, who had a great deal to do—he was also an official of the creamery board. Because he was cashier of the bank, he was the treasurer of a lot of societies and different things like that and he was a very popular man in town anyway. He held positions in this, that and the other thing all over town. His name figures very prominently when oldtimers get to talking about Troy, they remember S. A. Anderson. So he went down to the creamery, and several different people who were there, young people who were in that posse. And then I remember people telling that went in to look, that he sat down in the chair occupied by Watts, the manager's chair, and put the cap on, and made a few funny remarks, because he was a kind of a village wag, who could always adlib and say funny things, humorous, of sorts. He made some remark that other people thought was funny afterward, about Emil Watts, who was gone.

But they had such a roaring fire built up that the farmers had wondered why he had such a terribly hot fire. And some of 'em had gone in and found that he wasn't anywhere around the creamery, because they really got worried about the fire. It was a terribly hot fire, and they remembered all this. And when the fire died down, they even sifted the ashes looking for him. They looked around, and someone happened to think, "Well, did you see any tracks? Did you see any tracks going over to the depot?" Well of course by that time, everybody and his dog had walked around the creamery looking for him in vain, looking here, there and everywhere, and people had gone over to the depot. And when they inquired over at the station no, nobody had gone on the train. Nobody had bought a ticket and gone on the train. But they did remember that there was an early freight, and that early freight train goes up all the time. (I think we still have it—I don't know that it goes every day now, but in the
busy season when they're hauling grain and so on, we have that freight, and 
I hear it whistling sometimes yet.) That freight train, early in the morning,
it's about 4:30 I think it goes up. And they used to have this big water 
tank right down below the railroad station, and that always stopped and got 
water after it had puffed up the canyon from Kendrick. So they thought about 
that, that he might have gotten on the freight. But that was getting later in 
the day, 10 o'clock and later, and those questions had been asked. And I 
reasked them, but of course I wasn't heard--too small (chuckles). They say 
they telephoned up the line and telegraphed up the line too, they said to 
Palouse; I don't remember what they said, but anyway they got no results. 
And they had examined the caboose, and the people who were in the caboose hadn't 
seen anybody come on and nobody get off. You know the hobos, they used to 
always ride the caboose. They couldn't get any word there. And they had 
the train searched, I believe they said at Oaksdale, thinking that perhaps he 
might have walked out of town to get a train, so he wouldn't have to go at 
the home station. But he'd had been there to stock up that creamery, to get 
the creamery going early in the morning, so his presence was felt there. And 
also he had opened a bill of a letter from the company at Coeur d'Alene from 
whom they were expecting a letter giving them the order. And he had it there, 
and that was to be given to S. A. Anderson. They'd got the order for the 
butter that morning, and he'd opened it, it had been opened and read. And they 
knew he would've rejoiced over that. They said they sifted the ashes to make 
sure that there were no human bones in there.

SAM: You said they sent out a posse after him too?

WC: Afterwards. After the horse was stolen, as the old saying goes. My husband 
went the next day. They went up and down the canyon between Troy and Kendrick. 
There're lots of hiding places in there. My husband was with 'em and he said 
that oh there were a lot of people, just a lot of people went on that searching
party. And they searched up and down the canyon for him. Of course I never met Mrs. Watts. I was too young to be considered, I was just interested, and was I interested! Goodness, I drank up everything I heard. But no comment that I made was (chuckles) ever accepted as being anything. But I remember they said that his wife said (His wife or widow, whatever she was) that for awhile she thought, when would he come home, and wouldn't they find him and bring him home, and now--this was several days afterward and they were still looking for him--she said now she was hoping he wouldn't come home, because she didn't know what condition he would be in. She was afraid for some reason. I often wondered about that. I don't know how much that comment might of meant. You know, as a matter of fact, it might of meant a lot of things. It might of meant that she was afraid he was mentally ill.

SAM: What kind of an idea did you have at the time? Was it a total mystery to you, or did you have an idea yourself of what might've happened?

W C: Total mystery. It was a total mystery, except that I thought he got away. I always thought he was smart and got away.

SAM: The mystery then is, why bring his wife out from--?

W C: Why bring his wife and children? I've asked that. My husband and I have gone over it too. He was interested in that. His idea there was that well, he might have thought this--that she'd be over here and helpless, that if she were in Sweden, they'd find him. They're like the Canadian Mounties, they get their man, the authorities. And they're so well registered over there when they leave, they know who they're looking for.

SAM: You mean, they would find him over in this country?

W C: Well, my husband thought so, and he was a Swede.

SAM: Now what was the business about the tracks?

W C: Well the tracks were all too tramped over and tramped around the building.

And there had been some tracks going toward the railroad station, but the snow
was melting by that time, just a skiff of late spring snows, and by 11 o'clock, they were probably nearly all gone. There was still snow up against the buildings, there were traces of the snow, but not too much. There were tracks, but there were several people that went to work that direction from that other side of town, they went across there, and there was traffic both ways in that path that went past the creamery. There wasn't enough left of the tracks to be able to tell anything.

SAM: And what happened to her? You said she couldn't speak English at the time?

W C: She didn't know much English, I guess she knew a few words. Well S. A. Anderson has so much to do with everything. And it is not strange, at one time I was looking at it from the standpoint of a little girl that didn't know everything, and didn't know about conventions and rules and laws and all that, I thought there must be a mystery connected with S. A. Anderson. But there wasn't, and when I got to thinking it over, and got older and saw how it was, it was only natural she'd go to him. He was at the bank, he had everything to say about his money, he knew about how much money he had. Oh by the way, he didn't take a dollar of his money, he hadn't withdrawn a cent. And he'd been banking regularly. But he had taken money to send to her to get tickets to come over. But he'd been putting it in since then, he hadn't taken out an extra dollar. So it was a mystery any way you look at it!

SAM: Did they seem to the people to be very close and happy when they got together at the pound party?

W C: Nobody reported anything wrong there. If any of those gossips had seen anything, I think they would have said it, and it would have come down through the ages. And my husband was old enough to hear those things, and his mother had been at the party. And she thought she was a good looking woman and she'd talked to her at the party. Well, you asked me a question about what became of her. S. A. Anderson took her to Spokane and told her he'd get her employment,
I'm sure. And I never did find out what had happened to her for many years, and then S. A. Anderson's niece, Alma Anderson, stayed with me one winter, took care of my youngsters when I taught school out in the country. (I went back to American Ridge to teach school while my husband was trying to make the transfer from Kooskia where we'd lived for eleven years over to Burnt Ridge to his father's place with his cattle, and it took a long time. In the meantime we had to live, and I took a school and got a little house over there, and I got Alma to stay with us.)

(End of Side D)

Alma was about the age of my children, so you see she didn't know anything about them herself personally. But she said, "Well Uncle S. A. took her to Spokane to look out for her, and got her a job." She thought it was with a man housekeeping, where she could keep her children. And she worked at that for awhile, and then she did something else, she got another job after a few years. And then she married someone in the church up there, a countryman.

SAM: She stayed around Spokane?

W C: Um-hm, stayed around Spokane, lived up there as far as Alma knows.

SAM: When I told Laura, my wife, a little bit of the story, she wondered if it wouldn't have been possible that if this guy had been fallen for by some of the girls around that really had a crush on him, maybe one of their boys might have wanted to get even with him.

W C: And did away with him?

SAM: That was one thing she could think of.

W C: Well, I don't think I ever thought of that. Yes, the theory of foul play entered into it. They got a man, they got an expert—I don't know I never did know—but the coroner brought down somebody from Moscow that sifted the ashes. They suspected foul play. And that booming hot fire, they didn't
think he would have gone off and left the drafts open and everything to leave such a horrible fire. And they never did explain that fire. I have always wondered. I even read someplace that that's not a perfect criterion, that things can be consumed.

SAM: Did people remember it for long afterwards, did it continue to be a mystery around Troy?

W C: Oh yes, for a long, long time. I married in June of 1917—I just don't know what year that was he--

SAM: Well you said that the creamery didn't last for long after that, is that right?

W C: No it didn't, it went to pieces, it fell apart. And it was just going good! Naturally a new enterprise wouldn't have been paying off well yet, so soon. But they didn't have a buttermaker, and I guess that experience had kind of soured them maybe, I don't know. I couldn't tell you about how the people felt, because if I'd a been a little bigger, I'd've probably tried to get into their minds, and I could tell more about what they were thinking. But I did try to cudgel my husband's brains, and then his father talked freely about it, and he was a very intelligent man, and of course he liked to say "No foolishness about me." He did talk about that, and he was mystified by it completely. Said he had several conversations with Emil and he considered him very intelligent. And they speculated, and even after I was married, I always liked to bring it up when I could. I don't mean we sat around and talked about the Emil Watts story, but every now and then in a conversation out there it came up, and different comments would be made. Paul's father was very fertile in imagination and theories, and he was down there, and he thought it was foul play at first. And he was one of the ones that insisted that the ashes be sifted. And he said "Oh shock!" That was one of his words, he didn't say "shucks." "Oh shock! Of course they ought to sift the ashes but," he said, "they should have gotten that fire down right away, as soon as they
could, cooled off that fire, and gotten in there before it had a chance to
burn out everything." And I think that Paul's father thought that Emil Watts
was burned up in that furnace.

SAM: If he got away it seems like the perfect escape, because you would think
if someone was getting out, he would do something like take his money out
of the bank or something like that.

W C: Yes! Of course S. A. had no way of knowing. He hadn't been in Troy too
awful long, and he wouldn't have know how big a savings he might have had
with him. He might have had savings enough to make this little getaway.

SAM: You said he was Danish, came from Denmark? Is that correct?

W C: Well, he'd been educated, and you know, Denmark was the famous school for
dairymen, buttermakers, used to be, I remember that. Of course I lived in a
Scandinavian area and I heard a lot about it, and I associated it with that.
I wouldn't say he was a Dane, but it did seem to me that he wasn't entirely
Swedish, that he might have been Swedish and Dane, so he was educated in
Denmark, but that he had gone to that school.

SAM: And you said that they sent all the way to Minneapolis from Troy to get him?

W C: Yes, yes, they got him from Minneapolis.

SAM: I should wake up Lee and we should get going, because it's getting late.

W C: I suppose it is. As I say, time means nothing to me...

SAM: Well, I can come back, and I will come back.