

EUGENE SETTLE
Second Interview

Interviewed by:
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Oral History Project
Latah County Museum Society

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EUGENE SETTLE

rural Moscow; b. 1894

farmer; warehouse superintendent for county grain growers 2 hours

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that the South had become a good place to live. Prejudice in the South. Advances of a people depend on bloodshed. Northern segregation is a result of poverty and housing patterns.

- 15 23 Some people around Moscow didn't like him because he was black. His father told him not to run from fights, and he roughed up people who gave him a bad time. A drunk boy accused him of trying to steal his girl at Eggan's Hall.
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- 00 28 Method of baling hay. How father began baling for others. Seeing the country. Gas engines got father out of business. Alfalfa was fed to the cattle, wheat to horses.
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- 18 34 Wife's father came from South Carolina and farmed at Madeira, Cal. He bought bunchgrass prairie from the railroad at Dodge, Washington. He plowed and seeded the entire 160 acres, and paid off the place in a year. After acquiring 1300 acres he suffered dry years and finally moved to Oakesdale and tried to start over. After the Settles married they lived out their lives with them. Father could have gotten a prairie homestead if he'd known about it.
- 25 36 Timber claims in the Bovill country. Mr. Wilson (of the seed company) got his start by proving up on a timber claim.
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July 7, 1975
with Sam Schragger

II. Transcript

EUGENE SETTLE

This second interview with Eugene Settle takes place at his home in Moscow, Idaho on July 7, 1975. (Sam Schrager)

EUGENE SETTLE: Well, I was pretty young.

SAM SCHRAGER: Well, how old were you? going on

ES: Well, I was about twenty-two, twenty-three when I went in. But I was real small, I only weighed about a hundred and twenty-eight pounds, stripped. So, you see, there wasn't much of me, at that age.

SS: How did you happen to enlist?

ES: I was drafted. Yeah, I went to Spokane to enlist. I had a friend who was in the navy, he was a fireman. He enlisted as a fireman and after he went in, he kept writing to me to come on and enlist in the navy as a fireman and we might be lucky enough to get on the same boat. So in October '17, I went up to enlist, and they took me alright, but they couldn't put me in what I wanted to get in, because I wasn't heavy enough. I think you had to weigh a hundred, I think a hundred and thirty-five, stripped, to enlist as a fireman, and I only weighed a hundred and twenty-eight. But they told me I could go in in what branches there was, and (if) I gained weight, why then I could ~~transfer~~ ^{transfer} fireman. But I didn't do it. I didn't do it, I just thought well, I come on home and wait^{ed} for the draft about six months later. And I was in Camp Lewis about, long enough to get my shots. I was there just about a month, six weeks maybe. And I was transferred to Camp Funston.

SS: Camp what--?

ES: Camp Funston, Kansas to help make up another outfit that was ready to go overseas. And so we went over there from Camp Funston to Camp Mer-rit and was there about three days and we went overseas. Then we went overseas and went up to Verdun. The Battle of Verdun was over with but

it was still smoldering around there. And that's where they split us all up. Some of the boys moved over to a replacement outfit, some of the guys they put in the ammunition train and some went in-- transferred to different branches of the service. And you take-- there was a hundred-- about a hundred and sixty of us guys that went to Camp Lewis-- we hadn't had any training you might say at all-- that is, we drilled alright, but a lot of the guys hadn't been on a rifle range. Some of those kids out of the city, you know, they never saw a gun, you might say, until they got out there. But they divided us up. They'd take some of the guys--- and some of them they sent to ammunition train and one thing and another. Of course, I was one of the guys-- they sent me and about fifteen or twenty other fellows, we went out to a little town to do some advanced training. And so we went out there and took our gas mask training and some rifle and pistol training. And then along about in October, the latter part of October, then they called us up. They called us up to join our outfits. We was just getting just about bogged down up there, ^{towards the end of the war,} water, rain and mud, they needed reinforcements and they was calling up ^{pret'near} everybody behind the lines then. So that's when I went up. And I didn't have to go then, my lieutenant told me, "You don't have to go." But, I wanted to go, so I went. And we got up there in the Argonne Woods, and we was up there-- we was supposed to have got up there on the evening of the 10th-- no, I guess it was the 9th, because the next day we was in there, they dispersed us ammunition, tents. They issued us ammunition and inspected ^{our} dogtags and everything, and we was supposed to go in on the night of the 11th. And the morning of the 11th the Armistice was signed, so you see how close I missed it. Instead of going in, that night we turned around, they turned us around and started us-- well, it was on the night of the 10th-- the evening of the 11th, they turned us around. We was to go in that

night, and instead of going ahead, they just give us about face and started us on back again, and the Armistice was signed the next morning.

SS: How did you feel about missing the combat? Were you relieved?

ES: Well, I kind of wanted to get in. I got under artillery fire, but I never got under--- I'd kind of liked to have got under fire. I was glad I got ^{up} as close as I did. ^{I'll tell ya} When I got in the army, I wanted to get in combat, and I wanted to get wounded, so I could have a Purple Heart. That was my desire, I never did think I was gonna get killed. I didn't feel that way about it, I never did think they was gonna kill me! But I wanted to get wounded and that's why I could get a Purple Heart!!

SS: Were the chances pretty good of that if you got in combat?

ES: Oh, yeah, I think so. Pretty good. 'Course, when we was up there, when we was up there just before the Armistice was signed--it was a running battle, you know. The Germans was all in retreat and we was after 'em. And in the Argonne ~~the~~ woods there, they would put a machine gun nest ^{skeleton} over here and one over here, just [^] behind 'em to hold us back, see, while the main army was getting away. That's the way they did it. They'd have probably five or six men there fighting a whole company with machine guns. And, of course, they tell me [^] that we was losing about six men to one at that rate, because they was covering so many of us with so few of them, with machine guns. So, I don't know, I might have got a Purple Heart and ^{not ever have} never been able to wear it!! ^{Of course} Because lots of them got rifle wounds too, as far as that's concerned, but the biggest majority of the wounded was from shrapnel.

SS: What was it like in the camps there? The army camps in Europe?

ES: Well, I'll tell you. We got into Brest, France and it was raining and they put us out there, just building the camp there at Brest when I got in there, September. And it was just a mud hole. We got in there one

evening and we slept in the mud that night and the next night they had the barracks finished enough so we could get in out of the mud. And we just got into it and got our wet blankets spread out on the floor and then the officer stepped in there and said, "Be ready to roll in half an hour." So I didn't get to spend no night in no camp. But after the Armistice I came back as far as Brest-- not Brest, but Longuyon, France. We followed the Army of Occupation that was going up on the Rhine, we followed them back to Longuyon, France, that's just out of Belgium. We camped there, and that's where I spent the winter of 1919. I thought I was gonna get to come home, but I didn't. So, there was one company of-- 139th Infantry there-- there was a veterinary company there, they had a lot of wounded and gassed horses there they was doctoring. And there was a company-- there was three companies there-- two companies of American soldiers, one infantry outfit, one veterinary outfit and one French company there. But the French company didn't stay there all winter, they just stayed there 'til after Christmas and I imagine they went home. That's about the only camp I was in. I spent the winter there. It was pretty good. We had pitched barracks and it wasn't too bad.

SS: What about the time when you were on advanced training?

ES: When I was on advanced training over there, we stayed in a little French village and where we was, we slept in sheds and barns there in the country. My quarters was up overhead in an attic over a French home, where I stayed. Four of us stayed there. We did guard duty every night there. The road went right through this little village and we had to guard the entrance to the village all the time. ^{The officer} He just had to walk from one end of it to the other to see what was going on, you know. ^{He had to visit} Each guard post ~~supposed to~~ every hour. And so that's all we did. And then they practiced putting on gas masks. We had a chamber, ^{a tunnel} full of gas and then we'd

have to put on our gas masks and go through it and train that way. It was a pretty soft life.

SS: For the middle of the war.

ES: Yes, for the middle of the war.

SS: Was the company integrated?

ES: No. No, it was all black.

SS: Were the officers black, too?

ES: No, most all of the officers were white. All white. About the only black officers I saw while I was over in France, they were on the medical staff or dental, something like that. Doctors. But the officers-- I don't believe-- I know there wasn't any in our outfit. There was-- I think in what they called the-- what they called the Quartermaster Corps. I believe in the Quartermaster Corps, I think they had black officers. They didn't do nothing, they unloaded ships and stuff like that, you know. I think there was some ^{black} officers in the Quartermaster Corps.

SS: Where did most of the guys come from? Were they Westerners?

ES: Well, no. The outfit I was in, most of 'em were from Texas. I went from here to Camp Lewis, and of course, the boys I was with in Camp Lewis was from Montana, Idaho and California. Most of 'em was from California. And then when we left Fort Lewis and went to Camp Funston, Kansas; that's when the Texas ^{troops} ~~guys~~ from Camp Travis, Texas was up there. They were ready to go over, ^{but} they wasn't up to fighting strength, you know, so they took a hundred and fifty of us up here at Camp Lewis ^{over there} to fill 'em in. And then after we got filled in-- we just-- We started out on rifle range there one morning and we hadn't got very far --and we got called ^{back to get ready to sail} and we went from there to Camp Merritt, New Jersey.

SS: Did you know when you were going in there that that's the way that it was? That it wasn't going to be integrated?

ES: Yeah, yeah, I knew that. I knew that before I went in. When I was drafted here, it came out in the paper that I would be sent to-- I wouldn't ^{be able to} go with the Moscow boys because ^{they had me} ~~I would be~~ sent to some camp in the South. Some of 'em tried to do something about it, but it didn't work out. So it worked out pretty well for me, anyway. I got in a pretty good outfit, the 139th Infantry, what little time I was up ^{at the} front. And then when that was over, a bunch of guys come in from the last draft I guess, ^{they brought them over there,} and they were dismantling airplanes and stuff like that and tearing down buildings. And so I was transferred over there in the spring. The main division that I was with, they came home the first of the year, you see, and these guys like myself that got in there late-- and I was a ~~sergeant~~ ^{some} noncom officer with this new bunch that come in, so I got pulled into that. then we went out to Romaines (?) ^{doing} France, had a big German prison camp there, guard duty. And when I was out there-- I was not there but a little while, and I was a pretty good athlete in school, and then they started to get up a track team and so I got on the track team. From March 'til the First of July I didn't do nothing but just travel all over France, wherever there was American troops, this track team went. On Decoration Day in 1919 I ran in a relay race from Chateau ^{Thierre} to Paris and the race ended at the Arch of Triumphe (?) in Paris and I ran the last three miles. That was on Decoration Day, 1919. And so, they called us back about the First of July. They was gonna release the prisoners. I went back to the company and on the fifth of July, we broke camp and started ^{for} home. And I got home-- landed in the United States, back ~~to~~ American soil on August the fifth, 1919. That was quite a year to remember.

SS: What kind of impressions did you have of the French? What did they think of us?

ES: Well, (Laughter) some of the soldiers they didn't think too much of ^{us}.

Well, of course, they had plenty of money and they was kinda-- I think they thought they was a little better than anybody else. But they treated us good. I liked the French people.

SS: You say our boys did, or the French thought they were better?

ES: Our boys did. 'Course they thought the American army was the best paid army in the world to them. The French didn't get anything. They'd get pretty rowdy sometimes. We got along pretty good, though.

SS: How did the family feel about having people living in their attic?

ES: Oh, they didn't object to that. They was very nice, very nice, ^{where I was anyway.} We didn't have to go through the house, they just put a ladder up on the outside and went up ^{that} to the attic. ^{You take} nights when I was on guard duty-- I noticed there was always --I see a little light in the back of the house all the time-- and they didn't allow much light there, you know. We was back of the lines quite a ways, but we had to be awful careful with the lights, you know. I'd have to walk right past this place where I was staying, and seems like I could see just a little dim glow of light back there. ^{I wondered what it was all about} And that night, the early morning, when I got off of guard duty and I started up the ladder, this old French lady she come out and took me by the arm and took me in the back end of the room there, she had some milk and bread for me when I got off of shift. Very nice old lady. That old French bread was pretty hard to beat.

SS: What about the guys that you were with in your unit?

ES: Well, I'll tell you. I had more trouble with them than anybody. I just couldn't-- hard for me to adjust myself to their way of doing things. I take a drink but I'm not a drinker and never was. And ^I never was a rowdy. I was always taught to respect. So they was kind of out of my line. It was ^{kind of} hard ^{Me being a black.} to adjust myself there. ^I I never was around 'em any I left-- my parents came out here when I was five years old. So I never was around any black people outside of my family until I was--

Oh, I guess I was in high school, I went to Spokane a time or two and met some people up there, but-- So it was quite a shock to me. ^{to try to get on.} And then I'll tell you another thing that I found out after-- there was always a division point-- After we went over, these hundred and fifty that went from Camp Lewis to Camp Funston, Kansas, ^{and} met these guys from Camp Travis, some of 'em had been in the army over a year--they were all black, but there's always kind of a division point between the Western boys and those that come from the South. And I found that out. My brother, my youngest brother, he finished college here in '29. He left high school as soon as he got enough credits to get in college-- he didn't really graduate, he just ^{as he} soon got enough credits and he quit, went to college and took a short course, dairy course, and then he went out and worked in creameries all over the country. Worked up at Sandpoint for quite a while and after he worked at that two or three years, then he decided to come back and finish college and he come back and finished college. And he finished in '29. And then he got a job at Virginia State College at Petersburg, Virginia. They took him on as assistant professor there, he just had a BS. And so he came back the next year and went to WSU and got his Masters, and then he got a little better job. Then the next summer he went to Cornell, started to work on his PhD. He never did finish his PhD. He finished everything but his thesis; He never did get his thesis. They call ^{ed} him Doctor Settle all the time, But he never did get his thesis wrote.

SS: That happens to a lot of people. Get everything done but that.

ES: He passed away before he ever got it finished at Cornell.

SS: He stayed there at Cornell?

ES: No, he just went there in the summertime, worked on his PhD. No he was

teaching at Virginia State College at Petersburg, Virginia. But he went to school in Cornell in the summer months, that's ^{where} he was working on his PhD, at Cornell.

SS: But when you started talking about him you were talking about the difference between Southerners and Westerners.

ES: Oh, yeah. Then he bought a big ranch down there at Petersburg, Virginia. Six hundred and sixty-seven acres, I believe it was in this place. And he was quite a stockman. Course animals was what he was teaching, see. And he had some purebred stock. And don't you know it was hard for him to get help out on his farm there? Because he was a Yankee. Yeah they didn't like him. ^{that's the truth} Well, I was down there, I guess it was 1962, I was down there. That was my first trip down there, he had a stroke in the spring, so that fall I flew down to visit him. I was out there on his farm and a couple of old Virginia Mountaineers-- he raised shorthorn cattle on his farm out there-- and they come down there, they wanted to buy a heifer out of his strain, and they came down there, and I was there and he hadn't got out there yet, I was out there. He was having some work did on his house and he had me out there, I was kind of supervising it for him. Two old bachelors, they came down out of the hills up there and they wanted this heifer, they was looking for Doctor Settle, and I told 'em he wasn't here yet. I said, "I'm his brother." "Well," he said, they didn't think I would know anything about it, but he had a heifer that they were interested in, they wanted some of the same bloodlines. And so, we talked there a while and ^{pretty soon} my brother came and they went out to the barnyard to look at the heifer-- cattle. And of course, my brother'd been down there-- that was in '62-- and he's been down there since '29-- and one of these old guys asked him who I was. He told 'em I was his brother from-- "Well," he said, told him if he wanted to do any business with ^{they better} them ^{get rid of him.}

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You go down there ^{and} as soon as they open their mouth, they know you don't belong there. They knew I didn't belong there. It's kind of surprising, but it's true. And he tried to get different families to move out there on his place and work for him, they didn't want to do it.

SS: 'Cause they knew he was a Yankee?

ES: Yeah, uh-huh. When I was down there, he didn't have no trouble 'cause he was a Southerner then. (Chuckles) And you stay there very long you'll acquire that drawl, too, My brother ^{down} ^{little bit too.} Anyway, they had adopted him by that time. (End of Side A)

SS: When you were over there in Europe did you find that you had a harder time with the guys in your troop because you were a Westerner and not a Southerner?

ES: Well, as I say, there's kind of a little division, but I had a little rough time, in a know that way. I had a rough time in this way: I had two strikes against me. I was a-- In the company, the outfit, I was a Westerner, and I was about one of the smallest guys in the outfit, and I was a sergeant, too, and you know-- it kind of made a difference. They didn't like me giving 'em orders too well, but that didn't bother me any. I didn't let that worry me. I give 'em just the same and I got 'em done, but there was some of 'em didn't like it, but there wasn't much they could do about it. I wasn't overbearing to anybody. I just did my job and that was it. Whether you was from the South or whether you was from the West, it didn't make no difference to me. I treated 'em all alike, I didn't show no partiality to nobody, just did my job. And for most cases I was pretty well liked. When they told me I didn't have to go to the front, 'Course I wanted to go anyway, and that gave me a pull. the guys that were with me, they just put up such a howl about me not going.

SS: Why were they saying you didn't have to go?

ES: They thought I was too young. They didn't ^{think} I was ^{about} over sixteen.

SS: Did you think that the Westerners were more independent than the Southerners? Or wasn't there any difference like that?

ES: Well, I don't know that there much difference. The only thing I would say, it seemed to me that it was just the other way around. I don't know whether it was the general attitude of the Southerners, but just because those guys ^{was} from Texas, he figured if he was from Texas, there was nothing that compared to Texas, ⁱⁿ no way shape nor form. If you're from Texas, why ^{heck} you're a top cat!! (Chuckles) As ^{far} as Idaho, they didn't know Idaho was on the map. ^{And the same way about Wash}

You say anything about Washington, they'd say Washington, D.C.. It's a funny deal, they know about Montana, but Idaho and Washington they don't know nothing about it. Idaho was just a complete loss. If you'd say anything about Washington, they'd think you were talking about Washington, D.C.! But they all knew about Montana. When you'd say about Montana, they knew about Montana, but they didn't know about Washington and Idaho. Washington was Washington, D.C., and Idaho just didn't exist.

SS: That doesn't surprise me, it's still pretty bad. In the East they don't know.

ES: Yes it is. 'Course I always knew about it. When I was down there, I guess it was in '62 I was down there. I wanted to buy a pair of shoes. My brother and I, and we was up in Richland, Virginia, a big department store there, and I was getting a pair of shoes, and of course, as I say a while ago, as soon as you open your mouth they know you don't belong there. ^{Naturally} About the next thing they want to know is where you're from. So I was buying a pair of shoes there, and the fellow, I paid him for it, and he says, he asked me if I was an educator and I told him no, I'm just here-- was I from the college down there and I told him no. 'Course,

naturally-- "you just down here visiting are you?" and I told him, "Yes, that's my brother, down here with my brother at the college over there, and I'm down here visiting him." Then he wanted to know where I was from. I told him I was from Idaho. "Oh," he says, "my son-in-law isn't from Idaho, but he's right close to it." I said, "Where's he from, Montana?" And he said, "no." "Washington?" And he said, "No." "Oregon?" and he said, "No." "Wyoming?" "No." He studied a little while and then he said, "He's from Nebraska." (Chuckles) "Well," I said, "he's got quite a little ways to go yet to get to Idaho." (Laughter) Well, I'll tell you, after you cross the Mississippi River down there, you lose a lot of those Southerners. You're in wide open spaces.

SS: Well even Texas is the West as much as it's the South.

ES: Yes, it is, yes. Texas is considered as the Southwest. Yes, that was twelve months-- quite an experience for me.

SS: Did you feel that you grew up a lot while you were over there?

ES: Yeah, I did. There was a kid in our outfit, he was from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and he was a mixture of Negro and French, a Creole, they called themselves, and he spoke French, but he didn't speak the-- the French could understand him, but it wasn't quite the way they speak it as their native tongue-- the Creole, they spoke it in a little different tongue than they speak in France. He was on the track team, too. And he and I we was walking down the street one day, and so we made a stop at a French cafe, sidewalk cafe, and there was a black girl setting at a table there; and of course, we thought this kid he could speak French, and he asked her if we could sit down there. And we sit down there, and, of course he got to talking to this girl in French, you know. And pretty soon come to find out that she could speak better English than he could! (Chuckles) She'd been educated in London; she spoke very fluent English, so we talked there quite a lit-

tle while, and she told us that she felt that she was superior to us-- to the American Negro, she was from Algiers, she was from Africa anyway, but anyway she told us, that the African blacks, they felt that they were superior to the American Negro for the simple reason that the American Negro^{es} parents had been slaves. I wanted to tell her, but I didn't, "The only reason yours wasn't, they didn't catch yours." She thought she was pretty hot stuff! Well, I don't begrudge anybody that's got any pride, 'cause I think pride's the spice of life, if you don't have any pride there's not much to you. Yeah, that's a year for me to remember, that year in the army.

SS: It's too bad that you ^{still} had to feel superior to somebody else.

ES: Yes, --

SS: Sounds like the same old story.

ES: But there's very few people, I don't care, black or white, that ~~the~~ spent a year in France and got away with it as easy as I got it. I pretty near got what I wanted to get, and then didn't get-- Oh, I had my lot of hardships, nothing like a lot of the fellows had. 'Course, I got lots of travel-- ^{it was educational-} I saw what it was like on the front and I saw what it was like all over France. I got a good education. I can tell you what it's like on the front lines, I wasn't right up in 'em, but I was close enough I knew just what was going on there, and behind the lines, and about getting the ammunition up there. And how the French people back of the lines were living in villages and towns, and I just got a good history of the whole business. As I told you before, I was hoping that I'd get on the line and get wounded so I could get-- have a Purple Heart, but I didn't do that. But after I retired and went down here to Boise to take my examination for my army pension, I had a wart on this hip here, on this side of my buttocks here, and be-

fore I went in the service I don't know what I was getting examined for, but anyway the doctor noticed it there and he says, "Well, you watch that and if that starts to grow you'd better have it taken off." So when I got out of the service I thought it had growed some; anyway ^{when} I went down there to the Veterans' Hospital for examination, and I thought well, might be a good time to have that taken off. So they was x-raying me all over and they found that wart there and I told 'em I was going to have it taken off. Wanted to know-- there's something in my hip there--wanted to know if I'd been wounded and I told 'em not that I knew of. "Well", he said, "there's something in there, ^{pretty close to the hip bone,} maybe we'd better take it out, find out what it is, because if it works into your hip socket there it's liable to cause a lot of trouble." So when they took that wart off they just went on down and got it, and it was a little piece of steel. And I don't know how ^{or} when I got it. But I remembered after I got back out of the Argonne, and on that hip there was just a little patch of blood in my underwear about as big as a quarter there, but I didn't think much about it, 'course we was always getting in bobwire (barbwire) and one thing and another. But that night after we left--when they turned us around and started us back -- going up to the front in the night-- they turned us around-- we marched back and stayed all night in a little place, a little ^{old} village there--and there was a big crater there that was full of water there where a bomb had dropped, and so there was live ammunition and hand grenades all around the place there, so we ^{got to} taking the hand grenades and throw^{ing} em in that water--and you know hand grenades is deathly in a radius of sixteen feet any direction from it-- that's what we was taught in the army. You was just about the same as a dead man if you were within sixteen fet of one and it explodes. We was throwing them in that pond, exploding them, you see, and I just think that probably I got a little piece of shrapnel from that, is where I

got that in my hip. And I know a feller got hit just above the eye there and if it had been just a little bit lower it would have been right in his eyeball, got hit right in the eyebrow there. And so I think that's where I got that steel in my hip. I think I got just a little fragment there.

SS: Would that have qualified you for a Purple Heart?

ES: Well, (Chuckles) I'll tell you though. The first thing we got in up there in the woods and they kept us over to examine our dogtags and give us our final rundown before we went in--- see that we all had the right amount of ammunition and we all had our dogtags and all that-- that evening we got in there and we wasn't going in-- the next night's when we was supposed to go in--and a shell dropped in camp that night not too close to me, but ^{it was} close enough to me so that I just got a-- when the mud come falling down I just got a big shower of mud. But it wasn't close enough to our company-- I think there was one or two boys got hurt pretty bad. If I'd a been in that outfit, been close enough to get a piece of shrapnel from that shell, that would have qualified me for a Purple Heart. But the only thing I got hit with was mud!

SS: Well, I got to ask you why you wanted a Purple Heart so bad.

ES: Well, I just felt like that was something to show that I had been in ~~in~~ the service. That was it more than anything else. But I'm telling you though, since I've been out of the war, and there's another World War, and I have heard so much about this Purple Heart business, the way they give 'em for this thing and another-- and some of the guys wearing Purple Hearts from self-inflicted wounds, you know, they got 'em, I don't feel that way any more. But ~~when~~ ^{is} I see a guy with a Purple Heart the first thing I think, "How'd you get it, did you shoot yourself in the foot, or how." That's the way I feel about it now; about a

Purple Heart.

SS: Did the kind of work that you guys did in your troops, was that different than-- was it different in kind from the work that the white troops were doing?

ES: Well, of course, they were-- it's like I say--the Quartermaster Corps there at Brest-- I think there was some white there, too-- that's all they did, they unloaded ships. See the 92nd Division that I was supposed to ^{ve} ^{en} be in, they're engineers--they were not combat engineers-- they were stationed there at Brest-- they was the ones that was building those barracks there for the Quartermaster Corps, and they was unloading ships and building barracks and doing all that kind of work. And then there was Labor Battalions. There was ^{there} coming Labor Battalions--well, they called 'em Pioneer Infantry, was what they called 'em--of course, they was some black and they had some white, too. Pioneer Infantry. They worked behind the lines doing different things and building roads and such as like that. And then they had-- the French had Chinese battalions working, they was on their own, I guess for the money that was in it--they wasn't in army uniform though-- they was just working for the French. They built roads and that. But the 139th Infantry and the 92nd Division, that was all black combat outfit. The 92nd--outside of the 91st Engineers-- the 92nd Engineers-- they weren't ^{was} combat engineers, they was road building and stuff like that-- engineers-- carpenters and such as that. They did that, they wasn't in combat. But the rest of the ^{Division} and the 139th Infantry, where they put me into after I got through my basic training, that was all combat. And outside of those two outfits, that's the only two outfits that I know of in France that were combat-- the 139th and the 92nd Divisions-- excluding the engineers. They wore the same insignia as the 92nd Engineers, they wore the same insignia-- they never went to

the front, they stopped there at Brest and they started building barracks and unloading ships and they got a nice place after we came back home through there. They sure built it up awful nice. And where they went from there-- whether they left there and went home or not, I don't know. I imagine they did.

SS: Did local fellows really make a try for you to be able to stay with them in your troops? Their troop? Did you say that?

ES: Oh, yes, that is the fellows I was working with, when I got my final training over there, before we was called up-- they didn't want to see me leave the outfit, they wanted--

SS: I was talking before, you were saying that in Moscow before you went in--

ES: Oh, yes, yes, they was some of the fellows they tried to get a petition up for me to go with the kids ^{that had} I went to school with here. We had a fellow--in the Courthouse, Deputy Assessor up there-- he went to bat for me--tried to get-- they didn't like it-- But, of course, in the high school here I played football with the kids and one thing and another.

And they thought it was no more than fair -- why that I should have to-being raised here--why I'd have to separate myself--why I couldn't go on and fight
But that was the law, so-- with the rest of the boys.

SS: I wonder during the Civil War if it was that way for the Northern troops? Do you know?

ES: Well, I don't know. That's something that I don't know and I've thought of it too, quite a bit, ^{at this time.} To tell the truth about it, I don't really believe that there was-- there was lots of blacks in the Civil War, but I don't know whether there was any special company or special regiment or not. Now that I don't know. That's something to look into. I just really don't know about it.

SS: I don't know either.

ES: I just don't know.

SS: Well, one thing I've heard in Moscow, in the early days, which surprised me, was that the hotel was segregated. You know, they wouldn't let blacks stay in Moscow Hotel.

ES: Yeah, that's true. Well, that's, of course-- I wouldn't doubt that a bit. 'Course as long as I've been around Moscow here, ^{that I know anything} it hasn't been-- but in the early days I imagine it was. Probably could have been when we first came here-- ^{it probably was, I don't know to find out,} 'Course, we didn't live in town, we lived out in the country and I didn't know what was going on and I never heard my folks say anything about it. But I know this-- I know here-- oh, this was in, I believe it was in the '40's, ^I think it was in the '40's-- when I started to work for Latah County Grain Growers here, I know there was a fellow here, he was a railroad man-- and I can't figure out why it was, but, anyway, he had three or four black fellows working for him, on whatever he was doing, I don't know what-- and I know that he was a veteran and he had been to one of our veteran meetings and I had met him. And after that he was through here again, and he had these black-- he was working for the railroad, now what he was doing, I don't know, but he had two or three black boys of ^{responsible for his men} course he was. He came around here where I was at work one afternoon, when I was working-- and he asked me, he says, "'Gene, where do you eat at here in Moscow?" And I said, "What do you mean?" "I mean, which restaurant do you patronize when you go out for dinner?" "Well," I says, "First one then the other, I don't have no particular one." "Well," he says, "why I asked. I sent the boys to I don't know which one--whether ^{the} Varsity was running then or not, it was along in there. And," he said, "they served them but they acted liked they just as soon not serve them." And that was in the '40's. I think that was in the '40's 'cause I started to work the Grain Growers in ^{before I came to live in Moscow} '41. So, I wouldn't doubt it, I imagine there was prejudices that way reached a lot further than the south.

But, 'course ... here in Moscow, as far as I was concerned I never did experience any of it. Because, as I say, by the time I came to Moscow and started ^{to restaurants} going, ^{Course} I never went to the-- The first time that I was ever in the Moscow Hotel, that is, upstairs-- I think I was telling you before, about that colored boy come down here to go to school and died-- that his mother was about the first black woman to graduate, ^{from the University of Idaho} and then sent her son down here. Well, the first time I believe I was ever up there was after this kid died, his ^{mother} came down after the body, and she was staying at the Moscow Hotel then. So my sister and I, we went down to the hotel and saw her. I think that was the first time. 'Course, I didn't get a room there, but that's the first time I was ever upstairs. So, I wouldn't be surprised.

SS: Have there ever been times in your life here or out ⁱⁿ the country when people have given you a hard time because of it?

ES: No. I've never-- Now you take it when I started to high school here I was the only Black in the school system. Well, of course, the first morning I went to school, all the eyes was focused on me, naturally. That I expected. But I met one kid that I knew-- I met him the first day; and then when we went up for assembly, the principal was a man by the name of Otis Randa, ¹¹ and he lived out northeast of town here and he had a little farm out there, just the other side of where we did, and I knew him casually; I knew who he was, you might say. He used to walk past our place and ^{we} ^{ed} ^{him} talk to us some. And so he got up, and he had assembly that morning and he spoke about getting along with people and treating your fellow students, something about regardless of ^{his} race or creed or something--- (End of side B) The fellow that was teaching that, I knew him, he used to teach out in the country and I knew him, and so I met this kid that I used to know-- that I had met previously-- and

so we got along. And it seems like as soon as the kids found out that I walked and talked and breathed just the same as they did, why, then ~~it~~ ^{it wasn't long before} I got to be a very popular student in the Moscow High School. They invited me out for track and I did pretty well in football. And I got along just real good. Just as soon as they found out that I walked and breathed the same as anybody else, why,-- of course, there was always some kind of ~~scam~~ ^{stand back,} but there was so many more that didn't, that I never noticed it, so I got along real good in school here. And always have in Moscow here. After coming out here in the early days as we did, we never had any particular trouble that I know of. The worst setback that I got ever in my life since I've been old enough to know anything, and that's when I had to go to a segregated ^{army} unit. That ^{is} the worst setback I've got since I've been ~~back~~ was that. That really got under my skin. It's like I tell my wife now, 'course the army isn't segregated now and they have trouble once in a while, I tell her I think that's-- I tell her I don't think that would ever bother me any, I could go in an all white army, ^{just as good.} I think I could get along with 'em. But, of course, you take these Southern guys, they have a chip on their shoulder, and they have a little different attitude than I have. So, in a way, I blame those for it, just as much as I do the whites, just as bad. Because I've lived here all my life, ^{among} nobody but whites all my life, and I can't say that I've ever had trouble. The same as if I went into the army, all white army, I don't think I'd have any trouble. And I've never let nobody run over me either. But I don't go around with a chip on my shoulder. I see a letter from ^{the Troy} ~~A~~ bank, I'm wondering if maybe I got a check in here.

SS: There's no harm in trying. (Laughter) But I would think that in the South where it's been all segregation for so long, it would be pretty tough. It would seem that you wouldn't have a very good chance if you were black.

ES: Well, I'll tell you, I've thought of that too. Now, as I told you, I've got a brother who was born in the West, never been out of Moscow, you might say, until after he went South to teach in that school, down there in '39. Now he was a Western black boy went down in the deep South to teach. He bought himself a farm and he taught down there until he died in '67. And he left an estate down there ^{worth anyway} a quarter of a million dollars. And he went down there when you drive into a gas station and they'd fill your gas tank and take your money, but they wouldn't put your gas cap back on. If you wanted the gas cap on you had to get out and put it on ^{your} self. There was just that much prejudice. In spite of that though-- he was a Northern ^{he went down there} Black, and made himself a fortune. In spite of this. And I was down there and that was '62 when I first went to Virginia, and I was back down there-- I went down there and buried my brother, this same brother in '68, and I heard some of those professors in the South then talking about it. They figured that the South was the best place in the world for ^{the} a black man. They liked it so much better there, they said now if you're traveling-- just after the Civil Rights Act passed in '64--there was very few hotels that you're not welcome, ^{that is good hotels.} And they said the same way about restaurants. The accommodations were so much better now, they thought it was a wonderful place to live now, since the Civil Rights Act was passed. And when I was down there-- the first time I was down there, I'll tell you what I saw with my own eyes-- The main road up from Camp Lee, not too far down the road from where my brother ranch is-- the kids'd get on weekend passes, they'd go right past his farm either going to Petersburg or Richmond, Virginia for a weekend pass. And I saw a truck load -- army truck loaded with black and white soldiers come by there from Camp Lee, Virginia. And just down the-- a little ways from my brother's place there is a service station. And pretty near every service station has a lunch counter, ^{down there} most of 'em on the highway,

and these kids they stopped at this service station, The white boys on the truck, they went inside and sat at the counter and the black boys they handed their sandwich^{es} out of the window there on the side and they stood out there in the rain, and ate theirs, They couldn't go to the counter, they couldn't go in. I saw that because they were with my own eyes. Talk about segregation, I saw that right there. black.

SS: I've read that the feelings of the black people in the South were very divided about whether it was worth going through all the trouble, the suffering to get integration. But then I think a lot of people felt they had gone through a lot of trouble and suffering all ready.

ES: Well, I'll tell you-- you can say what you want to, but, how many good things that's happened to any race of people any time, taking clear back to Biblical time, without bloodshed? What great thing have they accomplished, any race of people, any nationality, without bloodshed? Just name me one.

SS: Seems like most of the integration though, has been accomplished by non-violence in the South.

ES: Yes, it has. But there's bloodshed-- I mean, they just didn't go to war, Martin Luther King he believed in nonviolence, but he did more for the blacks than anyone. Anyway, they're pretty proud of their accomplishments. It's so much better now than it was years ago.

SS: Well, the Northern cities seem to have a lot of their problems, still, they got nothing to crow about.

ES: That's it. There you are. Yes sir. And of course, lots of this segregation in the Northern cities though and places like that was caused when-- by residential barriers. It's just like-- I don't know if you can say what caused it-- but I guess it's probably caused by poor people, more than anything else in lots of cases. It's just like lots of these big cities where the black people immigrate from the South-- they're usually

poor people, very little money. So they look for a cheap place to live and, of course, that's where the slums get started. The slumlords ^{buy} these old hotels and old buildings and just make 'em liveable, and of course, that's why slums get started. And, of course, when they get a bunch of 'em together, blacks together, why, naturally in that vicinity, you've got a segregated school, you might say, because everybody in that ^{slum} district is black and naturally that school is going to be black. ^{so it goes up and it goes up.} And then on the other side of town, why there's all white, why then that's the way they get themselves segregated, that way. And ^{then I guess} ~~now~~ after so many years of that, they figured-- "Why should I bus kids across town, ^{or clear} ~~across town~~ to **balance** the segregation?" Well, I can see why that's not so good, I wouldn't really like that -- my kid done the same way either. But that's just a barrier that just happened-- and it didn't happen by law. I guess it happened by fate, I guess that's the way you'd have to put it.

SS: Do you think that there were people around here that didn't know you, who didn't like you, because you were black?

ES: Oh, yes. I imagine there's a lot of people right here in Moscow that don't like me for the simple reason-- just because I'm black. Yeah, I believe that.

SS: I can't imagine myself it'd be that way now. But I was thinking maybe forty years ago when you were a young man, back in the early days-- when it was still more a legacy of the Civil War--.

ES: I have to agree with you there. I believe when I was a younger man ^{back} years ago, there was more of it then than there is now. I feel now it still exists, but there's not as much of it.

SS: Nobody'd ever come up to you and insult you or anything? Or give you a hard time?

ES: Uh-huh.

SS: I imagine that if anybody had, there'd be other guys that had been friends of yours that would have laid 'em out pretty good.

ES: Uh-huh. Yeah, I remember when I was a teenager, or a kid anyway, ^a guy that kind of didn't like me very well for one reason or another, ^{he} wouldn't say nothing to me, but probably get a couple of drinks under his belt and then he'd come up and try to insult me, you know, figured he could get away with it, you know, ^{I'd figure he was drunk. Due to} because ^{of} that fact that I have served up a few guys in this town pretty damn fast, just on that account. So they kind of found out that didn't work too good either.

SS: ^{You didn't} just turn the other cheek, huh?

ES: HUH?

SS: You didn't just ^{turn} the other cheek?

ES: No, I didn't. I just held 'em by the collar and pushed 'em up against the wall. They all knew me for one thing, they knew that I wasn't a very big man, but I was a damn good little man! My dad always told us boys never to start no fight, he never wanted us to start no fight, but he didn't tell us to run either. About the last incident I had of that kind, was down here-- up there on Third Street, right above where the post office is, right in that shopping center there, there was a hall that ^{they} called Eggan's Hall. We used to have a roller skating rink there in the bottom part ^{of it} there. And so we used to go down there in the evenings ^{sometimes} to roller skate, I used to go down there once in a while to try roller skating. I was a pretty good roller skater. So I was down there one evening, several of us were down there roller skating. 'Course, I knew a lot of those kids, lot of high school kids, I knew a lot of 'em. And another kid come in there, I knew him, Rolland, ^{his name was,} he come in there; he had a girl with him. And he wasn't a very good skater any-

way, and he was trying to teach her to roller skate, you know. And he was on the floor more times than he was on the skates. There was two of us boys together. Now this ^{Dan} Rolland, he said, "'Gene, give me a lift here. We are in a lot of trouble." "Yeah, I'll say so, you're kinda holding up the parade." He said, "Yes, we are." So, this other kid that was with me, anyway, I ^{kinda} got ahold of him, and he got her up there so we went around there and sat 'em down. After he set down there they weren't skating and we were. Then this kid, Dan Rolland, he motioned us to come over there. I went over there and he said; "Why don't you and your friend take her around some."

If she could learn a little better, I think we could make it.

I can't skate too good, and she ^{at all,} can't skate ^{of a time."} "I says, "we just have a heck" I says, "if it's alright with her, why, I'll take her around." So I did, I took her around the floor a time or two, and I turned her over to this other kid and he took her around a time or two. And, so that was alright. I don't know whether it was the next Saturday night or the Saturday night after that why this Rolland kid he was in-- this same guy walked in the hall there and he was drunk, and he ^{'d} had a drink or two in him, you know. I don't think it was the next Saturday night, it ^{was probably} two weeks after that. And he was standing there in the hall and I walked in, I don't know who was with me that night or whether I was alone-- anyway, he was talking to some other kids there and he says,-- anyway, when I walked past, he says, "Well, Goddamn you, you tried to take my girl away from me the other night." I just turned around and I just walked up to him and I just got him right like that, and I just shoved him up against the wall, and I said, "Say it again, and I'll knock every Goddamn tooth you got right down your throat, you lying bastard." And if you ever see a man sober up now-- he come over and apologize, and he did to me. He sure did. And I made him tell them like it was, and he did. No, I was good to everybody and I didn't pick no trouble, but I don't let nobody try to push me

around, big or small. Therefore I think that's one reason why I get along good with everybody. I'm not overbearing, I treat everybody right, but I demand my respect.

SS: Myself, I was born Jewish.

ES: Are you?

SS: Yeah. And when I went to school, I was the only Jewish kid in the school. And every once in a while, you know not often, every once in a while, some kid would throw that up to me. Just didn't like me and was using that as a way to get at me.

ES: Yeah, I know what you mean. My daughter taught school in Oakland down there for ten years, and I heard her say the same thing. She said the black kids they get it throwed up to them too, she said, and then Jewish kids, -- they run into the same problem down there.

Do you know this Barbara Freeman that works down here at the Crossroads Book Store?

SS: No.

ES: She's a little Jewish girl from Detroit. She was born, Jewish was her faith and she turned Christian. (noisy)

SS: Oh, I was wanting to ask you about the haying that you did. About the hay baler you took around the country. I guess that was George Johnson was the guy that told me-- wanted me to say "Hello" to you for him, do you remember? George Johnson.

ES: George Johnson? There was so many Johnsons-- I know so many Johnsons--

SS: He was the one from Juliaetta. I guess he used to live right here in L~~en~~ville or not too far from there, 'cause he said that-- I don't know if he worked with your crew or if you baled on his place, or something like that.

ES: My dad run a hay baler all over the country, when I was a young man.

When I went to the army, I left the hay baler and went to the army, and when I came back they was baling, too. He baled hay for years and years all over the country. George Johnson-- did he grow^w up around Genesee? Or do you know?

SS: I know he was living near Linville when you were out in the neck of the woods. But I don't know him very good, I just met him at a friend's house, it was a friend of mine he was visiting.

ES: I know George---

SS: I'm pretty sure that his name is George. He's the only-- one of the only Johnsons right around Juliaetta. But anyway I was going to ask you about the bay baling and what kind of an operation you had there and how that worked.

ES: Well, It worked just the same as-- we went from farmer to farmer and baled hay, whenever a farmer had any hay to bale, he usually contacted my dad or Dad'd contact him. Just like we used to do in ---- farm deal to farm, is what it was, all over the country. And then he baled hay for Pullman college and he baled-- straw, rather. In the fall of, always baled a bunch of straw to bale for Idaho college or WSU. Animal Husbandry department used lots of straw, and he baled straw for both colleges. And he custom baled all over the country from Palouse up here, I don't think we ever went beyond Palouse very much, From Palouse, Wash. all out around Pullman, Colton, Uniontown, Genesee and clear down to the breaks before you started down Lewiston Hill there. We just baled all over the country. And my father and there was three of us boys and he hired about two or three fellows. Let's see, what did we have? Yeah, there was about six of us on the crew. And he had a farm out here northeast of town where us kids grew up. He raised lots of berries of different kinds and garden

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stuff. Sold mostly strawberries and that. Then he had this hay baler raised and this hay baling was a sideline.

SS: What was the season for baling?

ES: Well, we started along about the first of July and then we baled up until snow come because we baled straw. He usually had a contract for either the Idaho college or WSU, and that was straw. And in those days the stationary thresher, they blowed the straw in big stacks, you see, and then we come along and baled it. Then these colleges would buy these stacks, buy this straw, and then we'd go down and bale til pretty near snow fly, sometimes. Way up in November. We usually started along the first of July, up here. And, of course, we did that for years. (End of side C)

SS: --- because some people thought he was doing too good?

ES: Yeah, thought he was making too much money. It was hard work. 'Course now-a-days, there's no hard work to baling. They just go out in the field and windrow it and pick it up and bale it and bale it right out in the bale is only and the hard work there is following along and picking up the bales. But those days we sent the baler to the hay field, then the farmer that we was baling for, he hauled the hay to the baler and he just had about half a dozen one-by-twelve planks nailed together, we called it a slip, you might say, then they'd load it on those planks and have about four horses to the plank, they'd pull up along side the baler then they'd put rope right in front of the load, fasten one to the wheel of the baler and another to a post out here and then drive up and the boards slip right out from under the hay, you know, and that's a load of hay right there on the ground by the baler and then you'd have to hire a crew to get up and pitch it off into the baler. A pretty slick rig. See there was about six of us on the baler and then the farmer he'd have to have about three men -- about two of those slips, unless he already had it stacked, he'd have to have about three men to haul it in

on two slips. One fellow stayed out in the field--and pitched, two fellows could drive the slip. It was quite an operation. And I think ^{the} sun'd get hotter around an old hay baler than anywhere else.

SS: Well, would you just do-- would you be able to do very much in a day?

ES: Yeah, we baled around about fifteen, twenty ton a day. I think that most of the time it only run about three and a half ^{what} a ton, we got for baling it. So there was no big money ⁱⁿ it. Then you had to buy your wire.

SS: Would you sleep out doing that, just like if you was a threshing crew?

ES: Yeah, once in a while we did, we used to, but most of the time we came home at night. We come home at nights. When we first started though we stayed out. Slept in the farmer's barn, or something like that. you know. Usually baled the straw-- that's pretty late in the fall ^{of the year.} We usually came home from baling the straw, but, of course, when we baled hay lots of times, we would sleep right out in the field, right out with the baler there. And lots of times we'd get up in the early morning and probably bale probably a hour before we went in for breakfast.

SS: You started doing this before you went into the war?

ES: Yeah. Started doing this before I went into the war. Well, I'll tell you, my father started baling, I believe it was 1912. He bought an old baler at a sale. Fact of the matter, he just bought it more to do his own baling than anything else. It was an old thing, old wooden thing, and he got it for little or nothing. He bought it at ^{the} a sale and started baling for himself, and by golly, his neighbor across the fence out here, a fellow by the name of Nelson, why he said, "John, why don't you come over and bale mine?" So Dad did. Before he got through that, why, somebody wanted him to bale his, you know. Some other neighboring farmer right there, wanted him to bale his, so by golly, you know, he

did quite a little baling with that old baler that year. And it started out the next year. "John, ^{come over,} bale my hay!" So, he run it that first year and the second year, ^{gradually} and business kept piling up on him, ^{and piling up on him,} so he just went and bought him a baler! (Chuckles) Bought him a new one, new outfit, and that started it. Then he run that one for I don't know how many years, that was a horse power, too, and he run that I don't know how many years. Then he got rid of the old horse power and bought him one with a gas motor on it. And I think he had about two of those.

SS: Did you boys make pretty good money, as far as wages go, on the baler?

ES: No. we didn't get very much. Couldn't pay very much-- I think it was about ^{Baled} three or three and a half a ton ^{is} what they baled for. ^{about} twenty ^{With expenses there profit in it} ton a day. ^{Wasn't} very much. But we made a little. And then he usually had ^{to} hire about two men.

SS: Did you get to know the country pretty good when you were doing that?

ES: Yes, oh, yes, I'll say so. Yes, sure knew the country. Yes, we knew every place where we baled where they'd bring out lunch about the middle of the forenoon, too. (Chuckles) They sure knew that, places where we ^a baled where we got ^a lunch.

SS: Just some places would be good enough to feed you? While you were there?

ES: Oh, yeah. They usually fed us, while we was there. Oh, some places, why ^{or some old couple,} they'd rather pay a little more for the baling and let us ^{board,} feed ourselves than to feed us. We did that, too.

SS: Do you remember much what those places were like as far as-- was it people every hundred and sixty acres those days?

ES: Yeah. Well, I'll tell you-- of course when we first started out, the farms wasn't as large as they are now. There was lots of hundred and six- ^{because} ty acre farms and two hundred-- it was mostly horsepower. There wasn't very many tractors when we started out. So that's what put my dad

out of business, is when they got this tractor business and combine business. And then they got these power balers, they'd cut the hay and then windrow it, and then just go right out with the baler and pick it up and bale it right out in the field and just drop the bales along^{with a string} there. My dad, he was an old man then, he was through with the baler by that time. But that's what came long. They just started doing that a little bit before -- the last year or two that he baled, they started doing that. He was about done anyway.

SS: How were these farms doing in the teens, when you started baling? Were most of them in pretty good shape, or were the farmers struggling to get by?

ES: Well, I'll tell you--it was^{kind of} a struggle, just like it is now. Most of 'em, seemed like to me, they never had too much money then, the farmers didn't. That was along about 1912.

SS: I've heard it said that after World War I, that it never did come back for the farmers. That the '20's were hard years.

ES: That's true. I come back in the '20's there-- I only baled, I guess a little while after I came back. A couple of years, then I got married and then I went to farming by myself. And then I never did help on the baler only-- lots of times in the wintertime, some fellow'd have a barn full of hay and they'd want to bale it, you know; 'course that takes extra help, and I used to go out and help when they'd get a job like that. But people didn't seem to have--- after the war, as I say, it seemed like everything went up before the war, machinery and stuff, and the price never did come down. And then they had substitutes; flour, so it never did come back. When we first started, everything was horses, there wasn't any tractors in the country then. Everything was horsepower. And there was lots of hay, we had baled alfalfa, baled timothy, and we baled grain hay. We had all kinds of hay to bale, lots of it. So's you might

say, every farmer-- most of 'em always had a little hay to bale. Some of 'em'd fill their barn and then if they had any left, why they'd bale it and so forth. And then if they had a patch of wheat that had too many wild oats in it, They'd cut ^{for hay} that to sell. Hay at that time sold about fifteen, twenty dollars; good hay. Now it's-- just last winter it got up to eighty, ninety dollars a ton.

SS: Were most of your jobs small ones, then?

ES: No, we had some pretty good jobs; big jobs. That is, what I mean, we had several-- I know we had quite a few jobs, alfalfa probably thirty or forty acre fields, something like that. Some of it. Most of it was five, ten ^{patches} acres. Very few farmers had too big a field of alfalfa. Some had quite a little bit. 'Course when they had horses a lot of the farmers didn't like to feed alfalfa to the horses, they figured it was too washy. They thought it was good cow feed, but they didn't like to feed it to horses. And then before harvest, they'd take the mower machine and cut about four swaths around the wheat field, you see, they they'd bale that.

SS: That's what they'd give horses?

ES: Feed that to the horses. And feed the cattle alfalfa.

SS: Did many of the places still have the homestead cabins on them?

ES: Yeah. You betcha. A lot of 'em along that time had. I don't know a place in the country now that has a homestead cabin. I don't believe I do, since you mention it. ^{About 1912} when we started to bale hay, there was lots of places that had old homestead cabins still there. But I don't know a one of any more.

SS: Most of the families big? Or were there all different kinds?

ES: Well, I'll tell you, in those days-- most of the families were pretty fair size. You know this country, where I grew up and then around Moscow

here, it's principally Scandinavian country, you know. Now you take over the hill where I grew up, that was practically all Scandinavian and all of 'em had pretty good size families. And over across the hill here towards Blaine country in there, and then on a little further this way, a little further west down Thorn Creek country that was-- around Uniontown, and Colton, that's German settlement in there. And there's where you saw your good horses and your larger farms and good crops, around Uniontown and Colton, in around there. They had some nice farms down there. And they had some nice stock.

SS: How was it that they got ahead? Was it because they were on the prairie?

ES: That's ^{some of the} choice country down through there. 'Course you take out this way, Troy, that's mostly timber. And that didn't amount to anything until here in the last-- since World War II, you might say. Then they got to using fertilizer. You take up there at Troy, when I worked for the Latah County Graingrowers, ~~in a I worked~~ for twenty years, and they got a warehouse up there at Troy, they had a little old warehouse there, and if those fellows up there got ~~twenty~~ ^{why} thirty bushels to the acre, they got a big crop. And since World War II, they've increased that warehouse at Troy and Deary both about three times--now. ^{they} use fertilizer up there-- and they get seventy-five and eighty bushels crop just the same as they do down here. Yeah, that fertilized sure has did something for the ^{Troy} country, out this way. 'Course the country this way and this way, that's all prairie country. That timber soil, you take the timber off of it, I've heard oldtimers say that it leaves a certain amount of turpentine in the soil, ^{the pine does} and it takes years before it gets out. It don't produce too good ^{a crop}, ~~But~~ since they got to using fertilizer on it, though, it will ^{produce} just as good a crop as anywhere.

SS: Was it easy on the prairie country to start farming right away? Was

it hard to clear that brush?

ES: No brush on the prairie. Now you take my wife's dad down here, he came from South Carolina to Madeira, California, that's down in the Fresno country. He started working for a big cattle baron (~~too noisy to hear~~) that run cattle clear across the state there.

He owned thousands and thousands of acres of land, so they leased--and dad farmed there, him and his brother. Stella's mother and her brother-in-laws, they couldn't get along, they was farming together, so she wanted to get out of there. So Stella's dad got out of what he could--^{from} his brohters, selling out to ~~them~~ ^{them} and he came up in the Walla Walla country. And you know in the early days the railroad company-- the government give the railroads every other quarter section of land when they built the railroads through here. Well, came up from the Walla Walla country, 'course he didn't have no money, but he had a promise of getting some more from his brothers back there. He bought a hundred and sixty acres from the railroad company down here at Dodge, Washington-- you know where Dodge is, down below Lewiston-- between Dodge and Pomeroy ^{there} was no brush on it. well, that's where he bought. It was all bunchgrass. You've heard of bunchgrass? That's what the buffalo lived on those days. And he bought this hundred and sixty, it was all bunchgrass. And he talked the bank in the notion of loaning him some money to get it plowed. He didn't have a team or nothing. And he got some plows in there early in the fall and they plowed there all winter; plowed that hundred and sixty up. And then in February- he seeded it to wheat.

SS: The whole thing?

ES: The whole thing, hundred and sixty acres. And that next year, that fall, he got enough off that, he paid for his hundred and sixty, that he had borrowed money to buy, and all his debts, for plowing it and seeding it. He paid everybody. And by golly, he ^{and sent for his family} bought him an outfit and another hundred and sixty and built the house.

And he did pretty good the next year. And then he kept on building, kept on buying and he had thirteen hundred acres of land in his name down there at one time. And then after his boys grew up and they was big farmers down there. And then they got a couple of dry years in a row down there and just about broke the old fellow. And his boys got sick on him and he sold off-- got rid-- I think he lost part of it, sold what he could then he left and went there up there by Oakesdale. He lost both of his boys.

SS: They died?

ES: Yeah, lost both of his sons. Then they were getting old. My wife and her sister was the only two kids that was home. And when they got out of Walla Walla down there, they wanted 'em -- let the kids shift for themselves and them buy a small ranch that they could take care of, the two of 'em, you know. Get 'em a cow and chickens. He wanted to farm. He was a big farmer and he thought he could do it again, you know. So he lost his boys. And so about the second year that Stella and I were married, they had to quit and so we took 'em over. We took 'em in with us til they died. Kept 'em til they died.

SS: Did they stay for very long?

ES: Yeah. She passed away at eighty-five and I think he was in his eighties when he died, I think he was eighty three or four.

SS: When did he get that prairie land?

ES: Well, they came out here-- they must have came out here right after we did, along about 1902 or three, I think we was here a little ahead of them. We came out here about '98. 'Course, when we came to Idaho my dad could have got some homestead land up here in Nez Perce County, up here around Nez Perce. But he started farming and then when he looked into it, it was all-- there was nothing by mountains. Alright for cattle, I guess. He never tried. But if he'd aknow'n it when we first came here-- when he was gonna homestead up in the Big Bend country, if he'd known it when we

first stopped then, he might have looked into it.

SS: What? That there was still prairie country that was---?

ES: It was homestead land up there. I know a party that got a homestead there just about the time we come here, a little after we come here, that was good land,

SS: This was around Nez Perce?

ES: Yes, it was around Nez Perce.,. Quite a while after we got here, up in Bovill, up in that country around Pierce and up back in there you could get those stone and timber claims, they was available at that time.

SS: Weren't some of those where the lumber companies was paying people to--?

ES: I don't know, I don't know about that.

SS: I've heard that from several people.

ES: I know that we'd been here several years and my dad and another guy moved a widow woman up in there above Bovill, and she had took up a stone and timber claim up there, out of Bovill, somewhere there. And she was going up there to spend the summer on it to get proved up on it. I know he moved her up there, I don't know who brought her back.

SS: Was she at all concerned about going up there alone?

ES: I guess she was a widow and she wasn't married to this guy, but I guess they was fixing to get married, and he went with them up there. He had his team and rig. He didn't stay up there all the time, but I don't know what he was doing in Moscow, what his business was, but he went up there with them. And Dad left him up there. I don't know just what his name was, Dad knew him, got acquainted with him, on the way up there, but I think he told my father that he kind of went back and forth up there in the wintertime. And in the summertime while she was up there--- they was ^{going} to get married, but they wasn't married then. She had two or three kids, seven or eight year old kids. My dad said there sure was some swell timber on that place up there.

SS: Pretty good timber, but she couldn't farm it probably.

ES: Couldn't farm it. But I know a fellow that built this ^{Dumas} seed outfit, his name was Homer Wilson, he came here and he started working in a grocery store here for a man by the name of Washburn. And Old Man Washburn he sent him up there, he went up there and he filed on a stone and timber claim. He lived up there and proved up on it and then he married Old Man Washburn's daughter. And then he sold his stone and timber claim, then him and his father-in-law built this Dumas seed company down here. That used to be Washburn-Wilson. His name was Wilson and he married a Washburn-- they built that big outfit.

SS: I wonder if he sold that land to the timber company?

ES: I don't know. I don't know who he sold it to. I don't know whether he sold the timber off-- I know Potlatch eventually got it. Whether he sold it to Potlatch then, I don't know. But that's where he got his start ^{got some} and money and went in with his father-in-law and they built this Washburn-Wilson seed company.

SS: That's really where he got his start.

ES: That's how he got his start. But the Wellses up there, I'm pretty sure they homesteaded their's. What they had there. I don't see why they didn't homestead. Go back out on the ridge there and get some good land, instead of taking up there in the timber. But, I guess ^{got some} they thought that was the best part of it. Anyway they could get logs to build the house.

SS: Most of those ridges out there must have had timber on 'em, too.

ES: I think a lot of 'em did.

SS: People at first just didn't realize that that was going to be better farm land.

ES: But you take way out on that Driscoll Ridge, I doubt if there was ever ^{been some} any timber out there to amount to anything. In the draw, there might have

Outside of the canyon...But he could have got ^{where} it a homestead had some farm land on it anyway. I think that was all timber what he got there. But, I guess they did pretty good. They built that house and they had kind of a halfway house. They made quite a bit of money off of travelers going back in there on ^{now} these stone and timber claims and one thing and another. Stopover place to eat, I guess they could put 'em up for the night, I suppose, I think they did. They had such a big old house there, I think they did. Anyway, I know they fed a lot of people there. I guess they figured they did just as good.

SS: I've heard said that it was the main stopping place. Troy and Collins. Did they keep that business for quite a few years of having people stop?

ES: I don't know. I never knew too much about 'em. I went ^{up} ^{there} ⁱⁿ the winter of 1919, worked with them in the woods. But it wasn't going at that time. I think it had been stopped quite a little while. Their main trade was when people had those stone and timber claims up in there, that was when they did their biggest business. People went back and forth up there to file on or proving up.

END OF TAPE

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins 11-13-75