

FRANK BROCKE

Interviewed by:

Sam Schrager

Oral History Project

Latah County Museum Society

I. Index

II. Transcript

# I. Index

## FRANK O. BROCKE

Troy, Kendrick; b. 1906

President of First Bank of Troy

1.5 hours

minute page

## Side A

- 01 1 Father died in flu epidemic during World War I. Frank and George Brocke, still boys, continued to farm. Heavy people were more likely to die from the flu; had whiskey been available, more people would have been saved. A cousin cared for the whole sick Brocke family.
- 10 5 Walking to school in bad winter weather. Enjoyment of school. Taking sleds to school.
- 15 7 Playing shinny: rules of the game.
- 21 10 One room schoolhouse. Learning from the younger kids recite. Need for discipline and silence. Emphasis on penmanship and spelling. Oral recitations. Closeness of teacher to progress of students. Superiority of rural schools because of individual attention. Mr. Brocke skipped seventh grade when he moved to Kendrick because of what he'd learned on American Ridge.

## Side B

- 00 14 More about advantages of rural schools for teaching of average students. Sound reading much better than sight reading. Most elementary teachers were women who stayed for years until they got married. School trustees and financing.
- 07 17 Love of horses on the farm as a boy. The slow work of running a walking plow. Hoeing wild oats in the beans; threshing beans. Father's hand-fed threshing machine, "the little coffee grinder."
- 14 20 Family garden: potatoes three times a day. Meals. Luxury of bakery bread during World War I. Making bread depended on the flour.
- 19 22 Age differences between brother and sisters. Closeness of siblings. Marble shooting experts at Kendrick. Mumble-peg. Going home for lunch at the town school reduced the opportunity for play. In rural school you got to know the little kids very well, but in town school you never ever saw them.

minute	page	
Side B continued		
26	24	Parents never discussed politics with the family. Father a strong Democrat, mother a rabid Republican. Mr. Brocke knew nothing of politics, was persuaded by Ole Bohman to vote for Hoover in '28. Changing party strengths. Republicans were for trade embargo when he was young. People voted blindly for their family's party instead of examining the philosophies of both sides.
Side C		
00	27	Brother George Brocke helped break Republican stronghold on Latah County by winning seat in legislature.
02	27	Post-World War I depression caused by falling wheat market. Living with anti-German propaganda in World War I. People didn't know what we were fighting for in World War I, but in World War II the issue was clear. Family didn't suffer much during World War I depression.
08	30	Failure of brother's confectionary business, which burned down.
11	31	His friend, an assistant cashier, got Mr. Brocke interested in banking. The Kendrick banker took him in without pay. Learning to use the posting machine by watching. He hauled rock from a bank-owned farm during the summer. Advancing in responsibility and in salary to \$50 a month.
17	33	Ole Bohman was looking for a young man for the Bank of Troy, and Mr. Anderson (who ran the Kendrick bank) suggested Frank Brocke. His boss went along with the idea, but then persuaded Mr. Brocke to write a letter refusing the job; on his way to mail it the boss changed his mind, and Mr. Brocke went to Troy with the option of returning. The opportunity in the Troy bank. Mr. Anderson, a friend of Mr. Brocke's, wanted to get him out of Kendrick.
25	37	Learning the bank business in Kendrick by watching. His first job was handling collection slips; he sent several out by mistake. Learning accounts by check filing. Learning by listening.

with Sam Schrager

March 18, 1975

## II. Transcript

SAM SCHRAGER: Maybe we could talk about some family background first.

I was curious about when your parents first came to the Kendrick country.

FRANK BROCKE: Well, of course, I was pretty young at the time that they passed away. My dad passed away, and of course I never really. . . I heard mother talk, she was born in Kansas, and when they came west I would not know. They were obviously young. And my father was born born in Genesee. So my grandfather came from Luxembourg, which is close to Germany, and my mother was German, so there was German on both sides of the family. In fact, my mother could talk very fluent German, but my dad couldn't talk it at all. And he died when he was only forty years old. So for me to go back and state their backgrounds, I don't know too much about it.

SAM: How old were you when he died?

F B: It was 1919, I was thirteen. I was the second of five children. And the oldest one was George, and he was fifteen when my dad died. It was during the flu epidemics of 1918; 1919.

SAM: Oh is that what. . .

F B: Yeah, that's why he passed away. Yeah. He was a victim of the big flu epidemic. Of course, we lived on a farm, and the whole thing was left to her and us two boys to decide what we wanted to do. We went to a rural school. And of course, the year of the flu epidemic, out of eight months school, I think there was only three actual months that you attended school, because the schools were closed. And so the following year, <sup>why</sup> we went to Kendrick where I actually missed the seventh grade and went right into the eighth grade, and George went to high school. And so I took the eighth grade at the

Kendrick Elementary School. And we continued to farm then. My dad had somethin like out of a hundred and forty acres of farmland, <sup>I think</sup> he had about sixty acres of fall wheat in. And we went ahead and kept that wheat because it was on granted ground, my grandfather's place. And then we put in our own eighty, George and I put in the crop the next <sup>two</sup> years. ~~We~~ continued to farm and go to school from the ranch. Well, two years later, about 1922, Mother moved and the family moved to Kendrick. And of course there, in time I graduated from high school and George did not graduate, but he continued to go to school part time and then he got a job.

SAM: It sounds like a pretty big responsibility for a *couple of kids*.

F B: Oh, yeah. That was somethin. You oughta seen us. We hauled our grain down a grade of three miles to Kendrick, ~~And~~ we had a very good wheat crop that year, and of course, we had to haul all the crop off. ~~I~~ I can remember between Mother and I and George, we would load that wagon with twenty-five sacks of wheat, and we used to have quite a time. It can be done. You can do anything if you have to. But we were not wealthy people. Dad had some insurance and so Mother paid off the balance on the farm, so we had the eighty acres of land clear, which was good. And we had a good home, a good house--large house, but it was good. And we sold off the animals, the horses, in time when we quit. ~~But~~ we farmed then for three years and then <sup>one of</sup> rented it out to ~~our~~ relatives. And he farmed it for three or four years. And then Mother passed away then in '37, I believe it was. So she too didn't live too long.

SAM: Do you remember much about that flu epidemic?

F B: Oh, yes. Very much.

SAM: Could you tell me what it was like?



F B: Well, it seem<sup>ed</sup> as though heavier people, husky<sup>people</sup>.

it was very hard on fleshy people. It was the enlargement of the heart. The virus affected the heart and enlarged it and of course the fatter you were, you had a tendency to crowd your heart anyway, due to flesh or fatness. And my dad was a heavy man that weighed some over two hundred and ten pounds. He was my build, about six feet tall. So consequently he got the flu on a Sunday morning, and he lived until the following Sunday and died in the afternoon. But their heart continued to enlarge and it crowded the lungs, and there was not room to breathe and the heartbeat all in the chest cavity. That was really the thing, and there was no cure for it. I can remember my aunt telling about, from Bovill, John Brocké's wife. She was a nurse, she nursed through people. And she said the skinny ones survived. And of course in Bovill they had whiskey that they manufactured; it was more or less of a town where you could get whiskey. Anything to stimulate the heart and thin the blood and create<sup>the</sup> circulation seemed to be a help. And of course, the flu epidemic hit during the prohibition days when we never even had whiskey in the home; neither was it available. But I've often thought that had we had whiskey, that a lot of flu victims would have survived it. But it was very, very contagious. And you never knew when you got it. My dad got it from a neighbor's family; he had been there and they were playing. They used to go in the wintertime on Saturdays and play cards, and of course he came home with it and that same day he got it. And then we all got it. It seems as though one day is all it took. And he got it on Sunday, and I would say by Wednesday we were all on our backs. I never went to bed; I had it<sup>the</sup> mildest of anybody in the family. I believe my brother Kenny had it very mild. He was the baby, and the smaller, the younger you are the less it bothered you. But my mother was on her back and

my sister, <sup>and</sup> George, they had it very hard. And Wally too.

SAM: So you were the ones that took care of the family?

F B: No, no. We had a wonderful person. She was a cousin to ~~us~~ children. And she came and lived with us all during this thing. She was a hard working soul. Her name was Carrie <sup>Deobald</sup>. She married a man by the name of Bechtel, who was an undertaker and a furniture man in Kendrick. And she took care of our entire family from the time we took it until I would say ~~having~~ lost our dad, why it was terrible for my mother ~~and~~ and she stayed a good month after we got over the flu, which lasted about two weeks. And that was a godsend--I'll never forget that person. I can just see <sup>her</sup> ~~to~~ to this day. She did everything. And of course I was not allowed to go outside, but I helped her with the cooking and things of that sort. And of course everything was soup and broth. But ~~it~~ it was days to remember, and I've never seen anything like it since, an epidemic that would equal it.

SAM Did it hit most of the town?

F B: Oh yes. It was so widespread. ~~It was~~ nationwide. And people died by the hundreds and probably by the thousands. On American Ridge in itself we lost two within two days of each other--two prominent people. ~~One~~ One was a mother and then my own dad. And others died. And of course doctors were so scarce. Our regular doctor got the flu, so he was put out of commission early during the epidemic. And there was a doctor who took his place that was never what you'd call a very good doctor. Nobody knew what to do. All they did was prescribe aspirin, and go the bed and stay there and eat light. And you just had to wear it out, that was the thing. And if you could survive it you did, and if you didn't you died. And the fever, of course, was fantastic. That got up as high as a hundred and five and a hundred and six, and of course when it got over that your chances of survival were virtually

nil.

SAM: How far was your place from school?

about

F B: By a road it was two miles, but across country, across a field that we could go, why I would say a little over a mile and a half. It was probably two and a half miles by the road, but during the fall and when the snow would be crusted, why we would walk across. And then when it dried up in the spring we would walk across, but normally we walked. And it was very seldom unless it was very bad did we get transportation. We walked. You walked through sleet and snow and you were dressed warm. It was part of the life. <sup>there</sup>

Dad used to take us at the worst time <sup>e</sup> whenever the snow was too deep that you had to wade, he would go. But we lived back of a hill over from the main highway, and they didn't open roads in those days. You had to either wait, or else you got where there were snowdrifts, if you <sup>had</sup> a sled and a team and it was possible, you went around. You went out in the field to get out to the highway or to the road. It wasn't even called a highway in those days, <sup>they</sup> they called it a main road. And that's how you got there, <sup>B</sup> But snowdrifts were very common. And as I say, the top of our hill where there'd be a cut in the road, the snow would be three feet deep. Well, your only means of travel was by horse and sled, so consequently a horse couldn't go through that, why you went around it. So as a rule you got out. But many places was isolated that they couldn't drive around, <sup>and</sup> so consequently if there ever was a bad winter, why it was not impossible to close the school. In a rural school, the teacher never got there, why none of the kids did.

SAM: But you would go to school everyday?

F B: Yes, everyday, You bet. When you missed school you were either very sick or else there was some real legitimate reason. Yes. You took it far more serious than they do nowadays.

SAM: Well, this must have been past the time then--what I've heard<sup>is</sup> in the really early days that kids wouldn't go to school but for a couple of months, or a few months, and they'd stop for harvest and all that kind of thing.

F B: No, no. That was not in an elementary school where you only went to the eighth grade, see. You were normally too small to be in the harvest, or too young. So the biggest difficulty was for the first graders and <sup>the</sup> real small children, but I as a seventh or eighth grader, <sup>why</sup> you just went to school, you liked to go to school and it was part of your life. I think you went. You enjoyed other kids; you enjoyed your playing; they always had a good time at the recesses, and you'd play games. And you thrived to go to school, and you made yourself go--because to stay home in the wintertime, you did enough of that. You wanted to get out. And as a rule, in those days it seems to me <sup>that</sup> there was more--the crust was on the ground and you walked on top of the snow at least two months out of the year. At that was the deepest time. That would be December and January, which months would be the hardest part of the winter. <sup>S</sup>o there was no excuse. You could get on a sled. We always took a sled to school and never went without a sled. That was part of your books--cause you coasted during the noon hour, you coasted at the fifteen minute recesses, and that was it. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ <sup>A</sup>nd there was up and down hills. <sup>O</sup>ut of a mile and a half I daresay you always coasted a good half a mile if you could with <sup>the</sup> sled. And the sled was no problem to pull. We had one younger brother and my sister who was younger. I think that it was harder on them than anybody. But we had good sleds. We had big sleds too, <sup>that is,</sup> at least three and four kids could get on a sled. They weren't little tiny ones, <sup>they</sup> were big. And they got old "Flexible Flyer," that was the one. Every good sled was a "Flexible Flyer!"

SAM: When you talk about playin at school, what were the kinds of things that

you'd do besides sledding.

F B: Oh, shinny. And that was in the spring and the fall. Ever hear of shinny?

SAM: Never heard of it.

F B: Well, you dug out a hole in a spot, in fairly level ground. I'd say it would be two feet across and it would be just like a cup only it'd be rounded, and a round bottom. And probably in the very lowest spot in the middle, I would say that would be probably a foot or maybe eight inches deep so it would hold a can. And your shinny was a can no matter what--a tomato can or a peach can --not too big, <sup>but</sup> just so it would roll good. And they beat it up, you know, so it was maybe four or five inches long and maybe you couldn't get your fingers around it. And they'd beat that down to where it would be more or less rounded, and it would roll. Well, the circumference of the circle around the little one in the middle would probably be ~~the circumference of it~~ <sup>would be</sup> twenty feet--ten feet from the hole, each way, see. And then they'd make little holes that would be about three or four inches deep and the circumference of about six inches. And then you'd have a stick, a shinny stick -- that was what you'd drive the thing with. Well, as you'd come out of school the last one to the shinny deal was "it." He had to chase the can or get the can and try to get it into the center. And they could knock that <sup>can</sup> maybe two or three hundred feet. And then you had to go get it with your stick. And you couldn't pick it up, you had to beat it back. And of course the point was that if you had your stick in the hole you were safe, nobody could bother you. But as the can came back to the hole in the middle of the shinny diamond, why you'd take your stick out and run over and try to knock that can away from him and make him go back and get it again, and in the meantime they could steal your hole. So instead of being real close to it you were way off. And this guy that was drivin the shinny, he could look out the corner of his eye and if he saw a hole he could run and get his

stick in there and then everybody'd try to find and hole, and the one who didn't always had to go chase the shinny again, the can. And that was the game. And they played that, oh, indefinitely. That was the big game. And of course there was baseball in the spring, some baseball in the fall. But of course, in a small rural school <sup>why</sup> it was hard to get up two teams. It was virtually impossible. We usually played with about four or five on each side and that was the size of it. And then the girls could play shinny and they couldn't play the other. And then they used to make a sled effect. They would have three or four boards nailed together, and then you had a wire, and you had a stick in it every so often. And you could pull that and put kids on it, and that seemed to be fun. Quite a bit of that, you'd pull it on the grass. It pulled fairly easy, and that was <sup>a</sup> game. And that was played.

SAM: Would shinny be a game that all the kids would play--kids of all ages?

F B: No, you had to be careful, because it got rough. Yes, I would say, because you could hold that stick and protect yourself so that if they hit it, <sup>why</sup> that's what you always had to watch out for. Yeah, there was a lot of skinned legs, that was the worst. Nobody ever raised a stick up to hit anybody, but you were always beatin on the ground or trying to hit that can, and so you had to guard yourself by the stick. The stick was usually about that long. And there was nothing--just a blunt stick, There was no hook on it, They weren't too big. The lighter the stick the better a chance you had, because if it was too heavy, why you had to carry that, and you wanted to be able to move and maneuver.

SAM: Could you have a lot of kids playing that at once?

F B: Yeah, you could have twenty kids, any number. Whatever the diamond called for. Say there were only ten kids, then they had to lay a shinny stick over the hole that was dormant, see, so nobody could use that

he. In other words, if there were ten kids playin, they <sup>could only</sup> use nine holes, because you always had to have somebody that didn't find a hole, and he was the guy that chased the can. And if, by the way, he got it into the big hole in the middle of this shinny diamond, if he got it in there, you'd try to just like hockey to a degree, same idea as hockey.

SAM: It was like a goal?

F B: No, you tried to get that into that hole in the middle by nobody stoppin it, and if you did then everybody had to run to--they had a fence as far as which would be, say, from here out to your car. And you ran there and you had to hit that fence and <sup>then</sup> run back and find a hole no matter what. But <sup>then</sup> whoever was the last one back, of course he never found a hole, and he was stuck. Of course <sup>then</sup> you couldn't get 'em too young. The older you were the more speed you had, and of course you never had to drive the shinny. So the little kid, he was <sup>always</sup>, as a rule left out in the open and he'd have to shinny. ~~So even then you could~~ And then after he drove it, why then you could help him, ~~by~~ because everybody would try to get out and hit the can, and if you left your hole, why somebody else would get in it, see. So if this young one was alert, why he would watch and then get his turn. Pretty soon he'd have a hole. And you could all gang up against somebody that you wanted to drive the shinny.

SAM: That sounds like an ingenious game, I think. I've never heard of it before.

F B: That's right. I've never heard of it either, but hardly a year went by-- when ~~we~~ went to Kendrick they never heard of it, ~~and~~ when I went to the city school why there was no such thing as shinny. But we played it, oh. . .

SAM: What was the shinny itself? Was that just the game or was that what they called the can?

F B: No, the game was called shinny, but of course the shinny can, that's what it would be--shinny can. <sup>I</sup> guess.

SAM: Well, what about the school itself? Was it just a one room?

F B: One room school, yes, um-hum. And I would say  during my career there from the first to the seventh grade—I spent six years in that— at one time *when* they had two teachers, it was that highly attended. I think that was around forty students, which would be rare. And there was older boys. There'd be boys that would be fifteen and eighteen years old that would be attending that school, which was unusual. As a rule by the time you were twelve or thirteen you've graduated from the eighth grade. But there was cases where boys moved in and there'd be a large family, and they had never graduated from the eighth grade and there was a law you had to. You had to go to school until you passed the eighth grade or till you attained a certain age. So consequently there was older students going to school.

SAM: Was it hard for them, do you think?

F B: No, they never had opportunity, see. It wasn't because they were poor students.

SAM: No, what I meant is having to sit there in a classroom with all those little kids.

F B: No, they were ornery. That's true. Your teachers though were strict. There was no teacher'd put up with much. If there was such a thing as a poor discipline teacher, your school was bad, you just knew that it was bad. You had to be tough. You had to be very strong discipline in those days to teach a rural school. And when you had so many and all eight grades, you listened. Here I was in the seventh grade and maybe three rows over to me, why the second or third or fourth would be reciting — and you would listen. You would learn so much from the younger people. And of course they in turn learned from us. You tried to concentrate, <sup>but it was hard.</sup> I was always one to listen, anyway. But I can recall that, yes.

SAM: Are you saying that it was good to have mixed grades?



F B: Well, sure, you really had to concentrate. You studied a lot at night. You took books home, because in the daytime when other classes were reciting, they didn't necessarily talk above a whisper. They talked normally. You couldn't say don't talk so loud and so forth and so on. But you listened to other classes recite. And if you were a sixth grader, see you always made your classes--primary and the first, second and maybe the third, fourth--first four grades was on one side of the schoolbuilding--and the schoolbuilding was all open, ~~the way~~ and it was small. The whole school wouldn't be any bigger than that room which would be possibly say twenty by thirty feet. And you ~~and~~ and there was a stage took out of it, and there had to be a room for a stove--great, big pot-bellied stove. So by doing that the aisles weren't over eighteen inches apart, <sup>and</sup> of course you couldn't help but know what was goin on all through the room. So you learned. And there was a blackboard--a lot of blackboard work. In other words the teacher was constantly using the blackboard. Well, these things all took your attention, you know. And I'll tell you it was a job. I'll tell you, you marveled at a teacher that could teach eight grades in the daytime and keep 'em in order. And as I say, you were a strong disciplinarian, ~~And~~ and when a child got bawled out or got disciplined in the schoolroom, ~~course~~ we all heard it. And of course you sized the teacher up then, you knew--"Well boy, that better not be me!" I've seen teachers slap kids or hit 'em on across the hands with a ruler ~~or~~--it was common.

SAM: Usually a good reason for it?

F B: You bet, oh definitely yes. You had to, yes. Whispering I think was the worst difficulty, and talking out loud. And that was the worst offense. It didn't amount to anything, but you can imagine what it would be like if you didn't have silence within reason, see. And the only noise you was to

hear was the other class reciting, because if you were talking you took the attention of others. So it had to be. To anybody now that looks back on it, why you know that you had to have silence by your other students. Another thing I marvel at ~~we used~~ to spend a lot of time in writing, penmanship. That was a very highly thought-of subject. I guess maybe the teacher had too many she couldn't read, ~~and too many papers that they couldn't read,~~ but she dwelled on that. And spelling was another thing. Writing and spelling was very, very important. And if you analyze what we have in this day and age, those are the two very weaknesses<sup>es</sup> that we have in our system-- writing and spelling.

SAM: That's true. My writing is terrible.

F B: Well, did you ever take writing?

SAM: No, not in school, except they taught you handwriting in the third grade, but <sup>then</sup> that was the end of it.

F B: No, we literally had writing through every class, clear up <sup>through</sup> to the eighth grade you had a writing class--penmanship they called it. And you took it from a book, you followed instructions and you were assigned a lesson.

SAM: What were these recitations about? What would a class recite?

F B: Well, ~~you would~~ just like they do in this day and age, I think they recite. By reciting you answer a question orally. Oral recitations they called it in those days. And I think they still have that. But they didn't have nearly as many examinations as they have in this day and age. Teachers constantly order examinations nowadays. In those days it'd be very rare that you'd have a written examination. Everything was done more or less orally. Even down to an exam--oftentimes examinations were oral, because there was no reason to write 'em and that just made more work for the teacher, <sup>and</sup> she couldn't possibly keep up. So you took your turns in answering. Usually as a rule, if the teacher asked a question and there was four in your class, and she asked,

"Missy, you answer this question." And if Missy said, "I don't know the answer, <sup>then</sup> you raised your hand, and if you knew it, you got to recite, and you got to tell the answer. That was common. And that was at the discretion of the teacher. There's always smart and then there's the slower students [redacted]. I would probably never answer unless I was asked to answer. You know, that's up to the individual.

SAM: Did the teacher have an idea, do you think, of where each kid's progress was?

F B: Oh, my yes, you bet. Very much so. More so. That's true, I think. That's why I favor the small rural country schools that we have in this day and age. Like [redacted] you compare Troy to Moscow, There's a lot of individual attention, and that's what happened in our time in rural, small country schools. You were part of her and she was part of you. That is, your teacher just made you what you are, that is as far as education was concerned. You could learn at home, but your parents were busy or in lots of cases they never had much education; and they learned from you probably in many cases more than what you learned from them. There were exceptions, but as a rule-- and Mother used to help us a lot--Dad never did. He never was asked. But Mother, she was a graduate of the Lewiston Normal so she knew, she understood a lot and was a fairly good writer. [redacted] She didn't believe in doing your work for you, but she'd make us study, and study you had to. I found this out when I went from American Ridge where I got my first six years of education, I went and I moved to Kendrick. And that's quite a change going from a school where'd you'd lived all your life up to that time, you knew every child. And you walk into a city school. And I call it city because it was large. It was probably forty kids, and <sup>there</sup> [redacted] was two classes together, the seventh and eighth. And with my background I skipped the seventh and went right directly into the eighth grade from the sixth, because I was so far advanced in comparison to the town school. And that was the reason. I was

not a high graded child. I worked hard for my knowledge. I was never more than a "C"<sup>student,</sup> sometimes a "B", very seldom did I get an "A" because I wasn't. I don't know why I was slow. But when I learned something I never forgot it.

SAM: It's just interesting to me the way you're talkin about country schools because I'm so used to. . . <sup>(End of Side A)</sup> School was the better, the more facilities it had the better, in a country school with so many kids, any one kid would have a tough time learning. But when you say that you could learn from the smaller kids, that's really interesting to me because I don't usually think of that.

F B: Of course those schools are gone now. There is no rural school anymore, in comparison; very seldom, <sup>probably</sup> in Elk City or somewhere, isolated spots in the state of Idaho you probably have that one classroom. But you compare Troy to Moscow, I think there's a world of difference. And of the two places, I don't belittle Moscow, but I think that's true that the bigger the school the less individual attention that the student gets. If you've got it on the ball, if you're an "A" student, you're a smart child, I don't care where you go to school, you're going to be an "A" student. But if you are a "C" student and you go to Moscow and if you need special attention everyday not just once in a while, but constantly, <sup>there's</sup> no teacher in a big system that has her hands full and doesn't know you from Adam is going <sup>to</sup> go out of her way or his way to see that you get that special attention. Whereby in a small school everybody knows that child; everybody knows that teacher. And that teacher soon learns that family, learns the background, and becomes a part of that child, and is determined; if she's a good teacher she'll say, "Hum, I'm gonna give that person more time than anybody else. Because the "A" students I don't worry about those, they don't need it." So they've got to do

So they've got to dwell on these students that have the problem. And I've been on the school board for twenty-seven straight years, and I've got to know the insides of a lot of teachings and principles and curriculums. I never did believe when they took sound reading that was the worst thing that ever happened to any student in the United States of America. You remember when they dropped sound and went to the pictures or sight reading, they called it. We never recovered from it. You go out today and talk to a student that had sight reading--nine out of ten of them can't read. In your lifetime do you recall? Did you have sight or sound? <sup>you</sup> have sound

SAM: I'm not sure exactly what the difference is. What is the difference?

F B: Well the sound reading, when you learned your alphabet, you sounded your word like "madam"-m-a-d-a-m. The word was sounded out; that's how you learned it. Or let's take the picture. When you learned to spell "cat" on your primary, you learned to k-at <sup>(c-a-t)</sup> and how you learned it was sight, <sup>you saw the animal,</sup> it was a picture in a book.

SAM: No, I had the other way--the sound reading.

F B: The sound reading, that's right. Yes. We had several older teachers in the Troy School, and they continued to have both. Virtually picture music was forced <sup>up</sup> on the schools. They couldn't get away from it, they continued. The older teachers continued to use the sound along with the sight. They had fairly good success, but the younger ones that came in <sup>that had</sup> learned it through the universities and got their certificates used the sight. It was easier to teach, less trouble, but very, very poor for the child. I think they're back to it now. I understand they're back to sound. They're heading that direction, yes.

SAM: What do you think the reason was that kids couldn't master reading that way?

F B: Well, it was just a principle, that somebody said that this other's better. And you go through that. It's just a philosophy.

SAM: Were the teachers hard to keep in <sup>the</sup> ridge schools?

F B: No, no, no. They were much more settled than it is now. Of course the war made it impossible to find teachers, and of course there was no such thing as a young man. When I go back in my first eight grades I don't think I remember <sup>of</sup> a single man teacher in an elementary school. Everything was looked upon to the women to the young girls. When they got into high school, <sup>why</sup> there it was common to run into the man teacher, which was a new experience for you too.

SAM: Well, my impression has been that that was one of the only jobs open to women.

F B: That was very true, <sup>That's right,</sup> yes. Yeah, there was occasion when rural schools had a man, but it was very, very rare. In other words, it was take it or leave it. They were that scarce and you had to take whatever you could get.

SAM: Would you have the same teacher for more than one year?

F B: Oh yes, Many of them stayed. You might say there was teachers in the Troy area that had been here a lifetime. Because there was so many rural schools, they sometimes shifted, but I think I would say that if a teacher didn't stay over two years, there was <sup>some</sup> thing wrong and you asked her to leave. But as a rule they stayed anywhere from one to six <sup>and</sup> up to a dozen years. Usually the teacher fell in love with some local man and she got married <sup>then</sup> and that was the end of it, because as a rule a housewife never worked in those days, Yep. But it was interesting—and the school trustees was very hard to find in those days also. My dad, I believe, served one term and that was all. Usually that was a man's job also. And the rural school was hard to find anybody <sup>that would</sup> run on <sup>a</sup> school board, because it required a little time and so many of them didn't understand it. And I think the only thing they met was once a month to pay the teacher, (chuckles) and pay any bills they wanted. And once a year to hire a teacher for the next

year, and that was about the size of it.

SAM: Each school district financed itself?

F B: Yes, there was a school tax. And that was a tax levied upon the lands <sup>with</sup> in that district, yes. And that's how all schools were financed until the state equalization deal came into effect. There was not even state aid until during my lifetime. ~~As~~ As things got tougher there was such a thing as equalization, which was done by the state and brought on. Otherwise I don't think there was no county levies either, because your local districts financed your school.

SAM: What was your farm like when you were young and growing up on it?

F B: Well, I myself liked horses and I loved to be with my dad, and I used to ride on the binder with him, ride on the plow, <sup>with him,</sup> ride on the drill. Wherever he was I was. I liked horses. I harnessed a horse when I had to have something to stand on to get the harness on him. And our horses were gentle. Those that weren't gentle--of course I was warned constantly by my dad to stay away from them, which I did. <sup>But</sup> gradually, pretty soon you're petting them and you're on their back or your<sup>e</sup> fooling around with them like anything else. I didn't like cows though. I hated to milk a cow although I had to. But the horses, was my first love. Whenever we'd go to town or whenever we'd have <sup>the</sup> a team hitched up, I always wanted to drive even if I had to set in his lap. And that was it. I was doomed to be a farmer, <sup>I guess.</sup> That was my life. And as I say, when he died, <sup>and</sup> we had to go on and harvest the crop that fall, <sup>why I</sup> I think I ran the binder myself. George and I would take turns, but as I recall I ran it ninety per cent of the time. I had an awful time reaching down there with the end of my toe to triph the bundle rack every time.

But we worked together fine. And the plowing. I often think, if you've ever had three horses on a walking plow--now that's one furrow that on an average would cut about ten to twelve inches wide, and

you'd start around a thirty or forty acre field, And I'd like to see a young generation do that. Now it would take you at least two weeks to get that field plowed, and you would start at eight o'clock, seven o'clock in the morning, and you would work till five at night, because it would be dark. In the fall the days got shorter, and as a rule you could go out in the field at eight o'clock in the morning and <sup>then</sup> by five o'clock it <sup>would</sup> be starting to get dark ~~but~~ you'd have to quit. But you'd follow that plow around that field hour after hour after hour. And you'd hold the plow in place, you can't let it go. You walked behind it and you guided it and you plowed. And I've done that for three solid years. We had a disc plow that you could ride, but my dad never believed in that--only in the springtime. In the fall you had to use a walking plow because the disc plow wouldn't stay in the ground. But the walking plow would, so ~~all of our~~ all of our fall plowing we did, we had to do with a walking plow with three horses. And of course you had two lines and they went around your waist, and then your two hands was on the plowhandles. And the horses followed the furrow, only at the corner would <sup>you</sup> have to steer ~~because~~ because they followed the furrow, one horse was in the furrow. That's how you hitched it, so that that horse being in the furrow pulled the plow, and you just had to keep it in this way and that way, was very minor. And you planted your beans. I've done that. I've ~~done~~ did everything that there was to be done on a farm.

SAM: Is that what you were growing then? Beans?

F B: Yeah, we grew beans in those days. Bean and oats and wheat was the principle three crops.

SAM: Did you rotate?

F B: Yes, very much so. Your bean ground went into fall wheat. That was how you got fall wheat. And of course beans were ~~a~~ a problem because they



were so much work. You had to work your ground good in the spring and try to kill all the wild oats that was possible. And if it was a dry summer, as a rule you had very few weeds. I've seen the years when you didn't even have to hoe; if you did<sup>h</sup>oe, it would only be on certain spots of the field where the wild oats was the worst. But if you planted your beans in June and it was a wet spring, the wild oats came right up with the beans; and there was no way that you could cultivate and get these wild oats out of the row. You could kill 'em in between the rows--that was no problem. But to get the wild oats, which means that that wild oats had to be hoed, and that was a tough old job, I'll tell you. Because you hoed beans in July, and believe me that was when it was hot. And we did. We did well--kept 'em as clean as we could.

SAM: The thrashing of beans was a problem too, wasn't it?

F B: Well, not if it was a normal fall. As a rule you stacked your beans. It was very seldom that anybody would thrash their beans out of the shock in the field, because it was too undependable. If you didn't, why they were constantly being rained upon. So as a rule, I'd say eighty, ninety percent of the farmers stacked their beans--put 'em in a pile and then they were free to thrash 'em at any time. And of course, thrashing machines were scarce and you had to usually wait, and you didn't dare take that chance. My Dad had a thrashing machine. In fact we used to call it "the little coffee grinder." It was a hand fed, you had to stand up on a platform and feed it by hand. And he thrashed many, and many, and many an acre with that little thing, besides our own.

SAM: I never even heard of them being that small.

F B: Well, I had an uncle, my dad's brother was very handy with tools, and he used to overhaul that thrashing machine every summer. Everything, I don't think there was a thing in it--like the boxings for

the cylinders were made of <sup>hard</sup> wood and he would chisel those out, <sup>because</sup> you couldn't buy 'em otherwise. And the rattlerakes and the equipment inside the machine itself was wood. And so it was very easy for him to do.

SAM: Did the family try to be self-sufficient? I mean as far as like growing of the food to eat and all that.

F B: Oh yes, oh yeah. We had a garden. In my lifetime our garden would cover at least an acre to two acres, <sup>and</sup> a portion would be set aside for sweet corn, <sup>and</sup> potatoes was always separate though from the garden. We may have <sup>had</sup> a couple rows of early potatoes, but the potato patch in itself could be up to five acres. We used to put away any<sup>where</sup> <sup>here</sup> from sixty to a hundred sacks of potatoes every fall. We'd dig that many, and they went into a pit <sup>or</sup> they went into a cellar in our house. <sup>and</sup> so help me we ate potatoes three times a day, and you thought nothing of it--it was just as important as meat or anything else. If you didn't have potatoes, you didn't have anything. We had potatoes for breakfast, for dinner and for supper every day of our lives. Well, we had seven in our family. <sup>and</sup> Sometimes you had a hired man. <sup>and</sup> You lived off of potatoes--potatoes and beans and meat. Meat was something that you had at least twice a day. That would be noon; sometimes you wouldn't have it necessarily for breakfast, <sup>for</sup> <sup>us</sup> kids anyway, we would have an egg--eggs and potatoes and that would be the size of it. But your dinner and your supper--your dinner meal and your supper meal were both heavy meals, excepting when you went to school. <sup>and</sup> You took a lunch, <sup>and</sup> that was usually a jelly sandwich or whatever the season was--peanut butter sandwich made by homemade bread. But during the war years that was a rough one--bread. When we would go to town, if mother would buy a loaf of bread off of our grocery counter, <sup>we went home,</sup> <sup>and</sup> we ate that like cake. We didn't care whether there was anything on it--<sup>and</sup> a piece of bakery bread to us was just like eating cake. You could just give us a slice of bread and that would do it. It would be the same as a piece of

candy; I'd compare it to a piece of candy.

SAM: It was that hard to get?

F B Yes, and it was a luxury, see. You didn't buy bread. buy  
bread 'cause mother baked the bread. During the war the flour got so bad,  
and even after the war. As time went on, it took time to really get the  
bread, flour, you see it was all depended on the flour. Anybody could make  
pretty good bread if the flour was good. And you had to have patience, and  
you had to have reasonable know-how. If the flour was no good, the flour  
was heavy, why your bread was heavy. That was then way it was, if it was not  
ground properly.

SAM: Well, was the wheat that was grown here okay for making bread?

F B: Oh, yes. Yeah, they made bread. There was a flour mill in Kendrick, very  
Mill  
prominent flour mill, the Kendrick Flour Company which had their own power;  
they made it from, their machinery was run by water. <sup>there was a flume there.</sup> Yeah, they made flour.  
But during the war, of course the war effort took all the flour; all the  
flour was earmarked for the government. And you took whatever there was left.  
And of course the only flour you got was ground fast, not properly ground,  
it was very coarse--gee, it was rough. But you got by. It was nourishing,  
that's all you wanted.

SAM: I know that my wife Laura has tried to make bread with the wheat now that's  
grown here and it just doesn't come out too well.

F B: Well, of course <sup>soft</sup> white, no, they blend it now. Most northwest wheat is not  
the best flouring bread because they have to mix it to make some of the  
highest proteins but for baking, I understand the Japanese think it's the  
greatest. And there is a difference <sup>apparently</sup> between the soft white wheat is good  
~~for~~ the pastries and so forth.

SAM: Were you kids all pretty close in age? I mean within a few years.

F B: Yes, yes. Every one of us within two years. And George was the oldest. He was born in October and I was ~~born~~ and up to June before I was born. And then it went on around to June on around to November, Margaret was born. And then from November around to November, clear around to July before Wally was born. And I believe Kenny was younger by about three years. He was the baby of the family. And he was only about, he was just walking good, he wasn't over two years old; he never remembered his daddy at all. But he wasn't over two years old when my dad died.

SAM: Did the kids look out for each other a lot?

F B: Oh, sure. Yes, I should say. Yep, um hum. Yeah, you did. It was more or less taken for granted you did. It was part of the life in fact. And you played together. With five children why you were always playing at the same deal or you were making something. Or you were sharing something with other members of your family. That is, we were. I think that was common. I never heard of many, of course they were all large families. I would say that that was common, yeah. And you learned to play at school. I think that's part of your education. And you'd learn how to play at school; you'd learn different things to play. Of course, to play shinny would be impossible at home because. . . mumble peg, though, and marble games. When I went to Kendrick, that was the big thing in Kendrick when we moved to town was the marbles. That was everywhere, and I was a darn poor marble shooter, I'll tell you. <sup>If</sup> they gave me twenty-five marbles and in two days they were all gone because you (chuckles) that was the game. And the good ones, they was running out their ears. And talk about get good. <sup>Some of</sup> These high school kids could really nip off any marble at three and four feet away. But I never got that good. So whenever I played marbles I picked the guy that I was to play with so I'd have a chance. Else I didn't play.

SAM: What about this mumble peg?

F B: Well, that was played in the rule because that was played with a two bladed knife--a long blade and <sup>then</sup> a short blade. (Looks for a knife) That was mumble peg. You'd put this one around and you'd flip it over and then it would stick. Why then whatever your fingers. That was how you counted. And that was whatever fingers; you could get under this blade, why that was your score.

SAM: I see.

F B: And you played that. And that was a common game. But I don't think. . . When I went to Kendrick that was something they never played. But marbles took their eye. And of course a lot of basketball in Kendrick, but they had more playground equipment. There was more swings and that sort of thing in the Kendrick School. And of course the older you got why, I really, I guess I played in a gym. They played basketball, bouncing the ball. But you never had the fun in a city school, and of course you went home to eat--that required most of your time. That's right. You went home during the noon hour, see. So consequently, <sup>so</sup> your fifteen minute recesses just seemed to go in a city school because you couldn't organize anything in fifteen minutes to get a game going. And so consequently you went home and by the time you got back to school why it was ready to take up. In Kendrick from the school down to our house would be three quarters of a mile. And I can remember another kid and I always ran that. We'd run. We had to go down a steep hill and then down Main Street; and we used to run home. And then run back, just to be running. Trotting, we'd trot. And that was wonderful exercise. It

SAM: It sounds like though there was a lot more closeness, more neighborhood in American Ridge than in Kendrick.

F B: Oh, in the rural school? Yeah. Oh yes. Although in Kendrick it was not so big, but what you knew everybody in time; you knew everybody in that

schoolroom because I don't think the Kendrick High School in my day ever got over fifty students. And that was just ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth. Although it was a nice big assembly, you still knew everybody. But there was grade school kids that you wouldn't know after you got into high school. Even though they were in the same building, you may know 'em, but in my older age now when I get to reminiscing, talking about old families and old times. And I knew the high school kids. But in the same family if there was a first grader or a second grade, or third fourth, and even though the they were in the same school, I don't even remember 'em, see. And that's why you break away. But in this rural school you probably knew that first grader better than you did anybody in the world because you were taking sides with him, you'd help him or her. You'd wait on 'em, you know. And it just seemed natural. And if the older brother was pickin on 'em, why we always took their side and stopped 'em and so forth. So you got to know everyone in the rural school period. Their whole life too, I'll tell you. Yep.

SAM: When you were a youngster I figured you probably wouldn't be interested in politics and stuff that was goin on, <sup>but</sup> were your parents at all?

F B: They were but you never heard it. That is, they never discussed it at all. My dad, he came from a Democrat family, my mother was just as rabid, she came from a Republican side, just very outspoken Republican. And he and his family were Democrats. Well, they were married of course and Mother, she being a lady, kept her mouth shut. That was very seldom did you hear the mothers or the girls talk politics at all. It was always the men. So naturally we had no part. I voted for Hoover my first time when I got a job in Troy which was in 1926 and there was an election in 1928 and Herbert Hoover was a candidate and I believe Al Smith was a Democrat. And Ole Bowman, my boss, was a staunch Republican. And I had no knowledge, I didn't know anything more about politics that the moon in the moon. And

so he induced <sup>me to vote</sup> for Hoover and I did. And of course that ended up in the tragic depression, see. And not that that was his fault or anybody's but that's how you could be swayed. And <sup>so</sup> I was an open candidate ~~for~~ anything. Well, during the depression of course and coming through with it, why then I switched over and voted for Roosevelt because of the condition we were in. But you never took any part.

SAM: I've heard it said that a lot of people became Republican after 1892 because Cleveland was in when they had that depression in '93.

F B: Yes, I think that's true. That's just what happened. And the country certainly was Republican area for sure clear up to Hoover's administration. Of course that turned it around completely. And so then it was dominated by the Democrats for many years and now during the Eisenhower <sup>why</sup> ~~it~~ started to come back until Nixon of course upset it again. So now I don't know what's going to happen.

SAM: What do you think or do you have any idea what it was that would be of concern to like your father or the other men, not maybe national politics but locally? What'd be the kinds of things that they'd be concerned with?

F B: Mostly the policy of the Republican and the Democrats. There was no, and Republicans wanted an embargo on everything. In other words, don't trade with any other country, see. Trade at home. And they believed in embargo, see. Keep foreigners out and don't ship anything in here so consequently nobody would buy our products. <sup>That's</sup> why the commodities were so low that everything was, wheat the price of wheat was so low and all those things. I think that was the biggest issue between the two parties. There was tremendous difference between a Republican and a Democrat in those days. Now they call 'em liberal and conservative. <sup>I don't know, really.</sup> I can't go back and review on that at all because I was too far away from it. And as time went on during the thirties, why and of course you were raised and you. . . I saw people that was absolutely broke in 1932, <sup>and</sup> had been wealthy in the

'15's and '16's in there, and early '20's that had a small fortune and lost it all. And then I saw 'em come back and start their fortunes all over and have the opportunity to do well again. And so I saw Republicans that do that under a Democratic administration and yet wouldn't even so much as give 'em and ~~ch~~nce of credit, and probably that I followed that line because my mother's side of the family still are staunch Republicans right down the line. And of course my dad's. . . after my dad's death we drifted completely away from the Brocke relatives at all. They had nothing to do with us and we had nothin to do with them. So consequently we were practically associating ninety per cent of our time with my mother's side of the family who were staunch Republicans. But even then the new generation didn't discuss politics. Very, very seldom. Obviously they voted, they voted like they wanted to or like their parents. That's one thing <sup>that</sup> I've noticed all through my life is that a Republican family, as a rule the children are dominated and they vote the Republican ticket. They never have made up their mind. I used to get kind of bitter over that particular item. Is that if your parents were old diehard Democrats, why the kids voted Democrat, no matter what, no matter anything about it. Same way with Republicanism. If the parents were diehard Republicans, why the kids were. And they never really analyzed the philosophies of both sides.

SAM: Um hum.

(End of Side B)

Transcribed and typed by Kathy Blanton



F B: . . .during oh, I would say up till, all during the twenties, the thirties, even the forties Latah County was actually dominated by the Republican Party. The rural finally after the Roosevelt administration, I think they were leaning, the younger generation was leaning <sup>away</sup> from Republican, but Moscow, they did the electing, we followed along. And I believe George, my brother, when he ran for the senate on a Democratic ticket in Latah County and won really had a terrific effect on it. They found out that it could be done. And it seemed to be the turning point. Otherwise Latah County was just like Nez Perce County, is dominated and still does to this day by the Democrats. Latah County was dominated by Republicans constantly year after year after year. Then Democrats never had a chance, and now it's breaking away. Democrats in Latah County virtually have <sup>just</sup> the same opportunity as Republicans. It's very evenly divided.

SAM: What year was it that your brother got into legislature?

F B: That was in the early sixties. He ran as a senator, and I believe he was in there two terms. And <sup>then</sup> he didn't run again and then later he ran as a representative. And that was in the middle sixties, I guess. And then he ran till his death.

SAM: What was the effect there of World War I on this country and on the farms?

F B: World War I.

SAM: Was it mostly, well you said that wheat was so high that people couldn't eat it, but weren't the prices, didn't prices really improve for farming?

F B: Oh yeah. Well during World War I, of course I was pretty young then, and you didn't see too much of it. Only what you heard. But wheat did go up, and it went over two dollars. And that as a result of the war which was good. And the cost of bread went up and things of that kind, but they had controls. There was nothing like there is nowadays or what happened in the last ten years or right now the way prices have run away. And I can remember World War II far better than One. But there was the depression

after World War I was those that bought, wheat was around two dollars and so forth, so consequently the farmers did hold. Well, when wheat was two dollars it was going to be three. You saw that. And as I understand it those <sup>that</sup> went through the experience will tell you that when wheat started to drop the whole bottom went out. Now the stock market was minor in those days. The stock market, it was a big issue in 1932, but crops were not a big issue in 1932. In other words wheat was down and Latah County and the Inland Empire felt a depression far greater in '32 than they did the one in the early '20s because that was a case of crashing on markets where prices were, people were holding for a better price and once you started to drop it just dropped.

SAM: This is after World War I.

F B: After World War I, yes.

SAM: I was just wondering what happened in your family in that. . .?

F B: Well, you're a farmer and the only thing that you suffered for was oh, I would say you suffered more for the fact <sup>if</sup> you were of German descent more than anything else. That was the hardest part we had to play with it. My mother, German, my dad being German, and of course there was a lot of propaganda against the German people. And we had to be so careful. That was the hardest thing that we put up with in World War I. And the only thing I can, my mother and her sister used to talk over telephone and they'd talk in German. And of course <sup>ire</sup> that would the other people, they didn't like it and they'd slam the receivers down. But they overcame it after two or three years it all straightened out. And everybody was associating again. But it was strictly propaganda.

SAM: Was it supposed to be a question of loyalty, of whether the German people were really loyal to the United States instead of Germany? Was that it?

F B: Well of course, it wasn't near as bad as when Japan--Pearl Harbor-- and they took action against the Japanese which probably was justified beyond a doubt. It's too bad it had to be, you remember after Pearl Harbor how they <sup>took</sup> all the Japanese and concentrated them around a certain spot in California and they had to stay there for a certain length of time before they could be cleared. It never was that bad. It was just that there was a lot of hatred against the Germans and if you were German, you were a little bit tinted, I guess. But as I say, you miffed your own business, you didn't go lookin for trouble, that was the atmosphere on our place. We had no particular arguments with anybody and of course you got along.

SAM: My impression has been that World War I was not that popular with a lot of people around here whether German or Swedish. <sup>F. B.: That's true.</sup> It seemed to me a number of Swedish people resented the feeling that they'd come from Sweden to get away from militarism and then here they were being shoved into this war.

F B: Of course I don't think the issues was <sup>ever</sup> very clear cut on World War I. World War II was so much different. I think we obviously were fighting for a good cause in World War II because nobody wanted to see Hitler become so powerful. Where World War I was a tragic accident that got us into it. I don't think anybody knew really what we were fighting over in World War I. In comparison, there was no communications. The only thing you ever knew was what you read in a newspaper which you got if you were able to afford one. And there was no radio, no way of communicating and telling the real truth. And World War I was more or less, we were in it before we knew it. Whereby in World War II it was far more different. I can remember listening to Hitler. You could just about follow it in your own mind. There was very little propaganda, where World War I was just

lousy with propoganda constantly. That's how they had to in order to get people to follow. And I don't think it was near as bloody a war as World War II anyway. Of course we were in it only a short time which helped. <sup>also</sup>

SAM: Well after the war you weren't hit too badly by the depression then?

F B: No because the wheat prices dropped. When wheat was two <sup>or two</sup> and a half, it didn't go clear down to the bottom like it did in the deprssion of '32. Wheat went down to twenty-five <sup>cents</sup> in 1932 and '33. But in the first World War, I can't tell you, Sam, just exactly how bad that was. In fact we didn't really suffer from the depression of the twenties. You ate, you raised your meat, and you had your food and there was no rationing like there was in World War II. In other words, as I recall, we hardly knew other than when your neighbor's boy was called into the army in World War I, why you didn't realize there was much of a war going on.

SAM: Well, after you moved to Kendrick, you started a store is that right?

F B: No, no in about 1923 we started a confectionery, my brother and I, which was the mistake of our life. And we lasted in that only, oh, I would judge,        eight months. It burned up; it caught fire in the middle of the winter and that was the last of it. But that was a tragic experience that didn't help anybody. It didn't do any of us any good. I don't think we were in business over six months. We started in the spring and late the following fall it caught fire at midnight and burned up. I wasn't even there; I don't know. But anyway, it caught afire and that was a tragic thing in our life. We had a little insurance, but my mother who put up the money, and we lost probably two or three thousand dollars which was a fantastic amount at that time. But that's one of these things that *about being* ill-advised, poorly advised she let two boys talk her into something. And that's life, I guess. That's how you learn.

SAM: Confectionery, that means you made candy?

F B: No, we sold ice cream and short orders for sandwiches and so forth.

SAM: Were you still in school?

F B: Yes, both of us. Actually we were both in school although George didn't have to go to school, he was over eighteen. But I was going to school at the time, yes. And it was the following year '24 that I went into the bank then in Kendrick. I was a senior and at the time we had the confectionery I was a junior.

SAM: What was it that ever gave you the idea to look into banking?

F B: Well, they had an assistant cashier there. Kendrick had two banks. They had a young assistant cashier who was probably around twenty-five years old, and here I was a youngster of eighteen. And we chummed together. That is, we had the ranch, we still had the farm. We had horses out there so every weekend why we'd go to the ranch. And he used to ride up with us and then during the week why we'd chum around, and I got to know him very well. So he asked me one day, I was interested in it--I was always good on figures. And he asked me, I was to graduate the following spring and he asked me what I was going to do and I told him I had no idea. We didn't have enough for a farm to keep farming, and that was kind of a wasted cause <sup>and</sup> so he said, "Why don't you see if you can't get into a bank up here where I work and see if you can't learn the profession. Just go in there. They won't pay you anything but see if you can learn it." <sup>It was just an idea.</sup> So low and behold in early December I walked in to the boss of the bank and had a conference with him and told him what I would like to do--that I would like to come into the bank and learn it if this was possible. Well, he was for me, <sup>he</sup> knew my background, he knew my family and knew the tragedies that had hit us. We'd had a fire and my dad had passed away. And I was related, we had a fantastic number of relatives around Kendrick. That was our hometown, both sides of the

family, the Brocks and the *Ammlays* and the Eichers were all related, and they were successful people. But anyway, he said, "Okay, I'll take it up with the president of the bank." And I knew him too and he knew me and my background and he said, "We'll see." So that was in December of 1923. So he called me back about a week later and he said, "Okay, come in. You won't be paid. You come in after school. You start to work at three o'clock, as soon as school is out and you can stay until we close up and you can work Saturdays and you can work Christmas vacations." And so I did. And I was the most tickled man. So all my school interest stopped right then and there. I was playin basketball and I was not good, they wouldn't miss me. But anyway I dropped that and oh my whole life was that bank and going to school. And of course that just give me new hope. And they liked me and by that time my friend who had enticed me to go there and do that, he knew he was leaving, see. He had a job in Seattle so that's why he enticed me to move in there. Well, the fellow they got was an older man. I would judge that he was well along in his forties, the fellow that took this young man's place. And so he was a patient man and of course he and I just became like that too. And he helped me with anything and everything. He just went out of his way. If you've ever watched a man post at a posting machine, I'll bet that I watched the posting machine operate for <sup>nearly</sup> five or six months before I ever was allowed to touch it. All I could do was look at him and watch him, and watch him and watch him, and I stood there by the hour. I watched him until it just went around in my head that I could do that. And that opportunity finally came. And I started posting and I never stopped. I took over, I would say of his duties I took over at least, oh more than half so he was free. And so I stayed there. That was in December of '23 and I worked there up until the spring of '24. And the bank owned a farm down below Kendrick

It was a bench ranch we call it and it was loaded with rocks. Well, it got so quiet in the summertime <sup>if</sup> you stood around. There was nobody that came to town. Saturday was the only day that was active so I worked on Saturdays. But during the week we had a team of horses yet and we had a sled, go double as we called it. And so my boss who was the cashier of the bank asked me if I would go down there and try to haul the <sup>s</sup>rocks off off this farm, and I did. And so I went down there and I did that. He paid my mother for the use of the horses. I think she got maybe a dollar a day to feed 'em and so forth. But I did, I spent a good two months on this farm and it was a hot place to <sup>o</sup>. But I did my job so then I came back. And I worked that following fall clear through then and all through the year of 1925 and I finally got to twenty-five dollars a month for that first year. And then that fall, the fall of twenty-five, why business started to pick up and so then they raised me to fifty dollars a month. And I was doing all the posting. And I was doing virtually all the bookwork. I was waiting on people. I was a teller. I was clear in my job. I got very well-acquainted with bank examiners. And so the fall of 1926, that's when Ole Bowman from Troy was looking for a young man.

SAM: Can I ask you first. . . <sup>Would</sup> you explain what you have to do to run a posting machine?

F B: Oh, you run a postage machine. That's putting figures on to a sheet of paper. Then there's this is posting, see. That's the deal. And you keep, that's people's bank accounts. You post the checks and <sup>the</sup> deposits onto an account. Every individual has a sheet. And you take off his checks and if he has a <sup>o</sup> deposit you add it on and he has a balance. But that was a big operation in those days. Now it's not near so big. But in those days, you had a posting machine that was slow. It took you, oh, it took you hours to post and it was a slow process. But anyway, I was working from morning to night. Good, steady job. I liked it; I loved it. But anyway the president up here, this

man. He was a Republican and he had gone to a convention in Moscow and the competitor to the bank I was working in in Kendrick was also to that meeting in Moscow--a fellow by the name of George Anderson. So Ole Bohman told him he says, "I'm lookin for a young man to put in my bank as an assistant." And this Anderson knew me and he said, "I think I got just the man for you. I know he'll do you a good job if we can just convince him to go." So he came down and Mr. Anderson called me and he said, "Can you stop over today?" And I said, "Yeah." So I went over to my competitor in this other bank and he told me about it. He said, "Do you want a job in Troy?" And I, "Oh sure," I was ready to go. I'd learned I could learn in the Kendrick state bank and fifty dollars a month was not good and so I told him, "Okay." And he said, "Okay, now. You be here day after tomorrow and I'll have Mr. Bohman come down here and I'll call you and you come over here." So I did. And I met Mr. Bohman and he hired me.

SAM: Just on the spot?

F B: Yes, yeah. And he was satisfied. So <sup>then</sup> I went back and I told my boss, I said, "Well, I got a chance to go to work in Troy on a new job." And first he said, "Fine." He felt that that was the things to do. So he waited a couple days and finally he said, "Frank, I don't know. I'd like to see you stay here." I'll be darned--he talked me out of it. He said, "I think you got a good future here and that you might better stay." So even against my judgement and even against my wishes, why I wrote a letter to Mr. Ole Bohman and I told him what had happened that I'd decided <sup>ad</sup> not to come. And that morning I was walking up the sidewalk, our post office was three blocks away from the bank, and as I walked up across the street and here my boss was comin down the street and he waved at me and he said, "Frank, have you mailed that letter yet?" And I said, "No, I'm on ~~the~~ way to the post office



now." He says, "Well, hold it up. I've been thinkin about it. I have a feeling that you want to go up there and I'm talking you into something. Why don't you go up there and try it- try it for a month and if you like it, why okay. But if you don't why just come on back." So I stopped and I tore the envelope up and so the first of the month, September first of 1926 I came to Troy. I kept my keys to the Kendrick Bank. Every weekend I went home and I had to go see them. Had to go tell 'em about what I was doing and so forth. I had to report. Well, it went clear up into November then. And he said, "Well, I think you must like it up there." And I said, "Yeah, I sure do." He said, "Okay, you give me the key and I guess this will be your new life." And I did and that was the end of it. But it was just a miracle-<sup>that</sup> that would have changed my whole life of course. But I've been up here even since September first of 1926 and that will be fifty years on September first of 1976 that I came to Troy. So I was in the bank up here forty-seven years. So you can understand it was a little bit hard to have to get out.

SAM: I sure can.

Q: I wonder why he changed his mind?

F B: Because I think he knew <sup>that</sup> I was disappointed when he asked me not to go. I think the look on my face probably threw him and then he slept on it. That was the night before, see. And then he slept on it and decided, 'Well, maybe I'm doing that boy a very high injustice because I'm only paying him fifty dollars a month which is not enough. And we're a small bank. . . .' And I am sure that that was his intent because he just said to go try it. And maybe he figured at least I'll satisfy him. If he doesn't like it, why he'll know in a month's time. And he can come back, see. Otherwise if he'd a closed

the door I felt I would have been out altogether, see. So it was a case of he weighing the facts, and maybe it was his own selfish interest, I don't know. But he meant well. We left as the greatest of friends.

SAM: Do you think that there was much--he might have had some feeling that since he'd broken you in that you'd belonged to the bank?

F B: Yeah, well that's the way I felt. I felt that way. When he said, "No, you stay." Well, goodness, I had no choice. I gotta do what he says because he's my godfather in that sense of the word. Certainly I owed him my life. So I listened to him. Otherwise, sure I would have told him to go to hell--no, I wasn't that kind of a guy, but that would have been the thing to say, "No, I promised the man in Troy and I'm gonna go, regardless of you!" I didn't do that. I said, "No, I haven't mailed the letter." "Well don't mail it," he said. "you go up there and try it." And that just blew me out, see. That's what I wanted, and yet I couldn't do that without his consent.

SAM: Did you have a hard time making this decision yourself? It sounds like you instinctively knew you wanted to come here.

F B: No, I wanted to come. No, it was the chance of a lifetime because I had confidence in my ability, I knew what I could do. Sure, I was just a kid anxious to go. And then Troy wasn't very far away and I knew that. And I knew that Kendrick had nothing to offer me. . .

SAM: Why was that?

F B: Well, you're at the bottom of the totem pole. And new field was good because they certainly needed it up here. They needed new blood. Everything worked out perfectly. And the Kendrick Bank didn't last over three years after I left. It sold out to the Farmer's Bank. See, the depression came

on. The depression started in 1929 and they had difficulties so there was no bank after that. So it was the smartest move I ever made.

SAM: Did this bank's competitor know you fairly well when he recommended you?

F B: Oh, yes. He was anxious to get me out 'cause I had a way, I guess, I don't know why, <sup>but</sup> I was hurting him and I was very close to him. He was very close to me. Yeah, it was a most unusual thing. I could go into that bank and go into the back room and set and talk with him by the hour; he liked me. And I would do the same to him although he had no place, no opening for me. He didn't dare hire out of one bank and go to the other, I think. He wanted to get me out of town. That was the best thing to do.

SAM: When you first started working in that bank in Kendrick, you didn't tell me what it was they had you do. How did you break in?

F B: You watched. You watched. He told me at the time, he went through. . . And every employee that I've ever employed I've told 'em, "Keep your eyes open. Watch. Don't hesitate to ask some person who you feel you like to talk to-- why. Read a letter. Everything in here is open and above board." And that's what he told me--my boss in Kendrick. He says, "file these letters. Put 'em in this file. Read 'em before you file 'em; you've got lots of time." That's where you get your education. You learn how to write a letter, You learn what it's all about. I've had girls up here--I've asked 'em to write a letter and they don't even know how to put it in the paper <sup>in the</sup> form. Your letter maybe on the top of the page or halfway down the bottom. We always was told and I learned that in high school as well as--and this man, he was pretty pickish too, but <sup>get</sup> your letter in the middle of the sheet, not on one side and don't make your margins too wide and so forth and so on. I learned all of that. I watched. Everything was watched. "Just stand around," he said.

"You'll learn it. That's how you learn it. Ask questions no matter how simple, how foolish they might be. Just say, 'Well why did you do this?' You'll get an answer whether it'll be right or wrong, you'll learn."

SAM: What were the first jobs that he let you do when he started letting you do things?

F B: Writing--we had a register and I'll never forget this. We had a register and of course in those days you had collections. In other words, if John Jones brought a note in there and he left it. Now he said, "I've taken this note from my neighbor and it's three hundred dollars and it'll be due in one year. I want to leave this here for collection." <sup>And in</sup> those days it was nothing to have, sight drafts were very common. Sight drafts is when they draw on a business in Kendrick by somebody from Spokane and that collection is due in sight or it might be due in thirty days. We had a collection department within the bank and we had a register that we put those in. So, low and behold, my job was to register these things in this book and then put 'em in a folder, and then they were there. And then you notified the person who had the collection. You'd write 'em a special notice. "Dear Sir--John Jones, Kendrick, Idaho. We have for collection your sight draft in the amount of \$300 which is due on sight." And then it was signed: Kendrick State Bank. You didn't <sup>h</sup>ve to do anything, you put that in the envelope and you mailed it. The reason I'll never forget this is that some fellow brought in four notes that he had had, and he wanted to leave 'em at the bank and when they were due the bank was supposed to collect them. Up to that time, why everything we got was sight, and so the minute you got a collection you notified the person who was to pay it at once. And so help me, I sent out notices to these four guys that had left the notes <sup>n</sup> there and they weren't due. They weren't due for a whole year. So, my boss had to apologize to the guys that

<sup>Finally</sup> got the notices. They come here, "How in the sam hill do you get this?"  
 And: "That note isn't due." "Well, I have a young man working he and he just  
 misunderstood." And so I never did that again. But I remeber that as <sup>m</sup> though <sup>it</sup>  
 was yesterday. But that's life--can't be perfect. So that was number one.  
 But filing, I filed checks. That's something else if you don't know. That's  
 still done to this day. If you go into any bank they have to file the checks.  
 That's a box about this long and it's got just guides in it, and it'd be  
 "John Jones," "Mary Jones" or "John Johnson" and so forth. Every file has a  
 name on it and you have to put that check in there. And then at the end of  
 the month you take 'em <sup>out</sup> and <sup>you</sup> put 'em in your statement and you mail them  
 out. Now you've had a statement and you wonder how they keep the checks  
 straight. Well that's what they call a check file. But I did those. And tht's  
 where you learn the signatures, that's where you learn the accounts. That's  
 where you learn so much. If you're eager, you learn it. And then there was  
 letters to file. And then there was the janitor work. I did the janitor  
 work. I washed the windows, kept the place clean. And that was about the  
 size of the job. And you'd talk a lot. If you bring a man like this Mr. Emory  
 who was an older man <sup>than me</sup> and he had a lot of banking experiences. They were  
 always talking to me. I was a good listener. I never talked; I was a silent  
 man. I was always listening. And you gotta be a good listener. That's where  
 you learn. Because if your mind's somewhere else <sup>why</sup> that's no good either.  
 But they always enjoyed talking to me. And I could write. I was a very  
 good writer. And my figures were very easy to read which also was an advantage.  
 And there was a lot of writing in those days. I never took a typing lesson  
 in my life which was a mistake too. And I always hunt and pecked all my life  
 until I got to be pretty good. I can write a letter and keep up with anybody.  
 People just stand and look at me and laugh. But it was just simply practice  
 you know.

Transcribed and typed by Kathy Blanton