

CAROL RYRIE BRINK

In response to questions supplied by:
Sam Schrager

Oral History Project
Latah County Museum Society

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CAROL RYRIE BRINK

Moscow; b.

author.

1.9 hours

This tape was made by Carol Brink alone at her home in Pacific Beach, California in response to questions that Sam Schrager recorded at the beginning of the tape.

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(21 minutes)

June 1975

II. Transcript

BRINK, CAROL RYRIE

SAM SCHRAGER: The following report made by Carol Ryrie Brink at her home in Pacific Beach, California in June 1975. This was done in response to the questions recorded at the beginning of the tape by Sam Schrager.

SS: I think it might be interesting for you to discuss, but please don't feel bound to these in any way, if they don't strike your fancy. And please feel free to discuss anything that you want to.

In your letter you say that it might be good to get down for posterity that your books are not real history and that they're just fictionalized to a great extent. I think it would be interesting for you to discuss this in general, and also, with regard to some specific plots and characters. What are some of the sources that you've drawn from and events and people in the history of this area, and how did you choose to transform and use them in your fiction. One particular instance that comes to my mind is the case of Winnie Booth and Dr. Ledbrooke, who are clearly models for Jennie Waldon and Hugh Allerton in Buffalo Coat. This remains a most puzzling occurrence in Moscow history, and I am curious about what you heard about the double suicide and what you regard as the factual content of your account. Your explanation of how it happened is very plausible.

Of course, your grandmother, Mrs. Watkins, figures very prominently in a number of your books, and I think it would be very interesting if you discuss her importance to you and the kind of person she was. In Buffalo Coat and Snow in the River and Caddy Woodlawn, too, she is an exceptionally strong, wise and kind person. One of the most provocative passages in Caddy Woodlawn, for me, is when Caddy's father comforts her that night when she is planning to run away, telling her that as a woman her task will be to teach gentleness and courtesy and love and kindness. I'd like to ask you about your view of women's roles in pioneer society, and, of course, I know that this can only be in general terms; but were women and men on anything like

an equal footing? Was Caddy's free life as a tomboy unusual exception to the rule? Do you think that many women had difficulty finding fulfillment as wives and mothers? Or did they find -- did many find this restrictive? Also, do you think women do play the civilizing role that Mr. Woodlawn describes to Caddy? Do you think there was a great deal of difference between the East and the pioneer West in the roles of women? And do you know how people looked at the question of women's rights to vote in this area?

Now I know that's quite a few questions, but here's another aspect of-- that I think is interesting-- and that's the question of status in pioneer Moscow. It's a hard thing, I think to get at. I'm wondering if there was much of a dividing line between, let's say the Ladies Aid and the ordinary housewives-- between people who were rather well off and those who were just struggling to get by? I'm wondering-- do you think status depended more on a person's accomplishments in this country or more on his background before coming here? Now as I read your books I see a real conflict in many places between the opportunities and freedom in this country on one hand, and it's limitations and the reversals people experienced here on the other. This seemed especially strong to me in Snow on the River, and I'm wondering if you'd be interested in discussing that.

Now one historical question is interesting and one that we have a hard time finding out about, is that of homesteading east of Clarkia towards the Clearwater. I've read that your aunt homesteaded there. I think it's especially interesting that a significant number of women took homesteads there. Now the conflict that you present in Strangers in the Forest, which is the ethics of homesteading with the purpose of selling to the timber companies; Was that a real issue of the time in this area, do you think? And, I also think it would be most interesting if you would discuss how you became interested in writing, and how it relates to your personal background. Do you have strong feelings about why this area has given you inspiration and has

been the setting for a number of your books?

And one more question: Do you feel that ^{as} a woman you've been helped or hindered by society in your writing career?

Okay, those are just some things that I am throwing out to you and I hope you really enjoy sitting down and making a tape, and I very much look forward to hearing it when you send it back to us. So thanks, very much.

MRS. BRINK: Good morning, Mr. Schragar, you've asked me a lot of very good questions and you may find that you've got a monster by the tail when I get started talking, why there's no way of stopping me, especially about Moscow in the old days.

I think first, I might tell you a little bit about how I started writing and why I like to use Idaho as a source of material.

I lost both of my parents by the time I was eight years old, and I went to live with this very wonderful grandmother and aunt. We were three lone women in a big house. I often was very lonely as a child, although I had a happy childhood, really. But I had to make my own amusements. I had a pony and I rode all over the Idaho countryside on my pony, usually making up stories for myself as I went along. Incidentally both my grandmother and aunt were very good storytellers; they liked to recount the stories of the things that had happened in the small town, and I listened and took it all in, and then I liked to make up my own stories. I had to amuse myself in various ways. I read a great deal; liked books. I decided I wanted to be a writer and at that time, I thought I'd like to be an illustrator too. But that ambition fell by the wayside, although I do still like to draw and paint. But I think sometimes that if I had been born into a big, lively, jolly family, I might never have become a writer. It's one of those things that--well, lonely children make their own amusements and often it's very valuable to them in later life. Also if you have a feeling of being different from the other children that you know, it's likely to make either a criminal or

a genius out of you, and I've fallen sort of between the two benches, I don't think I qualify in either respect. But ^{it} has influenced my writing very much that I had a very observant but lonely childhood in a small town where everybody knew about everybody else. So, I think although I've used other backgrounds in my books, the dominant source of material has always been my experiences as a child in Idaho. I'm working on a book now that may never see the light of day, but it's important to me. I'm calling it Unimportant People and they're people that I knew in a small town where I grew up and some of the true stories rather than the fictionalized ones, because I have fictionalized many of the familiar stories of Moscow in my books.

I don't have total recall, by any means, but I do have a very good memory of my grandmother, especially of my early childhood. As I say, I've used that very much in my books. It might be well here to point out some of the differences between the real facts and the fiction in my books. For instance, the story of my grandfather and his assassination-- that's part of Moscow history now-- but many people feel that Buffalo Coat exactly describes that. That's not true. Much of it is fact, but it's fictionized to a great extent. I have notes, for instances, on the-- my grandfather's office. This was a small building just off Main Street, and it was occupied by a number of different doctors. I might just give you a bit of that history as it really occurred: My grandfather built the building, I believe. It was a very small building-- brick building-- and I'm not sure that it still exists. For a long time he was assisted by a French doctor, named Doctor *Dillipine* and Doctor *Dalopine* was one of the first specialists in Moscow. He specialized in diseases of the eye, ear, nose and throat. He had been married to an English woman and had practiced in England. It's very interesting to me and has been hard for me to understand how so many people from far away came to Idaho in those days, but it was the days when everybody was going West and we had many Scandivanians and people from England, people from France, people

from all parts of the world. I suppose people from Russia, at least I suppose that's how the town got it's name, although I've never known any of them. Well, Doctor ~~Dillipins~~ as I said, was French, but he'd practiced in England and had been married to an English woman who died, I believe, when his son was born. He had twin girls and a little boy. And for a while he brought them to Moscow and they lived with my grandparents and were almost like their own children. They all thought a great deal of Doctor ~~Dillipins~~. But before Doctor Watkins, my grandfather, was killed, Doctor ~~Dillipins~~ left Moscow and returned to England with his family. And then, there was, of course, the killing of Doctor Watkins and there were other men in town who were either wounded or lost their lives at the same time, and that, as I have described it in Buffalo Coat, I believe, is very nearly correct. But I am going on with the notes on Doctor Watkins' office now just to keep the historical order proper. ^{ly}_A So after my grandfather's death, his office was rented by another doctor who had just come from England, and this was Doctor Francis J. Ledbrooke, who came and brought his English wife with him. As you know, of course, in history on May 12, 1902, Doctor Ledbrooke and Winnifred Booth, the daughter of the Methodist minister died together in a suicide pact at Orofino, Idaho. Now there have been very many accounts of this double tragedy, and the newspapers of the time were full of the fact that Doctor Ledbrooke had a malign hypnotic influence over his victim and that he was really a villain who murdered this beautiful girl and people didn't quite understand it all. This all happened after my grandfather's death. Now in Buffalo Coat I make these two men contemporaries and rivals, so that you see the book is fictionized very much to that extent. Mrs. Ledbrooke, the wife of the doctor lived for many years with my grandmother. My grandmother was a wonderful person for taking in people who needed help and making them part of her family. And I loved Leddy, as I called her, very much as a child. She was one of the plainest, ugliest-- is a bad word-- because she had a good

disposition, but she was not a beautiful woman in any way, and I think that my interpretation of the double suicide is perhaps about as near as you can come to the truth of the matter. I think that Doctor Ledbrooke and Winnie Booth were both very much infatuated with each other. At that time, living in sin was one of the things that religious people did not do, so what did they do but decide that if they couldn't live together, they couldn't live at all. I think that's the real explanation of it. And, my grandmother, I'm sure felt that way. Nobody in our family felt that Doctor Ledbrooke had any malign, hypnotic influence over his victim as the newspapers would like to have had you believe. I think it was purely an unfortunate love affair, a sort of Romeo and Juliet ~~effect~~, but Romeo was married, and that made things very difficult in those days. Now-a-days I am sure people would have had a divorce, would have taken it all much more lightly and not felt that death was the only solution. As I say, I loved Mrs. Ledbrooke very much. And she was an eccentric character but a very dear person, and, in fact, she used to read aloud to me-- when anything that anybody would read aloud to me was so much fun that I would sit at her feet on ^{a stool} and she had a friend who owned a complete set of Elsie Dinsmore books. They are horrible books and I knew it at the time, but the fact that she would read them aloud to me was so delightful that I would sit by the hour and eat her peppermints that she kept in a tin box, and listen to Elsie Dinsmore just because it was so delightful to have somebody read aloud to me. We always had dogs and she used to rattle her tin box of candies and the dog would rush to her room barking and wanting a treat and then she would take ~~them~~ ^{for} for a walk. Altogether, she was quite a delightful character, and I have not really made the best of her in Buffalo Coat. But all of this happened after my grandfather's death, rather than at the same time that he was living.

Then after Doctor Ledbrooke's tragedy, Doctor C. D. Parsons moved into

the office. And on a day in May in 1903 he fell from a packhorse while he was on a camping trip and he died from a fractured skull. Well, by that time, people in Moscow were sure that there was a hoodoo on Doctor Watkins' office and no one would rent it. My poor grandmother really needed the rent because just before her husband's death he had cancelled all of his insurance policies because he felt that he was so husky and strong that there was no use paying out these foolish premiums, so that she had to live pretty much on the rents of a few small pieces of property that she owned. And the doctor's office stood empty for a long time because it seemed to be hoodooed. Nobody wanted to rent it. But then Doctor Dallipin came back again to Moscow; he was the French doctor who had assisted my grandfather years before. And he had no superstitions apparently about the office, he rented it again and apparently did very well for a great many years. And many people, I am sure, of the older generation may remember him as a successful and good doctor. I have somewhat maligned him in Buffalo Coat too, because while I am sure that there was a slight romantic interest between him and my grandmother, he was not a complete drunkard as I have ^{sort of} suggested in the book. So you see that one takes what's at hand and makes it into a story. I might say that I first wrote a novel based on the doctor's office. It followed somewhat the lines of this little resume that I have just given you, and I sent it into my publisher, it was the first novel I'd done, I'd done children's books before that, and they sent it back saying, "You have good material here, but this is not a novel, it's three short stories, and you kill off the most interesting character at the end of the first short story." Meaning my grandfather. So, after that ^{decided that} I ^{in order} to make a novel of it-- I had to make these men contemporaries and had to weave the whole plot together as it appears in the book, Buffalo Coat. And that's why that people should not take my books as genuine history. They're based on history, and some of it is very real, but in order to make

a good story of it a novelist starts with what's real and goes on and uses his imagination to build up a story that will interest people who are wanting to read a good story.

While I am on the subject of my grandfather I might give you a few notes, factual notes, on his life. You may have these in other places, I am not sure how the records go, but-

William Woodbury Watkins was born in Warner, New Hampshire on August 3, 1846. His father was of Welsh background and his mother was a cousin of-- her name was Phoebe Abbott-- she was a cousin of Jacob Abbott and John S. C. Abbott, who were both best-selling authors of their day. And Lyman Abbott, the celebrated New England preacher was ^{his} a second cousin and Emma Abbott, the singer was a close connection. So he had a good background on his mother's side, I'm not so sure about his father, who was, apparently, a rather cantankerous old man. My grandfather, William Watkins, was the youngest of a large family of children, and his mother, probably worn out by the time he arrived, died when he was quite small, and he was reared by older sisters. His father was either unable or unwilling to give him financial assistance with his education and he never went to high school as my aunt used to tell me. ^{at least} But somehow, he went South and there a man named Duke became very much interested in him and financed his medical education. He was accepted at the St. Louis Medical University without high school credits, and he apparently graduated there in good standing, and later served for a while on the faculty as a lecturer on women's and children's diseases. He was dark, had flashing black eyes and usually mutton-chop sideburns or walrus mustache. He was a very vigorous man. People who are interested in horoscopes would say that he was a perfect Leo, he was born in August, early August, and he was a very dominant, vigorous character. People reacted quite strongly toward him; either they adored him or they disliked him very much. The final tragedy was caused by the fact that he had been asked to reprimand a young

man, named William Stephans for beating his mother, they both belonged to the Mason's Lodge and the Masons had asked my grandfather to go out and tell this young man that it wasn't nice to beat his mother, and apparently he did so. And that was one reason why he was put on the list of people that Stephans wanted to shoot ^{on} the day he came in town, and he was the first one that Stephans met on his way in town and he was shot and instantly killed. He married my grandmother, Caroline Augusta Woodhouse in St. Louis when they were young people. My grandmother used to tell me that she was shelling peas on the side porch at their house when he proposed to her. And it was rather ironical that when they came to tell her of his death, she was sitting on the side porch of her house in Idaho shelling peas into a pan. They had eight children; two boys and six girls, but only three survived to adulthood. This also is ironical, because my grandfather was a doctor especially of women's and children's diseases. But in those days nobody, even the best of doctors, knew how to cope with diphtheria and scarlet fever and some of the scourges of childhood. So that while he delivered many babies and was a perfectly successful doctor, as far as his knowledge went in those days, he was still unable to save his two little boys and three little girls. He did, however-- I have a great sense of gratitude for him because he apparently saved my life. My grandmother said that they thought at first I was stillborn, but my grandfather took me up and worked my arms up and down and blew his own breath, doubtless tobacco scented because he was a great cigar smoker, into my lungs and started me going on a life that I've enjoyed very much, indeed. So I feel that I owe him as much as I owe my mother and father for my being and having a very happy and successful life.

Dr. Watkins kept a record book of the six hundred and seventy-one babies he delivered during his career. And he practiced first in various places in Missouri and in Kansas. And then in August, again, which is his month

the month he was born in, the month he was killed in, and the month he moved to Idaho in 1887-- when they came to Idaho. And the Indians at that time used to come and camp on the hill just up near the Presbyterian Church and where they built their little house, which they later enlarged. My grandfather, as it tells in Buffalo Coat was instrumental in getting the bell for the Presbyterian Church, and he wanted the largest one in town. Moscow used to be a great town for church bells. I don't know that they still ring so strenuously on Sunday morning, but churches were proud of their bells, and the morning that he got the biggest bell installed ^{and it} was to ring for church in the morning, he had a sick headache and his house was right across the street from the Presbyterian Church, and this bell began to boom and he jumped out of bed, rushed out and said, "For goodness sake, what has happened?" And it was vibrating the bedsprings and he was just in misery with this bell. So he never was very happy with his bell that he had worked so hard for. He was very forthright and an interesting character. He was instrumental in helping to get the University of Idaho for Moscow, although I am sure many people at the time thought that it belonged in the south where it was available to more Idaho people, and he was one of the early regents of the University, I think from 1893 to 1895. And he also gave the first award ever offered at the University of Idaho, which was the Watkins medal for oratory. And, let's see, what else about him? I think he was the first president of the Idaho State Medical Association in 1893-1894. Altogether, he had a great deal to do with the building of the town and he was a very forthright character. Many people, as I say, probably disliked him and yet, I remember my grandmother saying that at his funeral a little girl walked miles from a farm out in the country to lay a little bouquet of wilted wildflowers on his grave, and there were many people who were greatly devoted to him. Perhaps that's enough for my grandfather.

My grandmother was a very-- well it's difficult for me to say, because she was the greatest influence in my life-- she was full of kindness and wisdom. I have always felt that ^(End of Side A) there have been two great influences in my life; my grandmother and my husband. My relationship to my grandmother was a very special one. She represented for me stability, security, wisdom and good sense. These things had been lacking in much of my earliest life, so I prized them when I found them. In a sense, she also represented romance for her vivid stories of her own childhood on a pioneer frontier gave me my first feeling of continuity with the past. A past more exciting and strange than my own. I expect that I have glamorized her more than I should because she was a quiet old woman who had allowed herself to get too fat. She seldom left her house to go anywhere, certainly not socially. Her interests were not broad and her opinions not unusual. A heart condition kept her at home, but I am sure that a more restless person would have gone out in spite of an uncertain heart. She had great calm and self-content, and the world outside had in very many ways treated her so cruelly that she did well to shun it. She made her own world at home, and if anyone wished to find her there, she was good tempered and available. People had to come to her. She enjoyed men's chores and was never happier than when mending a fence, knocking together a chicken coop or repairing a clock or a doorlock, or sharpening a knife, or spading up a garden plot. She was competent indoors, too, baking bread and large, thick cookies sprinkled with caraway seeds. She never liked to do fancy work as her sisters used to do, but she was good at all sorts of utilitarian handywork. She kept ^{the} a small farm on ^{the} place on Van Buren Street. There were all sorts of fruit trees and ^{the} orchard-- I understand that Moscow doesn't grow many fruit trees anymore, but in my youth we had wonderful fruits. In our backyard we had two pie cherry trees, ^{the} Royal Anne cherry tree, several other cherry trees, summer apple tree, two prune trees, a pear tree-- well

I could go on-- it was almost like a little farm. We had a barn, where they had once kept cows and horses, now I had just a pony there when I lived at the place. There were chickenruns and we always had chicken for Sunday dinner if other things failed. And, altogether, it was a very pleasant place for a child to grow up. I had lots of friends around the neighborhood and many of those I have put into my books for children. Three of my books for children, All Over Town, Two are Better Than One, and Luley, the latest one, all have Idaho settings. All Over Town is not my own story, its' fictionized but it brings in many of the local characters that people remember, such as, Mr. Zumhoff, the blacksmith who used to shoe my pony and who was such a hero to all of the children, he was head of the volunteer fire department and later I knew and was very fond of one of his daughters, but he was a real town character and there are many others. In Two Are Better Than One, and Luley I put some of my good friends of my childhood-- (You heard the telephone ring and I had to go and answer it-- so I'll try and take up again.) Two are Better than One and Luley have much to do with my friends, Charlotte Lewis and Beth Soulen David-- Charlotte Lewis Case, I should say. The M. E. Lewis family was a very important one in the history of Idaho and I sometimes think that people in Moscow don't know enough about them or how influential they were socially at the University in many ways. I think that Mr. Lewis was a banker in Moscow-- well, anyway, Charlotte was a great friend of mine and some of our escapades have gone into the book called, Two Are Better Than One. Beth Soulen David, who lived next door to my grandmother's house on Van Buren Street is the heroine of Luley. I sent her a copy of the book when it came out and said she was to read it as fiction, but if anything rang a bell with her, why, I hoped she would enjoy it. And she called me up from Cape Cod where she lives now, and she and Don were both on the phone, and she said she laughed and cried and really got a good lot of memories out of it. In those books for children I

call Moscow, Warsaw, Idaho. I don't quite know why authors always like to disguise names a little bit, but we do. In the adult books, I call it Opportunity, and there's a bit of irony in that because I felt that many of the people who came there expecting that it was going to be the great opportunity of the West, felt that in the end they hadn't found what they wanted. But the fact that Moscow has partly--^{the fact that it has been} so interesting to me is that there were very diversified people there. People with all kinds of backgrounds who came from different parts of the East in the days when to go West was the thing to do, and I think that made it a very interesting town. Also, a kind of nervous tension all through the West, these were the adventurous people who had come West, they weren't the calm stay-at-homes. I think my grandmother, although she was born in Boston, and spent her childhood in pioneer Wisconsin, then St. Louis and then Idaho and finally she spent some time on the far Pacific Coast, so she typifies the pioneer who moved from the East to the West. But on the other hand, she was a rather quiet person herself, and I think wouldn't have come if it hadn't been for her pioneering father and her pioneering husband. But that makes for an interesting community, I think; people with diverse backgrounds and restless feet who come together in a little town and perhaps that's why there's so many interesting stories coming out of Idaho.

You asked about social status in pioneer Moscow. I think there was a very strong feeling of class. It's rather surprising that there should be in a Western town, but I feel that there were decided layers of social acceptability, that one belonged to the better families and the social life of the town or one was-- belonged to the middle class or the poolhall and saloon group or the honest Scandinavian farmer group. There were lots of different levels of social life in the town, and I think those barriers were harder to cross than they would be today. Many of the Scandinavian farm girls, who came in to work in the houses of the richer people in town, in

a way it was their education; their going out into the world and learning how to do things. And now they're the-- they became the mothers of some of the most important and influential businessmen of town, good Christian leaders. Today, I think there is not the sense of distinction that there used to be.

You asked also about women's role in pioneer society. I think that women in the West were much more nearly equal with men than those in the East, because they had to get out and do hard labor along with the men and they shared a partnership more truly, I think, than the Eastern women did. We tend to think of all women being subservient and sort of put-upon in the Victorian Period. But this isn't true in the West, I am sure. I think the women worked along with the men and I think the men respected them as competent in their role. It's true that the women were homemakers and the men were the adventurers and the builders, but I don't think that there was nearly the consciousness of difference in the sexes that there is-- well, today we're very conscious of the fact that women should be liberated. In those days I don't think women cared too much about the vote. Some of them were very strongly in favor of it, but-- and many of them worked hard for it. But, I don't think that women felt the need of it so much; they worked along with their men and they usually shared the men's political beliefs. My great grandmother-- my grandmother's mother, was quite a free-thinker, as they called it in those days. She was a devoted adherent to the doctrines of Ingersoll, many people thought of him as an atheist and a rather disreputable influence, but he was quite an intellectual man, too, and she read his books and ^{had} her own thoughts about them. And I think that many pioneer women did think for themselves and they had no feeling of inferiority. They felt that they had their role, which was quite as important as men's role. And you spoke about the scene in which Caddy's father-- in Caddy Woodlawn tells her about the importance of growing up to be a good

woman. I felt that that was quite ^{a real} and important ~~scene~~ ^{scene}. My grandmother was very devoted to her father. She felt about him ^{I think} as I felt about her. That he was absolutely just and stable and that whatever his decisions were, they were tempered by justice, and she could rely on them. I felt that way about her's always. But the women's libbers a few years ago, put Caddy Woodlawn on a list of books that they disapproved of. It was in good company, they had Mary Poppins and Dr. Doolittle and a number of other children's books on this list. I thought at first that perhaps it was because they felt that there was bias against the Indians in the book, but, no, it turned out that they disapproved of Caddy's father urging her to become a lady. They wanted her to continue being a tomboy all the rest of her life! I was rather amused by it, but I didn't take it too seriously. But then fairly recently a friend sent me a clipping from the magazine MS which is a pro-feminist magazine, and someone had written quite an article in that in which she'd told about how she had loved Caddy Woodlawn as a child and that there was no reason why that shouldn't be a book that was very well accepted by the women's libbers, because it was about a girl who asserted her own individuality and lived freely with the boys. And that is true, that my grandmother grew up with her two brothers doing everything that they did. She had lost a little sister, Mary, who died after they came out to Wisconsin, and her father had said that he wanted her to grow up with the boys, getting her health and strength, and that she shouldn't be kept in the house to do women's tasks. So she really had a real tomboy life. It's interesting now that while I didn't realize I was writing history when I wrote the book Caddy Woodlawn, it was only that my grandmother had a very clear memory and she had told me these stories so many times, that I felt that they were a part of me, and I wrote down what she had told me. I did considerable research, too, and we went down into Wisconsin, my husband and I, and found the old farmhouse where she had lived. We were able to locate it ^{through}

tax records at the county seat. The little town of Dunnville, where she lived when she was a child, and which seemed to promise to become a good town, was really-- now it's a ghost town there, you find the foundations of the old stores and the taverns and various things. The schoolhouse has been turned into a private residence. But fortunately the old farmhouses have escaped the devastation of the years and they are, many of them, still standing. The house that my grandmother lived in was used to store lumber and it was just about falling down ^{and} the Dunn County Historical Society suddenly became interested in saving this old place, and they purchased a corner of what was once my great grandfather's farm and moved the house a few hundred feet onto this part of the property that they had purchased and they ~~re~~restored it and they've made a park of it now with a big state park marker. And it's beautifully kept up now. They haven't been able to furnish the house because they don't have a permanent caretaker there, but the house is still available for people to go in and see, and there are places to picnic and it's really quite a delightful place. It's twelve miles south of Menomonie, Wisconsin, and it's called the Caddy Woodlawn Park, although, of course, the real name of the family was Woodhouse. It's interesting that really thousands of people go through there in the summer and sign their name in the guest book. That's been a great surprise and delight to me. And the people of Menomonie are very proud of this park. Every year they give the play of Caddy Woodlawn in an old pioneer theatre that they have in Menomonie, and that's partly how the funds are raised to keep the park in good repair, and it's also helped to finance other historical projects that they have. But I might have just written myself right out on a limb, not realizing that I was writing history at the time, but fortunately I didn't fictionize it so much that people were unable to recognize local characters and places. So, while I have this historical background in Idaho, I also have this little spot in Wisconsin that's dedicated

to the memory of my grandmother and the book, Caddy Woodlawn.

Perhaps you would like to have me tell you something about my father and his brothers, who came from Scotland and settled in Moscow in the early days: Much of their story I have told in Snow In The River. But, there again, I have to caution people who are looking for real history to remember that where I wanted to make a good story I felt free to fictionize, in this book as well as in others. But much of the story that is told in Snow In The River, about my father and his brothers is true. My father, Alexander Ryrie, was the third child of James and Charlotte Ryrie, and was born near Thurso in Scotland ^{on} August 24, 1865. His early training was in the church and common school and at thirteen he accepted a clerkship in the post office of Thurso. In July 1888 he arrived in Portland, Oregon with two friends from Scotland, and he stayed there for about a year. In 1889 he went to Moscow, Idaho, where he lived until his death, December 1, 1900. On November 8, 1893 he married Miss Henrietta Watkins, my mother. His two brothers joined him soon afterwards in Moscow and these three young Scotsmen were quite helpful in building up the town. They were young and lively and interested in the new country. My father went out as a representative for a Scotch life insurance company, I think it was the Balfour-Guthrie Company, and he also was in the real estate business and loans and mortgages and that sort of thing. And he did well in the new town. As I understand it, he became the first or one of the first mayors of the town. He'd learned surveying in Scotland and he superintended the laying out of many of the Moscow streets, and he rode around on horseback and named many of the streets. He was a very religious man, a devoted Presbyterian. Once he planned to enter the ministry but the family was too poor to finance the education of a Scottish minister. And he had thought of going as a missionary to Africa. That used to worry me when I was a child, I thought what if he had gone to Africa and would I be half black or would I be-- or would I ^{not} _{be}

have existed at all? It used to be quite a troublesome thought to me. In Moscow he always took a very active part in the church work and he was instrumental in getting a larger church building. For many years he made the weekly church calendars; he wrote them out in longhand and decorated them with little freehand drawings. He'd never had any training in art at all, but he had a good sense of drawing, and my mother used to help him with these and they mimeographed them then and handed them out to the congregation on Sunday. And they were ^{sufficiently} prized so that for years people used to find them in their attics and old trunks in Moscow and give them to me, so I have quite a collection of them now. He was very active in Sunday School work and lots of the men, who were young men when I was a child, used to remember my father in that way. He died of tuberculosis-- consumption in those days-- which was an almost ^{always fatal} fatal disease. Old cookbooks that I have recommended the cure for it as powdered charcoal mixed up with honey and molasses or something of the sort-- oh, port wine, I think. Anyway, they had no idea how to cure it but they were getting the idea that it was good to go and sit in the sun, and he did go to Hawaii, he and my mother went, in the days when the United States had just taken over the Hawaiian Islands. The old Queen Liliuokalani was still alive and they had many interesting recollections of that. That was the first time that I stayed with my grandparents and began ^{that} a long association with my grandmother that was useful to me in later years. These ^{are all} early day things in Moscow-- Moscow was quite a different town then; I have some old pictures of it, too, that show the old standpipe standing up against the mountains and the town itself looking very small and-- well-- unfinished, as it was in those days. Idaho, of course, was still a territory when my father and my grandfather came there. And there were many other Scottish people there. There used to be a boardinghouse run by an old Scottish widow and these young Scotsmen stayed there and she made a sort of home for them, and used to give *wonderful*

Hallowe'en parties and other entertainments that kept alive their social life. I think that people had to make their own social life in those days. They didn't have the movies or the television and all the things that we have to distract us now-a-days. And they really had a lot of fun. I can remember when I was researching a book on the Singing Hutchinsons, who were Civil War singers and had nothing to do with Idaho, but they founded a little town in Minnesota named Hutchinson, and I went down and interviewed some of the pioneers there, and one of the old women who talked to me, said, "Now, my dear, you're going to write about the pioneers, but don't tell all the hardships we had and none of the good times." She said, "Tell people when you write about them, that we had fun, too." And I've often thought of that, because I think ^{that} we tend to think of the pioneers as having this terribly hard struggle in life, but not realizing that they had a lot of fun, too, at the same time.

My mother was very much like her father, Dr. Watkins. She was very dark, very striking looking and quite a beauty. She was also a very good musician and used to play concerts around Moscow and belonged to a musical club and historical club and various clubs in town. And my aunt, also, was younger-- she was very dear to me in my childhood and very important to me--she stayed at home and didn't marry until, well, when I was almost grown. But she had kind of an interesting character, too, and many people in Moscow still remember her as Elsie File, or Miss Elsie, as she was called, even after she was married.

One of the things ^{that} the young people used to do in Moscow in the summer was to go camping up in the mountains, up on Moscow Mountain. I have some interesting old pictures of young people who were out camping-- they'd take a chaparone along, but it was all quite informal and very gay, and they don't look like young people on a camping trip now. The girls didn't wear bikinis or anything of that sort, they were very well covered, but they were

all having a very good time, and I think that is one of the things to remember, that they had a lot of fun in those days as well as serious times. My uncle, Donald Ryrie and Henry Ryrie, also came from Scotland with my father and lived in Moscow in the early days. Another brother came later, but he never got used to the fact that the men had to milk the cows on the farms and that the women were more independent than they were in Scotland and he went back and built a little farmhouse near my grandfather's place in Northern Scotland and didn't even put a modern cookstove in it, they cooked over an open fireplace, so he was a real throwback to the old peasant days. But my other two uncles became complete Americans. My Uncle Don was my great hero as a child. I had great love for him and he is the one I have called Douglas in Snow In The River.

My parents' house was right across the street from the Frank David house and my mother and Mrs. David were great friends. And Donald David, who has since achieved quite a career in business in the East, he and I were born about the same time and our mothers used to have us photographed together very often. I have photographs of us when we were probably about four years old with big Mc Kinley ^(END of side B) and Roosevelt campaign buttons, that is, Teddy Roosevelt. I don't think that we were old enough to have many political views of our own, but I am sure this must have reflected the views of our parents. But in that connection, it's rather interesting-- a little vignette of memory that I have-- I was about five years old, I suppose, and I can remember sitting at a dressing table in my grandmother's bedroom and somebody was brushing my hair, my mother or my aunt, I don't know who, and I remember that somebody rushed in and said, "The President has been shot! President Mc Kinley has been ^{assassinated by} an anarchist, I believe. Well, the consternation of the adults communicated itself to me and I remember this very clearly, although it's a tiny vignette that is completely surrounded by fog and haze. I just see it like a little picture. But that's my one connection with the history of the period.

As I was growing up, we had no Girl Scouts, but the Sunday School class used to take the place of ^{the} Girl Scouts. We had a group of about twelve girls who attended Sunday School together and for a long time we had a very dear teacher, Mrs. Mattie Heddington, ^{that} should be remembered in the town-- she was a very wonderful woman. I think she had lost a husband and children in some rather tragic way, and she devoted herself to the children of town. She was a teacher and also a very good Sunday School teacher, and we used to go out on all sorts of excursions and do most of the things that Girl Scouts do now-a-days. I can remember once that we camped out in the country in a farmer's barn-- I can still remember how scratchy the straw was, trying to sleep in it! An old-time fiddler played for us to dance in an old abandoned house, I can't remember how we gathered the fiddler and the house and everything together, but it was great fun. And, of course, we used to walk out the railroad tracks in the spring when the roads were all too deep in mud for any proper walking and get the earliest pussy willows and bring them back in triumph. And we did all sorts of things that weren't quite Sunday Schoolish. I can remember that we used to try to raise people on our fingers-- have somebody lie across a couple of chairs and we'd all breathe together and try to raise them up holding our fingers under them! Well, that doesn't sound very Sunday Schoolish, but it was great fun, and we did all sorts of things. We also had costume parties, I tell about one of those in Two Are Better Than One, when Charlotte and I dressed as rag dolls and all the other girls went in beautiful costumes with their hair curled and their faces colored, and after the masquerade was over they took off their little masks and ~~we~~ pulled off our big heavy rag doll heads stuffed with cotton and we were all sweaty and our hair was all sticking out on end with bunches of cotton stuck in it, and none of the boys would ask us to dance. We were sort of horrified by that, but we learned then that boys like pretty girls and not girls who dress up like rag dolls!!

You asked about the homesteading near Clarkia and the Clearwater country. It's true, I believe, that the lumber companies were very interested in settling homesteaders in there with the idea that they would sell out and the lumber companies would be able to go in and cut out and get out-- as they used to say . I think that the Conservationists did a great job by making this forest reserve, because otherwise, Idaho would have been pretty well devastated with it's big timber cut away. However, it was very hard on the homesteaders who went in expecting to make money on it, and losing out their claims in the end, because they couldn't prove that they were doing it to make a home. That was the criteria, I believe that they held up for them to aim for. But it was a very interesting experience for my aunt and for some of us girls who went in with her sometimes in the summer. She had a homestead, I think it was about twenty-eight miles from Clarkia, which was the last post office and last wagon road. We packed everything in on packhorses. Aunt went in many times and it is remarkable as you mentioned, that so many of the homesteaders were women who went in on this venture. They expected to make some money out of it, and it wasn't so easy for women to make money in those days, and this was a chance they took. My aunt always said that she was a very kind of delicate, fearful, sickly young woman when she went in there, and after, I don't know whether it was four or five years of homesteading, she came out feeling much healthier, much more confident, much happier, and in fact, had, according to her own estimate, it had changed her whole character and outlook on life. Two summers she took me into the homestead with her. She didn't attempt to stay there in the winter, but they used to have to go in in order ^{to} prove, or they hoped it would prove, that they were making a home there. They would go in sometimes in the winter, and one winter she went in and was snowed in and froze her feet on the way-- they lost their way--. When she got to the cabin she couldn't walk back out, her feet were too badly swollen, so they left her

her there while they went back to get more help-- I don't just understand what they were going to do-- get horses, or something, and she had to stay there alone for a while and she remembered hearing the cougars yell-- they're supposed to cry like a woman's scream-- and it's quite blood-curdling, I guess. And she saw their tracks coming around to her window where they had sniffed at the window. Well, it was a very rugged experience for her. And some of the things that really happened to her I've put into Strangers in the Forest. Although, actually, that is a madeup plot. But the young girl who goes in and has some of these harrowing experiences, is really based on my aunt and her experiences. One summer she took four of us girls, we were in high school then, she took Charlotte Lewis, and Katherine France, and Lucille Watkins. Lucille was a great friend of mine, she is no relation in spite of the name Watkins. Her father was a dentist in town. And the four of us were great friends at school, and we went in on packhorses and did the whole bit, and it was really a great experience for all of us. The next summer I went in with her alone, and it seemed to me the most lonely summer I'd ever spent, and I wasn't very happy about it. I was glad to come back again. But it was most beautiful country. I can't begin to say how beautiful. I've not seen it since, and I don't know whether it's still kept its beauty. They've had many forest fires. In fact, one of them, while she was still there, and she escaped from it. But, I think that it is a very marvelous country and Idaho should be proud of it. And, also, I'm very glad that it is being preserved as a forest reserve. I tried to make the book as accurate as I could, and when it was condensed in the Reader's Digest Condensed Books they had got a note from the Chief Forester of the United States at that time, who wrote a little recommendation for the book, and apparently he thought well of it, so this probably is as authentic as it could be made.

We used to stop at Bovill on our way to Clarkia, and then we had a

stage-- I think the train went as far as Bovill, I'm not sure, but then we took a stage from there to Clarkia. And I can remember the Bovill family. They were very interesting English people who had quite a-- for that place and time--rather sophisticated hotel there at this little town of Bovill, and there were two daughters, Gwen-- I can't remember the other one's name now-- later they came up to the University when I was there, and I knew them then. But this was a very interesting family, I think he had come from one of the noble families in England, and he and his wife apparently loved the rough frontier life that they found out in Bovill.

The summer that my aunt took the four of us into the woods with her, we were quite a curiosity to the people of Clarkia, to the lumberjacks and the man at the store had a big peace pipe made out of wood-- I don't know whether it had really belonged to the Indians-- but anyway, ^{we} ~~I~~ admired this greatly and he said he would give it to the girl who gained the most that summer. So we were all vying for the honor of earning the Indian pipe. Now-a-days ladies all want to vie to see who can remain the thinnest, but we were at a very young age and we were interested in seeing who could gain the most. We had a lot of wonderful food out there. Fresh trout, that even we could catch with a little fishline tied to a pole and a hook on the end of it, the trout were so plentiful at that time. And then there were always the sourdough bucket with wonderful sourdough pancakes. And Charlotte Lewis was the tallest and thinnest of the four of us, and she had the greatest capacity for pancakes and that summer she gained the most, so when we came back to town and we were all weighed, she won the Indian pipe. There were a lot of interesting characters in there: we had a lumberjack working for us who helped to make the garden, it was essential that you had to have a little garden, even if the deer ate it up or the other critters destroyed it, but that was part of the fiction that you were going to make a home out

on this homestead. And this lumberjack who worked for us was named Dynamite. I don't remember his real name but everybody called him Dynamite, and this was because he told a wonderful story about being in Seattle once when a building was burning, and they had, I don't know how many pounds of dynamite in a great package on one of the upper floors, and somebody called out to him to catch it and they threw it out of the upper window and he caught the package of dynamite and it didn't explode. Well, I am sure that that was one of his pleasant fictions, but anyway, he got the name of Dynamite by that. This was really a taste of the pioneer life for us who had lived in town always. We learned to ford streams on horseback and to climb mountains, and it was a great life. There were lots of wild huckleberries and the bears would come around and we'd hear them in the huckleberry patches, but we never did really have an encounter with one. We used to meet snakes on the trail, and that didn't please us because we were all kind of squeamish about snakes. We were real little town girls. But it was an interesting adventure and much of that has gone in as background to Strangers in the Forest, although the story itself is fiction.

You asked me whether I felt that I had been helped or hindered by society. I think I have always been helped. I have been very fortunate and had a very happy life in general. I have-- well, I think that writing is a wonderful occupation for a woman if she likes to do it. It's something you can do and keep a home and have a family and you don't have to give up any of the pleasures of being a woman, and still you can write. Now I must say that I owe a great deal of my freedom to write and do as I like to my husband, who was always my best supporter and very loyal in whatever I did, and helped me in every way. He was a writer too. He was a mathematician, and his books were mysteries to me, I could never read them. He could read mine and tell me what was wrong with them. So we used to have a kind of joke about that. But we had the same working habits. He was a professor of mathematics for

many years at the University of Minnesota. He had come out to Idaho on his first job when he was just nineteen and he was trying to look very dignified because he was younger than some of his students. He taught in the prep school at the University. We met-- at that time I was six years younger and still mostly a young hobbledohoy, but somehow we kept in touch for the years when he was away getting a graduate degree and I was in college, and it was a most fortunate-- a happy combination all of our lives. Our ideas and our feeling toward life were so similar. I feel sorry for husbands and wives who don't have this particular friendship along with the love and other instincts. It's a kind of wonderful thing to be a good friend to your husband or wife, too. And we did have such a relationship. So I owe much of my freedom to write and my pleasure in it to his indulgence and his interest. I have never felt handicapped as a woman. Perhaps if I had tried to go out and work in some competitive job with a man-- a writer is in a way a competitor with other writers, but it's something that you do alone on your own and you can express yourself freely, and I've never felt any handicap in being a woman. I have enjoyed being a woman and have not wished to change my status at all.

I don't know that I have answered all of your questions, and perhaps I had better leave this tape and play it over again and see what I have left out and what I can add to it at a later date. But for now I'm going to sign off.

MRS. BRINK READS SKETCHES, WHICH HAVE BEEN DELETED FROM THIS TRANSCRIPTION
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I have still not finished the tape, and so in conclusion I'll say one or two more things that are on my mind.

It seems to me that to have lived eighty years, as I have almost done, is a privilege increasingly common in our time. Soon, perhaps, it'll be nothing to live until ninety or a hundred. This is fine if there is no

diminution of power, no loss of wonder. If we live only to nurse our aches and pains-- the doctors have been to a lot of trouble for no good purpose-- we are better dead. The only hope for the aged is that they may have learned wisdom. If they can distill some good wine out of the crushed grapes then all the miracles of modern medicine may be worth while. What appears to us bit by bit when we are young may be seen as a whole when we are old. We see how the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle fit in finally until the whole is complete. If there are pieces that do not dovetail, we at least have more perspective in which to view them. So to look backward need not be entirely futile. I am glad to remember a peaceful and innocent time when many people born later than I have been will never know. It's pleasant for me to look back on it, to see ^a life through and marvel at it. This, I suppose, is one of the chief solaces of age. Also, I think, that it is a privilege to grow up in a small town. The large world outside is usually concentrated in a small town and is more easily observed. All of the virtues and vices of the large world blossom in ^{the} a small town with the most superb intensity. In this drop of water under a microscope you can observe all nature and become acquainted with people of all walks of life. Cities are too one-sided and diffuse. The section in which you live in a city may represent only one phase of life or activity. But the child who has grown up with open eyes in a little town has inherited the earth.

I should like to end with greetings and love to the old friends who still live in Moscow, and to wish you all many happy days.