

FRANK BROCKE  
Fourth Interview

Interviewed by:  
Sam Schrager

Oral History Project  
Latah County Museum Society

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# I. Index

## FRANK O. BROCKE

Troy, Kendrick, American Ridge; b. 1906

banker.

2 hours

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( 27 minutes)

with Sam Schrager  
February 11, 1976

Also taking part: Marge Green Brocke

## II. Transcript

FRANK BROCKE

This conversation with Frank Brocke took place at his home in Troy, Idaho on February 11, 1976. The interviewer is SAM SCHRAGER.

SAM SCHRAGER; What do you remember about Chuck Wells? Did you know him?

FRANK BROCKE: Yes, very well. Of course, he was ignorant. He was the type of a man that had no education. He could write, he could write his name, and beyond that I don't know how much he could write. But, when he had problems, financial problems, banking problems, he came to me <sup>constantly</sup>. And, of course, he made a will and he named me as executor, and that began our relation to where every time he'd come to Troy he'd come in and <sup>either</sup> shake hands. But, he was just a friend, that's all. I enjoyed him. But, he had a rough life, you know, after Mildred left him, and he divorced her and this woman from Texas came and she was strictly after his money. I think the story was-- I think he actually told me that they tried to burn his house down, and burn him up with it. He believed that anyway. I don't know. But he was as honest as a man could be, so help me. And, that's the reputation he had; everybody in Deary thought the world of Chuck Wells, they recommended him. He was a hardworking man; honest man. And they didn't want him hurt-- nobody did. But that's about my relationship with him, that's just about as far as I know. I never was in his home.

SS: Did he log when you knew him?

FB: No, no, he was too old. I think that he would work for the neighbors, he'd help in haying. He was poor; very, very, poor. Until social security come along I don't think he knew where the next dollar would be coming from. But he would work for neighbors up there taking care of their cattle. He obviously during his life was a logger, I would assume, I don't know.

SS: Yeah, he had quite a reputation as being a crackerjack logger up there.

he'd grown up with Joel, logging.

FB: Yeah, that's right. But other than the financial end of it and advising him and being a friend, that's as far as my relation ever got.

SS: Did you ever know Mary? ~~His sister?~~

FB: Yes, yes. She was very quiet, very reserved person. Yeah, I was just as close to her as I was ~~to~~ Chuck. But I had more experience with Mary's boy. He was not an honest kid. I tried to help him ~~a~~ couple times, but ~~he~~ soon learned that it was no good. We didn't lose anything on him, but he was evasive and I would say, that he was not the best.

SS: Well, I've heard that she had a pretty tough row.

FB: She did.

SS: Because her husband left, *I assume they hadn't been married that long.*

FB: I never knew her husband.

SS: He was gone by the end of the First World War.

FB: I see, that's the reason.

SS: But she stayed, didn't she?

FB: I think she lived and died there in Deary, with Chuck. That is, they were neighbors and lived in the same area, between Deary and Helmer, is where the old homesteads were. Then there was a brother, Roy, and he was here when I came. I knew him, I had met him. But he left and went to Canada, and I think he was a woodsman, too. And he died up there. But Chuck had saved-- he had--'course five hundred dollars was a lot of money in those days, and he always had at least that much. When he made his will he had his forty acres and he had a little money. And, of course, he willed everything to Roy. And he denied, Mildred, that's his exwife, and, of course, he had no children of his own. And Mary had died by that time, so that's who he was going to leave it to, but he died broke. *In fact* I think we had to sell his forty acres to pay his



funeral, as I recall.

SS: I wonder if that was the old home place. If that was where Joe's house was?

FB: Yeah, that's right.

SS: Chuck probably got it after--

FB: Yeah, that's right.

SS: That was a famous place in the early days. I understand that folks stopped there on their way to--- Collins.

FB: Uh-huh. Yeah, that's quite a history there. Now, the Mc Kinneys, I think they own most of it.

SS: But I found that people around Deary really did have a lot of respect for the whole family.

FB: They did. They thought nothing of it simply because they were black, because they knew their place, where they stood in life and they didn't abuse you, and they were modest, very modest; timid. When they asked for something it would be very rare. That's more or less why Chuck, he needed a friend, and he came to me, and that's how my relationship started. And, as I say, he had a little money and he left it in the bank.

SS: Since we're speaking about people up there, it just makes me think-- did you happen to know Pat Malone at all?

FB: Yes. Just knew who he was. And I can just see him, he always had the smile on his face and he had the cane, walking in front of him and he'd look up at you--look up like that. Yeah, he was an old man when I knew him though. But, yes, I knew him. Called him Pat. But he never arrested me, or anything like that. But he was the local cop.

SS: Did you use to hear a lot of stories about him, like-- I've heard so many stories about this guy. At Bovill, seems like everybody--

FB: That's true. But, of course, I was too far away from him, that to me all he was was a goodnatured cop. And, he would tickle you, because, like he'd be coming down the street on all fours, he had those two canes in front of him when he was walking, and when he'd stop he'd stop and he'd turn his head around, he was stooped, see, and I can remember <sup>like this,</sup> and I can just see that. And a big man, husky man. Fat. Chubby.

SS: I've heard that--

FB: But I knew nothing of his private life.

SS: I've heard that he was on duty really up until he died.

FB: That's true. Of course, Hubert Hall came into being about that time. I don't whether he died and Hubert became the marshall, or whether he-- Your understanding <sup>is</sup> that he died with the badge on?

SS: That's what I understand, but I don't know if he really-- he might have been almost an honorary marshall by then, because he was eighty when he died.

FB: That's right. I don't know anything about that, Sam.

SS: I should find out about that.

FB: It would be interesting to know that, yes.

SS: Well, I want to ask you about somebody that goes way back, to the real early days. This J. P. Vollmer guy. Now, he had a pretty bad reputation around this area.

FB: Yeah.

SS: Is it based on fact?

FB: It's based on facts. He was a determined, coldblooded man, financier. He was a warehouseman, a landowner. Yeah, he had his day. But, of course, he was completely out of the world when I came <sup>to being,</sup> or even knew about him, but, of course, everything-- the town being named after him-- I can't say that I ever talked to anybody that knew John P. Vollmer

personally, in my life, even after I was old enough to learn and remember, the name was just common. Because, when you describe anything-- so much land was owned by him, J. P. Vollmer. But the stories never died of how he finagled. I don't know that one would call him a crook, he was just sharp. And whether he stole 'course, it used to be common that a lot of warehousemen did steal. I don't know. That's beyond me. He didn't live in my day, and I didn't live in his.

SS: But his reputation, the reputation from what people would say-- it was kind of bad.

FB: They were condemned, because, I know the ~~name~~ of Troy was named Vollmer at one time, and people changed it because of the fact that he had a bad reputation. Now that's my understanding, that's why it was changed because they didn't like to be named after him. I don't know that Kendrick had the name of Vollmer. I think that--

SS: There was another town, I think--

FB: I believe it was up on the prairie.

SS: Yeah, I've heard--

FB: Is it Craigmont? I think that's true, <sup>too</sup> and then they changed-- that was brought about because of the fact that-- of the name. And, of course, he became very prominent in Lewiston. He <sup>the Vollmer interest</sup> owned the First National Bank, that was their's. I say the First National-- one was the First National and one was the Lewiston National Bank; I don't know which was the Vollmer bank. I've forgotten that.

SS: I know that his son-in-law, Clark, was the one that--

FB: Yes. Yes, he was shrewd. 'Course Clark was in my day, that is, I can remember Clark. But he was quiet, but sharp. And, of course, he inherited <sup>the</sup> fantastic holdings.

SS: I think that he's described--

- FB: -- Three, four, five-- he's mentioned six times, and that would give you the background of him.
- SS: I remember that Vollmer was in the Bank of Troy history-- the first Bank of Troy history-- that Vollmer was involved in the first bank-- in the first years, in the very first years. And I think that Frank Green knew him.
- FB: Oh, yeah, Green of course knew him because of the warehouse connection. See Green, he would be--<sup>he</sup> died when he was eighty-eight-- so he'd be over a hundred years old if he were alive today. So, of course, he knew Vollmer and Clark and all those through the warehouse connection. <sup>And then when he was local.</sup> <sub>^</sub>
- SS: Well, when they say a "New York" banker--
- FB: Well, you can classify that either as a slicker, a big city banker, or where he'd never seen New York--I don't know, I never heard. <sup>I think that would be</sup> <sub>^</sub> Just a sort of a caustic remark about him: a "New York" banker, because he would be awfully slick for us Westerners, see. He came out here and he hoodwinked. Not that would be my definition of a "New York" banker. Now, he could have been one, I don't know, but he'd have to have been awful young because he lived for many, many years here. He came here before the railroad, you might say, was being built. And, in fact, that's how these towns got their names. In fact, he was before the railroads, obviously. 'Cause I think that's when Troy was changed, <sup>was</sup> after the railroad came, and the spot in the area was called Vollmer. That's what he was doing, he was naming 'em all after himself. Now <sup>or what he was doing,</sup> what he was doing, or moving around, <sub>^</sub> I don't know.
- SS: Who was Clark? According to this book here, Clark wasn't allowed to reopen his bank, because he didn't want to cooperate with the federal government after the bank holiday.
- FB: That's true. 'Course, you had a choice. Now Melgrade didn't either. He refused. He was so confident that his bank was okay and he bluffed.

Yes, I think that's the word. He was only closed for about three days, Harkin, and he opened on his own, because I think he was a friend of Wheeler's, the bank examiner, and Wheeler had not been too long previous to that he had examined him, and he being a high money man, and he didn't have many problems, they let him go ahead and open, because that was the only bank in the county that was open. And, I am sure ~~that~~ that was the reason. And Vollmer-- Clark they had some serious problems. They were involved, I believe, with the the Old National and so consequently that was serious. They were closed down, too. And I think they refused to allow Clark to open without the examination-- without meeting certain restrictions. Just like Troy, we were delayed more from the fact that we couldn't get examined, because we hadn't had an examination-- hadn't had an examination at all <sup>only</sup> since the previous summer-- hearly within a year, so consequently we had no arguments. And we didn't argue because we knew we were going to make it, but at the same time, when we went to Boise within a week after we were closed and tried to talk to the commissioner and see if he wouldn't rush it, and he said, "No, I've only got two examiners and you've gotta wait your turn." He said, "It's going to take us thirty days before we can cover the county-- or cover the state." And so, we waited three weeks before--that was March the 4th-- I would say that we didn't have an examiner until about the-- between the 20th and the 24th of March. In other words, three weeks passed <sup>nearly</sup> before we even got an examination, before he got to North Idaho, he was ~~was~~ <sup>being</sup> so busy in the South. And, of course, he had nothing to do with the national banks, but at thst time there was considerable state banks, so he just worked his way north. And he had problems in-- there was no other bank in Latah County, <sup>that was under his supervision</sup> so he must have been working St. Maries, out of

Moscow, because the Moscow State had already closed and unless he was examining Melgrade, because-- Now, he examined us and he <sup>had</sup> left word on about the twenty-sixth that we have to <sup>that After we'd</sup> ~~ANALYZED~~ it, and he got it all together; we needed to raise \$50,000 - that was to eliminate the loss of the American Bank in Spokane plus about-- I think the total losses were \$84,000--We had a reserve account, and we had a loss in Spokane and we had some slow loans. So he told us we had to raise \$50,000 on a, say, a Wednesday morning. And, so I got to work and I wrote out a bunch of names that I knew that this money would be available to us locally. And I made this list and I think there must have been about-- one, two, three, four-- I don't think there was over eight names on this list--and I called Mr. Bowman and I said, "Mr. Bowman, you and Axel and Frank Green have got to go see these people today." And they got in Frank Green's car, and I couldn't leave, I was in the bank, see, I was a conservator, they called it, so I had a job to do, and the door was open. So these three people got in this -- at one o'clock and went to Walter Keene, they went to <sup>MONSON</sup> Eliph (?) Johnson, they went to John Milan in Deary, they went to-- and they called in Albert Lewis, and they called in Carl Johnson, who lived in town. And from one to three o'clock they had got \$50,000! And I went to the phone and I called him-- I called Wheeler-- he was in the Moscow Hotel-- he said he would remain there twenty-four hours, he would wait, and I called him and I said, "Mr. Wheeler, we got the money." (Chuckles) I can hear him say, "What?" And, I said, "Yes." He said, "I'll be down in the morning." He came in the morning and we went over it, and everybody came. Some <sup>of them</sup> had time certificates, some had it in savings, and we reissued the stock and gave it to them, and we opened then on the first of the month. The first of April.

SS: Did he count every loan that was outstanding as an unrecovered loan?

FB: No. He was tough; he was hard, and Wheeler had a reputation of being cold--he was a typical examiner and a typical banker eventually. He never was in a bank when he was an examiner, but he eventually was in a bank after that. But, oh, no, he was tough.

SS: What's a typical examiner?

FB: Tough. Tough. There's nothing like 'em. I never had, in all my forty-five years, I never had an examiner like Ben Wheeler. And yet, he and I, we never had problems. I respected the man. I could see his side of it. And you never wanted to lie! That was the last thing you wanted to do. He was that shrewd. And I know of a banker that did lie to him, and would not tell him the truth-- Ole Bowman, he never would lie, but he would say, "Mr. Wheeler, that man is honest." Now, Ole Bowman, he believed more in honesty than gold. In other words, if that man was honest, he would pay that note. It might take him a while, but that was his philosophy, see. And, of course, to a bank examiner, that didn't mean nothing. "Mr. Bowman, I know he's honest. We don't doubt that, but will he ever pay it? Can he ever pay it?" And, you don't have an answer to that. And I listened and I learned that. And, of course, what do you do? There is no such thing as an answer. Sure, we assume they're honest and ninety percent of the people in America today are honest, but they don't always pay off. No matter how honest you are, sometimes you can't pay, even if you want to pay!

SS: But it seems like here people were honest and they pay. Most of that slow money all was repaid.

FB: They came back, but in the Depression, you couldn't get it. There was no money to be had. You couldn't sell anything because nobody could buy. And, I can remember of a note that was three hundred dollars-- now three hundred dollars, now today that's pennies-- but a three hundred dollar

note, and it had probably been on our books, for say, three years-- it was cosigned by her brother-- I don't want to mention names-- but it was cosigned by her brother, and he was a highly respected warehouse-man in the area; you didn't question him. Three hundred dollars to him <sup>during</sup> the Depression, was impossible to get. And it was the hardest thing in the world to convince Mr. Wheeler, "No, that note should not be charged out, it is good. Because this man, this cosigner will pay it." "Well, why don't he pay it?" That would be the examiner's remark. "Well, he can't because there is no money." That's the argument that you fought against. People, sure, they want to pay. He would be firm, and yet-- well, he was tough.

SS: What I'm thinking is, it seems to me like around here, people paid back maybe better than they did a lot of other places, even with the best of intentions. I mean, do you think there was a way in which maybe there was more of a feeling of your word being your bond here?

FB: <sup>I think respect, yes.</sup> Yes, I think you treat a person right-- And I know that he used to say-- Ole and I used to talk about it-- "He could never go into a chain bank and get that hundred dollars, could he?" And, I'd say, "No, it's very doubtful, they would soon laugh him off the street." He might be staggering a little bit from the whiskey or the beer he'd been drinking or the moonshine, but he'd come in and he wanted a hundred dollars til payday, and we used to let him have it! That was common. Very common. And there was times when you wondered whether they remembered that they got it. But, oh, no, they would come on payday, and there was the hundred dollars. And they would pay the interest, <sup>the rent,</sup> and that was it. Yes, that's rare, but it's good. A chain banker, why, they wouldn't think of loaning a drinking man money. It would be very rare. That's the difference that was going on during the chain



era. And when they first started. I think they're more human now. I think they've educated a drinking man there's no use going to that bank-- there's no use going there. I wouldn't even go in the door, because I know I wouldn't get any money. See, that's the difference in the reputations of -- everybody knew you, and they knew where you would cut off. *So forth.*

SS: It sounds like a feeling that if you and Ole Bowman were gonna support them, people would stand by the bank.

FB: Well, there's where the old philosophy of honesty comes in-- this was Ole's belief. He knew, and no matter how drunk he got, he was honest. And honesty pays a debt. *you'll thrive,* You'll do anything to pay that debt, because-- And I very much believe in that philosophy. I don't think you've got to have gold in your pocket to go borrow money. But that's been taught that's been the philosophy of a lot of bankers, especially - I've no love for the chain banks, I don't mind telling you. But that great philosophy in their day. You didn't get to first base. *where by* And in a small town, in an area like this where you'd grown up, they knew your background, knew the family and knew there was honesty in that family, and believe me, if he didn't pay you could go out and shake him a little bit. "John, you know you owe us a hundred dollars." That was common, too, . you did that. You reminded him, because you were just as interested in keeping him honest, because if he ever wanted it again, he could never get it, see. And that was a belief. I have loaned money to individuals that owed a lot of money, and yet, the minute they got *the* paycheck they came right to me and paid that loan to keep what credit they had good. And I also, I came from Kendrick to Troy, and I've been amazed and I've thought of it so many times, that people in Kendrick who were considered as no good, see, they were not deadbeats, but people that never had anything. Never had anything

all their life, they may have owned a bench ranch down there and they just existed for a living; they fed their family, they did educate 'em and they grew up and they were old, and I had several of those old-timers come up here and say, "Frank, I don't bank here, but do you suppose I could borrow a hundred dollars?" I did it; I loaned them the hundred dollars simply because they were respected old-timers that had made this country. That went through my mind, and I <sup>all</sup> gamble a hundred dollars on that man, because I know him and he knows me or he wouldn't have come here. And that man, within a period of ten years had a savings account in this bank up here. Now, he never would have been trusted, never could walk into a bank and borrow a hundred dollars. Never had credit in his life of any consequence, and he was given that chance, even though he was <sup>probably</sup> fifty-five, sixty, or sixty-five years old. And that give him some spirit. And that honest to goodness happened. I could name other names, two or three of them like that. I was really honored that I was a part of that. Those things happened, because of the fact that you pick 'em up, and you give 'em the idea of savings and respect for credit and that's how they treasure it. And, today, I can name you off-- and they're right up in there. They're independent. And, of course, their social security keep<sup>s</sup> 'em alive, keeps 'em going. And they got enough to bury 'em. They don't have to be paupers. It's amazing what you can do with money, with the power to loan. But they could have never did that in Kendrick. They'd lost their privacy, they had become chain banks down there. They were worse off than ever, the people that I mentioned. They didn't go into a bank before because they had been turned down. They knew they couldn't have a chance to get a dollar from a chain bank. They had a reputation that wouldn't even qualify 'em to get a yes, if they did ask

for a hundred dollars. And they knew better than to ask. But they get in their car and they come up here; walk in the door and say, "Frank, I don't bank here, as you know, but would you loan me a hundred?" And I did, just simply because I knew 'em, and I knew that they were honest people.

SS: You sound just so much like the trust--You see, when I first talked about the bank, back when you were there-- I don't know what people think about it now, but some years ago, you know, that feeling of standing by the bank, "If to pay Brocke back, I have to get down and scrub the floors for the next three months, that's what I'd do." That kind of feeling. The feeling of confidence, the people feeling that they'd do anything to pay you back because you trusted them, that is a rare kind of a thing. Most people, if they don't pay back when they're in debt, they feel much more like-- they feel that it is a burden. But with a bank, they seem to feel differently, like it was a honor, or something like that.

FB: That probably would work that way, there has to be something else to it. Now there are exceptions, and I had those experiences with those too. I have loaned a hundred dollars to a man, even since I'm out of the bank, <sup>mind you,</sup> believe it or not. I had a young man-- not young, a middle age man come here and he knew that he could not go up there and get it, so he come here and he said, "Frank, will you loan me a hundred dollars?" And I did. "Can I pay it back in the next two months, fifty dollars a month, each time?" And I said, "Yes." And it happened, I would say that he borrowed probably-- he'd come back after the two months, after he got the note paid, and then in about a week he'd come back and he said, "Can I get fifty, again?" And, I said, "Yes." And we had a relationship going there. I didn't like it from the standpoint of I'm not in the banking business and I did it the first time as a favor

but now he started and so pretty soon, why, he comes and he wanted a hundred dollars again, and he said, "I'll give you my car title." So I took his car title and he paid-- and he said, "I'll pay you twenty-five dollars a month." He made three payments of twenty-five; he still owes me twenty-five. But at least I'm rid of him. I look at my side. I'm relieved, I'm willing to-- I got his title- and probably his car is

a junk heap somewhere, I don't know. But that's irrelevant. But I had to lose something sometime, <sup>or another</sup> Now, his respect ran out, see. He got so destitute, and he was a drinking man and he's a veteran on compensation-- and we used to feel that way sometimes in the bank-- we would like certain people to owe us a hundred dollars, and we would charge it off and then we were through, because the next time they come and wanted to borrow, "Well, you haven't paid the hundred dollars, yet we still got that. So your credit's no good." That's history, too, <sup>that's</sup> banking history. And that happens once in a while. You get all kinds! My father-in-law, Frank Green, used to say, "You get the preacher, and you get the superintendent of your schools or your professor, and you get your doctor on your books," and, he says, "you're never going to collect 'em!" But, of course, that's changed. The poor minister, I think he always will be hardup. It's pretty hard to get it out of him. The doctor, of course, they're rolling in the money, and the professors they're at a stage now, <sup>xc</sup> where they're pretty independent, so you're back down to the preacher. And he still has a hard row. Takes all kinds!

SS: Do you think that the difference between the way the policies of the bank here and the chain banks-- is that kind of like the difference between a rural country place where people know each other, and the cities, where they don't? I mean, is there a connection there?

FB: No, the only folly about a chain bank is that it-- the manager, he's just like anything else, they put him-- the manager in there-- as a rule he's young, because they have a program going. <sup>(End of side A)</sup> You get this training and they send you out-- like, for instance, let's go back to First Security who was in Kendrick. They had the banks in Kendrick, they have them in Orofino, they have 'em in Culdesac, they have 'em up on the prairie and they have them in Moscow and they have 'em in Genesee. Alright, those are all training posts for young bankers to get a banking background, because they learn responsibility. They go out there, now, if they're good <sup>and they are liked</sup> and they have obviously personality, and they're good for the bank ~~then~~ he wants to advance, don't he? That community is a strange place to him, he'll stay there maybe three or four or five years. He's learned to like the community, but there is still a desire; he's young and wants a better job. <sup>He</sup> Wants higher pay. Wants more responsibility. And if he's good, they've got a place for him. If he's not good, he sets there maybe another five years, and so forth and so on. That's the chance they take. I'm not saying that all small towns in the area--- they used to turn 'em over a lot faster than they are now; they're finding out that there was a lot of criticism because John Jones a farmer out here, he just acquainted with him and the man knew his pattern, he knew his financial standing and knew his background and knew his credit, and he was just getting to where there was really good relationship and they boot him out. They transfer him away. There was so much criticism over that, that now they are endeavoring to try to put older people in the chain banks and make 'em stay there and become a part of the community. Which is better. But it's still not the same, no matter what. They have only limited power. A manager can only do so much. He has a line of credit that he can give, over and

and above that, why, he has to say to the man John Jones when he comes in and wants to borrow fifty<sup>thousand</sup> dollars, "Well, I'm sorry, you'll have to wait about a week because I've got to send word to Boise, they got to analyze your situation. Then come back." He don't get a yes or no, you see. And if they don't have the money or if he's marginal it's awful easy to set in Boise and say, "Tell him no. We don't have the money." So, you're that man in between constantly.

SS: Don't they have to run for the maximum profit, instead for the good of the community?

FB: They're not in there for their health; yes. <sup>that's obvious, sure.</sup> But, I've always felt that they don't have the community at heart. They may say they do, but they're not going to lose money. They're not going to gamble. I know for instance, church loans-- construction of a church-- we were a small bank up here in our loaning capacities, but if you've got a dozen good Moscow farmers banking with you; prominent, stable men and <sup>it's usually an expensive</sup> they want to build a church, and <sup>it's usually an expensive</sup> church would be Moscow-- had it on two different occasions--they say, "Well, we need seventy-five thousand dollars. What's our chances?" "Oh, very good." Because we don't like 'em, but I told the Banking Department, I says, "What do you do? It's an obligation." I made several loans just on the strength of the fact that that's a key loan, that loan will be paid. You make it so that they have no choice but to pay it, because we're always going to have church, we're always going to support 'em. Those kind of people aren't going to die tomorrow. And it's great business, it's good advertising, you treat 'em right. And it's true. To my knowledge we've never had a problem. It's different with fraternities. It's hard for fraternities on the universities to get financing, because there's no old, reliable head to tie to. Now, you have those in the

churches, because those deacons or the board of directors, or whoever has that power, <sup>they're</sup> stable people, and they resent it when they don't get that help. They expect it. They couldn't get it anywhere else, and they came to us.

SS: Do you think that as a general rule that the Bank of Troy-- how did it weigh the difference between making a profit and supporting the community, when there was a conflict?

FB: Well, 'course your profit came automatically. <sup>Your growth of your bank.</sup> We had very little over-head. <sup>You'll work long.</sup> And I've spent often nighttimes going back to the bank and working, even from the day I started working up here, I would work often at night. File my checks at night. Got to work-- and I never took an hour's daytime noon in my life; an hour lunch hour. We always closed and my policy was to get back there just as quick as you can, because it's a privilege to close; to go home and eat and come back, and we don't want to abuse it. And, I would always be back by twelve thirty, sometimes twenty minutes afterwards. Because, I knew <sup>that</sup> it was a real privilege to close for that half hour, or whatever it'd be. But, anyway, your profit comes, if you have a successful operation. We never had to worry about loans. We never advertised for loans. The First Bank of Troy in the history of the time that I was there, have never put in an ad in the paper, "We want loans, or, come to us and get loans." You can come to us for advice, but we never asked for loans, because we always had 'em running out our ears. We had more loans than we knew what to do with, because people were coming constantly. So, the loans are what makes your money. So, that's part of the history of the thing. There have been statements that we were liberal. I would say not. <sup>no matter who,</sup> You turned away a lot of loans, <sup>^</sup> There was bad loans, and it wasn't hard to turn 'em away, if they were large loans, we were too

small to make 'em. And if they were bad loans-- I've turned down hundred dollar loans to many guys, because usually they were slow or they didn't really need it. They just wanted to have a hundred dollars that they could go out and spend or take a trip, and they weren't offended.

SS: What about this slow paper? The book on the <sup>First</sup> Bank of Troy talks about at the end of the year, there'd be notes that you'd charge off, but you knew they were going to be paid anyway. Was that different from other banks?

FB: <sup>No, see</sup> Banking Departments create their own regulations, and whenever a loan is past due, in my day in the majority of the years that I was in the bank, slow paper, past due paper was never a problem. They were more interested in knowing whether that loan was solvent; would be paid. That was more important than the fact that now to have regulations, if you've got a loan sixty days past due, that's bad. Well, here we live in a community where we have a lot of people that worked in the woods. They were payroll people. And woods employment, as a rule, is not twelve months out of the year. And many years Potlatch Forest shuts down-- if it's a bad winter they'll shut down in December first and not open up until March or April. You've got a lull in there. Alright, we financed homes in Bovill, Deary, Troy and very rarely in Elk River, but we did have those type of loans. And we financed automobiles. And it just seems as though-- we say that they lived from <sup>hard</sup> ~~h~~-to-mouth-- in other words, the paycheck pays the car payment, pays the house payment, pays the mortgage payment, pays the lights and the grocery bill and they're broke. Alright, what happens when they are laid off? Well, we drew a mortgage, it was a good mortgage, plenty of security, we drew it-- I always preached to 'em, "I'm going to make this payment



high, and if you can't pay December, January and February, well, you've got a good equity, it'll ride." Alright, I did that year, after year, after year; they'd pay fifty dollars a month when they had it, and then when the bad months come, why, you wrote-- out of work-- you wrote on the note, "Unemployed for three months; skip payments." The examiner, "It's reasonable. We have no argument wiht you, all we want to know is, that's it's honest, <sup>good loan</sup> <sup>good reputation</sup> good people." But, not now. That don't mean nothing. That examiner, if that loan is past the sixty days you go into a category, classified as slow paper. And that's against you. That's the difference. If you're overdrawn thirty days, which happens, that's a loss; that's classified as a loss. And it didn't used to be, see.

SS: Why?

FB: They're getting tougher, see. That's the bureaucrats.

SS: -- not as honest now as they used to be?

FB: I guess so. <sup>That's bureaucratic</sup> regulations. And it's that way all the way down the line. Everything is so much different. It's tough. In other words, I know that-- I always had the feeling that I knew bank examiners were waiving privileges that I had, they'd take my word for it and they'd turn the page and say, "Well, we'll see what happens ~~next~~ time we come around." But not anymore. It's different. It's tough. That's the way it is now. And, of course, the fact that I think they respected me from the standpoint that I fought for many a Troy borrower. Nobody knows what I used to go through if their paper was slow or if there was criticism. That's between me and the examiner, nobody else. See, I **defended** my loans, just like a superintendent defends his teachers, or your employer defends his employees. I did that for my people. And, if an examiner, like Ben Wheeler'd say,

"I don't think it's worth a damn." I ~~would raise a~~ fight, see. 'Cause I knew him, I knew my borrower, and I stood up for him. He didn't, he looked at it from a cold-blooded sheet of white paper with figures on it.

SS: Could you bank on when Ole Bowman used to say, "He's honest, I know he's honest?"

FB: No,-- when Ole Bowman said that, I shivered, I knew that's a poor excuse, it won't hold water. (Chuckles) "Sure, we're in the banking business-- sure, we're honest, we wouldn't have loaned him in the first place, no matter if he had a million dollars or nothing behind him. That's the only kind of people we loan to, is honest people." We don't have to tell the examiner that.

SS: Would you go into that the guy really had good financial--.

FB: I think honesty is between the borrower and the banker, but <sup>from the banker</sup> to the bank examiner, that's an adjective!

SS: How could you stick up for people then?

FB: Just on the fact that, "I **say** they'll pay it. My word; I wouldn't have loaned it to him if I hadn't believed in him. And you can look at my record. It's good. In other words, if I told you last year that that loan was going to be paid, and you go back and it was paid." I lived on those promises, and I made 'em good. That improved my relationship with the Banking Department, I know that, too. Because I was told that time and again. "By golly, you've been right before. So we won't argue." And that's how you build. Bank examiners, they know bankers just as well as bankers know their borrowers. They know you - you lie, <sup>I think</sup> they could tell, right now. And that was another one of my conclusions. I don't think I had been in the bank two years until I got caught on my own self, and that worried me. In other words, when I

promised the bank examiner when they came there as a rule, any time between eight months and twelve months from the last time; twice a year, and you had this problem over here, this borrower, and he wasn't doing like you thought he was ~~doing~~, and that promised that you'd made the Bank<sup>(in)</sup> Department; <sup>or</sup> the bank examiner, it wasn't being produced here, and so you better figure out why! (Chuckles) Because, he's going to ask you, "You said that note would be paid, when I came back here. So it's up to you, my boy, to tell me why it isn't paid." And so, you start to work on it. And, as a rule, there was a legitimate cause, because if it was bad, we always, in this bank, was a jump ahead on loses. We asked for items to be charged out. The bank examiners didn't tell us what to charge out, we told them what we wanted charged out. That was another thing that was in our favor. Now, that's not true in a chain bank. That reflects against management; losses. And there's <sup>an improving bank,</sup> no banker in the world that runs a good bank, a steady bank, <sup>a</sup> a successful bank, they're going to have losses, I don't care who you are; if you don't, you're not banking. That's all there is to it. You can't help it. It's just as sure-- now, there's excessive losses-- that's the thing ~~you~~ avoid. And we charged out slow paper, where we knew rather than foreclose or take action or do anything to harm that man, it was the best advertising in the world, was to play with him, to play ball. Take it out, give him some time, we'll get on his back in time. He'll come to us and say, "Well, I think I just as well quit. I can't pay." And especially young fellows that started out in life and had a heavy financial difficulties. When I came to Troy, we had real estate mortgages then that were ten years old. They were just as much the day <sup>that</sup> I came in as they were ten years previous. Nobody thought of paying on the principle. All they wanted to do was to pay the rent! <sup>a</sup>

The rent~~a~~ was the interest. And so, the bank examiners asked me, "Can't you get him to pay a hundred; two hundred dollars a year on the principle? Pretty soon, you know, he'll think he don't owe the principle, that all he owes is the interest." And it was good, common sense, yes, and I made that promise. So, I would renew these mortgages and I would put it right on the note, "Two hundred dollars on principle." And, eventually they got 'em paid.

SS: You could charge it off and then keep on going?

FB: Oh, yes, that was very, very common. You didn't jump on a man's back simply because the bank examiner said, "Charge out that note." That was our judgement, what we wanted to do. The Banking Department would order us to charge out a note, and whether it'd be declared a loss, that was irrelevant as far as between we and the borrower. Sometimes, if you go out here and a man was <sup>maybe</sup> out of a job, maybe he was having just temporary difficulties, and you go out and you said to him, "Well, give us five dollars a month-- give us ten dollars a month." See that made a friend. And, here, he was afraid to come to us. He owed us two hundred dollars, and wouldn't come near us. He'd avoid, he'd stay out of our road, he wouldn't come into the bank. He'd cash his check in Deary and Bovill. He wouldn't <sup>bring them</sup> home. But, we just made an effort then to catch him; corner him, say, "Now, John, we don't expect you to pay this all at once. But, you start paying ten dollars a month." And the note was out of the bank, nobody was pushing us, and pretty soon it was paid. We had a friend and if we'd a gone an attached his wages, you lost more money that way; more reputation and it becomes public knowledge, see; and that was no good. And that was our philosophy was to play with 'em. And we did.

SS: How did this compare, do you think, with the way other banks, small

banks, were handled, with the same problem?

FB: I think very similar. Although, I was a poor bank conventionist. I never went to conventions. I never intermingled with other bankers, under the grounds that you could compare things of that kind. I would judge that all banks had assets charged out. They would talk once in a while, <sup>end of the year</sup> say, "Oh, I got a stack of past due notes that's over five or six inches high." He says, "Boy, there's just no money in the country. What do you do?" And I said, "Well, do the best you can. That's all anybody can do."

SS: From what Barrett found, in comparing the minute books in different banks is that you were getting higher grades from the bank examiners, that perhaps any other bank in the state.

FB: That's possible.

SS: Certainly as high.

FB: Yes, uh-huh. But there again, I know this much, Sam, that no matter what anybody says, we had the respect of the Banking Department, of the commissioners. Ole Bowman did, and I grew into it. And I would make promises that I would make good. I took 'em just as serious. I wouldn't lie to 'em. <sup>I</sup> Many a time have told my junior officers, "Whatever you do, tell 'em the truth, 'cause <sup>they</sup> they can find out. And if you lie once, they know you'll lie again." And they made fun to me, that was a pun-- "Well, he's honest!" See, they don't go for that-- that's no excuse, that's not good. Sure, just as I say, "If he wasn't honest, we'd never loaned him the dollar in the first place." So, we believed in his honesty, but that's no asset.

SS: What about these young people that you mentioned; guys that were just starting in farming that really had a heavy burden? Were there a number of those people?

FB: Yes, yes. For instance, we made several GI loans. Now, a GI loan-- when you got out of the Korean War, that was just about the time that that came into being-- and they were in the Korean War and they wanted to go farming. And so, in other words, they had nothing, and you'd make 'em an eight thousand dollar loan and that was the beginning. And you would get in, see. And the government would guarantee fifty percent of that loan at all times. You took a mortgage on the crop and the chattels and you would give him at least three or four years to pay that. But, that was the beginning, see. And pretty soon his eight thousand would turn into twelve and then it would <sup>go and it would</sup> climb. He'd bought secondhand machinery; it was wearing out. He needed a new tractor. He needed a combine. Pretty soon that original GI loan of eight thousand dollars turned out to be thirty or forty thousand, and he was yet a renter. He was on rented land, and that's a strike against you, because you're giving away one third of your income and you cannot live. If you have to borrow money to live or feed your family, you've got an awful, awful hard hill. That's the risks of a ~~marginal~~ farmer. In other words, he's being eat up by his living, by his interest, by his expenses. There's nothing left to pay the loan with, see. No matter how he tries, he's innocent. He's tightened his belt <sup>but</sup> when it don't reach around, it don't reach around. And who waits? It's the banker. Because people that furnish him the gas, people that furnish him the seed, people that furnish him the repairs, they are to be paid. Because, that's also part of history. You can push 'em out and say, when the year rolls around, he's got to have that repair bill from somebody, he's got to have help. So, you got to see that the gas is paid in order to get him credit for the next year, you've got to see that his seed bill is paid, because he wants seed for the next year. You've

got to pay his repair bills, cause he's got to have repairs for the next year. So, you're always in the middle, see, you're always holding the bag, as the fellow said. And, you always wait in hope that next year is going to be better. And you know yourself, if you've gone <sup>through the</sup> years and years-- the farm stabilization program helped, <sup>it was a great thing</sup> because you adjust his living, his expenses, and everything was based on the minimum that you could borrow on your wheat from the government. Whether it would be the high price <sup>or the</sup> ~~whe~~ you turned it over to them or whether it'd go up; that was irrelevant. So you used that figure. At least you knew what he was going to get. In the olden days, he might raise wheat on the basis of a dollar and ~~take~~ thirty cents for it; which happened in the Depression. Well, who made up the seventy cents? The banker held the sack, because, you were lucky to pay the interest, let alone the principle. And that went on for years.

SS: You think the price supports were really ~~great~~?

FB: Yes, sir. That's the best friend the bankers ever had. It was politics, it was political, that's the sad part about it. But the stabilization program is what is in my mind. I think they'll come back to it. I think they have to. Because, when this thing is all over and the farmers start raising fence to fence with wheat and barley, they're going to flood the market, so help me. And it's so easy to go down. The prices that you pay are not going to go down for <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ things. The cost of operation, will be the last thing to go down. Which means that if you had a floor in there that you knew you could go to and depend on, that'd be all right. But there is no such thing right now. But I think farming has a good outlook, but the tragic part is that there is no new farmers. You know, the only new faces that you get in farming is where the son takes over from the father. And I believe--

Some time ago, I think about three years ago, I think I saw, or was told by the county agent; at that time seventy percent of the farmers in Latah County were over sixty to sixty-five years old. And, so many of 'em had no idea what was going to happen. They had no son in their family, they had no farmer members of the family that was farmers. And there is only two places for those to go. ~~Either~~ to sell out or to lease or to hire it done. Well, to lease, meant to sell out. Of course, you sold your lease --- (Phone rings)

Then, do you remember-- no, you weren't here--Anyway, the Commissioner of Finance, at the request of the President of the United States, appointed a conservator to take charge of a bank. This conservator could be anybody-- could be anybody in your community, could be any officer of goodstanding in a bank or anybody that knew the inside and he was in charge. So, it wasn't over three days after the Bank Holiday had been declared, that they called me from Boise and told me that I was being appointed as a conservator of the First Bank of Troy.

SS: State?

FB: State Commissioner of Finance. So then, I was in charge. And I was the boss, even over the president, anybody. And all you did, you opened the door-- you had your banking hours-- you opened the door at nine o'clock in the morning-- all we were allowed to do was make change. In other words, if somebody comes in with a twenty dollar bill, we could make change for that money, but we couldn't transact any other thing.

SS: Had Mr. Green been involved very much prior to that time?

FB: Yes. Let's see-- We were involved in the American Bank in Spokane, which was our correspondent-- in other words, the First Bank of Troy



was depositing-- and that man, there, Clyde Johnson, was vice-president of the First Bank of Troy. And, so, when -- and he closed. He closed in about - either '29 or '30 - after the crash. They closed his bank, so naturally - we had \$34,000 in that bank, and that was our pot. So we had to start digging for funds. Well, so the First Bank of Troy people knew that we were correspondent and it reflected on you. It was a loss to the bank, so, we had to be careful how we talked, what we did. So the Bowmans, naturally, they went to Frank Green to get their arm around him, see. He was the stable man in the whole darn area. He was well-to-do; good background, excellent. And so, they made him vice-president. And so, he came in and Ole Bowman transferred, just gave him, ten shares of stock, which qualified him to be a director. He didn't have to pay for it, because-- and it wasn't his, Ole held the stock after it was made out to F. M. Green, it <sup>would</sup> still belong to Ole Bowman. But it was a way to make him so he could - it was all <sup>you might say,</sup> under cover, you might say, but he became vice-president of the First Bank of Troy. Well, that was a stabilizing factor. I was his son-in-law-- no, I wasn't at that time-- Were we married then?

MRS. B: 1930.

FB: Yeah. We were married-- At the time that he become vice-president I don't know. But, anyway- I don't know when the American Bank closed, but I think it did close during the hot times there. So, anyway, that stabilized the bank. So, he remained as <sup>such he remained as</sup> vice-president. And so, then when the real crash came-- when the Holiday came-- why then he stepped in and he bought his ten shares; he paid for it. And I bought ten shares-- he gave me the money to buy ten shares. We borrowed the money from him. So there we were, we were a stabilizing factor. And Ole Bowman who had control of the bank, out of a hundred shares, he

had around, I would say, at least fifty or sixty-- or probably seventy shares out of the hundred, <sup>which</sup> ~~he~~ Controlled the bank, and so he started losing his; he couldn't pay the assessment. In other words, there was a two hundred and fifty dollar assessment, and if you had a hundred shares that meant twenty-five thousand dollars. So, he was unable to save his shares. So for every time that we went out to Walter Keene or to Mons Johnson or to Carl Johnson, Ole had to cut down his seventy to-- he ended up with no more than the rest of us. I think he ended up with probably fifteen shares. He was probably the biggest stockholder, at that, but he lost his stock. He had to either lose his stock or lose his bank. So, he ended up-- Frank Green had ten shares, I had ten shares; I think Ole had fifteen. I think Axel, he had already owned ten shares, so all he had to do was pay his \$2,500. Their brother, John, who had stock lost his. He wasn't able to pay his assessment, so he was out. He was broke. So it became a whole new ball game. And then we started from scratch ~~from~~ nothing.

SS: I was thinking; Frank Green -- he never had really had owned shares in the bank.

FB: No, he had nothing to do with it.

SS: Did he have any reluctance about jumping into this new venture?

FB: No-- I must have been his son-in-law-- I'm just sure that we were married, at that time. 'Course, he wouldn't have had to have been-- but by '32, then we were married and he and I were, of course, consulting and passing our advice, and so, he was a part of the bank by that time, owing to the fact that I was the cashier, and he was the vice-president. And then when the Holiday come along, why, we knew the only thing could go and that was up. So, he didn't hesitate.

SS: He must have been getting up in years by then.

- FB: Let's see, that was 1932 and he died in 1940? *(End of side B)*
- SS: -- really have a standing as kind of-- one of the most substantial--
- FB: I don't think there's any doubt, <sup>there's</sup> people will say, that he saved the bank. And I don't know what they would have done. I know, when I heard people-- these people that we made the list for to go out and see--they looked at him. They told me that afterwards-- "It's a good thing they brought Frank Green." ~~Axel~~ Bowman was not a popular man. Ole Bowman was popular. He was kind. He was not a banker. He was respected, but he was destitute. And you can imagine a man going out with his feeling when he went to get this money. Because, it looked bad for him, <sup>it was his reflection.</sup> "Will you come to my rescue?" That is just exactly what he was trying to say, but, again, he didn't do the talking. He probably did to Niki. Axel was a talker; he probably did the talking. Ole stayed in the background, because he felt, "My days are over." And he never was the same man after that year. He was disheartened. He had lost all he had built. But he snapped out of it pretty good, because it was so successful. It started with a bang again. And everything fell in it's place. Sure, there was a loss, but you just as well forget it. He hated Wheeler. He hated the bank examiner. And, of course, he had to blame somebody, which was natural. I didn't. I looked at it from the other side. If it wouldn't have been Wheeler, it would have been somebody else. It could have been worse.
- SS: I remember reading something like, Wheeler said, "Well, we cleaned up a lot of paper." And Ole Bowman said, "Yeah, at my expense."
- FB: Yes. That's how he always felt, see. But, we did get it back and the new people ~~who~~ put up the money, it was business; he had no choice. He had seventy shares, that meant he was to go out and find-- seventy

shares at \$250 a share. That was \$17,500. You know, that was a fortune in those days. That was unbelievable. He cashed in his life insurance, that was the means that he had to do it-- he cashed in his life insurance, -- I don't think he sold any land-- But in order for him to save what he could, he saved every share of stock that he could raise and pay the \$250 assessment on-- he tried, he did everything in his power. And, when he got through, the rest of them divided up among W. A. Keene, among John Milan, among Mons Johnson and among Eliph Johnson-- that's four- Carl Johnson is five, Albert Lewis is six, and Frank Green is seven and myself was eight. There was eight and Ole Bowman was nine. And I can't remember that there was another person but us. In other words, Ole was first, he got whatever he could stand and the rest was divided up. And you paid \$250 for every share. Set out to raise the \$50,000.

SS: Before you go, I was going to ask you about Mr. Green. Was he here from the way early days?

MRS.B: He came from Kansas, oh, I'm not sure how old he was. He homesteaded, <sup>didn't he</sup> on Bear Ridge.

FB: Yeah. Yeah, he settled on Little Bear Ridge. He had-not the Stanley Hillyard place-- but the one right below it there somewhere. Maybe it was the <sup>Leonard</sup> Nelson place. But it was out there on the Ridge where he homesteaded.

SS: Did you ever know what his connection was with this country? Did he know anybody that was around here?

FB: There were several brothers. They came from Canada. They had a connection in Canada, didn't they?

MRS. B: Well, he had family in Canada. He had two brothers in Canada. I can't remember whether Dad was the first one-- his mother and dad came

from Virginia.

SS: But they were out here as well?

MRS. B: Yeah.

SS: Around Troy?

FB: He's supposed to be related to-- what history?

MRS. B: Oh, his mother was related to Lee. *Second cousin.*

FB: Yeah, General Lee. So they were Virginia old--

MRS. B: We used to brag about it when we were in high school up there. Brag about our famous relatives. And Dad said you've got some that were hanged, too, so don't go bragging, you have some infamous ones, too!

SS: Did he move into Troy when he started the *roller* mill?

MRS. B: Yes, he farmed out there.

FB: Yes, he farmed, and he owned the farm. *He lived up here on the farm.* This first house after you get *up on top* ~~there,~~ that's the old family farm. Marge has a third interest in that. But he farmed there and then he moved to town here. And you were born next door here?

MRS. B: Yes, I was born in this house next door.

FB: He married a gal -- that was what? Sixteen years old? They eloped.

MRS. B: From out on Bear Ridge, with a horse and buggy. I don't remember for sure whether it was my stepgrandfather or my--

FB: No, it had to have been your grandfather--

MRS. B: Not in pursuit of 'em.

FB: *But he* got away. (Chuckles)

MRS. B: Dad was almost twenty years older than my mother.

SS: They had to go to Moscow probably-- Well, I wonder how he got into the *roller* mill?

FB: Well, that's quite a history in itself. He must have had the *roller* mill--Did he have a rolling mill? Where did you ever hear that?

SS: That's what--I thought that's what it said by the First Bank of Troy.

FB: It was a flour mill. And that was that building right down there then.

MRS. B: -- was over here though.

FB: No, but he bought this from Duffy. See, they went to Spokane, I heard him tell about that. <sup>there was a motor company.</sup> That's when the Transport Motor Truck was starting to be manufactured, and he and Harry Driscoll and this August Johnson went to Spokane, into that business. They formed a corporation, and they went into the business together, all three of them. Green was a silent partner, he didn't go up. I don't know whether he was in the grain business then or not, but, anyway, they started this business, then they broke up and August Johnson took the motor company himself. Harry Driscoll ended up with the Idaho Grain and Frank Green continued on in the F. M. Green Grain Company. So that was a sideline. Don't any of those history books give much detail of his life?

MRS. B: I DON'T THINK SO.

FB: They just tell us that he was county commissioner for years, and a life-long Democrat.

MRS. B: And a thirty-second degree Mason.

FB: Yeah.

SS: Was he a Democrat because he'd come from the South?

FB: Probably , although I don't know. He was in the Idaho State Militia, I know, because when they had the uprisings in the mines, I've heard him tell about-- that they were called out and he had to go .

SS: Did he ever tell about what happened to him up there?

FB: No. I think it was the just the same- they called it the militia, now they call it the National Guard. And I think all they had to do was keep order, and that was the size of it. That was when the IWWs and the miners was striking and so forth. But I don't think there were any lives lost, <sup>or</sup> anything like that.

SS: He made his wealth---

FB: He made his wealth, obviously-- no, he was wealthy before he must have gone into grain business. I think he was a conservative man that made money and was able to take care of it. You know, that's how the old generation did it; taking care of it was the main thing. But, he stretched the old dollar

MRS. B: He did it mostly by farming, didn't he?

FB: I would say so, yes. The early days. Clearing land and selling it, and branching out. I know the Cornwall place that he got, which was a hundred and sixty acres, he financed the purchase of-- Have you interviewed <sup>Oxax</sup> Holkenson? Does that name ring at all?

SS: No, I know who he is.

FB: Alright, okay. His dad bought the place for eight thousand dollars, this hundred and sixty. And Frank Green gave him the eight thousand dollars to buy it. And he went down there and he lasted about four years, and he couldn't even pay interest, -- and, <sup>Andrew come to him,</sup> "I yust as well deed it to you. I can't make it. You can have it. Frank Green, says, "OK." And he took it. Then he bought forty acres from the Cornwall estate after that. So that's two hundred acres out there. I know that's how he got that. But up here, I imagine he just naturally bought that over a period of time. But, during the grain business-- it was fabulous-- everybody-- that office was always full. They'd stand there and talk, -- and he was not a talker, either. He was a quiet reserved man, -- <sup>but his advise...</sup>

MRS. B: He was sure good with young people.

FB: Yeah. And he was on the school board for years. But he would tell you, and it seemed to be golden information. A great advisor to his people, his customers. They all swore by him, you know. Then, of

course, he would carry 'em. He'd give 'em the <sup>seed</sup>. He was just more or less Santa Claus.

MRS. B: Mostly ~~50~~ when he bought the store.

FB: That was the worst deal he ever got into.

Mrs. B: Put me in as manager, <sup>after he couldn't stand it.</sup> I'd never had anything to do with a store in my life.

SS: What store was that?

MRS.B: Where the ~~bus~~ garage is.

SS: Is this the one you mentioned to me, when the script on -

FB: Yeah, that's right.

SS: And you managed the store?

MRS. B: If you could call it that. (Chuckles)

SS: You wouldn't call it that?

MRS. B: No, that was a job.

FB: She managed it. She did a good job. But it was such a job, because everything's credit. They all knew Frank Green, you know, and he had money, "so, I can't pay, you charge it!" And that's the way it was. Yessir! Everybody charged. And he did well. He and Ole Bohman had it together. <sup>actually</sup> He and Ole were fifty-fifty.

SS: Did they expect to make money on it?

FB: They were more interested because the store that went broke, that was Williamson. The store went broke, and the bank had a bad note. Yeah, department store, boy, you could buy anything and everything.

SS: Is that the same Williamson that was in Moscow?

MRS. B: Yeah, uh-huh.

FB: The same Williamson, yes. He came down here and he ran Williamson's Department store, and he went broke during the '30's. And the bank had a note. And so that's how Ole got involved. And said, "Let's take over the assets for the note." 'Cause, I think he paid all the creditors



but the First Bank of Troy. And I don't think he ever did pay the note. But anyway, he and Frank Green started-- they each dumped in, I think each two thousand dollars in the pot. And that started the store. They did a good business.

SS: What kind of recovery was it on all this---

FB: Well, Green and Bohman, I don't think they lost anything. They didn't make anything. But when it was all over-- I don't know whether they fully recovered their original investment. I doubt it. I think they just forgot it.

SS: You say, it was kind of a mess.

MRS. B: I think so.

FB: Well, it was poor times, see. The Depression wasn't over yet.

SS: It must have helped this town keep going.

FB: That was what they had in mind, because they wanted a store. It was a great thing. That was when the Saturday nights was fabulous.

SS: Saturday nights?

FB: Yes, stay open til twelve o'clock at night, and your store would be so full of people, just like a Fourth of July. Every Saturday. I think I wrote in that thing I gave you, that you couldn't find a place to park on Saturday night. That was the truth. You couldn't. I worked in the store on Saturday nights. Yes, I'd help clerk, and we'd have a great time. We had a CC camp out here. And I'll never forget. Remember the kid that had his coat on, and I noticed it was bulging, you know, and I happened to look in there and I could see color, and I pulled it back and he had about two dozen ties in it. He was stealing them, see. And I reprimanded him. I said, "Young man, I'm not going to do anything, but you better not be caught in this store again." And he pulled 'em all out and laid 'em on the counter

and out the door he went.

MRS. B: Did you ever tell him about the gypsies?

FB: That ought to be <sup>Bertle</sup> Bohman. I wasn't in on that. I can tell you gypsy stories, though.

MRS. B: Bertle Bohman, and what they'd do to him, I don't know, but he opened the cash register for 'em. And about the time they'd reach in why, then he'd shut it. I don't think they ever got anything out did they?

FB: I don't know. But you just don't trust 'em. Dynamite. Yeah, I'll tell you one-- When I first went in the bank in Kendrick. And this cashier in the bank was shrewd. He was a Jew, and he was good. But he couldn't conceive that any gypsy could ever get the best of him. Of course, they were so rare that he thought he was having a good time with them, the old biddies, the old squaw, Anyway, she had him to where he was putting twenty dollar bills out on the counter; and he had two of 'em out there, and they were manipulating, and finally he quit. He said, "Now, I've had enough." So he put 'em back in the drawer, and that night we were twenty dollars short! (Chuckles) And so help me , he knew that that old gal got it, just as sure as the dickens. I don't think he slept for a week! And, he didn't make any bones about telling us about it.

And we had a cafe down at Kendrick, George and I, we operated a cafe, and they came in and they got me to open the till, too. But she was out, and I wouldn't let her get to it, and she'd take my hand, she said, "Now hold my hand on my breast." Just like that, you know. And she had me going too, but the minute she was-- it was behind the counter on the confectionery bar, and she'd take a step, I'd close it and I'd push her back. And finally I got so scared that I said, "You get out." And she did. And they had young girls running around the store,

you don't know what they stole. <sup>probably</sup> Took every candy bar they could get their hands on. I was there alone.

SS: What did that have to do with telling your fortune? That happened to a friend of mine not too long ago, in the city. Telling your fortune that's how you lose-- blessing your money.

FB: That's right. Blessing your money. That's how they get sight of it. I'll tell you one. This actually happened to George, my brother. And I told you in that letter how we'd go home and if you ran into 'em why, the mothers, the parents, they always warned us, "Don't get near 'em, because they steal boys and girls. And we were told that, and literally taught. But anyway, George and I was alone and they camped right below-- we went up the hill to our farm and just off the bridge a ways was a nice little camping spot sort at the head of the grade there. And this was still daylight, and so George wanted to go down and talk to 'em, and I didn't want to, but I wasn't going to let him go alone, so I kind of followed behind, and they came out, two older men, and so they started questioning George. And they started telling, "We like boys like you, we could take you along.", and this and that and they were just kidding. and so they said to George, "How far is it to the next town?" He was a smart alecky guy, you know. "Well," George says, "depends on how you travel." He'd been in a play and this was part of the play, "Depends on how you travel." And they said, "Well, how's that?" And he said, "Well, if you walk, it's a long ways, if you ride, why, it's not too bad, you'd get there," he says, "but, if you go in an airplane you're practically there now, but if you'd gone by telegraph, you'd a been there already!" (Chuckles) The old gypsy looked at him, "We don't want any of that boy. You go on home!" That actually happened. (Chuckles) He was a

*Dad always, all the time, "George, keep your mouth shut."*

talking kid, you know. <sup>^</sup> He was the politician in the family. And that just about floored the gypsy. "If you'd a gone by telegraph you'd a been there already!" But he'd learned that in a play at school, and he pulled that on the gypsy.

SS: Usually they're the ones that get the best of you.

FB: They didn't steal kids, really. But that was a way for the parents to scare the kids-- "Don't get near 'em." They could be friendly, gypsies were friendly, I don't care whether you were a kid-- but, oh, how they'd steal chickens! They would come to your house, in your yard and the men would come to the doors, and the women would get into the chicken houses, or get into the grain bins. They'd steal <sup>horses, they'd steal</sup> ~~coats~~, they'd steal anything they could get their hands on. Oh, it was awful. And you never knew when they were coming. The only way is if they come to one house, they'd call the next ones, "Go out and shut the pasture gate." And stand out there and tell 'em you don't want anything, to keep on going. That was common. But if you let 'em near your house or in your barnyard, they would load their wagons up with grain or feed or anything they could get their hands on. Steal. Steal. Steal. And some of the women were really attractive, <sup>as I recall</sup> but they were dirty. That is, they weren't well dressed or anything like that.

SS: We were talking before some about town life in the '20's. Stores being open at night. I was thinking, we talked a little bit about the dances and a little bit about the bootlegging. What did kids do? Like when you were dating with Mrs. Brocke, you know, --

FB: Well, of course, she taught school and you might say she come home only every other week or whenever it was. But we went to dances. We went to dances a lot. And after we got married, and even before, we never missed a movie in Moscow. We always went to the movies. There wasn't

a bad one, ever. There never was a bad movie in those days. They were all good. But, we'd go to the movies; we'd go to the dances. We had a dance hall here. We had one in Helmer, so there was dancing. And there was plays. There was chautauquas, or you put on a play yourself. That was common. I'd say that was. And, of course, ~~I~~ had a car, so you would go, or park or whatever you did. And you could go out into the rural-- every community had a schoolhouse, and some nights they'd have a dance and they'd advertise that, and you would go.

SS: Was it very different in the country than in town, as far as the dances or anything?

FB: No. No. I wouldn't say that. Your country dance would be strictly private, that is, it'd be local people. The dance hall at Helmer, the dance hall here at Troy was countywide. They'd come clear from Lewiston, and you'd see Pullman people; you'd see Genesee people come to the Allen's dance hall in Troy, and Moscow, and so forth. And the same way at Helmer. Helmer attracted them from Moscow and Pullman and Genesee, all over. And that was a big affair, there'd be two hundred people dancing at a time. It'd be crowded, you know. It <sup>was</sup> a mammoth hall.

SS: The place at Helmer?

FB: Yes.

SS: I was just <sup>+</sup>talking to the Lawrences, when they were up visiting recently.

FB: Yes, I can remember that.

SS: They were telling me about that-- running that place. They said they really had affairs out there.

FB: Yes, it was a fad. It lasted so long, and then when it blew up, it really blew. Of course, the Depression killed it, because you catered to moonshine. It was operated during the moonshine days. And that was minor. But, you never went to Helmer but you had a good time, and

as soon as twelve o'clock came, that's when they had to stop, and they went to roller skating. And you'd roller skate til two and three in the morning. I have gone-- Marge and I have gone-- to Helmer with a party, there'd be about three and four couples of us, we'd never go to bed. <sup>That was After we were married.</sup> We'd take off, soon as the dance was over, and nobody in our particular party liked to roller skate, we were older, as the fellow said, that was mostly for the teenagers or the half drunks-- but anyway, one family lived in Clarkia, that's Walt Johnson, he lived in Clarkia, and he was working for the Forest there, so they had a house. So, we got in the car and we drove to Clarkia. It would be <sup>gettin' to be</sup> daylight, so you wouldn't even go to bed, you'd get breakfast and then you'd go on out and you'd start fishing: Go fishing for the rest of the day. It was fun, we thought nothing of it.

SS: Sounds great to me.

FB: That's right. Yes. But, you made your own fun. There was plenty of opportunity. But it took friends. In other words, if you were loners, and you didn't run around with anybody, I would say, it would be tough. Because, you either went-- Now when Helmer was good, why, there was no dance hall at Troy-- seems as though that started dropping down, and the one was built here on the same pattern, the same sort of a deal as the one at Helmer. Well, that lasted for about four or five years and that was good. And so, it would shut down for maybe two or three months. Then somebody'd come along-- Allen from Lewiston, who was a bandleader, and he had his band, he'd come up and he'd say, "I'm going to try it again." And, money was tight. Money was scarce. It was still moonshine days. There was no liquor by the drink, yet. That was still in the late '29's and '30's. You see, their liquor didn't come til '34, '33 or '34. You know, over the counter. <sup>it was during that time,</sup> So-- And moonshine was tragic.

Because when you bought moonshine, you drank it, and you didn't throw it away and you didn't take it home. You didn't dare. You had to drink it, and so, consequently they drank it and they got drunker'n hell, because <sup>they</sup> <sub>A</sub> had to get rid of it. That was the bad thing about it, see. Because, they were tough. There was law enforcement. There was squealers all around you, guys that was stool pigeons, they called 'em.

SS: That really was a danger.

FB: Yes. You just didn't go out and drink with a stranger, you didn't know but what he was setting you up. He could blackball you, if nothing else.

SS: Blackball you?

FB: Yes, he could say, "We'll have a drink." And then the third guy would come, see, his pal would come and grab the bottle and he would disappear. And you'd be standing there with the bottle. You'd be innocent, you thought you were drinking <sup>ing</sup> with a friend. That's how they pin it onto you. Then in order to save your reputation, or your name, why, golly, you'd slip him a hundred dollars, or whatever, he said, "Well, I'll forget it." It stunk. But those are the hazards of it. And then to drink more than you could take, <sup>I always</sup> <sub>A</sub> got sick. I could only drink so much. I wouldn't let myself. As much whiskey and as much moonshine as I had, I never got drunk, I always got sick before I got drunk.

SS: I've heard that stuff was strong. Much stronger than--

FB: You couldn't drink it straight, you always <sup>had</sup> <sub>A</sub> to cut it. You got a bottle of moonshine, probably a third of it was moonshine and the rest would be ginger ale, or, gosh, I don't know, I've drank it with milk even. Let's see, milk-- cold milk wouldn't be bad. And, I think, -- not ketchup-- but tomato juice. That was common. Of course, it was good because it helped your stomach. But I drank my share of moonshine.

But you always wanted to get good. There was so much talk-- newspapers was constantly publishing a loss of sight, and people dying from bad moonshine, so you always was awful cautious of whose you bought. I've gone out here toward Randall Flat and you would send word out; you would tell him, "I'll meet you here next Friday night." You always wanted your moonshine for Saturday. And they would deliver it at night. And you would say, "I'll meet you at such and such a corner." And I and my friend would go out there as far as we could go with a car, and he'd meet us. He'd be there waiting, and you'd drive up and then you'd pay him two and a half, three dollars for a pint. And that pint went a long ways. You could cut it, see. You could make that pint into-- well, whatever you wanted. But you didn't dare keep it around. You had to dispose of it. You had to either give it to somebody else and say-- And I never sold any in my life-- but you had to dispose of the evidence. So you drank it. As a rule you'd do your drinking when you left your house, in your home, see, then you'd go to the dance. And you drank enough that that lasted. And there was always some wise guy out there that would have a bottle on him, or hid out there, and you'd go outside. But as a rule, why you had a good time, and you didn't have to be drunk to have it either.

SS: You didn't take a chance to drink---

FB: No sir, you never saw a bottle inside.

SS: And you always buy it really outside of town.

FB: Oh, yeah. Of course, there was bootleggers that would be at the dances and you had to know who they are, and they had to know you, or you'd have to take somebody with you that knew. But we never made that a practice. We did our drinking in our home. And we'd leave Troy, say at nine o'clock; we'd get to Helmer maybe by ten or nine-thirty; you



danced til midnight and you still felt good. It didn't take much to get you-- and we were amateurs from the standpoint that we weren't heavy drinkers or hard drinkers.

SS: Did any of the girls drink then?

FB: Yes, but lightly. You'd never see one-- once in a while, but they-- or you'd take one drink or two drinks, they might take one. But they were light. It didn't take much. But as a rule, it was too strong for 'em. Most of them, they couldn't stand it. It was hot, boy.

SS: What was it that you mentioned to me about the guy that--was it the  
(END of side C)  
guy that had been the doctor? Your family doctor.

FB: Well, no. Our regular family doctor contacted-- got sick -- he got the flu, and so he became incapacitated, and so in the midst of the epidemic, why, low and behold, this Doctor Kelly came into being. Who told him or whether-- or what brought him to Kendrick, I don't know-- but he had a horse and a buggy, and of course, we had the telephone and when our family became sick, why, he would cover a ridge at a time. In other words, he'd come up in the morning, he'd see all the flu patients in the area and then he would go back and then the next morning he'd go to the other ridge. And he was doing that, you probably could never get him unless there was an emergency, only about every third day, because he had to cover<sup>a</sup> terrific territory. And he was alone. And he got by because he was a doctor, he professed to be a doctor. But, anyway, he doctored us and all he did was give the pills, there was no science to it; there was not a heck of a lot you could do for flu; it's a dirty shame they didn't have whiskey, because I was told that that was one of the difficulties of the flu epidemic. Had they had whiskey it would have done stimulation to your heart, your heart enlarged, see, and if you were a heavy, husky person, why, the flu was much harder on you than the skinny one, 'cause he had

more room in there. But, anyway, that's irrelevant. But, anyway, after it was all over, why, they called him a horse doctor-- they began to realize that he didn't do anything, and yet, when it was all over, you got the doctor bill and you paid him. And a lot of people just said that he was a horse doctor. He had no certificates, no license. He had no office. So, he hung around Kendrick though, because he got to know quite a few people and he got intimate and Doctor Rosfro went out of the business-- that was the old family doctor, so Kendrick had none. So he kind of hung around. And, low and behold, he had gone down, right on Main Street-- I think I could point the house to you right <sup>his</sup> today--anyway, he and his wife, and obviously must have been a nurse, or else some friend that knew he was still in business-- I don't say that his wife was even involved in it-- she was a wonderful person-- anyway, he put a sign on the door, SMALLPOX, KEEP OUT, and he operated that thing for over three months with that sign on there, til people really got suspicious. And you could actually smell the brine, you know, and he <sup>re</sup> he was manufacturing moonshine! And they caught him, and that was the end of Dr. Kelly. But I can remember the sign, I can remember seeing it, and I thought nothing of it. But he left it there too long! But he was a real bootlegger. There was several from Troy that was caught bootlegging. Herb Spencer out here. Have you interviewed him?

SS: No, I talked to his brother, Jess.

FB: Herb, he was arrested. He was put in jail. They caught him, he was moonshining. And a hard working, good man, too. But he was one of the victims. He had to make a living someway. So he did it. The Mc Keans were the big ones.

SS: That's what I've heard.

FB: Old Sam Mc Kean. And he made good stuff. He was always just one jump

ahead of the <sup>goddamn</sup>revenueurs. And he manufactured it and he sold it. He had several boys, and they were all in cahoots. And Sam, he made good stuff. But he was touchy, if he didn't know you. He would never sell to me because I was Frank Green's son-in-law. That was enough. "I don't give a God Damn, I won't sell you nothin'. I know Frank Green, and I don't think his son-in-law should have it." That would be his attitude, see. But Herman Boyd, he was the old reliable. That's where I bought all mine from, virtually. He made wonderful stuff. You knew it was good. Did I ever tell you that there was a kid graduated from school up here, he graduated in May from high school, and I played against him in basketball. That was my first year in Troy,-- he graduated-- no, he had already been out, Wilfred Johnson, a great, big guy, but anyway, I kept the books and besides the bank books I kept the books for Sam Olson and Edwin Johansen-- they had a garage across the street from the bank-- so after banking hours I would go over there and do their posting, post their ledgers, and send out the statements, and so forth on their books. So, I went over there, probably four-thirty one afternoon, and I went into the garage-- they had a service station and the garage behind-- and I walked in the door and here was, oh, I'd say, one, two, three, four; there was a good eight men setting on anything they could get-- some of 'em were standing-- and in the center on an apple box was a five gallon can. And that was full of moonshine! And it belonged to this Wilfred Johnson, and they had given each one a sample and he wanted to sell it. And that was so bad that there was only one guy that could even begin to drink it, and that was an alcoholic by the name of Escal Gourd-- that's George Gourd's brother. He would up that goddam cup, he would rinse it around his <sup>just like</sup> mouth, you would water and swallow. "It wasn't good, but it wasn't bad." And he bought that whole five gallon for five bucks! And I saw

that. And the rest of them, they wouldn't no more think of buying it than nothing, because it was poison to them. And, of course, that man died, eventually from his drinking. But he was a real moonshine drinking man. <sup>?</sup> Oscar Gourd never made any, he always bought it. And he was well-to-do, too. He was worth money.

SS: Sam Mc Kean really had a fine ~~reputation~~.

FB: Sam Mc Kean, he was a moonshiner from the word go. And they caught him. They would keep picking him up on general principles. They knew he was making it. They knew he was selling it. They knew he was peddling it. And they'd pick him up on the smallest charges, but he was clever. He was good at it. I've drank his stuff, and it was good. But, I never bought any, <sup>from him</sup> as I say, he wouldn't have sold me nothin'!.

SS: Was it usually the county sheriffs like Summerfield and Hap Moody--

FB: Hap Moody was the watchdog. Hap Moody worked under Summerfield. He was his deputy, and so was Jordan. And Moody was smart; Jordan was nothing but a bull. I saw Jordan one day, right out here-- I don't know whether it was a dirt road or whether it was gravel, wasn't oiled-- and it was right out here, and he stopped a young kid and he suspicioned that he had whiskey in his car and that he was drunk; and it was a touring car, open side, and I saw him pull the door open and grab that kid by the nap of the neck, by his shirt at the nap of the neck and just lift him right out of the car and set him right out on the gravel. Mad, oh, honest to goodness, I lost respect then for law and order. That kid, he never had nothing on him, nothing at all, but just because he may have had a little bit ~~s~~ shady reputation, but he was just going to beat the hell out of that kid. He had asked him some questions and he hadn't got the proper answer, he didn't think, and that's what he

was going to do. That kid was no more drunk than nothin'! And before he got through the kid was back in the car and he drove off and Jordan was still hollering or ~~st~~ortin' like he did. He had no good for anybody. He didn't have a good word for his own mother, I don't think. I never liked Jordan. And just incidents like that just made you really sick of him.

SS: I've heard that he was the kind of the heavy--

FB: Yes, he was the heavy. Hap Moody was not that type. Hap Moody was-- he had a heart, he had a conscience. He was clever, though. He was smart. I tell you, he was just as good a dog in the country in tracking down a still and he had a lot of guts.

SS: I know, I've talked to him. I guess a lot of times he would impersonate lumberjacks or something like that--

FB: Yeah. He'd use a disguise, sure. He, no doubt, was a very good undercover man.

SS: He was so little, that you wouldn't think he was probably a cop.

FB: Yea. No, he was wiry, though.

SS: (I suppose I should get going. What time do you have there?)

FB: Quarter til five.

SS: Probably I should)----

FB: Baseball was great in my day when I was still an eighth grader, you might say, or a seventh grader. There was baseball in the backyard, in the cow lots, and in the timothy fields. That was common. I had two cousins, and there was two of us, George and I and Tony and Otto Eichner, and then we'd have Harry Amling, and you'd have Tim Wade-- but even the four of us, we could have a ball game; our two cousins. And whenever we'd go to our aunt and uncle's for dinner, why, we'd play baseball. And, of course, the Eichners' father was quite an

enthusiast. And so, Moscow had a baseball team, they called it the Moscow Cubs. It was made up and it was managed by a man by the name of Eastman. And Coney Estes was one, Frazier, this Frazier in Spokane he was a player, I played against him. But, anyway, we organized. WE got nine ball players at Kendrick, off of American Ridge, and these Eichner boys were good. One of 'em could pitch; Otto was a pitcher, and he could throw a curve ball at you-- and I was playing against that constantly, so I knew how to bat-- I'm not bragging, because we all did. He threw a curve and <sup>it</sup> come right at you, and then it would curve over the plate and you'd be out here dodging, see! And he'd throw that against these Cubs, and he had 'em scared to death. And they was just backing away from the plate and then it would curve over and it would be a strike. And in one game they never got onto him. And Moscow had a pitcher and he did the same thing, but we'd stack up and watch the ball, and I got up to bat four times and every one of 'em I was striking fast, see, and every one of 'em went over third base and I got a hit. And we all did, and we beat 'em. I think the score was seven to three, something like that. And we really got the reputation, because Moscow Cubs was really prominent. They had baseball suits and we went up there in our clothes, in our short pants or whatever. <sup>we had</sup> And on the way up, I'll never forget this, we stopped -- the train came to Kendrick at nine o'clock, we came through Troy, and we got to Moscow about ten, or between ten and eleven, and we played in the afternoon and then we got on the train and we was back into Kendrick at nine o'clock that night. That was the schedule. We had two trains a day, both ways. Anyway, we got to Troy and we had only eight players. And so, we stuck our heads out the windows, and there was a kid on the platform over there and we hollered at him, "Hey, can you play baseball?" And he says, "Yeah, a little." He was skinny and his name was

Weeks. And, I swear he had TB, he was that skinny. "Well, come on, you want to go to Moscow and play and we'll buy your ticket." And we got that kid-- he went up there and played for us; that was the ninth player. Believe it or not.

SS: Was he any good?

FB: Oh, Sam, he just filled the spot. But the idea was--knowing him after I came to Troy, I remembered him. I remembered him that well, and I kidded him about it. And <sup>then</sup> you put two and two together and wonder how in the Sam Hill, "We hollered at you. Didn't your parents miss you?" And you get up here and you found out his background-- he wasn't home only when <sup>ever</sup> he wanted to go home. He was kind of a rounder and a troubled kid, and so he fell right in line. I still think it's Merle Weeks out here-- that's the same kid. He works for Washington Wilson Seed, now. But I think he's the same one. It either has to be that or else it was Vernon, it was one of those kids. And they were just little devils at that time. We went up there and we won that game.

SS: How regular did you have-- Did you have a regular team?

FB: Well, we played every Sunday among ourselves. We only played the Moscow Cubs once then, because it was so hard to get there. But they come down after that-- they were so impressed with this Eichner pitching and his brother **was** good at everything, too, and they hired-- I say they came down every Sunday and they got this-- because they wanted to give this boy an opportunity, Otto. He was that good at pitching, 'cause he had a fabulous curve. And they took him and he joined the Cub team, he and his brother. And, of course, our dad died that winter, so we were out. And so, there was no more baseball for us then. They did-- and then Otto died the following year. He got pneumonia.

SS: Otto Eichner?

FB: Uh-huh. He died, it was either pneumonia or else-- as I recall it was a bursted appendix, and they put him on the train in Kendrick and took him to Moscow and he died ~~on~~ the operation. And that was the last of Otto. But Tony became quite an outstanding ball player. He played for Ritzville and he played for Moscow, he played for Genesee. He was in demand, too. He was a good little ball player. Had he ever followed it I think he could have made big league. But he was so small; he was a small guy, but size was no big issue in those days, if you were good. But he didn't pitch and he didn't catch, but he played outfield, and I think he played shortstop, but he was pretty good at the bat.

SS: I was going to ask you, if Kendrick and Troy, when you were growing up if they had days like-- I think it was celebration days.

FB: They had the Fourth of July, yes. Not very often. It got to be such a chore, you know. Celebrations were fantastic and you did put on a Fourth of July-- oh, it was really spontaneous, large. They'd have speakers, you know, politicians would come there. And the entertainment would be throwing at the nigger babies. And I can recall, I think I wrote that in that thing that I wrote up-- We went to Moscow to a Fourth of July, either Fourth of July or a County Fair, I don't know which one; whether it was the Fourth of July or the County Fair. Anyway, my dad and all of us kids, Kenneth I don't think was even born then, but there was four of us kids; three boys and one girl and Mother and Dad and we got on the train in Kendrick at nine o'clock in the morning and we went to Moscow to the Fair. And my biggest impression was when, and my dad stood beside me, and we watched the people throw at a nigger, behind a curtain. He was behind a canvas, and his head stuck through the hole. His hands were behind, just his head was out, and they threw baseballs at him. And, I would say that they threw as far



as from here to the kitchen. He never got hit. But every so often you could get eggs instead of the balls if you wanted to pay more money; that was supposed to be more fun, to throw a rotten egg at him. That's what they <sup>called</sup> it. Three for a quarter for rotten eggs, otherwise the baseballs were maybe three for a dime, because there was no loss there, but the eggs were gone. And then they'd throw eggs at him every so often, see, get somebody with a quarter and he could have eggs to throw. And I felt so sorry for that boy. It made me sick, see, just to watch it. The expression on my face must have been something, as I think about it now.

SS: What about the expression on his face?

FB: Oh, he was having the time of his life. No, he was being paid for it. He'd holler at 'em, and they'd call him, "You dirty black son of a bitch," you know and this and that. No women around, the women would be away from it. But, oh, the men were having the time of their lives. And he was, too, you know, he'd dodge, they never hit him, only with the eggs. The eggs'd break, say maybe that far from him, they'd splash in his face. He didn't care. I don't know what he got. But it was just the idea to me, and I never forgot it. Isn't that funny? And in those days there was nothing taught in our school, we never did see a negro. They were as rare as chickens, you know. We never saw a negro, saw a lot of Indians, 'cause we were in an Indian area. And we had a Chinese man in Kendrick who lived there: Jean Chinaman.

SS: I've never heard of him before. What would he be?

FB: Is that right? He was a vegetable gardner, he had his garden. And we never went by his house but what we would stop, and he'd come out, or he'd be crossing the street, and Dad would talk to him, and he'd-- and he liked us because we were boys-- the Chinese they had no use for

girls, and he would tell Dad that. "Me no likee girlee. But, oh, yes, I take those boys anytime you want to leave 'em here, you go ahead." And, of course, Dad'd get a kick out of that, see. And we'd be a little bit scared, but as long as we were with him we knew we were safe. But he would talk. He was just a kind, old, clean gentleman. After we moved to Kendrick I've been in his house, <sup>in</sup>his shack, you might say, I'd say it wasn't as large as that garage, his home. But warm and comfortable, clean. There was a kitchen and a bed, everything was in this room. And it had a board floor.

SS: Lived all by himself.

FB: Lived all by himself.

SS: No other Chinese.

FB: I don't think he <sup>ever</sup> <sub>^</sub>even had a visitor.

SS: Did he have a big garden?

FB: Yes. Fabulous. And he'd wheel it up town. He'd put it in a two wheel-ed cart, and he was constantly, as the stuff would come ripe, he'd deliver to the stores. You never bought direct from him, unless, if you wanted to, fine. But, he patronized the stores because-- he sold to the stores and the stores would sell to the customers. And so he would never-- I don't know <sup>whether</sup> <sub>^</sub>we never did, and I don't know whether anybody ever would stop and buy direct from him, because I think the stores took everything he had. And they liked it that way, see, then they got to sell it and make <sup>the</sup> <sub>^</sub>profit on it. But he would raise cabbages, corn, tomatoes, not too much cantaloupe or watermelons, I don't think he did that at all. I can just see his garden, right across the street from where he lived.

SS: I wonder if he rented it.

FB: No. Well, the garden, I don't know what deal he had there, because

there was--

SS: It was pretty tough for them to buy land, the Chinese.

FB: Yes. And the fact that nobody wanted this because water would set in it pretty late in the spring, so he didn't build a house there. There was no dwellings close to it. And I think that was the reason that's how he happened to get it, and he knew how to farm wet land.

SS: Water--

FB: Uh-huh. And his house was on the railroad right-of-way, so nobody could touch him. If you go down to Kendrick; where the Brocke ware-houses, that's on railroad right-of-way, and you get down there to where that road-- to where you hit Knedrick and that road comes in, all those houses on there are on NP<sup>rail</sup> right-of-way. They pay so much a year; that's personal property. All they can ever sell is the house. They can't sell the lot.

SS: So, he stayed there for quite a while?

FB: He was there-- Jean Chinaman, I would say, was obviously there twenty, twenty-five years, because he was old when I was--when my dad still lived. He died after I came to Troy, I'm sure, which would have been in the late '20's. I don't think he was even alive in the Depression. Kenny would probably know, my brother, how long he actually lived. I don't know. But he was an old man in 1918, and that's when my dad was alive, and we saw him, because he was slow. Oh, he was just an old man, <sup>period</sup>. But he was a Chinaman.

SS: A lot of those people always plan on going back to China.

FB: Yeah, but, I don't know how he got there. Nobody questioned him. Nobody visited him. I think kids were afraid that Jean Chinaman chop their ears off! And he didn't want kids to hang around him, you know, because they never molested him. Never broke his windows, never stole

from him. And at night, you wouldn't even think of going near there. In the daytime, why, you weren't at ease. After I got old enough, and I was in high school, as I say, I'd go down there and walk in and talk to him. He was glad to have me. But he knew me, too, he remembered me, remembered my dad.

SS: Remembered you from growing up.

FB: Yes. But I never did anything for him and he never asked me to. I was still young, you know, still in high school

SS: Did you get the idea he really didn't have very much to do with the people.

FB: No, he didn't, and that was for sure. In fact, I don't even know what happened to him after he became ill and died. I don't know where he's buried. I have no idea. I've never even given it a thought. He was just a forgotten man.

SS: A lot of 'em really wanted to go back to be buried in China.

FB: I would imagine. And he obviously had to have money, because he was so frugal. Outside of his salt and his pepper and his flour, I'll bet you he didn't buy anything. And his <sup>cost of his</sup> garden, which was always fabulous. Oh, he had a fantastic garden, unbelievable. He really could raise-- he knew how. He didn't give it away, he always sold it, and the merchants would cater to him, because they wanted him. He was good.

SS: From what I've heard from talking to this older Chinese couple-- they sent the money back to China, most of the time.

FB: Yes.

SS: Because the Chinese were really poor, and that's why they were here because they could make some money here and send it back. If you had somebody in your family here and they were making money, you were pretty well off.

FB: It was expected, yes. I think that's true with the Jews, too. I think they do that. I don't think there's any question that we're keeping Israel just on general principle. You know, I never knew-- to this day I don't know what Jean Chinaman's name was. That's all I ever heard; Jean Chinaman. Obviously his name was Jean, and the Chinaman was tacked on, because that's what everybody called him. Nobody ever said, Jean, nobody ever said Chinaman. That's Jean Chinaman. Isn't that funny?

SS: Yes.

FB: Now that we talk about it, I knew so much about him and heard <sup>him tell about</sup> Herman Paulsen tell about other people, and for some reason or other I remembered. Which makes history, to me, very interesting.

SS: Alright. That's the only link that there is, is people who remember.

FB: I know, but every year they're dropping off. And for some reason or other there's a gap, there's a gap between real old, and those of us who don't think we're old, see. (Chuckles) Just like this Jennie Driskoll. "I want you to do it, because I think you're going to be amazed," and I told her, "he's not going to write, you just talk, you just forget that he's there. And you just ramble on, you can tell him anything you want. But those incidents like you tell about riding that horse, those are the things that are going to <sup>take the</sup> attraction. That's going to make people laugh, and think, that, well, maybe that happened to them." And, I said, "you go home now and you think about it, and I'll get Sam there just as quick as I can." And, she says, "Ok, but, I'm afraid it might be disappointing." "Well, it won't." And it took her three hours to walk to school. And that's something else that should be brought out.

SS: Yeah. I mean, twenty years ago would have been fantastic.

FB:       Oh, man, there was so much history then.  You've got the ball rolling,  
          for goodness sake, don't let it stop!

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins, April 15, 1976.