

THOMAS WAHL
Second Interview

Interviewed by:
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Oral History Project
Latah County Museum Society

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THOMAS WAHL

Genesee; b. 1911

farmer.

2 hours

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with Sam Schrager
March 10, 1976

II. Transcript

THOMAS WAHL

This conversation with TOM WAHL of Genesee, Idaho, took place at his home in Pullman, Washington on March 10, 1976. The interviewer is SAM SCHRAGER.

THOMAS WAHL: One of my earliest knowledge of what the Genesee ~~area~~ was like originally, is pretty well described by my father speaking of riding from our place, six miles east of Genesee, to Lewiston on a saddle horse, without crossing a fence, and with the bunchgrass rubbing the horse's belly all the way down to the lower part of the Lewiston Canyon. This is something that I came too late to see. I was born in 1911. So my memory of that country, of course, is all fences and plowed ground and mud roads. Mud roads were a thing that very few people now experience, unless they make a wrong turn in the spring or the fall in our area and leave the gravelled road, then ^{they} find out what mud roads are. I was on the end of a mud road six miles away from the nearest town. And for certain stages of the year in this country, that's isolation. Your trips to town were infrequent enough that you considered that quite an event, when you were a child in those days. There was one period of the year when you got to go to town often enough that it could have become monotonous, were it not for this contrast of the long period of isolation. The time you got to go to town was when the crops were hauled into town and delivered. Then you got to go every day, or maybe twice a day. And this was for a boy that was big enough to enjoy it and too small to work. This was quite an enjoyable thing.

SS: You'd just go in with your father on the wagon, then?

TW: Yes.

SS: Ride in and back?

TW: Along with this same type of thing, you must realize that all of the heating of our homes for the winter was accomplished by burning wood.

And in the Genesee area there never was any great amount of wood very close. Some of the canyons had trees in; frequently some of this was used as fuel. And, in my day, it was supplemented somewhat if you had^{n't} accumulated a big enough woodpile it would be supplemented sometimes by buying coal in the nearest town. This coal, you can see almost had to be hauled before the roads deteriorated to the point where it became a pretty difficult thing. So, after the harvest, one of the last things you did in the fall was to try to accumulate enough wood to see you through another year of farming. You might think of this as a hardship, but really this was like a vacation; we got our wood from Troy, or north of Troy, or near Troy. And one of the places where we frequently got the wood was from OK Olson's sawmill, which was within, what would you say, a mile or two of Troy?

SS: I'd say about three miles.

TW: Three miles of Troy. And we would haul this home on a mud road, remember. By this time the road was either dry and dusty or it would be a time when the road was frozen^{and} hard. And we would leave our farm in the morning, and we'd go up to-- first in the direction of Julietta and then take the the first left-hand road up a canyon that drains into the Little Potlatch Creek. This road turned to the left before you reached the Little Potlatch Creek; there is another road roughly paralleling it that is about a mile or so further down when you turn off on it. And we would get up to the place where we loaded our wood. Usually OK Olson's sawmill, and we would get there in time to load a load up that night and we would cook our dinner and sleep overnight in our sleeping bags, or before my time, of course, the pioneers didn't have sleeping bags, it was more conventional bedding.

SS: Would you stay right there at the mill?

TW: Yes. And I must say here that the OK Olson family was a most hospitable family. We had never been there but what we were invited to share their meal with them. But, I can only recall one time that we did this, because, contrary to what you might think, pioneers were well aware of the trouble that another family might be put to when they're already feeding a large number of people to stretch the table for two more. And the next morning, we would start out for home and get down at the farm in time to unload this load of wood. That was the routine.

SS: How much wood do you think you would get in a load?

TW: Well, I was making these trips with my father, I believe the first one I made that stands out in my memory, I was big enough to drive a team with two horses pulling the wagon. And he drove a team with four horses pulling his wagon. And, I presume that the two of us, and this is just a real wild guess, but I presume that the two of us on the two wagons would haul more than a cord of wood. As I say, this wasn't a hardship, this was a vacation, ^{it WAS} like a camping trip. Everything you saw was new. I was going to describe the route we took; we would go up this road, up this canyon, across a little divide, down into a second canyon and we would probably go through, or near to, -- well, we went through what was then called ^{Len}ville, which was a little settlement. There was a store and post office and schoolhouse. And Cornwall, near what we speak of Joel now, and from there on into Troy and up the other side a ways til we came to the sawmill.

SS: Just one trip a year or would this have taken more than one to--?

TW: No, it would take several trips like this to get a year's supply of wood. I can't remember how much wood it required, and it varied,

too, it would depend on the year. We usually would keep a backlog of some sort of fuel there and there was always other sources of fuel, and if the weather wasn't suitable, you might not get to make this trip at all. You might have to burn refuse and what you had left and there was, too, in those days, ^{you must} remember, one method of taking up land by means of a timber claim, wherein you planted trees, and these trees, as a general rule were pretty worthless type of a tree, and they ^d no more than really come to an appreciable size before the process of grubbing out these timber claims-- timbers-- began. So, they served a purpose of supplying some alternate fuel and we relied on them frequently. And as I have said, you did supplement it with coal, and there were always the deteriorating fences with the resulting fenceposts and so forth that had to be replaced, and what remained of the old fenceposts could be burned.

SS: How long could you anticipate that you would be perhaps socked in, isolated during the winter months?

TW: If we happened to have a muddy fall, the thing we looked to-- looked forward to with a great deal of anticipation was the good sleighing-- would be a year with good sledding. Sometimes it was and sometimes it wasn't. But this was a vast improvement -- snow covered roads ^{were} a vast improvement for a horsedrawn economy over a muddy road. There are instances where a strong team of horses can't even move a wagon that's stuck in the mud. Not only a strong team of horses, two or three teams of horses. You have no idea of how deep the mud in this country was, particularly in an area where it was traveled or in a low area where the water didn't drain off. I've heard my mother tell of a team-- or rather-- of a wagon that was stuck in the main street of Moscow for a long period of time. I don't believe I would be misquoting her, if I said all winter. Of course, Moscow, and the

towns were the first settlements to pave certain streets. And my memory doesn't go back to the days of mud streets in Main Street of Moscow, although I have been stuck with a Model T within two blocks of Main Street. But that was as late as 1930- '31. Mud roads were pretty plentiful here in Pullman when I came here in 1945. I don't think you'd have to hunt too far to find mud roads yet, if you looked in suitable parts.

SS: No. Ours is kind of muddy. We live near the old O.K. Olson place.

TW: Oh, you do?

SS: Going through that canyon at this time of year, it's pretty muddy sometimes.

TW: There is a thing that would interest you a little bit-- but in general-- what we called the mountain roads, the mountain country, there-- in general the road ^{isn't} as muddy, that is, the mud isn't as muddy as the loam and clay soil that most represents a great deal of the Palouse. Those mountain areas where there is quite a bit of decomposed granite in the soil didn't ever get as bad as the lower roads that I speak of, except in spots.

SS: Let me ask you a little bit more about this isolation-- winter isolation, especially. But isolation in general. What did you do to pass the time in those months?

TW: Your question is a question I would expect from someone who hasn't experienced much of the horsepowered era. And what did we do? We tried to live. And that means, we had to care for our animals. We had to feed our horses. In order to live, we had to have a source of food, and a large part of this was supplied by cattle; meat and milk. And, also, chickens and fowls of other types. So, all these things have to be cared for in the winter. You have to either have stockpiled or be able to get this food-- animal food-- when ^{they} needed it. And you

had to distribute it to them every day. Now usually, the horses ran out without shelter and were fed at least once or maybe twice a day. Horses and cattle, both. And then, the cows that you were milking and any animals that needed care were stabled in the barn. It wasn't considered economical to try to put every animal you had in the barn. In the first place, they wouldn't have survived as well, and in the second place, you didn't want to use this hay that was under a roof, because there wasn't enough of it. You were limited in the amount of hay under a roof. But ^{loose} hay, properly stacked, keeps very well out in a haystack. And so, during the haying season, June and July, you put up all the hay that you could put up, and there was quite a lot of it put up; people raised alfalfa, and most all of the flat areas that are now plowed were, in those days, in timothy, timothy flax. Timothy is an excellent horse food. So a lot of our time in the summer was spent in providing things that we had to have for use in the winter. And the isolated periods, we were kept real busy, and incidentally, entertained by surviving, **by caring for these** stock and so forth. We had to sort our pile of potatoes over several times. We had to sort our apples out and discard those that were rotting. We usually had carrots, turnips, rutabags, as well as potatoes. Whatever we could have harvested from our garden and from our farm, why, these we tried to preserve as well as we could along through the winter. It was a different type of life from that which we have now. Considerably easier now, but we have lost some things, too, by it. Now, we work more indirectly at our survival-- but don't get me off on this, I do a lot of philosophizing about this and I haven't organized it so that I can talk very coherently.

SS: That sounds like an interesting contrast that you were just beginning

to make. I think it's true. We do work indirectly, certainly compared to what you are describing. That seems very directly related to immediate needs and having enough to eat.

TW: Yes. Putting out your hand and eating implies a whole lot more than the simplicity of the statement might lead one to believe. But, at least, in this kind of a life, you don't have to be very old before you see the necessity of what you are doing. And, although, the work is hard, it becomes a thing you want to do, because it means comfort. One example of this: When this was first called to my attention-- in hauling this wood for fuel for the winter, although we regarded it as a vacation, one part of this that was not a vacation, was loading and unloading these loads of wood as fast as you could because the theory being you could rest while you were riding back to get the next load, and I said-- I was protesting in somewhat illhumor at my father at this hard work of unloading this wood, and I think I expressed a dislike for wood-- and his answer to me was, "That wood will look pretty good to you this winter when you are toasting your shins by it." So, you weren't very old, because you began, I mean before you began to like to do what you were forced to do.

SS: The description of the things you were working on suggests a little more diversification than I thought might be ^{the} usual case of the farmers on the Palouse at that period of time. It sounds like you were involved in selfsufficiency to quite a degree.

TW: Yes. There is a little parallel there that would interest you. Now, a farmer in the wintertime should, whether he does or not, he should be overhauling and repairing his tractor and his machinery for the next season's operation. Most of them do. In those days, you were caring for your horses, oiling your harness, repairing it. There is

a thing that might not occur to someone who hasn't experienced it-- is the amount of labor involved in keeping the harnesses, that are necessary when you use horses as a source of power-- in keeping these harnesses in repair. In those days our breakdowns usually consisted of either the machinery you were pulling, or the rigging that you used to pull it with, and we made singletrees and doubletrees and single-tree hooks and clevises, and all of the things ^{that are} required to attach enough horses to a piece of machinery to move it. ^{This took maintenance.} We weren't bored in the winter. We got lonely, and we welcomed the chance to meet our neighbors or a chance to go to town. And a chance to go to town when the sleighing got good, the sledding or sleighing, as you wish to call it, this was one of the things that lightened up the chores of the winter. Always, we managed to get to town at least once sometime before Christmas each year. Christmas was a pretty big event, just for this reason, if none other.

SS: I'm curious about this going to town for-- were you buying presents?

TW: This would be part of it. Of course, there was supplies, you still needed supplies that you might have overlooked getting in the summer. You needed kerosene (coal oil) that's what we lighted our houses with. That's what we used when we went to the barn after dark to care for our animals. Kerosene was the principal ingredient that's been replaced by electricity. The principal essential ingredient. We had to have light. And yet, this aspect of farming that you have shown an interest in-- if you'd ask a farmer at that period of the year, what he was doing, he would have told you, "Nothing." Or, he might have said, "Just choring around." And, even now, if a farmer isn't tilling or harvesting or planting or working the land, if you should ask him what he's doing, he'll say, "Nothing." Occasionally

in the early spring, he might have said, "Fixin' fence." He won't say that now either.

SS: How close do you feel the connection was with town; the town of Genesee, for your family? Obviously there was a psychological *importance* as you described to me.

TW: In my lifetime, these towns were almost essential, because they were the terminal of the railroads. And everything we used, that we couldn't produce for ourselves, came by way of these railroads. And, I should go back a little *bit* -- anything that was within wagon driving distance, like the wood from Troy, didn't come by railroad, but -- the things I remember getting, of course, *things that* we used to vary our diet -- were cheese. We didn't make our cheddar cheese, but every store, anyplace you went, had a large, round, flat cylinder of cheese. And the most interesting mechanism for cutting it and protecting it -- and the cover for protecting it from the flies. And cheese, to anyone of that day and time meant a slice of this yellow cheddar cheese, of a wedge shape at one end and a portion of a cylinder at the other. You still see these wedges of cheese occasionally yet. And if you asked for a pound of cheese, the grocer made an estimate of what he thought would be about a pound of cheese and he'd cut it off, and then he weighed it, and you paid for what he cut. If he cut *it* a way too big, and you didn't want that much, he would probably have cut an inch off or another slice off and come a little closer. But usually his guess was pretty good, and you took it the more or less way that it came and paid for the quantity you got. Four pounds of cheese, I can visualize yet. This was a pretty common *size* because you didn't want to make a trip to town tomorrow to get a slice of cheese. Because a trip to town tomorrow involved losing a half a day of whatever else

you might have been doing. Another thing I liked about the winter-time; we had no refrigeration remember, so the wintertime was the time when we butchered. And, there would be butchering day, maybe ^{several, maybe} more than one. Sometimes neighbors cooperated in these butcherings. Oftentimes this job was really-- because of the people that cooperated and the companionship that you got, butcherings were a pleasure. They were an entertainment. They substituted for all of the time-wasting entertainment that we use now. And, the neighbors would get together and butcher several hogs or maybe you and your father would butcher one hog, it varied, depending on your needs and what other people were doing. And this meat was-- if it was hogs you were butchering, some of this meat you ate without curing it. But always, you cured a lot of it. And the hams that we made in those days, part of the curing process resulted from drying out as this salt penetrated the meat. A ham that you made in those days would last you from the time you butchered it- if you didn't eat it-- would last you from the time you butchered it until the next winter when you butchered again. This is a vastly different thing from the ham you buy downtown that is sold to you with all the water in it that the law permits. And as little salt in it as your palate permits. The hams and the bacon of my memory, didn't lack for salt. And I'll tell you, by the time the next butchering came around, you were pretty happy to see some fresh uncured meat!

SS: Could you tell me, if you're going to go to something else-- I'm a little curious about the butchering get-to-gathers-- how that was arranged that a number of neighbors would get together to butcher. How was that thing set up? Everybody met at one person's place?

TW: No. It was a little different because of the distances involved and

the difficulty in travel. Our butcherings, or least the ones that I attended, didn't involve the big crowds that might -- that I've heard described where travel was easier and people were closely-- neighbors were closer to each other. But our butchering usually would amount to a thing like this: One neighbor would say to his neighbor, "I'm gonna butcher a hog one of these days, why don't you bring something up and we'll butcher 'em together?" And maybe we'll see another neighbor and see if he wants to bring one." And so, usually this would consist of two, three, or maybe four neighbors. I can't remember a butchering where we had more than four people involved in butchering.

(End of Side A)

Families were a unit that we're beginning to forget about now, but in those days, families ^{were} a unit. And, if you invited a neighbor to come up to your house for dinner, that meant that he was gonna come and his wife was gonna come and the babies were gonna come, and the other kids were gonna come, and the hired man would come. It wasn't even necessary to specify this; this was what you meant when you said come visit us. So, these butcherings, you might have quite a crowd involving maybe as many as four people-- I don't mean people-- four families, and four supplies of meat. Four groups of animals. You might butcher each one hog. You might butcher each of you two hogs, or you might butcher as many as, well, say, twelve hogs at a butchering, or even twenty. And I could go into a little bit of the butchering.

SS: Why don't you?

TW: Usually the butchering was held at a place where some farmer maybe a little more enterprising than some of the others, had a vat, in which to scald the hogs. And this, at our place, consisted of a trough about a foot and a half deep, with a flat bottom of metal, and sides

and ends of wood, part of which was covered by this metal sheetiron turned up to protect the lower edges of the wood from the fire which you built under it. You placed this vat over a ditch that you dug with the edges of the sides resting on the earth, and the middle part of the bottom over this ditch. In this ditch you built a fire and one end of the trough you left the ditch open and at the other end you put in a stovepipe and closed it up with earth around it, so that the smoke from this fire went up this pipe and which provided a draft. And you might have a sheetiron or something that you covered the open end with and used it to regulate the amount of air, and therefore, the speed with which the fire burned-- the violence with which the fire burned. And, the man at whose place the butchering was to take place would probably delegate one of his sons the job of getting this ready while the father took care of the chores. Or, visa versa; you were always up early, you didn't get up early for a butchering, you got up early anyway. You did this preparation instead of some of your other chores. So, in my time, there was always an old fence post around. This makes splendid kindling, not only because it burned good, but because cedar is easy to split, and that's what ^{fence} posts were made of. A fireplace, or ditch, like this, long kindling and long wood was the type of thing we burned. So, we heated this water until it got to the right temperature for scalding a hog. And, the earliest butchering that I went to, you judge the temperature of this water without a thermometer. An immersion type thermometer was a luxury you didn't need, because the people that had settled this country if they didn't know when water was hot, they should have stayed in town! And one way of judging the time or the temperature at which this water was just right for butchering, was to stick your finger-- swing your finger

through this water three times. Now, the first time, you wouldn't think it was particularly hot, the second time you knew it was pretty warm; the ^{third} time, if you just felt like screaming, then you knew it was ready! Mind you, if you'd left your finger in there any of these times, why, the skin would eventually have slipped off, if the water was the right temperature. But, doing it quickly this way, it's a pretty effective way of judging temperature. If my memory serves me right, this corresponded roughly with a hundred and fifty degrees Fahrenheit. ^{which} we ^{later} had the luxury of owning a thermometer which would take some of the guess work out, and save your finger.

SS: What about immersing the hog, itself? That sounds like a---

TW: Immersing the hog itself, is, of course, the thing you're getting ready to do, but oftentimes if your guess or your estimate of this temperature wasn't right, you could tell by the way in which the hair on the hog loosened whether it was about right or not. If you got the water too hot it would do what the old-timers would call "set" the hair and it wouldn't scrape off good. If it was too cold, why you merely left it in the vat longer with the fire burning under it and gradually bringing the temperature up higher and higher until you got to the point where you thought, well, reaching down and pulling out a wisp of the bristles from the hog-- "Well, it's about right." Let's take him out and scrape him." This wasn't the chore that you would think it was. On each side of this vat there was this platform just a little lower than the top edge of the vat, say two or three or four inches, and clear across-- there was a platform like this-- always on one side of the vat and frequently on both sides. Across the top of the vat and across these platforms, you placed a rope at a spacing that would permit you to lay a hog on the rope and have the ropes behind

his front legs and in front of his hind legs. And this rope-- this might be one rope with a-- that continued over across the vat then back on the other side, or it might be two separate ropes, depending on what you had available. If you had a long rope, you didn't cut it for this purpose, because that was waste. If you had two short ropes you used that. One man would get a hold of each end of this rope, the hog would be placed on top of these two ropes, on the platform, then the two ends that were the closest to the hog would be placed back across the hog over onto the other side of the vat, handed to the men on the opposite side of the vat from the hog. Then, if there were only two men butchering this hog, you probably held one end of the rope and stood on the other end. Usually, this is the way it was done. You had one rope in your hands and one under your feet-- each man did-- one rope ran from beneath your feet, across the vat, underneath the hog, back up around the hog and back up to your hands. You pull on this rope and the hog falls into the vat. But before the hog falls into the vat, if you have four men, you pull this hog up til he's pretty nicely balanced near the edge of the vat, then the rope under your feet is handed to the man who is standing back on the other side of the hog. Remember one of these ropes and these pairs of men at each end of the hog. Now, you have a hog with a rope that has a bite in it-- if you know what a bite is-- it's a loop like the letter-- like the script letter E upside down-- the hog, his front quarters and his hind quarters sticking through this bite in the rope. The man on the opposite side of the vat pulls on his rope and this ^{rolls} the hog. The two men on the opposite side of the-- the two men opposite the hog on the other side of the vat, pull simultaneously on the rope that they have. The two men that are on the same side of the vat as the hog, standing on

this platform, hold their ropes tight and permit it to slacken as the hog is pulled further over the edge of the vat, keeping the rope tight. As soon as the weight of the hog would tend to splash it down into the water, splash this water-- splashing this water all out all over you and scalding you ^{all} badly, the men holding this end of the rope where the hog is, let the hog gently, easily, and slowly down into the water. And, nobody even thinks of the danger of getting scalded, because you know how to do this. And, it is done usually without any mishaps and very satisfactorily. There isn't any great straining or lifting about it because you have enough men around to do the job you're going to do. Scalding a hog in a gasoline drum or metal drum is another way of doing it where one man or two men might want to scald a hog where they stick it first-- one ^{end} and then the other--in a drum or barrel of hot water. But, to the way of thinking of my family, and most of the people in our neighborhood, this was a pretty slipshod and poorly planned butchering if you did it this way. Later on, some enterprising neighbors of ours left an old bathtub permanently set up for the purpose of scalding hogs. And this makes a fairly good vat, too, although it's rather small for a large hog. Hogs that you butchered might vary anywhere from a hundred and fifty pounds-- Well, I should say, sometimes even a suckling pig, which is an altogether different thing-- clear up to a hog that would weigh four hundred, six hundred pounds. And that's a big hog.

SS: After the--

TW: Then as you scald this hog, these ropes are still around him, and in this same position-- one man on each side of the vat-- at each end of the vat-- or, each side-- This is getting too wordy, I know. But you have one man on each end of the rope and the rope looping the shape of

a letter E down around, under the hog, and up to the other man. Now if you pulled these ropes properly, you can roll this hog over and over in the water, and the man on the other side as you slack your ropes up can pull the rope back under the hog without rolling the hog, so you have a choice there. You can roll this hog in either direction and you can roll him at any speed you wish, or you can lift him out of the trough, merely by the way in which you regulate the tension on these two ropes. And one of the first indications that the hog is ready to come out of this vat, is that the hair beneath these ropes-- continually rubbed by these ropes-- begins to disappear and float around in the vat. I've left out one important thing that you might be interested in-- this water that you use has to have some lye in it. But, since lye cost, in those days, five cents ^{for a} can you didn't go to the expense of pouring lye in, and lye is pretty wicked stuff anyway. You don't want to be splashed with lye-- you just put in ashes. And you put in enough ashes so that the water feels slippery. And, I think, the roughness of the ashes in the bottom of the vat probably contributes, also to the scraping off of the hair of the hog. The first thing after the killing of the hog is to scald him. First you kill him and bleed him and scald him and scrape off the hair.

SS: Let me ask you-- Since the description is so good: I'm curious about the killing itself. What was the method of butchering-- I mean, the killing of the hog, then? Did they use a knife?

TW: It's done in a number of ways. The method of killing a hog that is recommended by the Morton Salt people, and the method that is recommended and followed, and I believe, yet followed by the packing plants, such as Armour's, which I have witnessed, is to kill the hog by cutting his jugular vein and letting it bleed to death. And in my mind, and

in the mind of my father and a lot of people, this is quite a cruel method of killing. The purpose of it is, is not the purpose of cruelty, it's to get a good bleed of the hog. ^{your} meat is better if the blood is removed, it keeps better. This meat is going to be cured and it should be well bled and it'll keep better. And it is more attractive to look at, more palatable. In our family, we always shot the pig in the brain with a .22, which, to my mind yet, is one of the most humane methods commonly used. There is this hazard about shooting a hog, if you don't place that bullet just right, you won't kill the hog or even knock him down, and he'll run around squealing for a while and you've got to try to get close enough to him again, to do it. This occasionally happens. And you don't want to shoot him with a high-powered rifle that'll go clear through him and ruin the meat, so the commonly used rifle was a .22 rimfire rifle. A small hog frequently you use a .22 short bullet-- a .22 short cartridge-- which is not a very powerful cartridge. Ideally, the bullet when you shoot the hog'll go through the skull into the brain and not out of the other side of the skull. Another way, commonly done, requires a little skill, but it's probably a little safer in some ways, is to hit 'em in the head with a hammer. This takes a little skill, and it's pretty easy to fail to hit that hog hard enough to do anything more than temporarily stun him, or scare him, or hurt him. So, either method that you use, has the hazard of being more cruel, perhaps, than the knife. However, in our case, I preferred the use of a .22 long rifle much more than any other method that I've seen used.

SS: Then you slip it through immediately after the hog's shot?

TW: That's right. Properly done-- now these hogs are not really gentle animals. They're not fearful of you, but they are inclined to move a-

round. Properly done, the hog will usually be at the moment you are ready to kill him, he will be eating something that you've put down to attract his attention and make him stand still. And then you stand in front of him, ideally perhaps, at a distance of three or four feet, with his nose pointed toward the ground, draw an imaginary line between his ear and the opposite eye-- between each of his ears and each of his eyes-- where that line crosses, if you shoot him in a direction that is practically exactly perpendicular to the surface of his head at that point, he'll drop without ever knowing he was hit. He doesn't even move for a few seconds, then he goes through the spasms that are characteristic of death. As soon as you can, immediately after you have shot him, preferably before he starts into these spasms, you stick a knife into his throat and try to cross these-- try to cut one of these forks of the blood vessels-- I guess they're jugular veins, I don't really know the proper name of ^{them}. But there seems to be a place that they fork right in the soft part-- you can put your finger on the soft part of your own chest, or throat, just above your chest. That is the point that you stick your knife in. Aim for the pig's tail, and usually, if you've done it right, you give the knife a little twist and pull it back out-- usually, if you've done this right a gush of blood will follow the knife blade on the way out and it's just a very short time until he has bled clear out. This isn't a pretty picture. However, we all recognize the necessity of it, and make what pleasure we could out of these butcherings. And they were regarded as something of pleasure. But never, at any time, have I ever seen anybody enjoy the taking of a life at one of these things. And, always, if it isn't a clean, quick, painless death, there is always a sort of a cloud of unhappiness over this, what has come to be re-

garded as a more or less of a festival.

SS: Maybe we should just finish up the description from the end of the scalding of the hair to the cleaning.

TW: This is getting too long.

SS: I don't know. I enjoyed this kind of detail, because it's -- I have only heard butchering being described very superficially.

TW: That is because it is assumed that everybody knows everything I've told you.

SS: Well, I know a little of it, but people after me will know even less.

TW: Yes. That's right. It's no longer done. Not even on the farms, or if so, very, very rarely.

SS: If you want, you could just maybe go through it quickly on the rest of it-- the process.

TW: In a packing plant many of the things are done mechanically. But with these same ropes that you've been -- that you place the hog in the trough and the same ropes that you rolled him while he was in the trough, then you take him out with these same ropes. Now, if you have a platform on each side of the vat, it doesn't make any difference which way you roll the hog out of the vat, but at this point, you keep the rope that you have on your side and you reach over, or have passed to you the rope that had previously been held by the man on the opposite side of the vat, and you can put his rope under your foot, if you're short of men, or you can give it to someone else who will hold it solidly. Or, you can tie it to a stake, and then you pull on the rope you've been holding-- there is one man on each rope now--on the platform along one side of the vat, and then by pulling on this rope you simply roll this hog up out of the vat and onto this platform. There is only a very short distance that you're holding

the whole weight of the hog, and that's when he's clear out of the water, because he is buoyed up while he's in the water-- he's practically floating. And, you can see here the reason why the ideal vat will have a somewhat sloping side, although not really a low sloping side, but they're not vertical. And this is one of the drawbacks of using a bathtub, is that it has a slippery, vertical side, and it's too deep, and it's too short, and it's too narrow. As soon as you get him out, all the help that's available comes there around the hog with scrapers, if you have them, but usually it's a knife. And you scrape the hog with this knife, and as you scrape the hair comes off, and you keep on scraping the scarf skin comes off along with the hair. And, after you've scraped all the hair off ^{from} him, you wash him in this somewhat dirty looking water. And, lots of times, you will have then-- or you should have then-- after washing him-- or rather sloshing him, I should say, with this water and ashes, then you rinse that off with some clear water. And, frequently, that clear water you ^{rinse} him with is cold, or can be cold, because you've already accomplished the purpose that you wanted to accomplish with the hot water. You may then discover that you haven't scraped him as clean as you should have and you go back and scrape a few more patches.

SS: Is scraping done by the women as well as the men?

TW: Not in our country. In the butchering bee at our time-- there's no reason why a woman couldn't have participated in this, except for the fact that there was a big crowd of people there and this was a day of festivity and the women are all in the house making dinner. And, also as soon as you get the first animal butchered there are some of the early tidbits that could be even used at this dinner. Although, my appetite for these was much better a week after the butchering was over than it was the day of the butchering. My idea of a good meat

dish at a butchering is the swiss steak or a breaded steak, something that you don't associate with the animal you've just killed. There are many, many people that aren't bothered by this. Then after the hog is scraped, you hang him up and remove his entrails. And for that day you're done. If the weather's cool you hang him up high enough so the dogs won't get him; it's cold enough so the flies won't blow it, and the next day, or later, you can take him down and cut him up into bacons and start the curing process, which lasts for weeks and weeks.

SS: Would the neighbors take their hogs home and hang them up?

TW: Yeah. Or leave them at your place, ^{they could do both,} but usually they would hang them where they butchered them until they got stiff and cold, ready for the cutting up process. I won't try to describe much more of this, because this is a process-- this meat process, along with your daily chores and taking care of your horses and cattle and milking the cows and gathering the eggs, if your hens are still laying, and cleaning out the stables, chopping the wood or sawing it, if you haven't sawed it. Our wood usually was hauled in the form of four foot cord wood. Easier to load, easier to unload, quicker to handle, then you had all winter to saw it up. So, you filled some more of your day with the curing of this meat. And after it's sufficiently salted, then with the smoking of this meat. And this preparing of the cured meat is a process that went on for a long, long time. It didn't take much time each day, but it took a lot of time. It filled your day. When you were doing nothing, this is what was going on. Butchering day was the day, you didn't say you were doing nothing: "We're butchering." That was a day when you did something. But the rest of the time, although you were just as busy, you still got up at five thirty, went out after supper and fed your animals, and milked your cows. Still,

if you'd finished your butchering, you weren't doing anything. You didn't say, "I'm curing meat." You didn't say, "I'm milking cows." You didn't say, "I'm gathering eggs." You might say, "I'm doing chores." If you said you were doing chores, you were doing nothing. Your neighbor knew what you meant.

SS: Well, what about the festivity after the butchering?

TW: The festivity consisted of going in and eating this-- you'd say lunch-- we called it dinner. There were three meals the farmers ate: Breakfast, dinner, supper. Breakfast came in the morning, dinner came at noon and supper came at night. Your main meal of the day was dinner. Supper wasn't a bad meal either and breakfast was pretty hearty, too, because you had been up and done all the morning chores before you ate breakfast. You had three square meals a day. Sometimes in the winter, when you were doing nothing, you just had two square meals: breakfast and dinner, and might have a light supper.

SS: But this day, there would be neighbors there and it would be the whole family, would be quite a few people.

TW: The whole family would be there for this dinner. And dinner, the noon lunch, that was the meal of the day, and you all enjoyed it. And you visited and you talked and you lingered around the table and you ate until you hurt. And, if you had completed your butchering, you might then play some cards or just visit. But, remember, this didn't last long. The noon meal, this was the festivity, really. The noon meal was the festivity. People had to go home and do their chores, they'd been neglecting them all day, they'd been doing this butchering and they had to get back to doing nothing! Which consisted of the chores. They wouldn't be in bed until after dark, they had to go home and eat their supper and then they had to go out and milk their cows.

And if there were some animals that needed--- (End of Side B)

You usually tried to arrange these butcherings at a time when you could pretty much minimize the chores that you had to do for that particular day. You might even do some of them early before you started, you might chose butchering at a time when the-- when you didn't have but very few animals to care for, or when it was still-- if it was cold enough early enough and the snow wasn't on the ground, your animals still might be making their own living, picking it from the stubble which you hadn't plowed yet ^{or} from the timothy meadows which had the fall growth of grass showing up on them. However, the nicest time to butcher, is when there's snow on the ground. It's clean. Keeping this meat clean is kind of a problem. Butchering in the mud is not a pleasant job, although it's done often. I have seen men carrying a hog up to where you can put it in the vat and slipping and sliding in the mud and falling down. Usually the men don't all ^{fall} at the same time, but I've seen 'em-- a man lying on his back in the mud with a hog and blood on top of him. This is mirth. This causes great mirth!

And if somebody had the foresight to bring a flask, of what in my day, would have had to have been moonshine, this added to the mirth. And, it didn't hurt your appetite any either. Nobody got drunk, but it made the suffering, I must say, You did some. This was not easy, there was always some of the-- I don't call it unpleasantness, I am searching for a word that's right-- but somebody might slip and stick his foot in the vat of water, and get it out again before he got burned, and ^{this} caused a lot of mirth. Somebody might break a hole in the ice if it was that cold, and step into what remains of your

early fall mud hole and get his leg wet clear up to the knee. This isn't comfortable, but he's busy, he's not gonna go take his shoe and sock off or his pants off^{or anything}, no matter which it was he stepped in-to, unless he's really injured. He just accepts the laughs that come in his direction and this is all part of the mirth that goes with butchering. Which I think is probably artificially stimulated because of the rather abhorrence of causing a death that many people share with me.

SS: I would think, too, from what you're saying, there weren't that many opportunities for men to work together, because farming was mostly a solitary occupation. And so, this was a chance for men that knew each other to spend time together.

TW: This is absolutely right. And this is one of the reasons why also haying and harvest is remembered by most farmers as a pleasant time, although it is-- they are two of the most exhausting types of work that I have ever engaged in. Still this companionship of neighbor with neighbor and man with man and frequently in the case of harvest and haying, strangers, people that have traveled. We had, in those days, a source of labor, the migratory farm worker that was really an institution that I hate to see disappear^{ing}. Some were called harvest tramps, but they were far from a tramp. This was the profession they followed. They would start harvest at the earliest place they knew of, say Southern California, or Central California; work their way up through this area. Maybe they might start harvest sometime in early June in California, and be up here by August or September, and end up in the snow up in Canada, threshing wheat. And, having spent the whole summer, these people were drawing the highest wages that farm-laborers get, by following the harvest as long as possible. Hay harvest was a time that people got together this way. You got to get

acquainted with them. Now, remember, the help we used, farmers in those days, lived with you and ate with you, and became a part of your family. And they were your friends, usually. Sometimes, because of the number of them, the hired hands slept in a bunkhouse. Which was really a good thing, because they then got to associate with one another without the supervision or interference of their employer. They could discuss their grievances with one another without feeling like they were being listened in on. In harvest time and in haying, oftentimes the harvest hands and the hay hands slept in the barn. Oftentimes the farmer, the owner of the farm, and his son would sleep in the barn. This was not a hardship, this was a pleasure. You might sleep in nice weather right out under the skies. You enjoyed this. It's a new experience, ^{it's} pleasant. There are mosquitoes, and there were flies, something you might forget about. But, all in all, for these short periods of time, our work was our pleasure. Or at least, our work was related to our pleasure. And the sociability ^{that} you met was the biggest part of it.

SS: I'm quite interest in what you remember about the harvest, and the people that followed the harvest.

TW: Well, one of the things that would interest you in your harvest help and your hay help-- lots of times your harvest hand was your hay hand. He came and stayed through both seasons, because they overlap. And, these were people that had seen things ^{that} you never had seen, probably never would see. Oftentimes, they were people from a foreign country. One of the most-- or two of the most interesting harvest tramps that we had, that came to our place, were from the Scandinavian countries. One was a Norwegian and one was Swedish. And there was rivalry and a bickering between these two. They were both intelligent men; I don't mean to say educated men. I suppose neither one of them

had had any appreciable amount of schooling, and yet, they had acquired a wisdom^{and} experience and some skills that perhaps were of more value to them than an education is to some of our educated people now. Some of these people had a musical skill. Not a trained skill, but one that they had acquired in their homes or in their old countries. The Norwegian that I speak of, his name was Edward Olson, always carried a violin with him. And as music was a skill that I didn't have, and very few of our family had, it was a great pleasure if he was not too tired some evening, if he would take his fiddle out and play us some music. He also carried a flageolet, and he would play it. And he enjoyed this and we enjoyed it. Sometimes in hay season one particular event sticks in my mind because I was quite a young and impressionable boy at that time; I drove the derrick team, the team that pulled the cable that pulled the hay from the wagon up into the haymow of the barn. And ~~after~~ the evening quitting time would come, when the horses were too tired to work any more, and the men had an excuse for quitting, and the supper bell hadn't⁺ quite rang yet, one of the men got out a mouth harp, and sat up on a timber about twenty feet from the ground, that was the bottom of the opening where the hay was carried in by the derrick, he sat up in this opening twenty feet above us with his head dangling out over empty space, and played his harmonica. And the rest of us sat down below him resting and enjoying this. And two or three, of what I considered to be^{the} mature, middle-aged men that did all this hard work, two or three of these twenty year old men, joined in song, when it happened to be a song that they knew. Or maybe they suggested one, that they could sing. This didn't happen all the time. This was a highlight. This happened occasionally. Also, the hired man-- . The hired man is a person--

I've got to go back here a little bit. In addition to these migratory men, which I suppose played somewhat the part of the wandering troubadour in the medieval times, there were more or less steady hired men, our local people, that might work for you the year around, or they might work for you through the whole working season and go back to their own homes for the winter. Or there might be some, that wintered with you. But, this was the one you usually referred to when you said the hired man. It was the man that was there most all the time. There was the Father and the Mother and the kids and the growing members of the family and there was the hired men, or the hired man. And, he stayed with you all the time. He became a member of your family if he stayed there through the year. If he was sick, you cared for him; if you were sick he did what he could to care for you. You were mutually supportive. He, true, he wanted all the wages he could get, and you wanted to pay him the least you could, and you both understood this. But you were, in effect, members of the same family. Usually, in a family, the hired man did get paid, little, it's true, but board and room was always a part of the pay that you never even mentioned. You never said, "I'll pay you so much and board and room." because it was assumed that this was it. If you got a dollar a day, you didn't even say, "I got a dollar a day and board and room." You got a dollar a day. That meant you got it above board and room. The hired man furnished his own clothes, furnished part of your entertainment. He got certain benefits, and he gave certain benefits that weren't even mentioned as part of the ^{duties}. Usually, unless you had a lot of chores to do, in the winter and were raising a lot of stock, usually that portion of the year when you were doing nothing, or doing chores, hired man or farmer or family-- nobody got paid anything. You just lived. In the summertime, early on, the

hired man worked hard, and usually he wasn't expected to do any chores except to care for the team of horses that he was working. This was his responsibility. He got up before breakfast and fed them and harnessed them, and after breakfast he went out and fed them again and cleaned up-- well, no, I should just ^{say} ~~and~~, fed them again. In the morning in addition to harnessing and feeding, he usually curried them. In the evening he might clean out the barn, some. He put in a lot of hours. You didn't have to have entertainment in the evening, you were usually ready to go to bed. Although, in the bunkhouse quite a bit of merriment could go on after everybody was tucked in. If it was a busy season, several men, why, this was part of the social life was what went on in the bunkhouse after chores were done in the evening.

SS: Would the hired man work nearly as hard as the farmer himself on a place?

TW: If he was the man you kept: Yes, he did. If he didn't, he wasn't your hired man! (Chuckles) And, usually this is the way. You worked together. I think probably you would have to say, in the early phases of it, that the owner and the hired man worked equally hard. The owner had responsibilities and worries that the hired man couldn't have. And the hired man expected to do things that the owner didn't of necessity do. However, there wasn't any work that you expected the hired man to do that you wouldn't be willing to do yourself; on our farm, at least. The hired man was not a flunky, although he expected to get direction from his employer. I am picking out, of course, kind of the ideal sort of a situation. As in all relations between people, there was lots of times some friction. And the good hired man was a pretty tactful person. And the good employer was a pretty tactful person.

And, you can go from these ideal pairs of workers on down to the point where you part company. And, of course, there comes in this thing of cabin fever. People living together, more or less intimately, for a long time with the differences between 'em that an employer and employee relation entails-- there would be a time when one or the other might be pretty well fed up. And there have been many, many instances-- in fact, it's almost a part of the picture-- when the hired man gets mad and walks off and never gonna come back again, and the employer is glad he's gone, and then there is frequently the reunion when the hired man has thought it over and decided, "Well, it wasn't so bad there after all." And the employer has thought it over, that it wasn't so damned easy without the help of this hired man, and you both forget your differences and are glad that you have made them up again. I think this is, of course, is similar to the relationship between people all over all the time. Although, to some extent, this farmer-hired man relationship is the thing that is disappearing, because, more and more, farmers are doing their own work, except for the very^{very} busy season. And the reason why is obvious. We don't have these long periods where you spend all day long doing what you spoke of as nothing. You don't have these chores. You don't stay so busy. And you have a tractor that'll pull ten plows instead of a team that'll pull two.

SS: The hired man, it seems obvious to me, that he would be farming, if he could for himself. If he was in a position to have a farm, he would very likely prefer to be a farmer than a hired man. Was he just doing it, working for someone else, because of his economic need?

TW: That is a pretty good appraisal of the picture. At the time where my memory starts, and where my father's farming was drawing to an end,

I heard my father speak of this, that the hired man-- this was the way you started. You started as a young man working for a neighbor, usually. If you were the hired man usually were the neighbor's son, or a neighbor. Or a local person, as distinguished from the migratory help. And usually this man-- it was his intention to get a start farming, and he worked for various farmers, maybe, or maybe for one farmer, and he gained your respect. And he might farm a part of your land later; branch out, if he was a man you respected. or there might be a piece of ground that a farmer hadn't really thought he would plant to crop this year, but he might permit the hired man to venture to plant a crop on it. And, on occasions, the hired man might be starting to accumulate an outfit, as we called it, ^{in those days} he might buy a pair of harness someplace-- a set of harness, excuse me-- and eventually, maybe one at a time, a team of horses. And he might make arrangements with the farmer that for staying there and choring around and doing nothing in the winter, that he could leave his team of horses there on this farm. And, lots of arrangements like this might be made. He might have bought this team of horses from the farmer. Farmers raised their own horses when they had a string of them. And, occasionally might be culling some, or have raised more colts than they needed. Or some of them actually, this was a part of their farming, raising horses for sale, as a sort of a sideline. And, it might be in the deal for this hired man when he bought these horses that he could leave 'em there until he could get a job with somebody that would hire him and his team next summer, or next harvest. Often the threshing crews with stationary threshing machines that we used in those days, the men that hauled the bundles to the threshing machines to be threshed, they owned their team and their harness and their

wagon. They were an entrepreneur, although maybe just a year or two before, they had nothing but their two bare hands. Maybe a person had a team of horses and the bundle wagon, and incidentally, a bundle wagon, was just an ordinary wagon with a bundle rack on it, and you had a grain rack that you could substitute for a bundle rack, and you might take the front hounds of this wagon and use it as a cart. And you might-- this hired man might have picked up a couple of sections of harrow and a foot burner and with that much equipment, he was ready to start farming, if he could find a place to farm. This, of course, is before my time. I saw the last bit of this -- I saw a last little bit of this, where a man could start farming on a shoestring, as the term was. And, with a little luck, if he had managed to get a piece of ground and plow it and grow a crop on it, and got a good crop, and the price happened to be good, and his horse didn't die, and he didn't get sick, he might have a nest egg. And, maybe, then the next year, he would be a farmer. And, even though he was a farmer, a lot of your help was this small farmer, this neighbor that didn't have enough to keep him busy all year, he would augment his income by helping someone who had more to do. And, oftentimes this farmer-- this small farmer-- who was getting a start, would live in a house that had become the property of a farmer who had begun to expand and bought up a neighboring small farm, leaving this vacant house. And, in those days, the ability to start with nothing but your hands and end up with a considerable amount of wealth in a lifetime, wealth in the form of land, was within the reach of a vigorous, enterprising man. And it was-- well, I should say, it was within the reach of anybody who had the ability^{to} and the desire. But, of course, that route from bottom to top is not like it was. I still think that in America we are

maybe unique, that there still are roots of this nature.

SS: Well, when I think about it, it seems like they way you're describing it and from what I know, there is a time-- well, if you took a hired hand as the kind of lowest rung to begin with, and then if he was successful in accumulating some money, in moving up, and he was successful with his crop, moving up to-- it seems like a rough row to hoe, to me.

TW: It was a rough row. But yet, many of the older farmers that have just disappeared here, made it just that way. My father, although his father homesteaded on a farm adjoining to ours, and although, all of my father's brothers and sisters homesteaded one place or another, my father never did homestead **land**. He bought every acre that he owns. He did have a springboard of some of the outfit that he had helped accumulate in the farming of his father's land. And I wouldn't say that he had started-- well, I almost would have to say that he started pretty much from the bottom, but in addition to this springboard, he had the responsibility of his father's family, because his father died when he was about eighteen, I guess, or younger. And his older brother died when he was about twenty-one. And, he had the responsibility of supporting and helping to raise this family that his father had had to leave. So-- he had made that climb.

SS: It seems to me, tell me if this sounds right, if you were in a position to be helped by your father, if he had enough of a farm going that you could work for him, rather than having to work out for somebody else, that would probably a better position for you to be in.

TW: Yes, I think it would. However, I'll clarify that a little bit-- that my father, while his father was living did work for a neighbor, And a thing that might rather shock you now, and a thing that was

really very much of a trauma to my father, was that at the end of the week when his wages were due, his father, my father's father, my grandfather, came to the neighbor and collected the wages that my father had earned, and used it to support the family. My father did work for neighbors as a hired man, and through his life, the staunchest friends he had were among these neighbors that he had worked for. And that friendship exists clear down to this day between me and the descendants of one of those neighbors, even though I haven't lived near them since we were in the fourth grade. There is a hired man-neighbor type relationship.

SS: Did your father feel that it was very unfair that your grandfather did that? Or did he expect it? I mean, did he expect that his father would eventually set it right by him?

TW: I don't exactly know how to answer your question, except in this way: That my father never permitted me to work for him but what he paid me wages. And, although, he expected to work for his father for nothing, he felt it was putting it on a little bit thick, I think, when in those few instances when he could be spared from the free labor he contributed at home, long enough to work at a place where he could be paid, I think he would have willingly shared a part of this wage with his family. I think he would have probably resentfully have given it all to his father's family-- I know that he would have like to have got to hold it in his hand for a little while.

SS: I think of the growing and growing up, that there comes a point in time when, at least nowadays, a very well defined period of rebellion against parents, and you set out on your own. I have a feeling that that wasn't quite the same way, although I have heard of that kind of thing happening, where there is just kind of a break for a while.

TW: I think that that happened all the time. Probably happens^{probably still} occurs all the time. I know that there was always-- frequently-- rebellion between one generation and the other. I think it's probably inescapable. But I think we have lost the things that probably now explains why this rebellion is so exaggerated, and in many instances so unjustified now, wherein it wasn't so extreme previously. And that is, that in those more or less primitive days, everyone could see the necessity of the things they were expected to do. Maybe not in infancy, but as they developed and got older, as the case that I pointed out, the wood did look good to me and did feel good to me when I was toasting my shins over it that winter. But, the day that I was unloading it, when I would rather have been doing something else, it didn't look quite that good. (End of side C) A kid that is going to school comes home home to a house where his father is away working, his mother is away working, and there is no chores that this kid has to do. There is nothing to feed. There is no cow to go out and get out of the fields to bring in for milking. There is maybe nothing but a cat, a house cat, a spoiled house cat, to pet or stroke or to greet you when you come home. I've heard my wife speak of a boy who described the dog that he came home to, coming out laughing to greet him. There was something to come home to. And there was something that you were gonna do when you got home. And, I can remember when I was in grade school getting big enough so that as I walked home, I would pass the field where my father was working, and if I hurried, after school let out, maybe ran a little, which I frequently did, I could get to this field before my father would have disappeared from sight on the other side of the field, get there in time, so that I could take his team and drive it around the field until quitting time, and he could go home and rest

or get the cows, which I was getting pretty tired of doing. And, I would feel pretty good about this. I felt pretty big about this. I felt like I was a pretty accomplished person to be trusted out there with a team of six or eight horses. I, at that time, kinda missed the significance of the fact that I was driving a team that had just worked almost a whole day and weren't really much in the mood to run away. But, still, this was part of growing up. I could see the necessity of everything I did. I was learning a skill as I ^{grew} along. I never did, in my life, reach a point where I thought, "Well, here I am, and I don't know anything to do to make a living." I also, was never at the point of so many of the younger people now, that have been educated to a certain point, and they are pretty much afraid that their time is too valuable for them to accept the wage that they can get at the job that is available to them. I knew what these jobs were worth. I didn't expect to get paid the same as as hired man unless I could do the same things the hired man did. One thing along this line, a little incident, ^{it} isn't big by itself, but when I was too little to really be of much help, we harvested grain by binding it into bundles by a machine called a binder; the outgrowth of Cyrus McCormick's reaper. It was a machine that cut and tied-- cut the grain and tied it into ^{sheaves} . Pretty heavy, pretty big. And part of the curing and ripening process of this method of harvest, was that the grain could be cut green, before it shattered out, and then it - these ^{sheaves} had to be stood up on end in a mutually supporting, wigwam shape, which we called a shock. We were shocking grain; shocking bundles. And this is pretty hard work and it required a certain amount of skill. And the first time you do it, they won't stand up, they'll fall down, and that shock isn't shocked, that shock is just a pile

and the rain'll spoil, and you've got to do it over again. And my father paid me, just to get me interested, a penny a shock for shocking these bundles. And, one of the hired men that was shocking about fifteen and twenty of these shocks to my one, said to me, "Is your Dad paying you for this?" And, I said, "Yes, he is." And I told him how much I got. And the hired man said, "God, I wish he'd pay me that much. I'd be getting about fifteen dollars a day." And, you must remember that fifteen dollars a day in those days, was a hell of a lot more money than anybody ever got. It was just like saying, "I'd be a millionaire." And I felt quite a bit of shame at this because I had sort of been hoping for a little word of praise from this hired man that I had pretty much admired. But, that was how you got into-- You didn't really want to be paid for something you didn't do. You wanted to be a person that earned what you got. The hired men, too, felt this way. They took a pride, they wanted to have a reputation of being a good and efficient hired man. And this is the thing that would get them land when they wanted to rent it. They had a reputation in the neighborhood of being this kind of a man. And, lots of people would go a little bit out of their way to push a good deal -- and by that, I mean, a deal is being a good proposition the way of this hired man that had a good reputation. There is a hired man that a neighbor of ours had right down in the Genesee area now, that is in that position. And I don't know if he got his start that way, but I do know the son of his employer that said one ^{time} remarked to me, "There never will be anybody like this hired man again." And this particular hired man has prospered and is a farmer now.

SS: About the hired man: Did most of the farms, yours, and when you were growing up, and the surrounding ones, did most of them have one per-

manent hired man during the year? How was it done? Or would they sometimes have more than one?

TW: All of those ways. Sometimes you had no hired man. Sometimes you had a chore boy, and he might even later become your hired man.

SS: A chore boy?

TW: This would be a boy maybe from one of the towns, or maybe one of the neighbor's kids that would come to the farm and milk the cows, gather the eggs, split the wood and hoe the garden. Do all the odd jobs, run errands and so forth for a wage before he was old enough or big enough to be trusted with a team of horses or the more hazardous work. If he took this job as a chore boy, it might be in his mind, it was with the hopes of becoming a hired man. Or, if he was a boy ^{from} a neighboring town, it might be for the sake of becoming a good hired man.

SS: Would he live at the house?

TW: He would live with you. I remember one time my father was in town, and he happened to be in the hardware store and there was two little kids there, or what he considered little kids, I think eleven and twelve, something like that, and they had run away from home, I believe or maybe more or less left home with the permission of their parents, and ^{their} names stick in my mind. I never knew them by anything but their first names, but the names were Oscar and Tally. And the hardware man - they had run away to the West, you might say, they had run away to the country to get a job. Setting out to seek their fortune! ^{As it was.} And the hardware man said to my dad, "Haven't you got a place, Sherm, that you could use these boys?" And my dad rather reluctantly-- he was a sympathetic man-- with some misgivings, I should say, said, "Well, I think I could use them." And brought these two boys home. They were considerably, and by considerably at that time, I mean, probably two or three or four years older than I was.

And so, here the two kids showed up at our place to be chore boys. And, of course, there wasn't enough supervision to keep two boys of that age busy doing chores, and so, my father contacted a neighbor who thought he could use one or the other. And those boys stayed there quite a while. I don't-- they never did come back to work as hired men, but at least, they got a taste of farm life and probably learned a lot, and I imagine looked back with some pleasure later on to the experiences they had had there, because they were city boys and didn't know anything about the country. This never happened again at our place because-- well, I shouldn't say this because various-- sons of various relatives and so forth, filled this same thing occasionally. Friends' son would come out and do chores for board and room, or for a small wage in order to live on a farm. Chores, after all, you must remember, was considered doing nothing, and it was worth your board and room, if you did enough of it. That's all the farmer got out of his chores was his board, or part of his board, and so why should the hired man have more? He was getting his board, too. So much for the chore boy. They were sometimes from one source, sometimes from another; sometimes it was the lowest rung on the ladder toward becoming a farmer. And, usually, as soon as the farmer's family got big enough his son was the chore boy, and he didn't expect any compensation for it.

SS: You know we were talking about the migrants and we got off the subject of migrant workers. I would really, like to know a little more about them, and what you thought of them. They were different kind of people than the guys who were hired hands and who were more often local.

TW: Yes. That was the distinction you'd have to make; was that they

were a different-- they weren't a local person, although, this body of people that I liked to refer to as the migrant farm worker, you might have people born and raised in your community who were a part of this more or less nebulous work force; the migrant worker. And he might show up at your place or ^a neighbors place or something. ^{You knew him,} he was a neighbor and he was down someplace harvesting, he was up in Canada harvesting, you heard of him, his folks told you about him. But by and large, the men that we meet would be strangers in the first instance and then they might later return year after year when the harvest season came around.

SS: You would frequently have the same ones coming back.

TW: Edward Olson and -- the Norwegian and a man named Johnson, who was the Swede showed up at our place three or four different years. Maybe not consecutively, but one time or another. They had worked in this area before and had worked at a place where they had liked the employer, naturally that would be the first place that they would apply for a job. If the employer they had previously worked for didn't have a job, maybe he could suggest somebody that they would go to for a job. Very seldom was there ever any correspondence ahead of time, or even a phone call, or anything. They just showed up at your gate someday, or you met them in town, and he asked you, "Are you going to need any help this haying, or this harvest." Why, that was how those arrangements were made. Oftentimes, or maybe I shouldn't say oftentimes, but it was not unexpected if a man who had worked for you one time came to your house looking for employment, or to visit you as a friend and stay over night and talk about working and whether he was going to work. These were acquaintances, these were friends. I would like to say, there was no social differences

between you, but I can't say that. There was a feeling of some aloofness between you and this migrant farm worker. True, he ate at your table; he slept in your house or in your bunkhouse, or in your barn; he became well acquainted with the family, but if he was a man that went to town on Saturday night and got drunk, this was none of your business. As long as he did his work, it was none of your business. If the farmer was in the living room discussing things with his family, the hired man somewhat thoughtfully-- the hired man was sensitive enough that he didn't barge into this family room without an invitation or without a reason or without an invitation. Usually he was invited to come in and play cards or whatever you were doing or discussing.

SS: This would be equally true of hired man migrant workers , or more so of migrant workers?

TW: Moreso of migrant worker than the man that you call your hired man. Oftentimes a hired man, the one that I like to think of as the hired man, oftentimes he was just like a member of your family. He was probably closer to you than many of your relatives. And he knew your problems and you knew his. And you sympathized with each other. This was your local the hired man.

SS: So perhaps the farmer would feel free to give him advice or be concerned about his welfare, if he was going into town and maybe didn't seem to be in the best of shape.

TW: Unless the farmer was pretty much one to hit the cups himself, he wouldn't have ever become the hired man, if he did this. There was the distinction between the hired man and the migrant worker.

SS: Well did the migrant worker usually come as a single person, or did he come---?

TW: They sometimes came as a pair of relatives-- of each other, not you.

SS: They didn't travel in groups?

TW: They sometimes did. One time we had a pair of men come. A man and his son-in-law. And they made a point of working at the same place together. And the son-in-law was a splendid worker and my father would have been glad to have kept him. And the father-in-law was probably a burden to this son-in-law, and really didn't hold up his end at all, in my father's estimation. And my father decided not to keep the father-in-law, and the son-in-law, very politely and calmly, with no rancor said, "Well, I'd like to stay, but I can't. I'll have to quit, too." And so they did. And, in my estimation, probably this son-in-law was-- by this method, by doing the most work that he could do, was able frequently to maintain his father-in-law in a job where he would be tolerated because of the virtues of the son-in-law. I think my father appreciated this, but didn't feel that he was in a position to subsidize. He had his own people that he was responsible to.

SS: Well, these men made top wages because they followed the harvest, didn't they?

TW: Yeah. The harvest season was a high paying season. And it was worth every bit they got, but they worked long hours.

SS: Maybe it was a little different then, but my idea for the farm labor force now is that is that they are just really at the bottom, as far as their own social condition is.

TW: This has been-- this viewpoint has been brought about ^{by} several things in my opinion. One, of course, is the Chavez effort to organize farm labor. And, of course, Chavez is talking about the orchard labor and Mexican laborer. And I don't know anything about ^{it} and can't touch on it, because I only know--

SS: Oh, I'm not thinking about now, really. I'm asking you really whether back then, these men were economically---

TW: I think it's a different thing then. One of -- Most of these farm laborers, or many of them, had a hope of accumulating some money. Usually they didn't. They ended-- the thing that destroyed the farm laborer^{area}, in addition to the changing conditions, was the attitude of the draft during World War II toward the person that didn't have a steady job. Somehow, in^{the} type of bureaucratic stupidity that we're faced with so frequently, they never did recognize the migrant farm laborer as being an essential, steady, hardworking man; which he was. To get any kind of a draft deferment, you had to have first of all a steady job. And that right there, destroyed, or probably hastened, the destruction or the end of the migrant farm labor force. Although, the change in the ~~machinery~~^{of} type has done just as much, or more.

SS: I would certainly think-- I mean, if you were to choose, that the hired hand would be preferable to being migrant, although you might get more money as a migrant, place to place, but the changing all the time and the additional problems and all that go in with that, that would be pretty difficult. Although, I do understand that, for example, I've heard about plenty of tramp lumberjacks, too. And I suppose these folks were kind of kin, in a way, because it's a related kind of thing.

TW: I think so. I think though, I made a mistake by calling our laborers migrant farm laborers, because, although this does describe them, it was better to use a separate term and call them the harvest tramps. Because harvest was what they followed. Harvest was what they did. ~~They~~ might work on other jobs when there was no harvest to do. I don't know what. They might have been doing anything. One man worked

at our place, his other field was cutting cloth for clothes, somewhere. This was his background. Others might ^{on occasion} have started as seafaring men part of the time. This is what made them interesting. They might have originated in anything, or they might have other skills that you wouldn't expect. But, the harvest tramp, he harvested. And might do most anything else the rest of the year. But he made this harvest season stretch out for a long time, by moving. There is a distinction between the harvest man and the lumberjack, although, oftentimes it was one and the same man. He might have done one for a while and he might have done the other for a while. Some of them mined. On our place, we've had miners that had quit mining and taken up this other life outside of the earth, rather than underneath. They might have quit mining for this very reason, that they got tired of it. There was one man that worked for us, one of the last migrant type workers that worked for us, his name was Buck Lewis, Red Lewis; had a very good sense of humor, and he was describing some of the work that he had done other than farming. And, he described some mining that he had done down in Southern California, I believe it was in earth that was not like rock, you bored holes in it with an auger. And I having seen Calico in Southern California, I presume it was in an area like this, kind of an earthy rock or soil, and told me of how much he made there. Which was about three times what he was getting at our place. And it would be like, now, a man that here might be working for three dollars an hour, putting it in the modern time and wage scale, I would say, suppose he were working at our place at three dollars an hour right now, and he would in conversation have said to me, "Well, I was making fifteen dollars an hour." Or, "I was making ten dollars an hour, and I couldn't afford

to fritter away my time like that, so I quit." Now that is the only explanation he ever gave to me as to why he had quit mining and started moving from farm to farm. Incidentally, this man had worked at our place two different times, and one time, this was during the depth of the Depression, I offered him-- my father was dead by this time-- I offered him a chance to stay there all winter if he wanted to help me chore around, doing nothing, again. And we spent an enjoyable winter together, with him in our family. And here's an instance ^{of a} farm laborer that just fit right in, just like the hired man would have. He was the hired man there when he was out our place. And, I think perhaps the thing that endeared him to us, was his sense of humor, which my family shared with anyone who exposed it. I'll give you just a few little incidents, although this is far from being history, it did happen back in the Depression days, so that's quite a little while ago, ^{the '30's} for ^{the}. And along with this choring around and doing nothing, that we did, there for quite a long period of time every day when the weaather would permit, we would drive to town with a team of horses-- two teams of horses-- and two sleds and get a load of feed for all these animals and haul it ^{out} to fill the feedbins so that we would have a pair when work started in the spring and we had to use these horses in the field. You don't feed horses grain unless you're working them, and this was in preparation to getting ready to work the horses, although these that were doing the hauling, they got grain, but the ^{or fellow} horses that were going to eat it in the summer didn't get to eat it in the winter. And, this was in real cold weather when the sledding was good, and it was darn cold, and we were going to or from town, I got off and walked as you frequently do when you're driving horses and ^{are} cold, why, you walk, to keep warm. And, Buck said

to me as I was doing this, he says, "Well, I'll sit here and freeze like a man before I'll get off and walk like a dog!" Another thing that might be a little sidelight on some of these lighter moments, he had one bad habit, he chewed Copenhagen. This was almost a common habit to most farm workers; harvest tramps. Smoking would be almost forbidden. They most all of them chewed tobacco or chewed Copenhagen for a vice. And this man was helping me build a machine shed that winter, and so, he was up on a ladder nailing some boards on and with his mouth full of nails, when I heard him mumbling through these nails, "Now, Goddam you, you would want a chew of ^{snuff} (snuff)." (Chuckles) I can't remember too many of these little incidents.

SS: He sounds like a very humorous guy.

TW: This is just typical of a relationship, that more often than not-- I should say every time it was possible, occurred between the farmer and his employee, where you could. It lightened the day, it made it easier, it made it a pleasure. I think this is probably typical of what happened in many farm families, although, as a farmer's son, I never worked but very little as a hired man, and so, I can only speak firsthand of my own farm-- my father's farm-- and maybe of some of the close neighbors. ^{But it} would be typical of those. ^{That experience.}

SS: It sounds like when things were ideal, as you say, but the better relationships, you put all the differences aside and there was just a comradery between the people to get work done.

TW: It's, as I have tried to point out to a man that doesn't want to work for somebody else, he resents working for somebody else; I told him, "Look at it this way. You're fighting a common enemy, you're allies." A thing that I have felt, and I think that these hired men felt, was the hired man performs a service for his employer, and the employer

performs a service for his hired man. You provide him the tools of production, and he provides ^{you} the man to run them. You guarantee him an income and he helps you try to win one at a more chancy game. I wish that there better relations all through labor and management. Relations that parallel this because this is a situation that does exist. And it is one that is not to the interest of the managements of labor unions to foster. I have seen an instance or two where I think the answer to it would be cooperative enterprises, where the labor force are the stockholders and some of the stockholders are the management, where it is mutually shared.

END

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