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with Sam Schrager

May 9, 1975
II. Transcript
SAM SCHRAKER: Whether it's changed more here or in Norway, where you came from, in the last fifty years?

ED RAMSDALE: Oh, it's changing there too. It's following, following up what changes we had here. But the changes come here first and then they follow back there, that's about it. But they've changed an awful lot in the last, well, I was over there in 1948 and I was over there again last summer. And it's changed an awful lot in those years. That'd be twenty-seven years, you know, it doesn't seem like that long. But it's really changed a lot in that time. Well, at that time there wasn't hardly any private owned automobiles. They had buses, you know, passenger buses that transported people, you know from around the country and into towns and shopping places. Now pretty near everybody got their own automobiles, same as we have here. Another thing, in the homesthey didn't have any refrigeration or like automatic washers and deep freeze and refrigerators and all that. They didn't have them back there then in '48. Well, there might have been a few here and there maybe, but very few among the people in the country, you know. Now they all got 'em, yep.

SAM: Are there fewer people farming, fewer people in the country now than there were?

E R: Not many have left the farms in the country. There's a lot of them workin now. They have jobs but still they stay in the country and they go to town. They have a lot of regular buses that haul the laborers, labor men
They got the buses there so most of em. . . Of course it's different terrain there, you know, most of the country there is valleys. People live in the valleys. Then there's mountains on each side. Well, they got a main road up through that valley and them valleys are not wide, they're narrow. Then they got that main road there and everybody come in for that. And the buses go on that main road so you can leave your home there in the morning if you're going to work or even going to school. You take that bus and then it brings you back in the evening, y'know. School kids ride on them too. Which is a real good arrangement they have there, good transportation for people. But now it's gettin like here, you know, with their own cars. The bus will go there and still they go in their car. (chuckles)

SAM: So what do you think, it changed more here in the last twenty-five years or there, or can you compare em?

E R: Well, I think it actually changed a little more over there in the last twenty-five years than it has here. The changes here come along earlier, you know. Well, like automobiles, refrigeration, modern homes and all that. It came here, you know, a long time ago. And they didn't have it over there. They got this, you know, in the last twenty-five, thirty years.

SAM: I wanted to ask you about Oldest. Is that what you call it? The law of inheritance.

E R: Oh the Oldest

SAM: Yeah. You didn't explain that to me really before.

E R: Well, the Oldest, you know, that is if you have a farm back there, why the oldest boy has the right to the farm ahead of the other children. That's what they call an Oldest. If he owns the farm, why he gets it and the others can't get it.

SAM: That's a law?

E R: That's a law. That's an old English law. Or if there's no boys then the oldest
girl has the oldest, you know, she can claim the farm ahead of the other kids, see.

SAM: So the father and mother don't have the right if they wanted to give it to the second kid they couldn't?

ER: No. No, if they did, the oldest boy, if he wanted to he could come in and take it away from him. The way they do that, it happens once in a while that well, maybe at one time maybe none of the kids want the farm, you know they don't want to farm. So maybe it's sold to some outsider, you know, which don't happen very often back there. Well then later on if this oldest boy then decide, "Oh, yeah, I made a mistake, I should have held on to my farm." Well, he can actually go back and claim it. The way they do that, they get appraisals and they appraise that farm and then this boy with the oldest wants it, why he gotta pay that price and he can take the farm away from that other guy. Yep, it happens once in a while.

SAM: Can the farm be divided into pieces or does it have to all stay in one piece?

ER: Well, they do divide em up sometimes, quite a bit, yeah. Like if they have a pretty good-sized farm maybe then and there's a couple of boys like to farm, both of em, sometimes maybe they'd divide em.

SAM: And they agree, they make an agreement.

ER: Yeah, make an agreement, they divide em. Most of that country back there isn't actually ... land there isn't so that you can make a big farm and stuff like that. It's kind of patches, you know, small operations. Where I came from in the western part of Norway, you get over in the eastern part next to Sweden then you get into bigger farms, you know, more open country. But the western part and all along the coastal area there, why it's small farms and valleys and lots of mountains, you know, them fiords go way back in. And they have a little patch here and there that they cleared, you know, people live on em.
SAM: Well, did Oldsret have much to do with why people would leave Norway and come to America because they couldn't get a farm by themselves?

ER: Oh, I really don't know if it has much to do with that or what.

SAM: I wanted to ask you about history in school. When you went to school did you study history of Norway? Did they teach you...?

ER: Oh yeah, we had history. We had history of the world and you know, well, we actually had pretty good schools back there even when I went to school there. Well, we had history and we had Bible history, and catechism. We had religion taught in school there you know, everyday, you know, we had an hour or two of. And we had lessons we had to learn by heart. When we came to school, oh everyone has to stand up and recite our lessons in catechism and Bible history.

SAM: Well, what I was thinking is the history of Norway goes back so far compared to the history of this country. If you studied that as a kid they must have been teaching you way back around the year 1000 or something like that?

ER: Oh yeah, oh yeah. The year 1000, yes. Like when the religion came into Norway, and that was about the year 1000. They had a king there and he was religious. And they called him Olaf. Holy Olaf was his name. He was the one that brought the religion into Norway. For some way or another he was over in England quite a lot, you know, then he came back to Norway.

SAM: What was the religion before it was Christianity?

ER: Well, they believed in like Thor, you know. They thought there was a god like thunder and lightning, Thor. (Chuckles)

SAM: Was that the Norsemen?

ER: Yeah.

SAM: Are they from Norway?

ER: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah, they called it Thor, you know, and they believe there was a god up there, you know. I seen a picture of Thor, you know, that throws the
thunder and lightening. And I guess they had some. . .I really, really
don't remember too much about that.

SAM: Was everybody Norwegian in the area where you lived or were there other
cultural groups too, was everybody Norwegian?

E R: No, everybody was Norwegians, yeah them days. Pretty much yet. Well,
maybe in the cities you get a few outside countries and then the people
come in, but. And then in the country they're all. . . once in a while
there may be a Swede or a Dane, Finn, something like that, pretty straight,
you know, really very straight.

SAM: One thing I was wondering, what was the difference between Norwegians and
Swedish people as cultural differences. Are they about the same or is there
much difference between the two peoples?

E R: Oh, it's about the same, I'd say about the same, yeah. Their languages is
quite a bit alike so everybody can make out, you know. It's a difference
in the language but I can understand Swedish and Danish. Well, I don't know;
the trouble there, you know, in the early days they always had wars among
themselves: Swedes, the Norwegians, and the Danes, you know. So they hated each
other on account of these wars, didn't get along at all, you know. Well, like
even in Troy, you know, when I came here they had two churches—they had
a Norwegian Lutheran and a Swedish Lutheran. They didn't get along enough
to go to the same church.(chuckles) Yeah.

SAM: Well what about the Norwegian and Swedish communities did they get together
very much or did they stick to themselves?

E R: Oh, I think maybe along the borders there, you know people went back and forth there,
yeah.

SAM: Well wasn't most of the social life around the church, most of it?

E R: Yeah, that's right, yeah. Well, when I was a kid back there we had what they
we had what they called Umganslag, you know, that was a name for young people, you know. And we had meetings, you know, doings. And then we had another organization, the temperance organization was pretty strong back there when I left, you know. I belonged to that, but you know, temperance, you wasn't allowed to taste any liquor or anything. That was quite an organization, we had a lot of activities in that.

SAM: Well, what about here? Were most Swedish and Norwegian people pretty religious here?

ER: Well yeah, used to be, quite a bit, yeah, uh huh. Everybody went to church, belonged to the church.

SAM: Were Nick and John?

ER: Oh yeah, they went to church every Sunday, yeah. They were really pretty strict on that, you know. I wouldn't say that they were really so religious, but they went to church every Sunday. (Chuckles) Yeah.

SAM: So you probably went too when you were...

ER: Oh, they insisted that I went, yeah. Well, they had a Methodist church down here, you know, below Clem's there. Lester Clem's, you know where he lives down on the highway, don'tcha? Right below there down at the corner, on the flat there, they used to have a Methodist church. And that was kind of a neighborhood church here. Most of them around here were Methodists then, you know. And everybody went down there to that Methodist church. And so I just started goin down there too, you know. Of course I got to know some of the younger people around here Nick and John, they didn't think I should do that. They said you better stay with the Lutheran church, you know, and they didn't think I should go down there. But I used to go down. We used to have choir; I joined the choir down there. And we used to have choir practice sometimes in the evenings, and I used to walk right across the field down there, it's just a little ways across the field there, you know down at the church.
SAM: Well, where did you have to go to go to the Lutheran church, into town?
E R: Oh, yeah, yeah, into Troy. It used to set right there by Frank Brocke's house, where he built that green house there now. That's where the Lutheran church set when I came here, the Norwegian Lutheran church.
SAM: Were there holidays that were Norwegian holidays that were any different from the American?
E R: Oh, yeah, well at Christmastime we used to have three holidays back there. And Easter, you had three holidays, and Good Friday and Thursday both. That was two holidays that we had back there. And when we first come over here, why we kept them holidays for a while and finally we kind of drifted away, I guess.
SAM: When the kids were having entertainment, did they dance or have games they played?
E R: No, they played games. No, the parents around here, they didn't believe in dancing. They thought that was a sin, you know, to dance. But we played games which they thought was all right.
SAM: What kinds of games would...?
E R: Oh, like "Skip to my Lou" and "Three-Deep."
SAM: What's that?
E R: And the last couple out you know, and stuff like that. Well, you form-- "Three Deep," oh you never played that? (Chuckles) Well, that was a game, you formed a circle, you know, so you have two of em, one behind the other, standing all around this circle. Well, there was one, you know, there was a tag and there was one that was three, see. Well, then this one that was tryin to catch the third fellow, you tagged him, y'know, you were tryin to catch him. If there was three there you run over there and try to tap the third one behind on the back, see. And then he was it, then he'd be the one that tagged around and try to catch the other one. So they called it "Three-Deep."
SAM: There was only one person that was it', right?
E R: Yeah.
SAM: And he could pick any of the two and try to get at the one behind.

E R: Yeah, uh huh, that's it.

SAM: That sounds like it could be a lot of fun.

E R: It was kind of fun, good game, yeah.

And then "The Last Couple Out," you've played that, haven't you?

SAM: No, no, this is before my time, this "Last Couple Out?"

E R: Well, that was really an outside game, though, but it was played a lot. There'd be a boy and a girl, you know, you'd be lined up two and two, boys and girl right behind the other one. Well, then there was one one up in front that was trying to catch, last couple out, they had to run out, see. One on each side'd come up, and then this guy was trying to catch one of them, then he got this partner and would step up in front, you see. Well, then there was another guy, then there was the last couple behind again that had to run out, you know. They just kept on that way.

SAM: It was always the last couple that had to run?

E R: Yeah, the last couple.

SAM: Ah all you had to do was catch either one of them?

E R: Yeah, um hum. And then the pair one of them would be alone, see. He'd catch one of them would be alone, see. He'd catch one of those pairs or one of em and then that'd be alone so he was the one that had to catch the next.

SAM: That's funny, I never played anything like that.

E R: Haven't you? You've never heard of that?

SAM: I've heard of "Skip to my Lou," but then that's probably the song that I'm...

E R: Yeah, there's a song with that one, you know: "Skip, skip, skip to my Lou, my darling." (Chuckles) Yeah. Oh, we played them back in the old country too, them games.

SAM: Same games?
ER: Same games, yeah. We had them back there too. Like "Three-Deep" and "Last Couple Out" and I don't know, there was a few more. We had quite a lot of games.

SAM: Did the kids have much time to spend together in this country? Did you have a lot of time or was it all work and not much play?

ER: Well, it was Sundays, you know, holidays. Saturday nights we generally had, well we had literary down in the schoolhouse here in the wintertime. And we had plays.

SAM: Plays too?

ER: Oh yeah, we had quite a lot of plays.

SAM: I didn't know that.

ER: Oh yeah and the literary. Yeah, I was in plays too, quite a bit around here and we'd show it in the schoolhouse on some Saturday nights.

SAM: Would they be in English or in Norwegian?

ER: Oh yeah, in English, yeah. I used to get—well I suppose I kinda talked broken and maybe they had some plays where there was parts for someone like an Irish or something, kind of a little different brogue, you know. And they generally give them to me, you know. (Chuckles) Yeah.

SAM: I wonder where the plays came from? Do you remember what kind they were?

ER: Oh, no I really don't, no.

SAM: Yeah, that sounds interesting. It sounds like it was all entertaining yourself and nowadays it's the opposite.

ER: We entertained ourselves and we had home entertainments, you know. We never went to town them days, I mean for taking anything in town, we always had country around here, you know. So we should have parties, you know, house parties, go party from house to house and all the time. We had a lot of that. Some winters.

SAM: What would a house party be? They'd give eats and stuff that?

ER: Yeah, we had lunch and then we'd play games, and maybe sometimes play—we
didn't--cards was another thing, you know, they didn't believe in so
they had other card games, you know, besides the regular playin cards,
played sometimes, you know.

SAM: You mean a special kind of cards?

E R: Yeah, yeah. Games with special kind of cards, yeah. No, they didn't believe
in the regular playin cards you played.

SAM: What did you use town for? What did people do when they'd go to Troy?

E R: Oh, shopping mostly. You know everybody in them days would go to town on Saturdays.
Pretty near all the farmers would go to town on Saturdays, and there'd be pretty
big crowds in town on Saturdays because that's when everybody managed to go to
town. They'd go in with their horses. Maybe they took in eggs, you know, they
had cream cans, butter and stuff like that. They always had something to sell
them days, you know, the farmers. And they'd bring back groceries. A lot of em
you know, they kinda broke even on that. They'd take in enough cream and
eggs and stuff to pay for the groceries, yep. Everybody had chickens, you know,
them days, a few milk cows. Everybody milked cows. Some of em would try
to sell the cream and others maybe sell the butter to the stores, or trade em
for groceries.

SAM: What kind of groceries would people buy? What would they need that they couldn't
grow on their homesteads?

E R: Oh, they didn't buy much them days: sugar and coffee and flour, everybody
baked their own bread. They didn't actually buy much in the grocery stores
them days, you know. Everybody put up their own meat. I remember we used to
butcher, most of the farmers maybe butcher four or five or six hogs in the
fall. And they cure em, sugar cure them. Put em by and then smoke it;
it'd keep. And they used to can a lot of beef, you know. Butcher, then you
had beef then, and can most of that. And like hamburger, they ground a lot
of that and they used to put it down in big stone jars and then
lard on the top to cover it and it would keep. And of course, they'd salt it and pepper and you know, cure it with salt and stuff. And it would keep a long time. That canned meat, I really liked that and I still like that, really good.

SAM: Would they do that together—would they have the butcher bees?

E R: Yeah, they used to kind of double up when they done that, you know, yep. And then we canned a lot of fruits and stuff too, you know.

SAM: Do you remember the merchandise stores in Troy, or general stores?

E R: Oh yeah. Well, they had one there. There was Anderson's grocery store, and Tom Christian had a grocery store in Troy when I came here. And then, Butcher Johnson, he had a butcher shop in Troy when I came here.

SAM: I've heard about him.

E R: Yeah.

SAM: He was a funny guy.

E R: Yeah. (Chuckles) And then a little later, you know, they got—well Olson and Johnson were there too when I came. That was a kind of a department store. They had groceries and they had clothes and they had hardware, and that's the Olson and Johnson store. Big store, that's a school bus garage now. Yes, that was a big store when I came here. That's the first store I stepped into when I came to Troy, Olson and Johnson store, I remember that.

SAM: Is that when you were looking for a way out here?

E R: Yeah, this Alfred Sundell, he's the one I met down by the depot there, and he took me up in town. And he was kinda lookin for somebody from out here, you know, maybe I'd get a ride out. And he found Mushles there. So I got a ride out with Mushles in a hack. He took me right up here to Nick and John's. (Chuckles). Yeah.

SAM: So people who did probably socialize a lot in Troy when they were there on Saturday.
E R: Oh yeah. Oh that was the meeting days you know. Everybody visit on the street and they talk, most of the language there was Scandinavian language on Saturdays down on the street when I came here, yeah. Yeah, that's it, you know, that's the reason why everybody went to town on Saturdays and everybody meet. And they talk and visit and do a little shoppin.

SAM: What about places to sit down inside like they got today.

E R: Well, they had two pool halls there where they could play pool and where they served a little lunch and soft drinks. Christy was one of em, Christy Brothers. That's where the Troy Tavern is now. They didn't have no liquor there in Troy when I came here--no beer or no liquor. But they had two pool halls--loafing places. You could go in there and buy a cup of coffee, a little lunch or you could sit around and play pool or play cards, they had card tables in there. And that's where we a lot of times, you know, of it's cold out and we would go in there and sit down and then have a cup of coffee, a little lunch or somethin'. Then they had a hotel there on the corner where Norm is now and that's a hotel, restaurant there.

SAM: Did they have movies when you came?

E R: Yeah, part of the time, not all of the time, but they had movies there when I came. The movie was across the street, up in that area where the clinic is now or Floyd's Service Station. In that area there was a movie there.

SAM: Were they very popular then or...?

E R: Oh yeah, quite popular, yeah. Then they had a bowling alley for a while too, but that didn't last long, just for a short time there. But Troy was actually more active then than it is now. You know, I mean there was more business places than they have now, two or three. Three grocery stores, now we only have one. And of course now they've got the beer parlors.

(End of Side A)
ER: ... and they'd stay in the hotel, maybe overnight.

SAM: The salesmen?

ER: Oh yeah. Pretty near all them, you know, they'd travel on the train between the towns and they probably stay in town overnight, see. And they had a pretty good restaurant there.

SAM: There aren't anymore salesmen to speak of like there used to be, I guess. You don't...

ER: Well, they still have em all right. But of course, they don't stay very long. They come in their car, you know, and come in town for an hour and they go on. And then before you come into town on the train, you had to wait until the next day until you could get to the next town on the train. Couldn't take off when you wanted to, they had to take off when the train left. That made a lot of difference.

SAM: I'll bet the depot was a pretty busy place.

ER: Oh, it was, it was. A lot of people traveling on the passenger trains there then. Well, that was about the only way to get around, you know, was the train. You were going to go someplace, why, you went on the train. They had no buses. Like to Spokane, let me see, I don't know how many passenger trains they had. I think they had two of em, I don't know. There used to be one come in there around noon, then the other one about five o'clock. I forgot whether you could go up to Spokane and back the same day or what, I don't think you could. I think if you went to Spokane you had to stay overnight and come back the next day.

SAM: Have you been on that train down to Lewiston?

ER: Oh yeah.

SAM: People don't ride on that anymore. Was that a nice trip through the canyon there, goin down the canyon?
E R: Yeah, it was a pretty nice trip. Oh yeah, I went on the train lots of times to Lewiston and Spokane. In fact I've ridden quite a lot on the train, you know, different places. Coast, I used to go down to the coast quite often on the train.

SAM: I wanted to ask you about those farming years, when you were early farming. You told me that the first couple years there you worked out. And after that you started renting.

E R: Yeah.

SAM: And, now the first place you rented was where, near Clem's?

E R: Yeah, the first place I rented was that forty acres that Lester Clem's lives on now. There was an old house down there just about where Lester Clem's house sets now that I stayed in, lived there then. I lived there for, I don't know, one year or two years, I guess it was. And I farmed that. That was the first farming I done on my own was on that forty there.

SAM: What did it take for you to farm that place, to put in a crop and harvest it in those days, what did you need and how did you do it?

E R: Well, what I done there, and I bought the team of horses and a walkin plow, and I bought a couple sections of harrows. I put that forty all in beans the first year. But I hired the bean planting done, I didn't have a bean planter so I hired this guy over there by the name of George Strohm, and I hired him to plant my beans there. Remember, you know, I had a team, they didn't match too well, kind of a bay mare and a younger colt, kind of a work horse. So George he wanted to trade horses with me, you know. He had one, a bay one just like the one I had, and he said, "They'll make you a nice matched team. You better trade me that other one for my bay and you'll have a nice matched team." So it ended up, I traded with him. (Chuckles) by the time he got through plantin the beans. But I had five hundred dollars saved up, I remember that when I started farmin. And I bought them horses
and I had to buy some hay. And I bought em in the fall of the year, and I plowed that with that \textit{foot plow} that fall. And then I bought some oats and then I had to buy some seed, you know, next spring, bean seed. And then of course I had to live, you know. But Olson and Johnson down there, they agreed to carry me, you know, the groceries in the spring till in the fall when I could sell, you know, have them beans harvested and sold. So I got the groceries on time. But I remember by harvest time the next fall, why my five hundred was all gone. I didn't have any money left. But when I sold the beans there, you know, I got my five hundred back, so I had that back then. I might have sold a little bit more. Well, there was expenses, but I remember that I had got enough out of that bean crop so I had my five hundred back. Which wasn't too bad, see.

SAM: No, in one year that sounds good.

E R: No, of course, I worked out too a little in harvest then \textit{which} we used to trade work too you know, quite a bit them days. Like in thrashing, one guy helped the other one. They exchanged work back and forth to hold down the overhead of hiring, some of that done.

SAM: \textit{then} what happened after that?

E R: Well, then the next year I farmed that and then I got some more land from back Nick back in there, you know, and he let me have a field that I put in beans too. So that went pretty good, and then, this was in about 1915, '16, and that next fall the bean prices went up quite a bit. That was about the time the First World War started over in Europe, you know. So the prices on the farm products here went up quite a little. So I don't remember exactly, but I know I done pretty good, I don't quite a bit better that year, better than if I'd a worked for wages, you know, quite a bit better. Well, I helped Nick too up here, I worked a forty for him and then he let me use some of
his horses, you know, once in a while. I actually didn't buy more horses. And we exchanged. I worked for him a few days and then got to use his horses there.

SAM: Did you keep expanding from then?

E R: Yeah, I'd plant a little more land and I got a little more land from Nick, here. And then there was a fellah name of Walker over here, I rented some from him there one year. And so I farmed a little bigger and done a little better. 

Farming was pretty good then for them few years in there. Well, I'll say up until about 1918, '19 in there, y'know. Oh from '16 up to '19--1919 was pretty good farming, good prices. And beans, oh one fall went up to about eleven, twelve cents which was unheard of. Wheat was up about two and a half, you know, which was pretty good prices them days, you know. So it was pretty good, but then about 1920, then we got the crash there, you know. And the bottom went out of the prices, y'know. Beans down to three cents, wheat down to a dollar, (Chuckles), they just tumbled right down. And from then on, y'know, it was pretty tough going in farming for many, many years. Then you got in the thirties, then they got still worse, you know.

SAM: Well, what happened all of a sudden, was it the end of the war or what?

E R: End of the war, it was it. Well, the production I suppose, the high prices were high and everybody, you know, natural. And then the war ended and then we lost foreign markets, y'know and the prices just tumbled. I remember I took a trip back to Norway in 1920. And I remember comin back, I came back here in the fall. I went over there in May and I came back here in November. And I remember coming on the train across and the wheat was droppin, it was up to two and a half. By the time I got to Troy it was a dollar. Yep, I remember that, you'd see it in the paper every day, it was dropping. Beans was down to I think three, three and a half cents.

SAM: Did many people get hurt around here, in the pinch?

E R: Yeah, yeah I know some guys, you know, that had a hundred and sixty acres, had
it paid for and they wanted to get big and they buy some more land, and they mortgaged everything they had to buy this land and lost it all, some guys did, yep.

SAM: But you decided to come back here before the crash, right?

E R: Well, yeah, yeah. The crash just started about the time that I was on the way over here. (Chuckles) Yep, I wrote Nick Olson, you know, and asked him, "I'm thinkin about comin back if I could rent some land," you know. Otherwise, I don't know whether I'd a come back or not. I might a not, I mighta tried to stay over there. So then he told me I could have the lower place, he had another place down in the canyon down here, you know, which is really good farm, you know, lots of pasture down in the canyon. "Yeah," he said, "If you come back, why, I'll rent you that lower place down there." Well, that sounded pretty good, you know, I figured I ought to do pretty good down there. So I got ready and come back right away.

SAM: Well, was that your thinking? You wanted to have a better prospect to have more land if you were going to come back, is that it?

E R: Yeah, that's right, yeah. Oh yeah, my intentions were strictly farming, you know. That's what I intended to do. Come back and of course when he said I could have that farm down there, why I could have done pretty good if the prices would have stayed up like we had em. I could have done real good, but it changed quick.

SAM: What did you do when you got back?

E R: Well, I went to work down there, you know. I don't know what, if I bought a few cattle and a few hogs, and anyhow I got ready to farm. And started gettin some horses and hay and stuff.

SAM: Did you have a hard time then because of the prices?

E R: Oh, I don't know if it was really such a hard time but I never got anywheres. I never gained any, no, that was about it, just break even, maybe a little bit
better, that's about all. But then I bought a thrashing machine, you know, a little bit later there. And I custom thrashed around here you know, for a lot of people around. I used to thrash around this whole neighborhood for about, oh, I think sixteen years.

SAM: Which year did you start?

E R: Well, it was later. It was probably back in '25 or so I bought the thrashing machine. Well, I had a half interest in one, maybe a little earlier than that, maybe '24. I bought out a guy, Albert Olson, but him and his brother Bob, they were partners and I worked for them that harvest and oiled the separator, kind of worked around the separator, you know, oiling and one thing and another. Well, them in the fall he says, "You better buy me out. I'd like to quit. You know how to run this machine now, you've been around here this harvest," and it ended up I bought his half, so then Bob and I, we were partners. So we thrashed there for a couple of years or so, maybe more, I don't remember. And then I sold out to Bob, and then I bought a small outfit—a gas outfit. This was big steam outfits, you know, we had there, big steam, big machine, cookhouse, they fed all the men and all that. But that went pretty good; we done pretty good thrashin, all right. We made a little money there.

SAM: Was that Carl Olson's gas...?

E R: (chuckles).

SAM: (gas outfit, yeah. I bought that from Carl Olson, yeah.

SAM: Yeah, he told me about Ole Bohman givin you a loan for that, saying that he'd give it to you for that, but not for a car, yeah.

E R: (chuckles).

SAM: There wasn't much competition around here then or was it an open field for thrashing?

E R: Yeah, it was, yeah. There wasn't much competition. In fact, I was the first one in here with the small gas outfit. And they all liked them gas outfits,
that's one reason why I kinda went out of the big steam deal, you know, because everybody favored the smaller rigs and the gas outfit for some reason or other.

SAM: Well, was there real advantages over steam, to have em small?

E R: Well, yeah, it think so. You had smaller crews for one thing. And well, with a steam rig you had a lot of horses, you had four horses on the water wagon. You had to haul water for the steamer, you know. And then you had a bigger crew and then you had maybe three or four horses around the cookhouse to move the cookhouse with. And then you had about eight or ten bundle wagons, you had a lot of horses. Smaller farmers, they kinda hated to see you move in, and maybe you come in in the evening, you know. And we had to feed all them horses overnight and all that. And they preferred less outfit, you know.

SAM: How did they compare for work done? Did the gas one put out near as much as . . .?

E R: Well, a little bit more per man, I think, yeah, or team, than the big outfits. Yeah, I know I used to put out with that outfit I had five bundle wagons I hauled in the bundles and I used to have three pitchers. And with a big outfit you had around five pitchers and maybe nine bundle teams, you know. I used to do a little better per man with a small outfit. I used to thrash up to, oh, seven hundred sacks a day, which is pretty good. Well, with the big rig we figured if we got nine hundred or a thousand, why that's about the best we could do. So it was a little better.

SAM: When did you start the season? What month did you start the harvesting in?

E R: Well, some years we'd get started maybe the last of July, it was generally in August, though, around the first or tenth of August before we started thrashing. But once in a while they had an early wheat that they called "Forty Fold." And they'd seed that early in the fall and sometimes they'd
harvest that the last of July. So it depended on, we tried to start as soon as everything was ready enough to go.

SAM: Did you usually have a certain part of this area you'd start with and work your way around or did you have a set order you went in?

E R: Not exactly, no. No, we just thrashed as it gets ready, you know, around. Because everybody was anxious when their grain was ready to get it thrashed, you know, and we'd go around whatever. Course Kilby down here, he was the biggest farmer in here then, he farmed. I generally had about a week to ten days run on him alone. So...

SAM: Well, how much land did he have?

E R: Oh, he farmed it quite a bit. I don't know, must have farmed four or five hundred acres. He used to farm that Stanford place, that must have been over two hundred. And then Doc Wick place was around three. Yeah, he farmed over five hundred acres.

SAM: What about most of the farms, how big were they?

E R: Oh, most of em were about a hundred and sixty, yeah. Some less than that. Some farmed only eighty, maybe a hundred, a hundred and twenty.

SAM: Had they cleared up most of the land on their places by then?

E R: Well, pretty much. There hasn't been up this area here and it was pretty well cleared up when I came here. The only thing different here then and nowadays, they used to have big orchards here, you know, great big orchards that they pulled out, you know. Like up there on that hill, the old cabin, that hill up there was an orchard when I came here: apples and prunes and pears and some cherries. And the same thing down on the Troy hill, y'know, that field there, kinda along that new highway there, that whole thing was in orchard when I came here in '14. Down here old Jock had a big orchard.

Down on the next lower place he had twenty acres in orchard down there, mostly prunes. There was one time here a long, long time ago there was
big money in fruit and everybody planted orchards. And then they over-
done it. Couldn't sell any of it. (Chuckles) Yep.

SAM: What about the harvesting? Was it just done in the area, did people come
in and harvest or what?

E R: Oh, there used to be people come in, you know, in the fall and pick the fruit
from up north like Deary, Bovill, Elk River area, used to come down here and
pick fruit, you know. In the fall, I would say some, not such a great extent,
you know.

SAM: What about your harvest crew, were they all local people or did many of them
come in...?

E R: Oh, yeah, there was quite a bit of them local, yeah. Most of em local, um hum.
Well, there was a couple of years there during the thirties when
they had the dry area back in Montana, Dakota were all dried up back there.
Then there was a lot of people come out here from back there lookin for
work. So I had some guys here from Montana and Dakota workin.

SAM: Did you have the same crew year after year pretty much?

E R: Most of the time I had about the same bundle haulers, they were all local.
I had about the same ones every year, for many years. I used to have Bob
and Marvin Chaney and Rudy Anderson and Jerry Peterson and Clarence
Steelsmith. Those five hauled bundles for me for years and years. About Corker
was another one; he used to haul bundles for me for many, many years, yeah.

SAM: What about your cooking?

E R: Well, they had the cookhouse there for quite a few years. You don't know
Jenny Boffman down in Troy, do you, that crippled lady down there? She
cooked for me a while. And then, Mrs. Jesse Spencer, she cooked for me.
I don't know if it was one year, two years. Steelsmith girls cooked for me one year,
Clarence and Lawrence's sisters, two of em. We had two cooks always. They
cooked one year, yeah.

SAM: What do you think of that work? Was that good work, do you think?

E R: Yeah, that was pretty good. Everybody had a pretty good time in harvest. You looked forward to it, you had a lot of fun, you know, through together. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves in harvest, you know, yeah.

SAM: Sleep out most of the time?

E R: Sleep in the straw stacks, sure. Everybody had their bedroll along, you know. And we moved the cookhouse wherever we and the cookhouse would follow and you eat there and sleep in the strawstack. Of course if you got a rain then you all had to head for the barn or someplace, you know. (Chuckles)

Yeah, That's what they call the good old days, you know. (Chuckles)

Yep,

SAM: Was the money in it pretty good?

E R: Yeah, I actually done pretty good, yeah, I done pretty good thrashing. I made money every year.

About

SAM: How did it break down? What was the goin wage you'd start em at?

E R: Well, about that time I think I paid the sack sewers, I had two sack sewers, oh four or five dollars a day. That was pretty heavy work, you know, sewing sacks. And there wasn't many guys that would do it really, you know. Well, the bundle haulers, a man and a team, I think when I first started they were getting four dollars a day. And I think the pitchers, I paid two and a half or three dollars a day. And the cooks, I don't know what. I had two cooks, the first one probably would get around four dollars and then the second maybe around two, two and a half, something like that. That was about to start with. And we worked twelve hours a day, that was the

SAM: How long would the season be about?

E R: Well it varied some but the longest I think I ever put in that we thrashed grain, then we got through with the grain thrashin, we thrashed beans, beans is always later. And there was one year we put in sixty days. But that was
the longest. Ordinarily, oh well, thirty days, maybe, thrashing grain and
behs both, thirty-five.

SAM: Can you remember how much you would clear after all your expenses in an
average year?

E R: Oh, well, I don't know, I think I used to figure on clearing around oh, sixty
dollars a day or something like that, I think. I know that first year when
I bought that gas outfit, I done pretty good that year. I didn't quite pay
for it but pretty close. I got up there around a couple thousand dollars.
I believe I gave
I think I paid, what was it--twenty-six hundred dollars, for that outfit.

SAM: What kind of shape were most of the farmers in as far as how well off the
farmer was in the late twenties when you started thrashing, were they doin
pretty good?

E R: Oh, yeah, I think they were fairly well off, most of them, yeah. I think so.
Oh, there were some in debt, you know, a little, but most of them were getting
along pretty good.

SAM: Okay, well what happened when that depression started to be felt out here?
About when was that?

E R: Well, the real severe depression came in the thirties, well in '29 is when
they had the big crash. They had kind of a crash there in the twenties, you know,
after the First World War. It was pretty tough then, you know. Oh, not so
real tough, you could make it, you know, I mean you could make it all right,
maybe realize a little. But the crash came in '29 and then in thirty it was
impossible, really. Everybody really got kind of bad off, you know. And some
of them let their land go for taxes. They couldn't even come up with enough
money to pay their taxes. A lot of delinquent taxes them days, for many years
after that. Like timberlands, quit payin taxes. Even Potlatch Corporation had
a lot of land, they quit payin taxes on timberland, you know. Money was real
tight. Well, I'll tell you how bad farmin was--like peas, there was a time you couldn't sell em at all. No, market, and if you did get a buyer maybe a dollar and a half, two dollars and hundred--two cents a pound. Wheat, I sold some wheat there for twenty-four cents a bushel. Well, you couldn't anywhere's begin to grow it for that, you know. And so that was really a squeeze. They didn't have any money. Everybody had to get along without money, you know, like they had a flour mill down there by Culdesac. And we'd take wheat down there and trade for flour, you know. Well, then in the Genesee country, they needed wood for fuel, most of em, burned wood them days for fuel, you know, for their cookstove and their heaters. Well, maybe they'd trade somebody up here north of town some pork or meat for cordwood. So people got started to tradin, see. Instead of buyin or selling, nobody had no money so they'd trade. If I had too much of something I'd trade it to somebody else maybe for something else, you know.

(End of Side B)

E R: I know they closed all the banks, you know. Well, people got scared, a lot of banks went under. Maybe they'd want to get their money out of the bank so they'd close the banks so you couldn't draw it out. They let you draw out maybe a little bit at a time, but if you had money in the bank they wouldn't draw it out, only a little at a time.

SAM: Did people keep on farming here when you...

E R: Oh yeah.

SAM: You still had a good amount to thrash even if it wasn't...

E R: That's it, I made a little thrashing anyhow, you know. I didn't make a thing farming, I actually slipped a little, I actually gone in the red a little on the farming, but I made a little money on the thrashing machine right along. Of course it got so tough then we had to quit the cookhouse.
And I didn't have any bundle haulers either. The farmers would exchange bundle hauling, you know, exchange work so it didn't cost them anything, you see. Then they cut way down on the thrashing price, you know. All I had maybe was two sack swers, three pitchers and one man beside myself to run the machine, that's all I had.

SAM: What happened with all the people. . .?

E R: We boarded with the farmers, you know, and everything.

SAM: What happened with the people, like these people who worked for you and they had no work anymore, there wasn't any work for em?

E R: Well. . .

SAM: These guys that were the bundle haulers and those people. Did they still stay in the area, could they make it?

E R: Oh well, they hunted for work, you know. Oh no, a lot of them left again, you know. Well, people will hunt for work. Of course they had, there was a few sawmills around here and then the CC Camps, you know, come in about that time and they gave a lot of work. Like they had a CC Camp up on Big Meadows out of Troy. They must have had about a hundred and fifty up there. Then they had another CC Camp up by Moscow, there, right out of Moscow on the flat there. And then they had one over by Pullman and that give a lot of work or you know, they could make it there, you know. I don't know if they made any money, but anyhow they had a job and they made it, you know, by workin a little. They made roads up in the mountains, developed springs and different things. And then everybody burned wood in them days so there was quite a bit of work cuttin wood, you know, cordwood. So I used to have around oh, ten to twelve, thirteen woodcutters some winters cuttin cordwood. I sold a lot of cordwood them CC Camps. There was one year I sold nine hundred cords of cordwood. I sold about five hundred cords to that CC Camp out of Moscow and I sold some to the one out at Pullman and down at Genesee they had
kind of a soil conservation camp down there and they all burned wood for heat, you know.

SAM: You would supply the men with the tools to cut wood, is that it?

ER: No, it was kind of a contract. I think I paid em a dollar and a half a cord for cuttin' and they had their own tools. Well, it was just a handsaw and an axe and a sledge and a wedge, that was about it, you know, yeah.

SAM: So you contracted with the CC Camps?

ER: Yeah, and I had a contract with the... you know. Well, they had it out bids actually, out of Spokane, out of they call Port Wright, that was the head office for all the CC Camps around here. And so they advertised for bids for so much wood, you know, cordwood. And so I went up there and bid, you know.

SAM: Well, did many of the farmers just plumb up and quit around here and leave the country? Did that happen...?

ER: Oh, not so many, no, not very many.

SAM: They stuck it out.

ER: Some of em did, some did.

SAM: What about foreclosing or losing their land, were there very many?

ER: Well, there was some of that, yeah. But actually, you know, the banks really didn't want the land either, you know. If they had a mortgage on a farm they didn't want the farm and the insurance companies used to have quite a lot mortgage around there, but they didn't want em either. They tried to tell the man that had it, why you stay there and do the best you can and pay us what you can. They didn't want it. Why some of em left anyhow because they figured what, it was just going to get worse off all the time. So they left the farm and let it go. Yeah, I know when I bought that place up there on this side of Troy, why there was an insurance man came over there one
day, Hancock Insurance, and he was tellin me they thought they'd have to take over a place in Burnt Ridge, farm there. And he said, "Why don't you buy it? Why don't you buy that farm?" And I said, "I just bought a place. I haven't got a penny to my name." "Well," he said, "if you agree to buy it and operate it, you won't need any money." But I really didn't want it. The way it was you just couldn't make anything. No use to load yourself down with a lot of farming and then in the fall of the year you didn't know if you were going to be in the red or even or what, you know. So I didn't want it really. I should have bought it sure. If I had known what happened later, of course, I'd took it. (Chuckles).

SAM: Well, what about this first place that you bought? How did that come about?

E R: Well, that was the Walter Olson place up there by Troy. That was the first one I bought. Well, Walt was going to let it go on a mortgage, fellah name of Strubel had a mortgage on that for about six thousand dollars, and then Walter owed him about five or six hundred interest. And Walter was going to quit it, let it go. And that was about the time that, well, Nick Olson up here, he died, you know and I had that place down there in the canyon, I farmed that for fifteen years down there. Well then John Wey, he come over from Norway and he farmed this up here and about the time the tractor started coming in, you know. So he wanted to buy a cat and then times when he, ha've enough land, he'd like to have that place down there, you know. So I had to give that up. Well, then you see I didn't have any land, you see. I had to quit or find another place somewhere. So I didn't know about this outfit but I was down at the Grange, one evening there in Troy and I told Clarence Johnson, I think it was, that looks like I have to quit farming, I'm losing my place down there. He says, "Why don't you buy Walter Olson's, he's going to let it go, to Strubel on the mortgage. I'm sure if you go up there and
talk to him maybe and give him a few hundred dollars why he'll probably sell it to you. But you better hurry because A has already made arrangements to rent it and they're going to move in some machinery there. So well, I thought, well, so I went up the next morning and talked to Walter about it and I says, "I'll give you seventy-two hundred for it." Well, he says, "Give me a day and I'll see what I can do." So I said, "Okay." So the next day, you know, he come around and says, "You can have it. I made arrangements. They already moved a disc over here, they were going to farm it but I talked 'em out of it." So this way he got a few hundred dollars over lettin it go, just lettin it go on the mortgage, he ended up with a few hundred dollars on his own in other words. So I bought it, yep. That was the first land that I bought. That was in 1935.

SAM: Was this holding of a mortgage by another person like did, was it usual, was that often done?

E R: Yeah, there was a lot of that them days, yeah. You know, that some individuals had money and rather than have the money in the bank they try to, you know, get it out on a mortgage, on land. They got a little better interest on that way, you know. I think this was about, I don't know what that interest was--five or six percent or something. And if you put in the bank I think they paid four at that time in the banks. So most of 'em that had a little money preferred to get it on a mortgage, got a little more interest and just as safe, you know, maybe a little safer than having it in the bank too.

SAM: Was it easier for farmers to get a mortgage from another individual than it was to get it from the bank, let's say?

E R: Oh well, no, not exactly. Well, I know when I bought that place up there I didn't have any money so--well I had a little but I couldn't get ahold of it.
I think I had a couple of thousand dollars or something, on a mortgage I picked up some other place. I couldn't get ahold of it so I got all the money from the bank to buy it, but just on my note. I never did have to give a mortgage down there at the bank. Never did those, got what I needed on my note. So, but they said then that we'd like for you to get some private money if you can and then pay us off or pay part of it back, anyhow. So I said, I'll do that, I'll try to do that." So then there was an old guy up there, Gord, he lived up there close. Well, he lived down by the road there where Jack Rasmussen lives now. And he had a little money. He used to lend money out, you know to farm mortgages. So I went and talked to him. "Yeah," he says, "I'll have some money comin in pretty soon and I'll let you have some money on that farm, take a mortgage out of it." So I got from him—around four or five thousand dollars, I think. So I took that down and paid that much in the bank. And those mortgages then was set up on so many years, you know. You didn't have to pay anything off on the principle, you just paid the interest. Nowadays it's a little different, most of them are set up so you pay some off the principle and the interest every year. But they didn't have that much them days, you just paid interest and the mortgage was set up for three or four or five years, whatever it was and then, you had to pay it off. Maybe, of course some of em probably renewed it again. So I got that from Gord, then about in '37, I think it was, then things started pickin up a little and I had some beans, I had a pretty good bean crop and I think the price of beans went up so I had a little surplus money then so I elected to pay Gord off, you know, part of it." No," he says, "just let it go the way it is." He didn't want to accept it, you know. (Chuckles). So I had to let it go until the time run out on the mortgage so I could pay it off, yeah. Yes, sir.

SAM: Well, how did you come to get to buy some of that land from Potlatch?
E R: Well, that was in the Depression. You know, I *started* buyin up there I think in abut 1934, yeah in there, '34 or '5. Well, they had pretty near all their land for sale, them days, you know. And you could really do a pretty good bargain with em too. They wanted to sell it, and they quit payin taxes on a lot of it them days.

SAM: How come they wanted to sell it?

E R: Well, they were hard up, they were hard up for moey.

SAM: But in the long range the timber is worth good money.

E R: Oh yeah, but then I'll tell you, they believe, old *San* on, he used to be their land agent over in Potlatch. Their head office was in Potlatch then, you know, not down in Lewiston or now they got it in San Francisco. And they kind of believed that the timber price, or the price of lumber would never come back on account of they were using so many substitutes when they were building, you know. That was about the time when this sheetrock come in, like they all use on the inside. Well, I got it here, everybody got it, you know. Instead of boards you use that. Then the cement blocks was comin in about that time and they was building with cement blocks, you know. And then of course, brick, well brick, they always had that, you know. And then a lot of other by-products, you know. Plaster, you know, and all that. And they kind of believed that the price of lumber wouldn't come back, it'd stay down there, they build with something else. And I think that's one reason why they didn't think much of the timber. Of course, they had lots of timber them days, you know, lots of timber. And of course most of this land they let go had been logged a little you know, took the best out, the choice stuff. But their policy, actually to begin with, you know, they'd log a piece of ground and then they'd offer it for sale, sell it. They always done that
before the Depression. But during the Depression they let some of it go that had nice timber on it too.

SAM: So this land was just on the open market and...?

E R: Yeah, oh yes, on the open market.

SAM: What made you be interested in it?

E R: Well, up in there in the White Pine country I got into cattle, you know, when I lived down there. I had some pasture down in the canyon so I got into cattle there quite a bit. And then there was nothing for em to eat down in that canyon and then in the summertime it dried up, you know and up in the woods it'd stay green, you know. So I was actually looking for some place to run my cattle during the summer months. Well, there was a guy name of John Roan, he used to run up in there and then he got old, you know, and quit the cattle. So he says, "Now you better go up there and get that range that I've used. I'm quittin, I won't need it anymore." So I did, I went up there and rented a little. Well, then I started buying. I liked that country up there, I always did, really liked them meadows and timber and all that. I'd go up there in the summer, you know, and it'd be so nice and fresh up in there. So then I started buyin whenever I had a chance, you know, I kept buyin up in there.

SAM: So that was all owned by Potlatch, that White Pine country?

E R: Most of it, not all. Like the meadow, I don't know if you've been up in there or what, that meadow where the old mill site was there, that belonged to the Troy Lumber Company. I bought that from them, but pretty near all the rest in--well, there's another place, the Ruberg place, that the Potlatch didn't have, down the meadow quite a ways. I bought that. But nearly all the rest of it in there--well, no I bought another eighty there, well, that had belonged to Potlatch. I bought it from a fellah by the name of
Hites at Moscow. But I think he bought it from Potlatch, and then he kinda wanted to sell it and so I bought it from him. Well, he cut cordwood up in there, you know, I said, "You can cut cordwood up here. If I'll buy it from you, I'll let you cut wood." Not the big trees for logs, but I said other trees, you know black pine. And I said, "You can cut all the wood you want to." And so I bought it and he kept cuttin wood up in there quite a few years after that and then finally he got too old, you know. But nearly all the land up in there used to be Potlatch land.

SAM: What was Potlatch sellin' their land for during the thirties?

E R: Well, they didn't want to pay taxes on it, I guess.

SAM: Well, I mean as far as the price that they were charging for it.

E R: Oh, what they'd sell it for?

SAM: Yeah.

E R: Oh, some of them hundred and sixties up in there I bought for around $500 for a hundred and sixty acres. And it would vary some then. I had a Chevy agency down in Troy there for a couple of years. I think in '34, '35, so I traded em a new Chevy truck for some land up there once. (Chuckles) And I should have bought it all one time, Sageron says, "Why don't you buy all the land in here, I'll put a price on all of it, and buy it all."

So he send me a price list, you know, on all the land they had up in there. And oh, they had it priced around two hundred, two fifty for forties then. It had edged up a little bit. But I was after the meadows, you know.

I was thinkin' about pasture and cattle. I wasn't thinkin' about timber at that time timber really wasn't worth anything. You couldn't hardly sell it, you know. And if you did sell the thing, they wouldn't take anything but a perfect tree, you know—wouldn't have no limbs on it and straight and it had to be prefect or they wouldn't take it, white pine or something like that, cedar.
They never touched that white fir, you know, in them days, they didn't give a damn about that.

SAM: You told me you were pretty conservative about what you would be willing to buy anyway, you were very careful.

E R: Oh yeah, I was pretty careful. Well, that's it, you see. If I hadn't been so conservative I probably would have went in debt and bought a whole lot more but I was scared of the Depression, you know. I thought maybe we'd have another one. So I didn't want to go in debt much at a time; I'd go in debt a little. Kinda get that whittled down and then maybe I'd buy a little more and go in a little more again. That's the way I kept it goin, I didn't go in very deep at any time, you know, scared to, see.

SAM: What do you mean, buy one place at a time?

E R: Yeah. That's the way I done it. I bought one place and then I went in debt and then I'd get it paid down and then maybe pay it off. And then maybe I'd buy another one, go in again a little. That's the way I kept again. In fact, I was in debt a little most of the time, yeah. Yes sir.

SAM: Well, I'll bet Potlatch, if they had it to do over again, wouldn't sell an acre of that land the way they did.

E R: Well, you couldn't pry--don't let it leak out, but I'll tell you something.

(Break)

SAM: ... it was for cattle when you were first doin it. Where did you market em for one thing. Well, at that time, live cattle, most of em you shipped to Spokane from here then. We didn't have the markets here like the auction, like in Lewiston. So most of em were shipped carload lots mostly to Spokane-- to Armour or Swift or or the the yards, you know, the stockyards in Spokane. Then they had commission companies that would sell them for you instead of sellin em in the auction like they do now. They had commission
in the yards, they would take bids, you know from whoever they could and the highest bidder, you know, would get em. And then we had a packing house in Moscow-Hagan and Cushing. And we'd sell fat cattle to them. That's about all they bought, you know, is fat cattle ready for slaughter. And I sold quite a bit to them. And I sold quite a lot of cattle out in Pullman too, to a fellah by the name of Hamilton. He had a meat market in Pullman, a little slaughterhouse. And I drove quite a lot of cattle from here over to Pullman.

SAM Oh, really?

E R: Oh yeah. Yeah, we drove em. And we'd generally take two days. We'd go south of Moscow where we had our own road, they call a sand road there. And we'd drive em down past Moscow a ways out there and we'd get permission from somebody to let em keep em overnight, maybe an old barnyard or someplace fenced. We'd stop over night there and then go in the next morning.

SAM Would you ride horseback?

E R: Yeah, we rode horseback, um hum. (Chuckles).

SAM An oldtime cattle drive.

E R Oh, yeah. One time we drove a herd from here down to Clarkston, yeah, I think we had about eighty-five or ninety head. That was Odberg, a fellah from Genesee and I. Well, we bought some cattle, I didn't have that many of my own. He bought some and I bought some. And we drove em to Genesee, Odberg had a place, he lived in Genesee, and he had about twenty acres there close to town. So we drove em over there and we held em there a few days. So we got buyers to come up there and bid on em. We didn't want to take em any farther until we had em sold. So we got buyers there, an old fellah by the name of Nelson, he came up and made us offers and then there was another guy, Taylor and he come up and gave us offers so we finally...
He said, "You gotta sold em there and this guy we sold em to deliver em down there across the bridge in Clarkston, and I'll meet you thare and take over so that's what we done. We'd go up on the Normal hill with em and then take em across Normal hill and then down on Snake and then down to the bridge. And we made arrangements with the policemen down there to stop all the traffic on the bridge while we drove em across. (Chuckles). Yeah, well we did all right. Yeah, but I'll never forget that night. We rode back to Genesee that night and it rained and the wind blew—just and Herman Boyd and I. C. J., he stayed down there I think that night. No, in Herman Boyd and I, we rode back that night. And boy oh boy, did we get soaked! Just, there wasn't a dry thread on us, you know. (Chuckles). Rode them horses back to Genesee.

SAM: How many head would you be having in those days, when you had the canyon here?

E R: Oh, I used to run around a hundred head of cattle.

SAM: What did you do with them in the summer before you had the White Pine?

E R: Well, I didn't have that many before, I guess. No, I didn't have that many till I got some summer range.

SAM: Were they easy to keep track of back in there on the White Pine?

E R: Oh, not too bad, I used to salt them there and go up there once in a while and kind of call em in, you know. And they didn't stray off bad, they stayed pretty good in there. I actually didn't lose many there to start with. Once maybe in a while maybe there'd be some gettin over on the other side, over on the Flat Creek side. Well, some of their cattle come over in White Pine too— a few, not too many. Oh, Sam Crumley used to have a few cows, they got started comin over there, and they'd come over every summer, them same cows. Well, then in the fall they'd go home again, you know. Well, maybe I had some yearlings would get in with em and they'd follow them cows over there from the other side so I had to go over there a few times and get em and bring em back.
But later on towards the last up in there, it got so I'd lose a few once in a while, I don't know what happened to em really. And everybody else did; everybody else got to losin a few.

SAM: It sounds pretty suspicious to me.

E R: Yeah, yeah, you bet. Oh, there was some rustling going on all over the country, really is today, I guess it's actually getting worse, you know, all the time.

SAM: But it wasn't somethin that was here in the early days, it was somethin that came in later probably.

E R: Yeah, it was so much, when I first started goin up in there there wasn't much of that and something come on later. Well, there was a few bad eggs aroun', you know. Well, then they come in with trucks, you know, one thing or another, and they make it a little easier for them guys, you know, they could slip in at night and get one or two in a truck and take off and by morning they could be two or three hundred miles away from here, you know, if they had some place to take em to, get rid of em right away, pretty hard to. . .And then they gotta catch em in the act, you know.

SAM: Did you have somebody with the herd at all during the summer?

E R: I never had any herders much, no. No, I just turned em up in there and I'd go up in there--in the fall I'd go up in there quite often myself. Well, I had some woodcutters up in there most of the time. They'd kinda watch around a little in there. Yeah.

SAM: What do you think has been the biggest change, changes that the country has.

E R: The farms into towns, of course that's a big change.

SAM: The movement of people?

E R: Well, you know when I came here why there was virtually pretty near a hundred and sixty acres and lots of homes that we haven't got here today. The reason I think is because farmin was just so tough. And you couldn't hardly
make a livin on a farm on account of the prices was too low on what you produced. So people would go on and take a job in town and be a whole lot better off and not on the farm. And of course that’s maybe still not as much as if did for a while. You take in the thirties there, like well, now all the places that I bought, really, the fellah’s that farmed that, they wasn’t makin it. They were goin in debt and they just seen where it looked like they were just goin to lose what they had so they were glad to sell out and they went on the coast or someplace and got a job, worked for wages. Like Halseth over there on Burnt Ridge. There was Danny Olson on Burnt Ridge there, he farmed there and he says, “I’ve been farmin here and I haven’t gained a thing. And I don’t want to spend all my time there workin hard. I can go up to Spokane and get a job for Kaiser Aluminum and make a little money. Well, his wife, she was the daughter of Ailor there, the one that really homestead the farm. He didn’t like the idea of lettin em lose the farm but he didn’t want it so they sold it. Went to Spokane and he’s been workin up there ever since, still livin up there. Of course, Halseth, he’d dead now, but he worked, went down to Portland and got a job there in the shipyard or something, I guess.

SAM: When was the biggest leaving, was it the thirties or forties or fifties when most people left the farm?

ER: Oh, it was something that was goin on gradually, I think people pulling in off the farms and going to town. It’s been going on for many years, you know. And it slowed up now, I think the last couple or three years it’s slowed up quite a bit. But you take out here like when I came here, you had a hell of a school over here, you had a school over by Harland’s, you had a school down here below Driscoil Ridge, you had a school over there by Miller Trestle and they had another school settin down in there. And they had plenty kids
to have school in all of em. They finally got to dwindling down, they didn't have any kids down there and didn't have hardly any there, just a few so they build this school here, they thought they'd consolidate all these schools out here, you know, and have one out here.

SAM: Which school was the one they kept?

ER: Well, they built a new schoolhouse on his place, they called it the Olson School, they named it after John Olson. He gave em two or three acres down there to build on. They said, "If you give us some land to build the schoolhouse on we'll name it after you," so they called it the Olson schoolhouse.

SAM: But that didn't work either?

ER: Well, it worked a few years, but they only had five kids so they had to quit there, yeah. Of course that's about the time they started the buses, you know, haulin everybody into town.

SAM: What was this place, Miller Trestle, you said?

ER: Yeah, yeah, they had a school there. Well, you know where that's at don'tcha, going to Moscow there?

SAM: I don't think so.

ER: Well, you know, goin to Moscow you get out there and the road goes under the railroad there, they call that the Miller Trestle. And they had a schoolhouse right on the north side of the railroad there. I don't know if the old building is still--no, I don't think so, I think it's torn down.

They called that the Miller Trestle School.

SAM: Well, do you think the way of farming changed a good deal?

ER: Oh, yes. Oh my, yes, yes. It's nothing like it used to be when you had horses, you know. Now it's bigger farms, big machinery and combines and big tractors and al together different.

SAM: Does a guy have a chance of makin it as a farmer compared to the way he used to?
I mean it just takes a lot more capital to get going?

ER: Well, that's it. It takes a lot of capital now to farm, and it takes a lot of land. If you're going to be able to buy all this modern equipment we have now, why you gotta have a lot of land because you can get up to a hundred thousand dollars in machinery now pretty easy if you buy everything new, last thing out, you know. And you've gotta have a lot of land to make it. Of course, I still think it's possible to make it on a smaller place if you can get along with cheap, used machinery, hold your investment down. Why I think it still can be made on a hundred and sixty or two hundred acres.

SAM: You don't see many people tryin it though.

ER: No, you don't see many but some of em have. That's all they farmed then, they made a pretty good livin, but they gotta be careful, you know, how you use your money, you gotta get along with cheap equipment.

SAM: And there's sure enough old equipment lyin around.

ER: Well, that's it. That's the kind you gotta use and you can still farm with that stuff, yeah. A fellah's goin to farm a couple hundred acres or so, he don't need a five-bottom plow and a great big thirty thousand dollar tractor to pull it with. He can get along with maybe a secondhand one and get three or four, an old plow, five thousand dollars that way, you know, like I was at this sale the other day and they sold an older plow there for a couple hundred dollars. And here they had a new plow, same size, five-bottom, it brought oh, I don't know--twelve, fifteen hundred, trip bottoms, you know, modern. Well, I said, "I'll bet you the plowin is done you go out in the field, I'll bet you can't tell where they used the new plow or used the old one." (Chuckles). They do about the same job, you know.

SAM: Well, what about land prices? When did they start going up from bein just the way they were during the Depression?
ER: Oh, that's something gradually too you might say. Up till here, last couple of years, you know, they've been rocketing, you know, the land prices were. . . , a fellah would probably sold his farm here about four years ago for 350 dollars an acre. Now he's askin maybe 6 hundred since the wheat went up to five dollars there once, you know, and peas a year ago, thirty cents. And of course the man that was farming big, why then he made a lot of money there on those crops, you know, there. And he took it for more land when the price is up.

SAM: Do you think the prices will stay up like this?

ER: I doubt it if the prices of the farm products go down again, I think land will sag down, slow up anyhow a little.

SAM: Now what happened in the war, when the war came, World War Two? Then prices went up and things really got better again, is that what ended the Depression here?

ER: Oh yeah, oh yeah. That's when things got better again, you know. The farming got better again. I consider in there in the forties, say from 1940, '45, '48 in there, it's about the best times that the farmer ever had when you consider the land prices and what he got for his produce off of the farms, why that was the best time he ever had; that was under Truman. Well, that was the Second World War, you know, it was. Well, land prices hadn't went up then, you know, you could still buy pretty good land on the ridges there, farmland for, oh, around seventy-five dollars an acre. And at that time, I remember peas was around six cents and wheat was a dollar and a half, you know. And if was easy then, you could buy land at seventy-five dollars an acre, maybe pay for it in two or three years, easy. Well, then after that, you know, here land prices really never went back; it's gradually been going up, but the price of peas and wheat and whatever we grewed went way down. Like peas went down below three
cents, see.

SAM: When was this?

E R: Oh, just about three years ago peas was three cents. And wheat, a dollar and thirty, thirty-five cents. But land prices kept again up. So it was pretty hard to make anything for many, many years after the war—Second World War Two, you know.

SAM: Were the prices controlled then after the Second War?

E R: Well, they had a floor under wheat, nothing else, no peas or anything like that. But you had a loan price on wheat that you could get a loan on it and get your money for the wheat and still have the wheat if it went up, why you could sell it and pay off the loan, you know. What was that loan price? A dollar and I don't know, maybe 90s less than that, back then it was probably less than that, maybe under a dollar, maybe ninety cents or something. But on farm products they had a parity price there, you know, for quite awhile which was the fairest thing they ever had, that should never have been taken off. They regulated support price on wheat according to what the farmer had to pay for his machinery or fertilizer or all that. If machinery went up, fertilizer went up, the cost of production went up, then the support price of your commodities would follow that up, you know. And I figured that was the best deal we ever had, that was a fair deal and that should have been left on.

SAM: That was a floor, a minimum that you were guaranteed?

E R: That was a minimum, yeah, Yeah, it was guaranteed, a minimum there.

SAM: Was this under Truman?

E R: Yeah, they had it under Truman, um hum. Well, then after Truman, then come in, Eisenhower, wasn't it? And Benson come in as the Secretary of Agriculture, they done away with all that. Well, that's really the movement from the farms, started goin to town, I think.
Benson, he was kinda in favor of that. He said, "If you can't make it on a little farm, go and take a job and work for corporations." That was his attitude, he'd come right out there. It was wrong, absolutely wrong. They should have tried to regulate the system so that the little farmers could have made a livin on the farm instead of goin to town. It was the wrong, wrong movement, the wrong thing. Now they got a great big labor force and unemployment, and I've been wondering a long time that if we wouldn't end up with a lot of unemployment because we were importing a lot of goods from other countries, the corporations are going over into other countries to build factories and make the stuff there and import it in here and then everybody has a business here. Engineers sittin around figurin all the time to come up with a machine that'll take the place of a man. Why you pretty near have to run into unemployment.

SAM: Do you think there's any chance you could put people back on the small farms? Is there any possibility of doin that anymore?

E R: Well, it depends. It's a pretty hard situation all right. Of course there is young people now that's actually thinking that way, that they want to get out on a piece of land and make a livin off the land, you know, which is what they done in the old days. But to do that, people have to change their way of livin an awful lot. Of course now it takes a lot of money too, not only the food, what you eat, but it takes a lot of other money, well, for your cars, and appliances, you know: refrigerators, deep freezers and T.V.'s and all the stuff that we didn't have in the old days; we didn't need much money in the old days, we could live off the land because we didn't need hardly any cash. But now it's different, that's a sticker. And man, I think a man could still go out on a small piece of ground out here and you can grow a lot
vegetables, you can grow fruit, and you can fruit, and you can grow enough meat and all that for eats, to live, but you won't get any cash, you see, you won't any. And your taxes are going up all the time, you know. So it takes quite a bit of cash now. But if people are willing to live like they did sixty, seventy years ago, why maybe they could make it on a piece of ground yet. (Chuckles) Yeah.

SAM: That'd be the old pioneer spirit comin back.

E R: Yeah.

SAM: Probably Nick and John, people like that would be glad to see it in a way.

E R: Yeah, yeah that's right. Well, I think people were actually more contented then than they are now and just as happy as we are now I believe, in fact I know it. People seemed to have a pretty good time and enjoy themselves in the old days.

SAM: It seems like now that they need more and they get together less?

E R: Yeah, that's it, you know, that's right. They get together less. Well, I don't know. Well, you take like Troy, now you go down to Troy. There you got how many places they got they sell booze? You got Berg and you got the two beer parlors, that's three and you got Smith, that's four, then Erickson sells beer in the store, that's five, then you got the restaurant there, that's six places they're selling liquor in a little place like Troy, only one grocery store, huh? Does that make sense? No, I don't know, I feel like they should clean up the whole works. Yep, it's all gone the wrong way.

SAM: I wish I could see how you could go back because I like better what I know about the early days than what I know about the way things are going. But I just don't see how you turn it around, how you change it.

E R: Well, it's pretty hard to turn it around, it is. It's hard to go backwards. People get used to a lot of things and it's pretty hard to go back.
SAM: And there isn't too much power in the country 'cause there aren't too many people, there's much more in the cities it seems.

E R: Well, that's it, you know, like farmers don't have any political power at all anymore. There are only about two and a half million farmers. Like the farm bill, you know, in the Congress they had, they tried to get a support under wheat and cotton and corn and soybeans. Well, it passed, it passed the Senate all right, I don't think it would, but it did pass the Senate and passed the Congress, but the President vetoed the bill. There was support, you know, price on the wheat, a loan price of two and a half. And corn, I don't know what was corn, a little less than two dollars a bushel, and soybeans, I forgot exactly what it was. Well, they're askin' the farmer to produce more all the time, you know, for more. We need more food, you know. Well, the trouble is now and always has been that you get every farmer going, and all out production, produce as much as you possibly can, you know. Well, then you get into surplus, you know. And then the price, you know, goes way down below the cost of production. So you actually get hurt by trying to produce more. And I think there should be a support there. If they're asking the farmer to go all out and produce more they should have a support on the price, only go down so far. But Ford said, 'For the best interest for the consumer I vetoed the bill!' Well, of course, the consumer, sure, he's got his end too, but shows the consumers is the majority and there's where the vote comes, for political reasons veto the farm bill, just as well come out and said that.

That's what it amounts to. But here's the sticker, you know. Wheat was up six dollars a bushel here last year, over a year ago now. Well, that was just a little while, but five, quite a lot at five and one time. Bread prices went up there, you know, accordingly there. Well, now wheat is down to about three dollars, you know, a little over there, give it to the farmer,
not much. Has bread dropped any, I don't buy any bread, I don't keep track, but has it dropped any?

SAM: I don't think much, maybe a little, but hardly any. So there's the sticker, you know, the fluctuation that those farmers have in the price, what we get don't follow over to the consumer, the consumer don't get any benefit of it, we're two-faced.

SAM: The middle man. . .

ER: Yeah, he pays about the same whether we get five dollars for wheat or we get two or three. The consumer pays about the same, you know. Oh, the farmers could actually get into a squeeze again now, it is possible because your cost of production is really up now, you know. Well, like a D-4 tractor here, I bought one back in '55, I gave six thousand dollars for it, and now if I was going to buy a D-4 tractor it'll cost me up around thirty thousand. Of course it's a little better tractor then, but nothing like that. Combine, I got a combine settin in the shed over there on Burnt Ridge, I paid five thousand dollars for it; it's a self-propelled combine, I used to thrash it all the time. Well, now I just heard the other day you could get a combine now, fully equipped for peas and air-conditioned cab, you know, all that. It's up around fifty thousand now. Fertilizer, about three times as high as it was a couple of years ago.

SAM: Three times?

ER: Just about, and you gotta put on more of it, just about twice as much as we did. That's a sticker with these artificial fertilizers, if you want to use that instead of other soil building crops, you've got to put on more and more and more all the time to get any effect from it. I remember when we first started puttin nitrogen on the wheat here, we put on about thirty pounds to the acre maybe, a sack of around thirty pounds. And you could just tell right to the mark where you went, you know, it would green up nice. You skipped a little
SAM: What's goin on there, is that ruinin the land, or what do you do about that?

E R: Well, I think that's it. Well, actually that fertilizer do, it burns up the
humors in the straw and make it available for the plant, you might say the
first year. Before we used to plow under straw and we didn't use any fertilizer.
Well, maybe next time you plowed, you plowed that straw back up and it
wouldn't hardly be rotten. But now, your straw just disappears, right now
when they put that fertilizer on. It burns it, decomposes it, burns it-
up and then the plant gets food value out of it right away.

SAM: But is it worth the money? It sounds like an addiction almost like, you
know what I mean, if it takes more and more, like smokin cigarettes or
something like that, you know.

E R: Well, that's exactly. . .Then it gets your ground out of balance. You know,
first we figured all that we needed was nitrogen, so that's all we put on
the wheat was nitrogen. Well, then a little later on here—we'd get more
wheat, sure, more wheat. Well, then they didn't figure that sulfur would
do wheat any good, that was for legumes, you know—alfalfa and clover. But
now they're running short of sulfur so now you gotta put sulfur on it too,
on the wheat. Well, then now they figure, well, we always had plenty of
phosphate, no, not phosphate, this other fertilizer that Simplot puts out. They
ship it out of southern Idaho. Well, anyway there's another sort, now
we gotta put that on, it's gettin short, see. So you gotta keep adding
different kinds and more of it, it takes more. So now some of these guys,
they, you know, they put out twenty-five, thirty dollars a day for fertilizer.

SAM: Well, what's the answer to that one, do you know? What do you do?

E R: Well, what is going to happen in the long run, I don't know, where it's ended
up. We used to farm different before we had fertilizer. We raised legumes,
you know, your legume puts nitrogen in the soil from the air. Like clover, we used to grow lots of big, sweet clover. I plowed under sweet clover, let it go way up above the cat, you know, rolled it down under. And boy, I'll tell you, we really got some good ground from that. Well now the sweet clover won't grow here anymore. Something about it, I don't know, it just won't grow.

SAM: What was the rotation then, what did you do?

E R: Well, probably every fourth year we plowed under a crop of sweet clover.

SAM: You wouldn't grow anything else on the land?

E R: Well, we'd grow wheat and peas and maybe barley. Then we'd seed sweet clover with the barley and the next year we'd plow under that sweet clover, the green manure. I used to rotate with hay quite a bit when I had cattle, you know. I'd put in alfalfa in a field for several years to make hay and then maybe plow that up, then I'd put in an alfalfa field. And I'd rotate that way and keep the fertility of the soil up, you know, which was really good, you know.

SAM: Could you go back to that now, I mean if you took the fertilizer off all together, you could go back and . . . ?

E R: Well, I doubt it. No, I'll tell you, if you take the fertilizer off all together now, it'd be a sick lookin mess, that's a fact.

SAM: But maybe you could cut it down some.

E R: Yeah, maybe cut it down or maybe go rotating. But here these meeting they go, like the county agent, they have farm meetings once in a while and he preaches is fertilizers, you know. You gotta have this a you gotta have that and you gotta have so much of that and that. And I said to him one day, "Well, why don't you tell people about soil building crops like we used to, like sweet clover and alfalfa and keep the fertility of the ground up with some nourish crops, you know."

(End of Side D)
He said,

E R: "Now you gotta have crop on all the land you got. Otherwise you can't make it."

SAM: Because the farmer can't make it?

E R: Yeah, without croppin all the land. Sure, if you have sweet clover one year, why it takes that field out of production for one year, you know, when you plow it under it lays flat there. He says, "Now we can't make it that way. You gotta crop every acre every year. And then you gotta use artificial fertilizers to get a crop." That's his answer.

SAM: He makes it sound as if the farmer is on the edge of goin under if he doesn't put every once of his land.

E R: That's about it, you know.

SAM: It doesn't seem true to me, really.

E R: Well, of course, well the farmer had a couple of good years now, you might say. But then some farmers been pretty well off all the time and others, but the majority of em are really not well off.

SAM: Even around here, too, you think?

E R: Yeah, in the north here, not, but the big farmer that got started quite a few years ago, that's farmed big, maybe inherited a lot of land to start with and then maybe added to it a little. Which is, quite a few of that around, you know. Why sure, he's doin real good, but the fellahs you know that started, bought land and are farming, you know some of them, there is quite a few of em that are up all right. Yep, it's makes a big difference how you started, how you got into farming. You started a long time ago when land was cheap, bought land, why you can manage pretty good and you're making it, you're making it all right. Probably not makin quite as much interest on the investment on it you should, you know, but still you get along all right.

SAM: But if you inherit the land you have no investment in it at all, you can go
out and add on.

E R: Well, that's it. We got some here, you know, fell heir to maybe a couple of
thousand acres, a lot of money and new homes and like a person like that,
you know, they're sitting on top of the world. But now the guy that goes
out here without much money and goes in debt and buys a farm, you know and
gets in debt for machinery and stuff, why he's in a little bind most of the
time.

SAM: How much do you think a farmer should farm his acreage if he's going to be
successful nowadays using the big machinery and and then . . . ?

E R: Oh, you mean use modern machinery and all that? Oh, I really don't know, I
imagine you have to have at least a thousand acres to make it if you're going
to use modern equipment, I think so, I think you have to have a thousand acres,
um hum.

SAM: I wanted to ask you a couple other things before I go. One is about the Bank
of Troy. And I was wondering: Do you think that that has helped the country
a lot to have a bank that is right in the community like this, the Bank of
Troy? Do you think it's made much of a difference in this area as compared
to someplace where they don't have a home owned bank?

E R: Oh, yeah, I think it helps the community and helps smaller farmers, you know,
and smaller operations that wants to get started. Or whether you buy a home
or buy a farm, if you have a neighborhood bank that understands the
situation, that is really more acquainted with the people, you know, you
know everybody individually better than a big chain bank, you know, they more
or less get their instruction from the head office, you know, what they can
do and what they can't. And the Bank of Troy, you can't say anything but it's
been a good bank. And it's helped a lot of people to get started. And of
course it's a liberal bank, you might say besides a lot of the chain banks
Another thing, you sure get quick decisions. You go in there and talk to em about something and you can find out pretty soon one way or the other.

SAM: Does the bank pretty much follow the policies of Ole Bohman, do you think. Are the policies very similar to the way they were back in the twenties and the thirties?

ER: Yeah, I think so, I think the policies are being pretty much the same. Ole Bohman, of course he was the one that started the bank and he was there his lifetime, you know, and he was a fairly liberal man, really, you know, when you come down to it. And he was quite a businessman too, you know. And he was... ventures, you know and a lot of people came to him. So, and then Brocke, you know, took over after Ole got too old and it's been pretty much the same policy I'd say.

SAM: When you say that Ole's liberal, what do you mean, what was he...?

ER: Well, he was fairly liberal with loans, you know, like the time I went down there and bought a farm. Most bankers would have said we have to have a mortgage on your farm or we can't let you have the money. Well, Ole didn't ask for a mortgage, he just laid down his notebook there and had me sign it and he give me the money I needed. That was the case pretty near all the time when I went in there. I never had to give a mortgage, If I wanted to buy a farm or some land or something, he never asked for a mortgage. He just laid a check, that notebook, I can just see it. He'd lay that down. "Well," he says,"how much do you need. We'll try to give you what you need."

SAM: But if you walked in there and wanted to buy that car instead of the thrashing machine he said he wouldn't have give it to you.

ER: Yeah. No, that's what he told me that time."Well," he says,"you got a chance to
make a little money on the thrashing machine." So he walked back there
and he turned around and come back and he says to me, "I believe I'll let
you have that. If you come to me to get money to buy a new car I wouldn't
let you have it!" *(Break)*

E R: *... summer got quite a bit.*

SAM: Is that about your favorite place around.

E R: That is, yeah, I always liked that place up in there, from the first time
I went up there I always liked to go up there in the summer. Well, it seems
like down here it gets kinda dry and warm and then you go up in there and
and the timber is kinda fresh, you know. It just feels different up there. I
used to go up there a lot of times and I'd buy me a newspaper downtown, I'd
go up there and drive under a tree in the shade on Sunday and sit there
and read all Sunday. *(Chuckles)* Watch the bear--one Sunday I was settin there
in my car here, I noticed one of the bulls, you know, he started lookin around,
and held his head up. So I thought well, what does he see now? Here
come a bear, you know right across the meadow. And over there's an old saw-dust
pile, you know, right by my car, he didn't see me or know I was there. And
he started over there diggin in some old rotten logs, you know, in the sawdust.
Finally he went down in the woods and well, in a little bit down here comes
some deer out, you know. And then some coyotes come out there. It's funny,
you know, coyotes come in right among the cattle and the cattle don't pay
any attention to em at all. Now if a dog come along they get all excited.
But the coyotes, the cattle just go along and don't pay any attention
to em at all.

SAM: What about beaver? Do you see any beaver up in there?

E R: Oh, there's lots of beavers there.

SAM: I've seen a lot of ponds there but I've never spent much time so I've never
seen any beaver.
ER: Well, you daft, you know, it's pretty hard to get to see a beaver, they're pretty cautious, you know, and they don't come out much in the daytime, they come out at night, but I've set up there sometime real still, you know, in the evening just before dark and they come out, you know, start workin on their dams. I've watched them build them dams; they do quite a job. Get some sticks and then get some mud and then they slap it down with their tail, you know, pack it down.

SAM: They're nice. There aren't many places you can find em anymore. That's real nice that they're still up there.

ER: Yeah, well I like to have em in there, you know. They hold water for the cattle in those creeks there, you know, they dam em up, you know. Water stays there all summer.

SAM: The tree up there are so nice, they're really pretty.

ER: Oh yeah, it's a good area there for timber and the timber grows good up in there. It's actually pretty good land in there too. That you don't have many places. So many places your land's gravelly and rocky and that, but in there it's good, deep soil.

SAM: They're a couple of old--in fact behind the old sawmill, the old mill site up that road there's a couple of old houses back in there, abandoned places, a couple of...

ER: You mean on the top of the hill there?

SAM: Well, if you turn right there where the road goes up along the side of the old sawmill there at the left, you go through some big yellow pine trees and then there's an old--oh it's a barn, there's an old barn sittin there still. And that's what I'm thinkin of. There used to be homesteads up in there?

ER: Yeah, that country was all homesteaded, but that barn up on top of the hill
there, there used to be a house there too, that Hanson lived in, a fellah name of Henry Hanson. Well, he cut wood up in there and made fence posts for me, I imagine, for twenty-five or thirty years. So I sold him a forty up there top of the hill. And he built that barn and he built a home and he built a chickenhouse there. And he had a horse there at that time, that's the reason why he built a barn, he had a horse. And then he had a buggy and they'd go over to Avon to buy his groceries. Well, the reason why he went to Avon because they didn't have any beer parlors or place to get any booze there. And Hanson, he was really a terrible drinker, you know. And he didn't want to be, he wanted to quit. But it seemed like whenever he got someplace where they had it, if he'd take one drink, well then he wouldn't quit until he got plumb drunk. I guess they'd call him an alcoholic, I don't know. So, and he wanted to quit it; he wanted to quit drinkin. So it was for seven years there that he drove to Avon for his groceries, and there was a post office at Avon at that time, and he'd get his mail there and his groceries and he'd come back home and he didn't touch a drop of liquor for seven years. Well, then I don't know what happened, whether one fall during hunting season or something or somebody brought up some--had some whiskey or beer or whatever it was and went up to their shack and got him drinkin again. And after that he never did quit drinkin, he'd go on a bender ever so often, yeah.

SAM: If you go up beyond that place, if you keep hikin along the road, is it just timber from there up to the divide, or is there any more old homesteads in there?

ER: Well, there's the Swiker place up in the flat, kinda north of there. There's some shacks there yet. A fellah by the name of Swiker lived back in there
for years. Well, in fact, he raised his family, and he must have had eight or ten kids, and he raised his family in there. There still some shacks in there. And then there was another guy, a fellah by the name of Fred Kerns, that lived up in there when I first went up in there. Well, he got old and he wanted to sell the place so I bought forty from him. But he said, "I can't live here in the winter any more. I'd like to go downtown in the winter and then move back up here in the summer, cut a little wood." So I said, "That's fine, you can cut all the wood you want to." So he done that quite a few years. In the summer he moved back in there and cut a little wood and in the winter he'd move out. Finally he went down to Oregon, he had some boys there, and he went down there and he died down there, I guess, down at

SAM: Did that sawmill cut most of the timber in the area, that White Pine mill over there?

ER: Yeah, they cut a lot of timber there. And then the Troy Lumber Company had a planer in Troy, you know. Those days they hauled all the lumber from the mill down to Troy and ran it through the planer, and they had a box factory there too in Troy once. And they shipped a lot of lumber out of Troy. They had that for many, many years.

SAM: Do you remember about when the White Pine mill went down?

ER: Well, it burnt there. The Troy Lumber Company sold their mill up there to some fellahs name of Hanson, Hanson brothers. And that was in the thirties. Well, then it burnt down. They used to have a steam outfit there, you know. Well, then Albert Lewis, he bought some white pine from Milwaukee Land Company—they got a lot of land up in there, for match stock. Lewis, he was sellin match stock for Diamond Match or other match companies in Spokane. So he built another mill there and sawed this timber there that he bought from Milwaukee. Well then he wasn't in there long, maybe a couple or three years,
and then he sold the mill to Rausch. And Rausch ran it there for I think only one year, and I don't know what happened there. Anyhow, something happened that Rausch couldn't pay for something so Lewis got the mill back and he tore it down, tore the roof off of it and everything.

SAM: Do you know when...

E R: That was in the forties, I think.

SAM: Was that White Pine, was that one of the biggest of the small sawmills around here?

E R: Oh yeah, that was the biggest mill around here at that time next to, of course, Potlatch, you know, they were a whole lot bigger. But yeah, it was the biggest small mill around here.

SAM: I wonder about when they started?

E R: Oh that started, they had a mill up above what they call the old White Pine mill when I first came here. That was three or four miles up West Fork of Bear Creek. And then they hauled the lumber over the hill, down to Spring Valley ad that way. But that was about in the years that I came here, I'd say around 1913, '14 or '15 in there some place.

SAM: So is that about when they built the White Pine sawmill?

E R: Well, then they quit up there and built the one, the new White Pine Mill they called it. Yeah. (Chuckles.)

SAM: Do you remember about when that was? Around World War I?

E R: Well, yeah, I'd say in there, in the twenties or maybe a little later in there, about that time, yeah.

SAM: Did they have a crew there, a regular crew?

E R: Well, the way they operated that mill, they had a big pond there, you know, so they'd do all the loggin in the wintertime, and haul the logs in with horses, you know, on sleds on the snow. And then they'd saw in the spring of
the year after it warmed up, then they'd saw there till they got all the logs sawed up, you know, during the summer months.

SAM: Where was the pond?

E R: Oh, it's right there by the.

SAM: By the old shack there?

E R: By the mill there. Yeah if you go up there and look you see in the spring they had a little ridge built there in that pond.

SAM: Yeah, I think I've seen it. Yeah, it think now I have.

E R: And they just piled the logs all along the sidehill there, you know, deck em up there. And then in the spring when they started sawin they just roll em down in the pond, yep. Yeah they used to have, then the biggest building there, of course they had a lot of buildings then that's gone now, you know. And Hanson he tore some of em down to build his barn with up there. And he built a shack out of some of those old buildings, of the lumber there. They had a great big barn there for the horses. Then they had a bunk houses, and they had an office, then they had—well that building that's still settin there, I think that used to be the kitchen there, they used to eat there.

SAM: That old building that's still there?

E R: Yeah, the one that's still there.

SAM: The one that all the birds are in?

E R: Yeah, probably. I put a new roof on it, though, a tin roof. But otherwise they'd be leaving the door open, everything, cattle. Yeah, it was a pretty fair building there, yep. Oh, and the snow broke the barn down though one winter. They had a nice big barn, you know, two story barn for the horses.

SAM: Where was the barn and the mill from the kitchen, from the cookhouse there?

E R: Well, the mill, you know, was right down by the pond, below the pond.
the flat, but the barn was over by that other road there, next to timber land. That's where they had the barn. Just about in there where that corral is, you know, pretty close to that is where the barn set. Yeah, that was too bad that barn went down; that was a beaut. I'd a liked to've had that barn. But it got too much snow and it caved in.

SAM: Well, I should be goin. There's a form to donate the interview to the county.

(Pause)

E R: Well, we came from St. Lawrence to Quebec and then to Montreal and then, we crossed into the United States there close to Niagra Falls, at a place they call St. Marie's.

SAM: St. Marie or something like that.

E R: That's where we actually crossed into the United States there. Yeah, I must have been thinkin about another time that I went through New York another way, you know.

SAM: Well, you went back and forth a number of times.

E R: Well, I didn't know what, but that's a mistake there.

SAM: Well, it's good to correct it.

E R: Well, if you can, you know.

SAM: Oh yeah.

Transcribed and typed by Kathy Blanton