

EUGENE SETTLE  
Fifth Interview

Interviewed by:  
Sam Schrager

Oral History Project  
Latah County Museum Society

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## EUGENE SETTLE

Rural Moscow, Aspendale; b. 1894

farmer, warehouse superintendent.

2.1 hrs.

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with Sam Schrager  
January 13, 1976

## II. Transcript

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EUGENE SETTLE

This conversation with EUGENE SETTLE took place at his home in Moscow, Idaho on January 13, 1976. The interviewer is SAM SCHRAGER.

ES: It showed a picture of a--<sup>the</sup> sign was made of tin- and it has tacked up on a fence between our place and school and it was a train and a fella running to catch the train with a suitcase and said, "Going to the Boston." But, I never did know just where the Boston store was. And then reading some memoirs of Earl David, that founded the David's store here, his memoirs, and in that he said-- he spoke about that Williamson taking over the Boston store. In other words, what was Williamson when I was a kid when I <sup>when I got</sup> to Moscow, that was the old Boston.

SS: Oh, I was going to ask you, when you came to town with your father, what did he do in town besides get groceries? Did he go visit, spend time talking to people?

ES: No. Oh, just like any other farmer, why, he'd buy groceries, then if he-- of course he's was always visiting on the corners. Course, my father was never a guy to hang around -- he'd never hang around the poolhalls or Pasttime like that. When I was a little kid and I used to come to town with my dad, we used to come in-- and of course, David's Store there, <sup>that</sup> had a side door there on Third Street-- that's where they had a grocery store there--and my folks always did all their trading there, we'd always go in there and they always had these big pot-bellied stoves in there, you know, <sup>in the early day,</sup> and had a good fire in there and in the wintertime we'd go in there and get warm, and get the groceries. You could get about everything you wanted in there. But David's was the main place ~~we~~ went. And then, in the later years, he always-- Ralston's store there-- the Moscow Grocery, that's where he went.

He always traded with the Ral<sup>l</sup>stons. But that's the way it was. He'd just come to town to buy groceries, and of course, he'd always find somebody to visit with. But hef never was no hand, as I say, to hang around poolhalls or anything like that. He never did that. Of course a lot of 'em would. Come to town and they'd go to the poolhall and and get warm and some of 'em liked to play cards, and some of 'em play cards and such as that, pool or <sup>something</sup> like that. See, when I was a kid there was about-- one, two, -- there was about four poolhalls in Moscow then, <sup>with</sup> card tables, <sup>where</sup> and the farmers used to gather around when they come to town in the wintertime.

SS: Did you know the Pasttime?

ES: Yes, oh, yes.

SS: Did you used to go in there when you were young?

Es: Yeah, I used to go in there when I was a young man. That was my hang-out. Well, even <sup>Stella and I</sup> after we were first married, I'd come to town in the wintertime, I'd always used to go to the Pasttime. They always had a good fire there and they always had a lunch counter there so you could go there and get your lunch and get warm. Then I'll tell you another thing about the Pasttime- if there was anybody you wanted to see, why, <sup>if</sup> you <sup>'d</sup> go to the Pasttime, <sup>and hang around there</sup> pretty soon they'd come in. It was sure quite a gathering place for <sup>the</sup> farmers. It's a place that never closed. And they always had a good fire there, <sup>you could always</sup> get warm. And everybody that come to town-- farmers come to town-- why, as soon as he got his team taken care of, why, he'd strike out for the Pasttime. He'd get warm, get him a hot cup of coffee, and all his friends'd be there. If you were looking for anybody, go to the Pasttime, he'd soon be in there.

SS: What made that the most popular place?

ES: Well, I'll tell you, it was a good place to warm, before there was too



many cars, you know. Well after cars, fellas come in there, drive-- just like we was out there-- ten or twelve miles to town, or ten miles to town with a sled and a team--first thing you'd want you know, you'd want to go to a place and warm up. And, as I say, they had a big lunch counter there and they had lots of pool tables-- I think they had about five pool tables-- and I don't know how many card tables they had. And some of those old farmers they like to play rummy-- and what<sup>else</sup> did they play?

SS: Did they play poker?

ES: No, they didn't play no poker. Well, I don't know if they ever did. They might <sup>of</sup> in early days, had poker <sup>games</sup> in the saloons, I don't know, that was before my time, if they were, I don't remember nothing about that.

SS: But the Pastime that was during Prohibition, wasn't that?

ES: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, they had a confectionery counter there and lunch counter. And as I say, card tables or pool tables and toilets and so forth.

SS: Were there any other places in Moscow to go, if a guy wanted to?

ES: Oh, yes. There was a Shorty O'Connor, used to run a pool place, the same <sup>kind,</sup> and then Robbins had one. They was all smaller places, and then <sup>in</sup> there at the corner of the Moscow Hotel where their bar is now, that was-- I think that was just billiards.

SS: Did you shoot pool?

ES: Some, but not too much. My <sup>brother,</sup> next to me, <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ three years younger than I am, he ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> to be quite a pool player. I played some but I never played very much pool. I played a little rummy.

SS: Well, when you were a young man, what would you do for entertainment?

ES; Well, when I was a kid--

SS: Old enough to go out.

ES: Until after we moved over here at town, of course, we lived-- I

started high school after we got here, I went to high school. But when we was over in the country there, why then we had-- we played baseball, and after we moved to town here, why, of course, we didn't do too much, as I say-- in the wintertime we took in basketball games at the high school and the University and such as that. And go back and forth over to Pullman, followed the school sports. In the wintertime, that's what our biggest thing was in the wintertime -- pasttime was in the wintertime--. And we did quite a bit of hunting.

SS: Did you go to movies?

Es: Yeah, we went to movies. Yes, that's right, we went to movies, too, quite a bit. Pretty near every weekend-- went to movies probably about once a week, and sometimes more than that, when we was kids. Lots of Saturday nights we'd go downtown and go to the movies. We used to do that. And another thing in the wintertime, we had quite a stock out on the ranch, had a sleigh and we used to take sleighing parties out there. That was a big deal for us, on the weekends. Take like when I was in high school, we used to take university kids over to Pullman and back and forth, or just go were out for a couple three hours drive on a sleighing party.

SS: What would you do for that? Just hook up a cutter to the---?

ES: We had a bobsled. Had the big sled and probably put a hayrack on it and put some straw in it, these university kids, they'd get their own blankets and get in there; know five or six couple and they usually say where they wanted to go and we used to take 'em. That's how we made quite a bit of spending money that way in the winter months. Seemed like we always had something to do. And if we didn't, why, week ends, if we didn't have nothing to do weekends, why, we, as I say; we did a lot of hunting. I just had a letter from an old friend, a kid that kind of grew up with

us, we've known a long time. He lives up at Kellogg. And he wrote me a letter, and he got <sup>the other day</sup> to talking about the fun we used to have on weekends hunting on this Paradise Hill over here and up on the Moscow Mountain. And he said about my brother-- he was climbing up a bank and my brother had a shotgun and he got the end of the barrel full of snow and he never noticed it, and I don't know what he shot at, I think it was a snowshoe rabbit, and it just blew the end of the barrel, just belled it out just about two inches, you know. Just swelled the end of the barrel out there-- it looked like a bell. (Chuckles)  
It had that snow in the end of the barrel.

SS: Would you guys go out and camp out? Or would you just go out for the day?

ES: Just for the day.

SS: Did you usually get something?

ES: Oh, no, we just did a lot of hiking, <sup>more than anything.</sup> We never got much. Sometimes we'd get a-- in the wintertime we probably killed a snowshoe rabbit or two. And sometimes we'd get a shot at a coyote. But we enjoyed hiking.

SS: You went afoot?

ES: Oh, yeah, ~~love~~, we went afoot. Then when we was teenagers way out there in the country, we all had saddle horses and lots of Saturdays we'd get-- four or five of <sup>us'd</sup> out saddle horses, <sup>get</sup> ~~saddle~~ and we'd ride into town and just ride around town. Didn't have money enough to go to the show, just ride around town and back. Just to pass the time away.

SS: I was thinking that we've talked quite a bit about other things, but we haven't talked about the farming that you did. You did mention that it wasn't all that long and you didn't think it was all that great, but you did farm for some time.

- ES: Oh, yes , we farmed, <sup>Stella</sup> and I were married in '24, farmed up til I guess it was about '37, I guess.
- SS: That long?
- ES: Yes.
- SS: What did you have to start with when you farmed?
- ES: Well, had two hundred and forty acres of land rented. And I had eight or ten head of horses and <sup>a</sup> farming outfit, same as anybody else. Before I quit I traded my horses off and got a small tractor-- I used a tractor the last few years I was farming. Had a little tractor. Small one. I think farming was a pretty good life, myself. I liked to farm. I liked the stock. I liked to fool with stock. We farmed, my wife and I-- 'course we got married in the Depression and we had pretty tough sledding. <sup>Wheat was cheap.</sup> That's one reason we quit the farm, and then after we quit the farm then World War II broke out, and things went up. We just missed it, we should have stayed with it. We talk about it quite a bit, I tell the wife I wish I'd a stayed with it, wish we'd a <sup>a little longer.</sup> But she thinks we stayed with the farm, ~~But things~~ turned out pretty good the way it was.
- SS: You say you started in a depression, you mean the one after World War I and the farm prices were down?
- ES: Yeah, uh-huh. We started farming in '24, and that was right after World War I, depression. And then when we quit farming-- we quit just before World II broke out.
- SS: You said to me once before that the equipment that was coming in was making it harder for small farmers with horses.
- ES: Yes, yes, it was. The last part of my farming, the tractors were coming in. And a lot of the farmers that was able, pretty good sized farms, they'd buy tractors, you know, and then they was making it pret-

ty hard for a fellow that was farming with horses to lease land then, you know, everybody wanted to lease to a fellow that had a tractor and get it because ~~the~~ he could get the work in quicker than ~~the~~ a fellow could with horses. I really don't know how we did get our work did with horses though. They got it in, the crops, but they'd do it so much faster with a tractor. Well, when I quit farming that was the beginning of the end of the little farmer. When I started farming there was lots of farmers-- about a hundred and sixty and eighty acre farms. But you don't see those any more. Less it's <sup>some patch</sup> right close to town or something like that, but there were lots of farmers that-- lots of eighty acre farms and a hundred and sixty acre farms when we started farming, but now-- But after they got the tractors, why then-- the big farmer got bigger and they just pushed the little farmer clear out.

SS: Did you see that happening yourself?

ES: Yes, I see it happening just before the time that we quit farming, with me it was the same way now. I farmed two hundred and forty acres, we farmed that for quite a while, and then I lost that to a fella that had a tractor; I lost that place to him. And then we bought a hundred and sixty. And the fella at the bank that I had this-- that I bought this hundred and sixty acres from, he had another hundred and sixty acres about two miles from where I lived, what I bought, <sup>that</sup> It didn't have no buildings on it, and he was gonna let me have that, but the fella that was farming it was in debt to him pretty bad and he said soon as he got out of debt <sup>to him, why</sup> I could have that. But all around me there-- got all big farmers-- these that got tractors they took the <sup>that was</sup> farming land. So ~~it~~ was pretty hard for a fellow, farming with horses to lease any land.

SS: Well, with a hundred and sixty acres of land; that's what you were farming then, when you had your place.

ES: Yeah, yes.

SS: Was it hard to make a living with that and horses?

ES: Yes. Well, I'll tell you, if a fella, if he had his land cleared and he farmed a 160 acres with ~~head~~ of horses and had him a few cows and diversified, and a few hogs, why, he <sup>could</sup> ~~can~~ make a living on it.

Where he didn't have to depend on wheat and oats, ~~grain~~ alone, you know. Had a few milk cows and raised hogs on the side, a few beef, something like that, a fella could make a pretty good living there for a small family. But, as I say, that's harder work than where you just straight grain farm.

SS: Is that what you did? Did you have cattle and hogs too?

ES: Yeah. We had a few cattle and a few hogs.

SS: Do you remember very well what happened when the depression hit here?

ES: Yeah, I remember it pretty well. Yeah, I remember the Depression pretty well.

SS: What would you say the kind of effect it had on people around here?

ES: Well, there was no money. The banks were all closed, practically. There was no money, available. And of course, a lot of the poor farmers worked on WPA--You might 've heard of it. This was before your time. Worked on WPA-- oh, I never did though. I never did. And I took wheat down to Lewiston, down to Asotin, there was a flour mill down there-- We took wheat down there and got our own flour; got our own wheat made into flour. <sup>We got by that way.</sup> Then they had substitutes. We couldn't have only so much flour anyway. And before that they had substitutes, they had barley flour and oh-- You couldn't buy this and you couldn't that. And you couldn't buy gasoline, 'course there wasn't--

SS: This was in the Depression? You couldn't buy-- you could only get so much flour ground?

ES: You wasn't supposed to have only such much flour ground.

SS: Ground?

ES: No, you couldn't have only just so much. 'Course, some farmers had a lot of it, that got it and buried it up in the haybarn in the hay so they wouldn't catch with 'em with it. <sup>Got away with</sup> More than they was supposed to have. 'Course, we was supposed to eat substitutes, see. Barley flour and I don't know what all there was, but I know they was substitutes. But when we was just farming, <sup>then it</sup> there was just Stella and I, and 'course it didn't take much flour for us. A sack would last us for long time. But you take these fellas that had big families, why, and they had to use lots of flour, why then they couldn't get enough white flour to take care of 'em. They had to buy and use substitutes and one thing and another. See flour, and I forget what else, I don't remember what else there was we couldn't get.

SS: Did you find that you could make it through okay? Did you find you had to go in debt then, during the Depression?  
the worst thing for me.

ES: Yeah, I was in debt when I got married, you see. I bought my outfit to farm with, you see, and I didn't have money enough to pay for it. And I went in debt for that, part of it. And I had to buy-- take quite a little bit of machinery to farm two hundred and forty acres of ground, see.

SS: What did you have?

ES: Two hundred and forty--

SS: No, I mean, what machinery did you have to have?

ES: Oh, I had to have <sup>a</sup> plow and about eight, ten head of horses and a binder and a drill and a springtooth and a disc. 'Course, one thing about me, there was <sup>another</sup> fella started up -- my neighbor there, he was

older than I was, but he grew up on a farm, and he'd got married again and he had a place rented right next to me there. So, he was like myself, he didn't have much money or much machinery either, so we used to exchange back and forth that way, quite a little bit, helped us out.

SS: Did he have-- what did he have that you didn't have in machinery?

ES: Well, see, we bought a disc together-- no it wasn't a disc, a spring tooth harrow-- we bought one of those together. We bought one between us. Went together and bought one of those. And then, I think-- and the wagons.

SS: So, were you still in debt when the Depression hit? Did you still owe money?

ES: Yeah. That's what I say, I was in debt when I--- I was farming during the Depression and so naturally I went in debt. ~~I got my outfit--~~ it didn't cost me too much. A lot <sup>of my</sup> ~~were~~ horses <sup>were</sup> livestock because I was working for a big farmer out here south and west of town and he had bought him a big tractor, he'd bought a tractor, and so he sold me what horses I wanted-- I <sup>just</sup> picked 'em out of his herd-- and he sold 'em to me very cheap. Horses and harness.

SS: You'd been working for this guy before you got married?

ES: Yeah, I worked for him through harvest time, lots of time. I sewed sacks on his combine before I was married. So I got a pretty good break in buying my livestock.

SS: Did you see other people go under during that depression?

ES: Oh, yes. They was a lot of 'em. Lots of sales. <sup>People just</sup> Farm sales every fall. <sup>couldn't pay</sup> up, just sell out and try something else. Yeah, I saw a lot of 'em go under. And some of 'em just quit, couldn't make anything so they just quit. Then as I say, the tractors were coming in and the fella <sup>just like this fella I worked for-</sup> that was able to buy him a tractor, shoot those fellas-- If you were



renting the land, if <sup>it,</sup> somebody ~~land~~ he wanted, he'd just about get it. Yes, it's still the same way today, now. There is no such <sup>a</sup> thing as a little farmer anymore. 'Less it's somebody that owns two hundred and forty acres of land, probably still living on it and his boys are <sup>for him</sup> farming it or something. Or he's got his land leased out to somebody else but he's living on the property. But he can own the buildings <sup>is ing the</sup> but somebody else's farm place, and they're probably farming another thousand acres.

SS: Do you think that people in town, in Moscow, had a rougher time during the Depression than the people out in the country did?

ES: I don't think they had any rougher time than anybody anywhere else, but I imagine there's lots of townpeople, poor people, they had a hard time getting on these government sponsored jobs, on WPA and such as that. There was a lot of farmers the same way though. But that's one thing about us on the farm, we had-- we raised so much of our eats-- we had our own meat and potatoes, such as that. We raised 'em, we had that. While the poor fella in town he had to buy all his, <sup>so</sup> he had to get some money somewhere to live on. While we could get along raising our own meat and our own potatoes. We had the basis of our own living right there. And then, of course, we canned a lot of fruit in the summertime, when we could get it. Usually had a cellar full of fruit; canned goods. 'Course, <sup>in those days</sup> we didn't can as many vegetables like we do nowadays. We didn't can so many vegetables. The farmer-- as far as living is concerned-- he fared a little better than-- I mean the poor farmer, he fared a little bit better than the poor guy in town.

SS: What did you think of Roosevelt? Franklin Roosevelt, when he got in?

ES: Well, I have to say one thing for Franklin Roosevelt, -- see our worst depression, that was under Hoover. And when Franklin Roosevelt come in, he started all these WPAs and all that stuff, you know, and give the poor man a chance to get out and do a little work to make a little something. He kinda started the ball rolling; give him a lot of credit for that. He made a job for a lot of these fellas around town. The <sup>se</sup> WPAs, different I don't know how many of those jobs he did have of all forms, shapes and sizes. He fixed it so the poor man could make a little money.

SS: (End of side A)  
Did you and Mrs. Settle date for a very long time before you were married?

ES: Well, about four years after we first met, I guess. I met her in '20 and we didn't get married 'til '24. Of course, we didn't-- we weren't like lots of people, like we lived in the same town-- she lived up towards Palouse up in the farming country and I lived down here. And 'course we had a car-- we probably didn't see each other only twice-- maybe twice a month, something like that. I'd drive up on the weekend <sup>weren't</sup> there. We ~~went~~ together every week like most people are when they're dating. We lived too far apart.

SS: Where did you get married?

ES: Walla Walla. After we got engaged, why then she went to California-- She had two sisters down there in California-- She thought she'd go to California and get a job and work that summer so she'd have something help to <sup>buy</sup> furniture with. So that's why she went, the first year. And I bached and lived on the farm and then she came up -- came home. When she came home that fall before Christmastime, then I met her in Walla Walla and we got married in Walla Walla.

SS: What did she work at in California?

ES: She just did domestic work, while she was down there.

SS: Did you decide to get a job at Graingrowers or were you offered a job?

How did you wind up quitting the farming?

ES: Well, I'll tell you, I wound up-- I wasn't getting anywhere! I would farm and I'd sell what little-- on that hundred and sixty. And I was paying for <sup>the</sup> place and then I had other debts besides. And I worked beside my crop-- I worked out all I could and, by golly, I just wasn't getting anywhere. And it wasn't what I owed on the place that was both-  
<sup>these</sup> ering me, it was <sup>that was</sup> outside debts where they were crowding me. The people I bought the place from, the bank in Lewiston, and they sure wanted me to stay with it. They offered me all kinds of chances, and as I <sup>a</sup> said while ago, I think lots of times I should have stayed with the place.

SS: What were the outside debts you are thinking of?

ES: Well, Oh, sometimes I'd <sup>have to</sup> buy feed, and I borrowed money at the bank. 'Course, I always got that paid back. Our biggest debt though was, -- seemed like was paying for machinery. And, 'course, we had a few cows and we'd sell cream-- and we got most of our groceries. We got most of our groceries that way. But most of my debts was for-- mostly for machinery. And it seemed like every spring of the year I always had to buy feed for my stock; I'd run out of hay during the winter-time, I didn't have enough feed to carry me through. I'd have to buy <sup>some</sup> grain in the spring to get my crop in, and such as that; and I'd owe <sup>I had to charge.</sup> for that, had it always on time, I didn't have no money 'til I'd get <sup>tried to</sup> my crop in. And time you <sup>make</sup> your place payment and your taxes, why then, it would work out, you didn't have money enough to go around. That was my trouble. But I wasn't alone, there was a lot of us the same way. But, I worked hard, worked real, awful hard. That's why <sup>that</sup> the fella <sup>that's why</sup> I bought the place from, he didn't want to see me leave the place. They wanted me to stay with it. And they made me a pretty good

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proposition, too. They told me that if I would just give them a mortgage on everything that I had, and then they would take care of me then. See that I got the machinery I wanted, and of course, I'd just be working for them, you see, practically. But, as I say, the war broke out and the wheat went up-- grain went up-- that would have been in my favor. It'd probably take me a year or two to pay up but after the war I think I would come out in the long run. Grain went up and then the price of land started climbing. So I woulda come out in the long run. But at that time-- there was a eighty and a hundred and sixty joining me that I think I woulda bought to go with what I had, and that would have given me a pretty good four hundred acre farm then, you see and I would be in pretty good shape, if those fellas backed me on it. Why I think I woulda made it in good shape.

SS: They would have let you buy that---

ES: I kinda believe they would of. I kinda believe they would of.

SS: But you decided at the time to turn them down on it?

ES: So I just got so tired of it-- of being in debt--that I <sup>decided</sup> ~~tried~~ to do something else. Then I bought a truck and I did some trucking-- I hauled wood and I hauled the clay for a brickyard down here and I work on that for a year or two. And then I -- when the war broke out, then I took to welding and I went down to Portland and stayed a year and worked on defense. And I worked hard down there and I made good money and every time I got a check I sent it home to my wife here and she paid our debts and bought this place. And then I come home, and a farmer over here, I rented <sup>'d</sup> a part of his land over here where I first started farming-- he was farming a lot of his own land then, and he wanted somebody to run his combine. I was in Portland-- and they was talking about going on a strike down there anyway, so I

left defense and come up here to go to work for him. And then I worked for him that fall. And then from there-- <sup>this manager of</sup> the Latah County Graingrowers, then, <sup>and</sup> I knew him from when I was farming down there, <sup>this co-op,</sup> see, <sup>And</sup> a friend of mine had started to work for him, <sup>out near Joel,</sup> and told him I was coming back -- he told him that I was coming back from Portland pretty soon, and so he told this friend to tell <sup>me</sup> "As soon as he gets back, why you tell him to come and see me." So this fellow come, told me about it, so I went to see him, and in the meantime this fellow that wanted me to run his combine, he had found someone else to run his combine-- <sup>'cause,</sup> he had to start before I got here-- home. So I went to see this man by the name of Simpson, and he wanted me to go to work at Joel, warehouse for him, so I went to work <sup>with</sup> for him. And I worked out there at Joel for one year-- the first year I worked out there under a fellow by the name of Johan, he was running the warehouse out there, then he quit and went to farming. Wheat and stuff-- the price had gone up, so he had a farm, so he just quit, he figured he could make it on the farm-- so he quit. And then the next year this Simpson, he gave me the-- he put me in charge out there running Joel, see-- running the warehouse out there at Joel. So the first year, that year, I run the warehouse under him at Joel, I was the foreman out at Joel, and this man, Simpson, that fall-- then he retired and a fellow that was book-keeping, they wanted him to take the manager of the whole outfit, of the company, and he said, "I'll take it under one consideration. If you let me have a warehouse foreman. Have a man to look after all the warehouses." They had 'em at Joel and <sup>Howell</sup> and Troy and Deary and Kennedy Ford over here and Estes Station. Fellow to take care of all the warehouses, take care of ~~all~~ the labor and everything. Well, they-- And they wanted to know did he have a man in mind for the job, and he

"Yes, I do." And he said he wanted Gene Settle, so they let him have it. So I got to be a big shot in the company in about three years.

SS: Did you know this guy who had been the bookkeeper?

ES: Yeah, I knew him. I'd just got acquainted with him since I started working for the company. I'd just known him. 'Course I didn't know him til I started working for the company. But, I knew the man who hired me, Simpson; I knew him. As I said, I had did business with him before, when I was on the farm. I knew him, but I didn't know his bookkeeper then, still I started working for the company.

SS: Well, you told me when we were talking before that when you worked under him as a warehouse superintendent that you had real good support from him.

ES: Yes, I did. I had good support from him, you bet. Yessir! He sure stood back of me. Yessir! And He depended on me because I knew grain and I knew warehouse. I knew that end of the business. Of course, he knew the book part of it, but at that time, he wasn't too good at the outside part of it, and I knew it. So we just made a good team.

He really backed me. Yeah, he was a fine guy.

SS: I was going to ask you why-- what made you two get along so well, but I guess you're telling me the answer by saying that he depended on you.

ES: Yes, he did. He depended on me a whole lot. You bet he did. 'Course, I knew the outside of the-- I knew the elevator part of the business, so much better than he did, so we worked together. We just made it fine.

SS: What were the main responsibilities that you had when you were in that?

ES: Well, I hired all the warehouse help. You see, I had Joel and Troy and Kennedy Ford and those places, I had to-- I used to pick up the

we'd sell a car of wheat.

tickets out there and at Deary I used to bill out the cars. I'd go up and bill out the cars. And, of course, I billed 'em out here, too. Billed out most of 'em. And I took care of all the billing of cars at these neighborhood stations. And I did all the hiring and firing and bought all the sacks and brooms (?) and twine that they used. And I bought some machinery for the cleaning plant.

SS: In working the Grain Growers, did you have any better sense than the farmer in the field about how prices were going?

ES: Well, yeah, in a way, I knew it before they do, because I'd get it at the office, you see. I was right close to the main office of the-- and the manager, so I usually knew what they knew. So I really knew it before most of the farmers did, of course, a lot of them knew it at the same time I did. I didn't know much about-- as far as prices are concerned. You can just kind of form their own idea about whether wheat is going to go up or down, as far as that's concerned. But if they got any dope, why then I usually got it right off the bat. They asked me. I know a lot of 'em-- At the last part I had my office down in that big elevator on Main Street, that big one, the last one, that one downtown and there, so lots of guys'd come in there and talk to me instead of going to the main office. Of course, I usually knew what they knew and we discussed and-- And lots of times if I didn't know, why I'd get on the phone and find out for 'em.

SS: I've never played the market, so to speak, to figure out when to sell and when to hold onto it-- How did that work anyway? What were the farmers thinking about when they tried to calculate whether the market was going to go up or down?

ES: Well, I'll tell you, it's pretty hard to tell whether it'll go up or down-- it just depends on if you get a-- if they get a headline that

or a drouth, there's a big wheat crop in Australia or Russia or somewhere, then they can kind of figure on <sup>that they'd</sup> and kind of guess on that. Well, that'll <sup>gonna</sup> help the wheat prices. Now, when I was a kid, the farmers used to say that Russia controlled the wheat market of the United States. If they had a big crop in Russia, our prices were down. If they had a short crop in Russia, then our price was a little better. Now I heard that when I was a little kid, <sup>led</sup> that Russia control the wheat prices, but I found out after I got older, why, I found out that wasn't <sup>That's the world market.</sup> altogether true. But I can't see hardly how in those days the wheat was as cheap as it was; <sup>Figuring then</sup> grain-- : And everybody on a farm had from six to twenty head of horses and mules and cattle to feed-- just think of all the grain it would take to feed all those-- they don't have those anymore now-- The biggest farmers you got, a lot of 'em don't have a horse on the place or a cow, or a chicken. So that dumped an <sup>lot</sup> awful more grain on the market.

SS: As a general rule do you have a feeling about whether it was better for the farmer to sell after he got his crop in, or whether he really did better by hanging on and see what happens?

ES: I'll tell you, Sam; All I know, I got my idea through just working around with different farmers when I was a kid, you know, and I worked for one farmer down here at Genesee, ~~the~~ Lenahans, you've run into or heard of them-- some of his kids or grandkids down there- He was farming quite a bit of good land down there, and I worked for him <sup>in the fall</sup> different years, and that man, when he got his last sack in the warehouse he sold it. And he died a wealthy man. And I worked for one farmer out here south of town, swellest little guy that ever walked, but he was always holding his wheat for a higher price, when he could get two dollars he wanted three. He wound up, the bank got his place. I



think, course, I never had no big lot' of wheat to sell, so I usually sold mine right after it got to the warehouse, because I had bills pushing me that I wanted to get taken care of. 'Course, I had the <sup>to take care of,</sup> threshing bill, so I usually sold right away. But to gamble on wheat I always figured out I might sell part of it; half of it or something like that, then hold some for a while longer, until after the first of the year to see how prices were gonna be. But, I think that, year in and year out the Genesee farmer had the best idea of all. When you get it in the warehouse, sell it.

SS: Then it's off your mind.

ES: Then it's off your mind, you betcha. Yessir. Because, when you hold it, the price goes up a little, you're paying storage on that wheat, too, you see, so I think the man when he gets it in the warehouse, why, sell it. I think he did better. Then this other fella did that and this is Bob Peterson, this attorney down at Moscow here, you probably heard of him; but his dad he was a big farmer he owned all this--

SS: Was that Klaus Peterson?

ES: Yes, Klaus Peterson. He farmed down toward Washington, down in the lower road down there, and he owned quite a bit of land. Had a pretty good sized ranch down there and a place up here in town and had a ranch over there in that country where I lived, and he followed that -- that's what he followed. And Old Klaus Peterson, he was a rich man. Left a big estate. So, this gambling on wheat-- then some farmers I've heard of, selling wheat and buying on the Board of Trade on a margin. Gambling that way. But I think the guy that made the money was when he got his wheat in the warehouse, he didn't gamble on it, he sold it. And put his money in the bank, invested it in something else. Wasn't like I was, owed it all for debts.

SS: Did you run into farmers that didn't trust the co-op? And thought they were getting cheated on their wheat, not getting what they should get, and weren't getting a good enough grade, and they weren't getting--

ES: Well, I ran onto farmers that didn't say too much-- ~~didn't~~ seem like it was<sup>is</sup> too much on the wheat, but they was-- seems like their big argument, more than anything, was on the peas. They never<sup>was</sup> satisfied on the quality of pea grades. You take at the warehouse and you turn it in, and then they'd come back and want ~~give--~~ get another sample. Some of 'em want three or four different samples ~~who~~ they get the pea grades, ~~in~~. But I don't think they was so much on the wheat. Of course there was always some guy that probably think maybe it should have weighed a little bit more, or something like that, but that's common. And then there's farmers that-- <sup>more</sup> farmers that try to cheat on the weights than anything. If a fellow drives in<sup>on</sup> the scales, you know, and maybe he'd get out of his truck when they weighed him in, see, and then vice versa, ~~he'd get out~~ sometimes when they'd start weighing -- ~~he'd~~ get off of the scales on this side, he'd get off on this side, the <sup>when you weighted it</sup> driver's side there, and <sup>if</sup> you didn't watch him, he'd be standing on the scales! (Chuckles) Oh, I tell you, they get kind of catty, some of 'em. Then you know the warehouse is supposed-- it's a kind of a unwritten law-- that the warehouse gets the break on the scales. But lots of times those farmers, you know, they watch <sup>you on</sup> that, and you got to <sup>just</sup> run it out there and just-- as the guys say, you've got to milk it to death. (Chuckles) This old Harry Simpson, the fella I started to work for, ~~he~~ I took instructions on how to weigh and he showed me how he could run that weight out there. Just as soon as that beam come down, why, he'd trip the lever down. He held <sup>there</sup> her right <sup>let it alone, just</sup>, see. While if you just <sup>ease</sup> it out there, you'd probably get fifteen or twenty more pounds on that-- ten maybe, a few more

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pounds, anyway. But that's an unwritten law, that's the warehouseman's margin. But <sup>lots of</sup> these farmers got onto that, and so they didn't go for that, you had to work that key right out there until that break. And a lot of them, no matter what you did, they figured the warehouse was getting the best of it. Well, 'course, you got figure this way, there's money in it or there wouldn't be no warehouses. Now you take a sack of wheat, and when I first started <sup>warehousing</sup> a lot of it was sacked, you know. You take a sack of wheat that was sitting in the warehouse all winter, that sack of wheat will gain weight. Peas'll do the same thing. If you haul in three thousand bushels of wheat, and you sold me three thousand bushels of wheat in early spring, you come in there and sold me three thousand bushels of wheat, well, <sup>I'd</sup> go to the warehouse and weigh out <sup>your</sup> ~~those~~ three thousand bushels of wheat, <sup>and</sup> there'd be quite a little bit of wheat left there. They call that the overrun; the same way with peas. That's the way these pea men, they figure to make-- they buy big lots of peas and they figure to make it on the overrun. That's where the warehouses ~~make~~ their money, is on the overrun. A sack of wheat'll gain in weight when it sets there too long, it'll gather so much moisture and so will peas. I'm not so sure about barley and oats. I guess that does too, but I know wheat and peas does. I remember-- I found that out before I went to the warehouse business. This place down here where I said I my office in this warehouse, that was originally built as <sup>the</sup> Farmers' Union. That was a farmers' outfit. The farmers built that.

SS: What did you know about that Farmers' Union? What was that all about?

ES: The way it started here in Moscow, is a bunch of farmers went together and they built their own elevator, and they marketed their grain through this elevator. They hired a manager, just kind of like the Co-op--it's

the same thing, only this didn't get too . Anyway, they built that elevator down there and then right across the street from where the lumberyard is, they had a store; the Farmers' Union store. And this fellow that I said was always holding his wheat and the bank wound up with his place, he had about two crops of wheat in there. And then he sold it and when he sold his wheat, this fella who was running the-- we was down there one day and the manager says, "Billy, what are you going to do with the rest of your wheat?" And this manager says, "Well, I sold it all!" (End of side B) here in tape) "Several pounds of wheat over there in the warehouse. There was quite a bit left in the warehouse after we weighed out your tickets." So we went over there and, by golly, he had quite a little pile of wheat over there left, the overrun on wheat. If it was an independent warehouse, they wouldn't never said nothing to him about it, but this was farmers owned-- so this fella told them it was his wheat, so he turned right around and sold his overrun.

SS: What happened to the Farmers' Union?

ES: They finally went under, <sup>they</sup> he couldn't make it.

SS: I wonder why they couldn't.

ES: I don't know, anyway-- when this Co-op started, the one I worked for, I don't remember, I think they bought their building, and the other big grain man in Moscow was a Mark P. Miller. This Co-op I worked for, they bought him out. He owned lots of warehouses, and he owned a flour mill. But the flour mill had closed down and they'd built an elevator over there and the Grain Growers got so big, they bought him out. And the manager of the Grain Growers today is-- he was the manager of the Mark P. Miller outfit when I started to work for Grain Growers.

SS: Oh, really?

ES: Uh-huh. Then this manager that I worked for at the Grain Growers, he retired and when they bought Mark P. Miller out, they took this fella-- took their manager in as assistant manager, and he was a younger man than my boss was, and he worked until my boss retired, then they put <sup>in, this Lwvaas,</sup> him, and he's the manager now. The manager of the whole works.

SS: We talked a little ~~about~~ before about sometimes you might have trouble-- you had to make sure the men were going to work and all that, but I was wondering--. Was there anything that was especially challenging or that would cause problems besides sometimes the men? The work that you had to do?

ES: Well, you know, I don't care what the headman is of any concern, he's gonna have problems with somebody, in some way or form. If you're the boss, you're going to hire a man that he knows more about your business than you do. You know that's a fact. That's the same way in my business, I run onto fellas that they knew more about it than I did. <sup>way they wanted to do it.</sup> They figured they should do it the ~~way~~ and I found it, and I had lots of men in the fifteen years that I was there, and I find that lots of fellas go out looking for a man to run an elevator, <sup>warehouse,</sup> they like to have an experienced man. Well I'm just the other way. If you didn't know nothing about elevators, you're the man that I'm looking for. Because when I put you in that elevator, and I explain to you how to do it, how to <sup>run it</sup> why you <sup>would</sup> do it that way. But if you'd a had experience, why, you <sup>would</sup> know a way better than I did, <sup>and</sup> you'd try to run it your way and first thing you know, you're all fouled up. You get too smart! I never did hire a man that was too dumb to run one, but I had 'em that was too smart!

SS: What would be the kind of thing where somebody would do it his own way and would do it wrong? What would be the sort of thing where you had

to know the right way to do it?

ES: Well, You got to be careful to-- one particular thing you had to watch out, and that's not to get these grains mixed. You got wheat, probably two or three different kinds of wheat, that you don't mix. 'Course not in late years you didn't, but when I first started they <sup>did.</sup> They used to have a red wheat, and what they call white wheat. But now, of course, they don't have but very little red wheat anymore. And then they had a brewing barley and then you had a feed barley, and they got to be separate. 'Course, oats, that's all the same. Oats is oats. But the wheat and the barleys is different grades, kinds, that you had to keep separate. <sup>I got a kick out of it.</sup> I had trouble with some. I didn't have too much trouble. <sup>But I still like to</sup> get around the warehouse at harvesttime, as long as I've <sup>been</sup> got away from it. The worst thing about warehousing, is if you have a wet season. <sup>over</sup> And you're not supposed to take in any grain <sup>under</sup> a certain percentage of moisture, not over twelve percent moisture. You got a wet season, why, just as soon as the sunshine's out, the farmer he'd get out as soon as he could knock it out of the head why and here he comes in with a load of wheat, and then you won't take it and then you got a fight on your hands. (Chuckles) That was my biggest trouble for a long time. <sup>But,</sup> I had my orders and I knew it from the take it over 12%. <sup>bank,</sup> don't We had a-- at the warehouse, every warehouse <sup>had a</sup> <sup>you</sup> <sup>tester,</sup> see, and you test a man's grain, and <sup>you</sup> tell him, "No, we can't take that, it's too wet." And he probably jump all over you, and then <sup>he'd</sup> take his wheat and <sup>come ning</sup> run into the main office (Laughter) <sup>get in his car</sup> -- and come running into town to the main office-- "By God, I'll show you whether you'll take it or not." (Laughter) But when I told him we couldn't take it, why he didn't get nowhere by taking it to the main office.

SS: Did it cause a real fire danger if you took what that was -- ?

ES: Yeah, heat. But they don't care, just as long as they can get it off

all. Like their truck, why that's a fella out there at Joel, I guess an old friend of mine, too, he come down there with a load of wheat, and I told him, "Miller, I can't take that, <sup>that's just</sup> ~~that's~~ too wet." And, he just about <sup>the ramp</sup> tore up <sup>on</sup> the sidewalk. (Laughter) And he says, "Well, by golly, you're not gonna stop me from cutting. I'm going to go home and go to cutting and put mine in the granary." I says, "I want to tell you something, you're not that big a fool to put that <sup>wet</sup> wheat in your own granary." And instead of that, why, he turned around and he buzzed into town to see the boss. But he didn't <sup>cut and</sup> put it in the granary either.

SS: He probably thought that being your friend that you'd let him get away with it.

ES: Yeah, I think he did. He got awful mad though when I wouldn't take his grain. He thought that was an awful dirty trick for me not taking his grain. Just 'cause we were friends, I should take his whether there was ~~the~~ water ~~was~~ running out of it or not. ~~and~~ Then he was going to go back and get on his combine and <sup>go to putting</sup> put it in his own granary, and I said, "Miller, you're not that big a fool, to put that wet wheat in your granary." Then he come to town and the boss told him, "If 'Gene told you it's too wet, it must be too wet. He's got the same tester that I've got."

SS: It seems like you learned the business pretty fast.

ES: Yes, I did. I did. Well, you see, I was raised on a farm. And then to going to working in different grains-- And then I got a lot of responsibility buying seed wheat and stuff like that, and grading grains and one thing and another. I <sup>to be</sup> got real good. The only thing that I would be weak in would be the selling, of course. The selling isn't too much; if you came in there and the price was a dollar and so much a bushel, and you'd decide to sell that morning. OKay. I'll give you

a check for it, and then before the market closed I'd sell it again,  
of it.  
I'd turn loose, and I wouldn't carry it over until the next day. I  
the warehouses  
buy it today, I sell it today. See, they don't gamble on it. The  
come in and  
farmers gamble on it, but they don't. If you sell me your wheat today,  
I'm gonna sell it today. Whatever that price is, I sell it to you today,  
I sell it and get my margin on the other end. I don't keep it til the  
no sir,  
next day, Maybe it'll be better, I get rid of it that day. I don't  
fool with it. If I buy a hundred thousand bushels today, I sell a  
hundred thousand bushels. That way, you always keep your shirt clean.  
But if you buy a hundred thousand today, and say, "I might make a few  
the next day,  
cents if I'd sell it tomorrow," but then she might drop, then why, you  
got egg all over your face."

(there is a break in the taping) Resumes with.)

ES: Over at Cornwall,  
-- Oh, his son and somebody blowed him out through the house. Dynamited  
the house he was living in.

SS: What was the deal on that?

ES: I'll tell you, I don't remember exactly what it was at the time, but  
the  
it seems like he ran a store at Cornwall, and he had two daughters and  
a son, and he was a pretty old-- he wasn't an old man, but I guess he  
was in his fifties, maybe. Maybe he wasn't that old, but they got to  
having a lot of family trouble, and so the old man he moved in another  
house right across the road in front of his store. They lived up over-  
head in the store, and he built a little house across the road. He  
just moved out and they said his son just blowed him up. (Chuckles)  
Threw a stick of dynamite in there and blew a hole in the roof, and  
they said it blowed him out at the top of it, but I don't know whether  
it did or not. But, anyway, there was an explosion in there and the  
old man was in there and he come out alive. But they was having some



kind of family trouble. Seems like the kids and the old lady was against the old man.

SS: Did you ever hear about the story when the old Doctor Watkins got shot?

ES: Yes, Yes, I remember <sup>hearing about that.</sup> him. I guess that was about the time we came to the country, about that time, I don't know. Around 1900, wasn't it?

SS: Yeah, 1901.

ES: Right around there. We hadn't been here long. I've heard lots of times.

SS: What have you heard people say about what Will Stephen was doing? I mean--

ES: Huh?

SS: What had you heard about Will Steffen?(break)Wild Davey?

ES: I won't say for sure whether it was him or not, whether they just thought it was him. He was pretty well-- lots of talk about him, way back along about 1904 or '05, along in there, when I was a little kid. But, I know there was a fella camped over in a tent over on the school section not too far from where I was, lived in a tent up there in the draw, and the kids was afraid to go up in there, 'cause they said that was old Wild Davy. Whether there was or not, I don't know, but I don't think so. He was a ragged customer.

SS: When we were talking about prejudice before, you said that the progress of people, it has to have bloodshed for there to be progress. I was thinking about that when I was looking through some of the things we discussed. That's all you said about it at the time. What do you mean by that, that we have to have bloodshed to have progress for <sup>a</sup> people?

ES: Well, I didn't just exactly get your question, Sam. You said I was talking about prejudice--

SS: I thought you said the advances of a people require bloodshed--it takes bloodshed for--. We were talking about civil rights <sup>in the South.</sup> And you were saying bloodshed is something that you have to--.

ES: Well, I think that <sup>probably</sup> Iella made ~~the~~ remark that very few good things that came to people without bloodshed. Well, so this takes us -- getting things straightened out. Just like this country was, we had to have a civil war, and you take the same thing is going on over at Angola now. There's a civil war over there, they're trying to get their problems straightened out. It's gonna be bloodshed before they do it. It is already. And you take <sup>back to</sup> clear the Bible days--it's <sup>usually</sup> bloodshed before the people can settle their difficulties, for some reason or other, <sup>the way</sup> I don't know why it has to be, but usually <sup>it's</sup>. And it don't seem like how highly civilized we get, we still go to war to settle our difficulties. Bloodshed before we get our difficulties settled.

SS: I had the idea when we were talking before that -- we talked about World War I, and you said something like that maybe we didn't gain anything by that war. Is that the way you feel, that really that war didn't --?

ES: No, really; that was supposed to be the war to end all wars, but I don't think there was nothing gained by it. And just like this conflict we just got out of, look at ~~this~~, over fifty thousand lives over there, <sup>died,</sup> for what? In other words, <sup>the way</sup> I felt about that, <sup>over there--we were intervening</sup> into a civil war anyway. <sup>That's the way I figured it.</sup> We was kinda meddling <sup>with</sup> in somebody else's business, just the same way with the Angolan situation in Africa now. Well, I figure that Cuba, Russia and those people, I figure they're butting in on somebody else's affair-- business. And after it's all over with, <sup>why</sup> they'll settle it among themselves anyway.

SS: When you were in World War I, 'Gene, did you believe that that was

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going to be the last ~~big~~ war?

ES: Yeah, I did. I did at that time. Yes, I did. I figured it would, I thought-- I ~~sure~~ wasn't looking for <sup>no</sup> another war, but I said when I was over there at this <sup>German</sup> prison camp, and talked to some of those German prisoners, they were very bitter against France. They wasn't against the United States, but they was-- had more than one of 'em tell me that France was going to have to pay for this. But I didn't think there'd be another war about twenty years from then. I thought-- I didn't think I'd ever live to see it-- to see another war. (end ~~cas~~)

SS: When you were a kid; and we talked about prejudice before and you were saying that there really wasn't very much when you were a kid. I was wondering. Was there any? When you were a kid, that you remember of times when you were-- when you knew that you were being---?

ES: Mistreated on account of my color?

SS: Yes.

SS: Well, truthfully, Sam, I can't say that I can say that I run into anything like that. Like I tell you, I was-- if I had of been raised in the city, I figure I <sup>would've</sup> had more of a chance for that, but I was raised out in the open spaces in the country, where they didn't-- And another thing that-- there was four of us boys, we didn't have to run around <sup>go</sup> to other places to have fun and do things. We did things at our own place, home, we entertained ourself a lot. And so, therefore, we wasn't thrown in with ~~so much~~ <sup>on</sup> communicati<sup>n</sup> with the outside world. As I say, there wasn't any up until after we come over here and started to school here in town. While we was out there in the country, course, we always had-- well even after we come <sup>over</sup> here, now, -- Our place was kind of a gathering place <sup>on</sup> weekends, because we always had so much going on up there. We had horses to fool with and different projects <sup>to</sup> work with, and pitching horseshoes and one thing and another

and kids always flocked to our place. And, of course, if they was too prejudiced, they wouldn't show up, naturally. But as far as just about actually being hurt by prejudice, I think I told you that the worst that I ever-- the first and the worst that I ever ran into prejudice being called was when I started to enlist in the army. That was my worst for pre- that other, a little bit, but it didn't amount to-- Of course judice,; but of course, I've had kids to get mad at me and call me "nigger" and such as that.

SS: When you were a kid and that kind of thing happened, what would you do? When a kid called you that? Would it get you really mad?

ES: No, the first time I ignored it. 'Course, I figured that-- I figured after I got up in age- it this way, the kid learned it from his parents, probably.

SS: Would it stop you from wanting to be friends?

ES: Well, (Chuckles) you know how kids are. Probably the next minute he'd want me to do something for him. But just to come out and disbar me for anything like that-- like he thought that was the thing to do, that's a different story. I probably called him worse things than that!

SS: When you were a kid, did you feel very much aware of the difference in color?

ES: No I didn't. It's a funny thing. When I left the South and came out here I was just a little kid, and to tell you the truth about it, what I can remember about the South, my dad, <sup>he</sup> had a farm, he had cotton, raised cotton, and he run a sorghum mill, and he had a big hog pasture; hog lot, we called it. And he had a contract job; he hauled slop from the hotels in this town, and he always had two or three black boys to do that for him. And he always had-- and I remember when they picked cotton, he always had a bunch of black people, women and men, picking cotton for him for a few days, whatever it'd take to pick what little he had. And outside of that, the people that I know, that he assoc-

iated with, they were white, I'd see more of them. He run a big lot  
 he took in horses to pasture:  
 down there, and of course, most of the people that he dealt with  
 mostly white. when I came out here and I truthfully say, that I nev-  
 er any black people til I <sup>went</sup> got in the army. I didn't know there was  
 I didn't.  
 that many in the world! (Chuckles) ^ 'Til I got to high school, I went  
 to Spokane a time or two, and went to church up there and I met a few,  
 But up until I was twenty-one years old, there was just a very few  
 black people that I <sup>'d ever</sup> had any contact with whatsoever.

SS: When you were a kid, you thought of yourself as being black at the  
 same time?

ES: yes, when I was very young.  
 Oh, sure. I knew that I was black, I <sup>'m sure</sup> knew that. But my youngest bro-  
 man. I don't believe  
 ther, I don't believe he ever realized that he was <sup>a</sup> black. It just did-  
 he was a kid that way. Of course, we heard  
 n't seem like it made any difference to him. My parents talked about  
 the South and the difference between races and the troubles-and all  
 those troubles and prejudices and all of that. (End of side C) C)

ES: Well, we escaped. And one thing about us kids, we were an independent  
 kind of a setup anyway. What you're doing and what you got didn't  
 was pretty well fixed ourselves. We <sup>so</sup> why worry,  
 worry us, because we had plenty to do ourselves, <sup>so</sup> we didn't lose no  
 sleep over what the other fellow was doing. That was the least of our  
 trouble. As I say, our yard was always full of kids; our barnyard was  
 always full of kids. We stayed home, on the weekends we didn't go  
 Or we went hunting.  
 down and run around town like a lot of kids did. We stayed home. We  
 We was  
 always had lots of company, the barnyard was always full of kids. Box-  
 we was we was we was  
 ing, pitching horseshoes, or breaking horses or doing something. So  
 that's the way I grew up, so I didn't run into this color barrier too  
 much. I figured it was present, alright.

SS: They always say when they talk about Joe Wells that he was accepted  
 all the way and his family was by the community. Nobody thought it

made the slightest bit of difference what his color was. And I guess there's really truth in that, that people did act that way.

ES: Yes, they took him in. That's the way I understood it. Now, I don't know, I heard that, now like you say, they went to dances up there. Out of five kids, there was only two of us that ever did dance and that was my sister and my next to the youngest brother. 'Course, now here we had parties. We'd go from one neighbor to the other in the of course we always went. But wintertime and have parties and things like that. <sup>^</sup>We never danced. Literary and school functions and different neighborhoods-- and all that stuff, we was accepted.

SS: Did you ever get joked or teased about it?

ES: What?

SS: Did kids ever tease you about it or joke with you about it? About color difference? I still sometimes hear jokes--

ES: Yeah, yeah, I've heard that. Yeah, I've heard that lots of times. I can't say that I ~~was~~ ever teased much myself. I've been in-- guys was always telling some nigger joke. I always figured they was just telling it for my benefit. But <sup>now</sup> maybe they was and maybe they wasn't. But anyway, as far as I was concerned it went in one ear and out the other, because I just figured, "Well, you're just exposing your own ignorance, not mine."

SS: Did you have any real close friends when you were a kid, or any special friends?

ES: What?

SS: When you were a kid growing up, did you have any special pals that you palled around with outside of the family?

ES: Oh, yeah, oh, I had friends, special friends. But I wasn't so much of that as some of my younger brothers. They usually was more pally

a bunch of  
 with kids than I was. I was more of a loner, myself. I had my  
 brothers. They always had a bunch of kids at our place to stay all  
 night and they'd go to other places and stay all night. Well, I did  
 it too, occasionally, and such as that. But, like some people do, to  
 get all tied up in one certain pal, that you can't turn around with-  
 out him, I never was that way. I think it's been more that way since  
 I've been married, since early married life. There's fellows that  
 I've met, the two of us, that is, their families, and his wife  
 and my wife, we palled together that way. Probably every weekend, we was  
 probably way off here in the mountains on a fishing trip or something  
 like that. Well, we had a little girl and they had two little kids. I was  
 more pally that way since we were married than when I was a kid. I  
 had brother<sup>s</sup> that they had friends<sup>^</sup> just like that-- you couldn't see  
 one without the other. But I never was that way, as I say, until af-  
 ter we was married. Then different ones, the families, that way, we  
 went together. But I never was. I never was a guy to put all my eggs  
 in one basket!

SS: You know, when I think about it, your growing up, I can really under-  
 stand what you're saying. Why race prejudice wouldn't be a problem.  
 I imagine that probably it meant a lot more to the parents, in a way,  
 than it did to the kids, because I imagine your parents had seen a lot  
 more.

ES: Well, I know they have. They saw-- they knew all about it. They had  
 experienced it, they knew what it was before they ever came out here.  
 They knew what it was all about, <sup>you bet,</sup> sure they did. <sup>was</sup> They like us kids,  
 though, after we got out here-- I'm just trying to think if I can  
 remember anything, <sup>any real time that</sup> Even my dad, I know my mother didn't, cause my  
 mother she didn't -- she was just kind of a homebody, she didn't go

too much, she'd go to town. But my dad-- if I remember him talking about it any time- he really got a slap in the face because <sup>on account</sup> of his color-- I don't think so. Nothing to amount to.

SS: Do you know how he felt about this country around here as it went as far as prejudice? Whether it was really a good place and how he felt about it.

ES: Well---

SS: You said to me something once about-- we talked a little bit that Westerners could be more prejudiced than Southerners.

ES: I got that from my father. Some of his <sup>closest</sup> friends after he came over here, some of his closest associates was people that was from the South. <sup>Yes...</sup> Now, as I told you, how he'd do a lot of hunting and ~~some~~ of the guys that hunt with him, fellows that hunt with him, so many of ~~them~~ <sup>Well</sup> were Southerners. <sup>Naturally they're gonna</sup> I can see why that white people be standoff-- standoffish on a black person, Negro, because from my own experience, as I told you a while ago, I grew up I didn't ever see no Negro until <sup>after</sup> I was ~~past~~ twenty-one. Well, what about the white kids that growed up and never saw one. <sup>Probably</sup> be kind of standoffish and wonder-- That's just the way I felt when I started to high school here in Moscow. I was the only black kid when I started to school there. Well, some of the kids they <sup>were</sup> standoffish, you know, they didn't bother me or didn't say nothing, but they just kind of give me plenty of room. But it wasn't very long before they found out I stood upright and walked just and talked just the same as they did. The only difference in me and them was the color. After they found out I wasn't an animal, <sup>a</sup> beast, why, then they began to kind of warm up to us. It wasn't long before I was on the track team and I was on the football team and everything else I wanted to get onto. They offered



to do <sup>to</sup>.  
 me more than I wanted, I could see their side of it; they was kind  
 of amazed to start with.

SS: Have you ever discussed with Mrs. Settle about what her experiences  
 were like when she was a kid growing up?

ES: Well, her's was pretty much like mine. She grew up on a farm down  
 here out of Pomeroy there, and her dad, and she had two brothers. They  
 were, I think, a little more to themselves though-- that is the girls  
 were-- than we were. Of course, they were aware of the prejudice that was  
 there, same as we were. <sup>we knew it was there.</sup> But it just didn't get in <sup>our</sup> road, as I say,  
 like as if we'd a been in town or someplace like that <sup>where we were</sup>  
 dependent on--

SS: It would have depended on the town, it would be different. Do you  
 think your father felt he was held back by it?

ES: Huh?

SS: Do you know if your father felt that he was held back by it in this  
 country. It would have been easier for him to get ahead?

ES: Well, I don't know. I never heard him say anything about that, whether  
 he thought his color was hurting him. He seemed to get what he wanted.  
 And if he needed help, <sup>why</sup> he always had somebody to do it. I remember, he  
 bought eighty acres of school land up there--up here at the sale-- and  
 he had to pay so much down on it, and after he got it he didn't have  
 enough money to pay down on it, and I know that, it wasn't long after <sup>that</sup>  
 they found he was short, <sup>there was</sup> different ones <sup>that</sup> come and offered him enough  
 money so he'd have enough money to pay down it. I do remember that.  
 So he could make his downpayment on it. But I don't remember, I never  
 heard my dad say anything about it being any <sup>running up against</sup>  
 a stonewall because he was a black man.

SS: On the farm, did your family have a lot to do with their neighbors?  
 Did you do much with the --

ES: Sure, sure, we had neighbors, you betcha, we had friends. You betcha.  
We was neighborly. with our  
Lots of friends. Neighbor all friends. Yessir.

SS: What was the kind of stuff that you would do with the neighbors?  
What kind of contact would you have with them? Would it be over ex-  
changing work and that kind of thing? Or was it--

ES: There was lots of times, you know, if the neighbor needed help, we'd  
go help them out and if we needed, visa versa. Lots of times we'd  
visit back and forth in the wintertime. That's about the only time  
farmers got time to visit, in the wintertime. And take the women,  
lots of times in the afternoons, the neighbor ladies would come to  
visit my mother and visa versa. We were  
Real neighborly. And would have been  
lots more, but my mother, she didn't go very much, herself, she was  
quite a quiet lady, but she always appreciated people coming to her  
house. And she went some, too, as far as that's concerned, but she  
didn't go as much as she had company; there was always somebody at  
her house. No,  
We had lots of friends and lots of neighbors. And in those  
days, when I was a kid, why, you knew your neighbor, nowadays you don't  
know who your neighbor is. 'Cause they don't socialize like they used  
to when-- Course when I was a kid they used to have in the wintertime--  
they used to have parties around at different houses all winter long.  
And now, since they got the automobiles the kids all leave home, they  
wouldn't stay at home, they got to go twenty-five, thirty miles off to  
somewhere else. But those days, why, had to go horseback or buggy,  
we had our parties right there in the neighborhood.

SS: What kind of neighborhood parties were they? Were they dancing?

ES: Yeah, sometimes they'd dance and square dance and some'd play pinochle;  
play cards.

SS: Would there be music? Somebody play a violin?

- ES: Yes, some old farmer could play Turkey in the Straw or something like that! (Chuckles) Yeah, we had a lot of fun just the same.
- SS: So it would usually be just one instrument, or something like that?
- ES: Well, maybe somebody could chord on the organ or piano, or something like that, and somebody with the violin. That's about all, <sup>there was.</sup> Or two violins.
- SS: Would there be food, too?
- ES: Sometimes there's be two. I think in our bunch there was about two different fellows could play the violin some, and one woman she chorded. She played the piano a little bit.
- SS: Would there be eats at a gettogether, like that?
- ES: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah. Always had lunch, of some kind. Yeah, we used to have some good times.
- SS: There is one more thing I want to ask you before I go, because I got to go. But that is, I was interested about your father-- what kind of a man do you remember him as being?
- ES: My father?
- SS: Yeah. You told me different things that he did. But what kind of a person do you remember him as being?
- ES: Well, I'll tell you. There was a fella by the name of ~~Yes~~ Gamble, he's dead now, probably you've heard of Gambles, the old pioneers here-- He and I were standing downtown there talking, and my dad come <sup>was ing</sup> up the other side of the street and he started to cross over where I was, and this Gamble says, "Here comes old John Settle, the man with a smile for everybody." And I thought he just about described my dad pretty much. He was a real sociable guy, good guy, and a feller <sup>that</sup> would always do the right thing; never took advantage of anybody. Just a good old man, that's what my dad was. And I think in your travels

you don't find many people saying anything against my dad; only he was a black man, that's all. But he was a good, honest old man, John Settle was. And he had lots of friends. (Break)

And the Wells Family they were old pioneers of this country. But they was a lot of things they didn't have in common. Now you take the Wells Family, I don't know whether it was the environment, where they <sup>ir</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>raised</sup> up there in the woods, but they liked moonshine-whiskey and that kind of stuff. Well, that didn't go with my people at all. But the Wells they was all goodtimers and had to have their fun like the rest of the wood rats up there, <sup>'cause there was no difference between the two,</sup> and drink whiskey and fool with moonshine. <sup>the Swedes,</sup>

SS: Your family really wasn't a bit like that then?

ES: No. My family wasn't that way at all. 'Course now, you take Old Lady Wells herself, I thought the world of her. I worked in the woods up there with <sup>them</sup> part of one winter. She was a fine old lady, <sup>I thought.</sup> But the boys and the old man, they got under my skin. They were good people, had a heart like a hotel, as far as that's concerned, but they ~~they~~ just lived a different life than the Settle family did.

SS: When you say they got under your skin; is it just because you didn't like the way they lived?

ES: Yeah. I don't like this <sup>just</sup> drinking <sup>and hurraing</sup> <sup>Course,</sup> they called it having fun but I couldn't see no fun in that. <sup>Of course</sup> They was just <sup>just</sup> keeping up with the Joneses up there in the woods. (Chuckles)

SS: What about Mrs. Wells?

ES: She was more of a quiet woman, like my mother was.

SS: Like your own mother?

ES: UH-huh. She didn't like what her family was doing; but what could she do about it? But as <sup>far</sup> they were good people in their way. And their

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way was like the way of ninety percent of them up there, was  
doing the same thing. (Chuckles)

SS: Did she take a lot of responsibility, Mrs. Wells, around the--?

ES: No. I'll tell you. I worked with them up there for about six weeks, I believe, one winter, the winter of 1919. And about all that woman did was-- to e walked down to the Deary store there, and keep grub on that table and wash their clothes. And said very little, as far as their affairs, but she and I would talk together. Lots of times after dinner, after supper, why, I'd go out there and dry dishes for her or something, and we would talk. So that's when I found out that she wasn't-- she didn't just like the way <sup>that</sup> her family lived, with the whiskey and the moonshine and all that, she didn't like that. She didn't think too much of that, but nothing she can do about it. And she didn't try to do nothing, she just did her work and that was it.

SS: Did she take a liking to you?

ES: Oh, yes, we got along fine. She was just like a slave to Joe, Old Joe. He used to come in there hollering at her, I kind of felt sorry for the little I guess she was used <sup>but</sup> old woman. to it, anyway, she never hollered back at him. She just went on with her work, ~~just~~ like I say, just like she was a slave girl for the outfit.

SS: How did her sons treat her? How did the kids treat her?

ES: They was all just alike.

SS: Like Joe?

ES: Yes. They beat Old Joe, I guess, 'course he was an old man, but the kids, <sup>they</sup> was worse than the old man, 'course they always had whiskey around the house, and old Joe would drink his, but he didn't go out and raise Cain like the boys did. He did most of his drinking-- well, he--- I remember my dad saying one time that he came to town, I think it was

about the first time that he knew that this colored family was up there in Deary, but I don't know whether he had met 'em, he had heard of 'em-- I think the first time my dad, I won't say for sure whether it was the first time or not, but it seemed like, the first time my dad came to town one day and he met Old Joe Wells and he was drunk then.

SS: Did he say anything about it, your dad?

ES: He was telling us about it when he came home, that this man was drunk.

SS: But you knew that the boys would even beat up on their father?

ES: No, I never heard of them fighting among 'em at all, I never did hear nothing like that at all. No fighting at all. But I know that the old man he was very abusive to his wife, I knew that, he was very abusive to her, but she just took it. I guess she got used to it, she just took it, never argued back with him, never talked back. But she sure kept a meal on the table, grub on the table all the time for 'em.

SS: Was Mary there when you were there?

ES: What?

SS: Was Mary living there when you were there?

ES: Yeah, yeah.

SS: Did you get to know her at all?

ES: Yeah, I knew her. Yes, Mary was up there, she had two little kids, when I was up there. I think she had both of 'em, 'cause she married a soldier from Fort Wright up there at Spokane, and he went to World War I, same as I did, and he got as far as-- he went as far as New York and then they lost track of him. But he went with the company to New York, and seemed like nobody could never find hide nor hair of that man after he got to New York.

SS: He never came back here?

ES: No, no, he never came back and they never did hear from him. I know that after I came back from the army, and after I'd been up there in the woods there talking <sup>working</sup> with the Wellses, and I heard her side of the story, and Mrs. Wells' side of the story, and I belonged to the Veterans of Foreign Wars here in Moscow, and I took it up through the Veterans of Foreign Wars <sup>to try</sup> to locate this man. We traced him to New York, like they said, and they couldn't find no hide nor hair of him, with his serial number or nothing from New York on. Now whether he-- what happened to him, now that's a mystery. He never did show up back here.

SS: Do you remember how Mary felt about it, when you were out there? Did she think he was coming back, or what?

ES: Well, it seemed like-- it seemed to me like she was kinda of reconciled to the deal; that had been about two years he'd been gone. She sat down and talked to me, and I got all the details of the whole thing from her, so I took it up with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I got all the identification <sup>serial number and whatever</sup> that I could from 'em.

SS: Was he a soldier when they got married?

ES: He was a soldier up here at Fort Wright, when they had Fort George Wright up here at Spokane. He was a regular soldier.

SS: Did she know where he was from in the first place?

ES: I ~~guess~~ <sup>know whether</sup> she did know where he was from. He was a smart in a way. <sup>guy</sup> I guess he spoke two or three different languages. But he was-- <sup>he was a drinker,</sup> <sup>(chuckles)</sup> I think he was kinda like the rest of 'em-- he liked his whiskey. But he disappeared. He joined the army, he went in the army again when the war broke out, and they traced him in this company til they got to New York, and that's as far as---

SS: So he'd been in the army and then he got out of the army, and he came

down to--

SS: Yeah, I can't say that, I know that he was a soldier at Fort Wright when she married him.

(End of side D)

ES: --- and blew it, and have a good time. And they -

SS: The Wells boys?

ES: Yeah. And they met this guy up there in Spokane, this soldier, and he came home with 'em. And then it wasn't long after that-- then after that he married their sister. That's the way it was told to me, I don't know. But they brought him back with them from Spokane, 'cause they was all up there together, drinking and raising Cain, And anyway, he came home with 'em, and <sup>that's where</sup> he met their sister and they got married. But he was down here. He must have got out of the army because he lived there. He lived up there and they had these two kids, and he was down here until he left to go to the army again. I guess he must have reenlisted, I guess he reenlisted again, I suppose.

SS: Did Mrs. Wells help Mary? Was she helping her raise the kids, at that time when you were out there?

ES: Well, I think-- I kind of think that they was taking care of both of them. They lived in that little house, not too far from where they did. <sup>Mary, the girl</sup> 'Cause Joe wasn't working and she didn't seem <sup>wasn't</sup> to be over there helping her mother any. She was over there quite a bit, but I think Old Joe was taking care of 'em. Well, let me see now-- I take it all back, I think she was doing some washing for some of the lumberjacks up there, something like that, I believe she was. I take that all back, he was doing some washing for some of those people up there.

ES: It's pretty difficult to raise two little kids and no father.

ES: Uh-huh. Now these kids were real small at that time.