

From her American Ridge childhood Willa Cummings Carlson has strong and loving memories of one neighboring pioneer family above all--that of Fannie and Al Roberts. Among the least liked people in early Troy were certain members of the Hays' family, and she recalls some of the events that swirled around the shooting of Marshall Hays, and around his daughter who became a madame in Lewiston. She also discusses J.P. Vollmer, "Idaho's first millionaire," and her own experiences with learning as a child.

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# I. Index

## WILLA CUMMINGS CARLSON

American Ridge; Troy; b. 1896

schoolteacher; farmwife

2 hour

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with Sam Schrager  
and Mavis Lee Utley\*  
April 30, 1974

\* Mavis Lee Utley is Willa Carlson's daughter

## II. Transcript

SAM SCHRAGER: First, I was wondering about what you had heard about the importance of the railroad, the coming of the railroad to Troy.

WILLA CUMMINGS CARLSON: Oh, well that was terribly important. When my father, S. Charles Cummings, came out from Michigan, he came by rail as far as Colfax, and the railroad stopped there. Now I have in my notes someplace how excited the people of Moscow were waiting for this to come. But I think you'll find there where Mrs. Roberts had said in her diary that Mr. Robert's family were coming from Pennsylvania. Well I think they stopped by way of Illinois and Kansas--that's the way most of that particular group of people came. They stopped at these places because there were people who had gone ahead of them to those places, and they stopped and visited with them awhile and then came on. And they were so excited about them coming from Colfax and I remember it especially. I took the notes down from Mrs. Roberts' diary...Getting Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, that is, Al Roberts' father and mother, out here, and then his brothers who come with them--and that was Frank, Cyrus and Oliver. A snow came. It was in the spring. Of course they weren't used to the country nor the climate, and it turned out to be a real summer snowstorm. So before he got to Palouse, he had to trade the bobsleds for a wagon, and went on the rest of the way with a wagon. And then he had to bring them home in a wagon. And he didn't get the sleds home until the next winter I believe.

SAM: You mean a chinook came up?

W C: Well of course they always say it's a chinook when the snow goes off. But you get a snowstorm in the last of April, and certainly in May, it was like when Watts disappeared. They go off and they don't need a chinook to take it off (chuckles). Just naturally the sun's up a lot higher you know, and just ordinary temperatures rising, and unless they rapidly fall, why they're not going to keep on a snow. No snow lasts when they come that way, that is, up to date. Of course there may come a time when they will, I don't know. But

anyway they came home in the wagon, and I always thought that was interesting, how they went up with the sled (chuckles)--

SAM: So what about the railroad coming to Troy?

W C: Well the railroad hadn't come to Troy yet then--so it came later, after the old Roberts' had come out. My father came in 1889. It was after he came that it went from Troy down to Kendrick, because he worked on the railroad line between Troy and Kendrick. But people in Moscow were terribly excited about the rails coming, and they began to get excited down the line. Troy was a tough little old town and got tougher I guess. It was a tough pioneer town, and then it got tougher as it got to be a railroad town. Because it was a railroad headquarters for quite some time, the headquarters for supplies for the railroad company as it built the line on down toward Kendrick see, down through that canyon. That was really something, driving it down there... Hard to find a wide enough spot in the bottom of that canyon, you know, to set their box cars, and one thing another. Well Mrs. Roberts went down there and cooked one summer for the men. I don't know that it was in the diary, I think it was in some little additional booklet.

SAM: You mentioned it in your manuscript that she did cook for the men.

W C: Did I? Yes, I know, but of course I know a lot of that by her telling me, because I just ate up this stuff. I just lived along at Roberts' when I'd be allowed to, I'd have to be brought home. I'd be down there listening to all that stuff.

SAM: Well what was that like for her to cook? Did she say?

W C: Oh yes, she was a pioneer woman! As I said in my book, when she got started she said "I'm going to be a pioneer woman" and she lived it to the full. Mrs. Roberts was a woman who loved life and she lived it. She was a wonderful person. And Mr. Roberts was the kind of a fellow that loved life too and he lived it up too, but he didn't have her persistence, and he wasn't as stable



in his likes and dislikes as she was, and he had a more mercurial temperament, you know. He was up in the clouds or down in the dumps. She wasn't; she understood that you had to take the sunshine with the shadow. And of course she never did put that across to Mr. Roberts quite, never got it all the way across. They were a delightful pair of people, and very entertaining. And in that day and age when you depended on what people said to entertain you, they were in great demand always. Al Roberts was always in great demand, and when he was a county assessor, he liked to be a deputy assessor because he got out on his riding horse, and he had these big saddle bags carrying the paraphernalia that went with the deputy assessor's office. And he'd carry them along, and he was always very welcome in all the homes: "Come on in and stay, Al!" And then when Al got ready to leave: "Well if ever you come by my place, if you're ever on American Ridge, find out where I live, everybody knows, I live in the middle of the ridge, and you're perfectly welcome to stay all night." And they had lots of lodgers took advantage of that, many of them. They never knew when they were going to be alone, they had lots of people coming in. And when he died I couldn't go to the funeral. We lived over in Idaho County at the time and I remember my husband being away on a cattle drive...

SAM: Can you expand on what made them entertaining to other people?

W C: Their personalities, and the way they lived! You find a person that loves life and sees life in all its angles, and more than just a common ordinary clodhopper, excuse the term. When they tell things it's much more entertaining. And besides, you know there's all the difference in the world between one person and another telling a tale. Lots of people just (chuckles) see things they say the way they are. That's an awful way to be. Then there are people who look at things through rose-colored glasses. Well, they're not always the nicest things to have around either because they're always too happy maybe,

and people get a little bit disgusted with them for being so terribly optimistic perhaps. Well, you know, what is that little couplet? "The difference between a pessimist and optimist is droll / The optimist the donut sees, the pessimist the hole." There's that difference. Some get the meat of it and see the whole things.

As I had to say to a man who came to school to see me about why his boy didn't get as good grades in an English class as his daughter did--he said, "That was a good article." "Yes," I said, and "I know it was, it was a very good article, but he tried to take the extraordinary and make the ordinary out of it, and that wasn't what he was supposed to do. He was supposed to clothe that extraordinary in words that would satisfy his audience and create the atmosphere, create an atmosphere of certain things." I said, "That was what we were trying to do, and we were trying to see which ones got the best. So the ones that made it the clearest--(There's no way for any teacher in a grade school, and especially the way they used to grade, to grade them evenly and fairly. I recognized that factor and always said so. But if we were going to have to grade them, aside from saying this is very satisfactory, or giving them a few words--they didn't want words, they wanted letters, they wanted a real grade.) But I said, "Now she isn't that way. If Tommy wants to tell about the first day of school with his little brother, he said, 'Well, then that year my brother started to school, and he walked along with me, and the girls went along with the girls. They went to the same school but they went along with the girls.'" But I said, "Marilyn didn't say it that way. She said, 'The day my little sister started to school, I took her by the hand, and it was a beautiful day. I'll never forget the day. The sun was shining so brightly and I talked to her about it. And she said "Well, isn't the sun shining because I'm going to school?"' And she said, 'I told her yes, it was shining for her.' And she said, 'I felt so proud, and when we passed people

on the way,' she said, 'I'd wave and she'd wave too. We waved so gaily at them. And she'd say to me, "Do they know I'm going to school and this is my first day of school?"' And I said, "All the kids sat up and took notice, and they could see little Susan doing that. There's a difference." I said, "Now do you live by the fact alone, or do you also take in what's on the periphery? Well, if you don't, you're missing a lot of life." Well now it's that way in this stuff too.

SAM: And Mrs. Roberts really had a sense of that?

W C: Oh yes, and she also had a sense of the time that it was. Yes, she knew that. Oh yes, she was great. And she lived out there in that little old house. It wasn't quite a log house; they'd built over a log cabin, one of the first frame structures. It was never painted, but we objected to her ever painting it. But I couldn't go to the funeral. My husband had been on a trip with cattle to Spokane, and he came home and he said, "Well, do you want to go? I could take you down tonight to the train. You could go over in the morning. You'd be late, but then they'd be glad to see ya." And I said, "No, but I'll just write to them." So I wrote to Mrs. Roberts and oh of course that was a very personal, very private letter. But I did say <sup>for</sup> to her that/Mr. Roberts I always will remember Samuel Fosse's poem, "Let Me Live in My House by the Side of the Road and Be a Friend to Man." And I wrote a stanza of the poem. And she wrote back and said, "Who did you say wrote it and how will I get it?" She said, "I want to have it copied on Al's tombstone," and it's out there on his tombstone. That's what he thought. He didn't care for anything else. And he always went hunting ever year, and he always took one fishing trip and he had such a glorious time at it. And he came back, now he said, "Now what'll Frank May get out of life?" I knew-- but I don't believe I said it then--that he had a pretty large size tin box full of mortgages, a mortgage on almost every farm on American Ridge. They

took 'em out to show 'em to me once. I don't know why somebody was always parading his achievements to me. I was a young girl at the time. But anyway they worked the only girl they had to death.

MAVIS LEE UTLEY: Who was this now?

W C: Frank May. Dora May's father. Poor old Dora didn't get anything out of life.

SAM: Al said--

W C: Well he said, "What's old Frank May going to get out of life? He never had a day of fun in his life. He's never had one day of fun." And he said, "Now look at me. I don't have a lot of money, but," he said, "my crop turned out pretty good. Got a dandy stand of alfalfa up here on the hill, and the hogs'll eat well next spring," he said. "And we've got chickens and if nothing else," he said, "Fannie'll keep those chickens going and we'll have butter and egg money." He was always full of fun. Fannie, that was Mrs. Roberts, her name was Francis Elizabeth.

SAM: How did Frank May come by the mortgages?

W C: He bought 'em. He had a little money when he came there. He never spent a cent on anybody. He never gave away a cent. And I understood that he had gambled and got some stuff in the early days by gambling...And then they would come to him and ask him for money when they were in a tight spot, and he was a very good about letting his neighbors have it. But of course he didn't let 'em have free of charge. They paid the usual amount of interest, whatever it was. And nobody held it against him, I don't hold it against him, if he had the money and he did them a favor of loaning it to them. But I said then to Mr. Roberts, "Well you get fun out of different things! He gets fun out of getting another mortgage and putting in the box and nearly filling it up with his mortgages. Now that gives him deep inner satisfaction. And you get deep inner satisfaction when you get away from the grizzly without the grizzly

getting you, up in the hills. That gives you a deep moral satisfaction.

It'd give me deep satisfaction too, but I don't know if it'd have anything to do with my well-being except that I was alive yet."

SAM: Did Al ever tell you any of the kinds of things that happened to him out on the expeditions in the back country?

W C: Oh he was always telling about something, running into a grizzly at night or something. He wasn't as good a storyteller as Mrs. Roberts. If she'd been up there, she would have made it more dramatic. But he had some dramatic tales and people used to come in to listen to him telling 'em. I didn't think he dressed them up near enough, you know, really. They were pretty matter of fact. Or telling about how they went to bed one night tired out or soaking wet out in the storm, and they'd been going all over one place or another. And they heard an awful noise, and the horses were squealing, and they knew something had happened and wondered what in the world was the matter. And one fella said, "That's bear!" He said, "If they smell bear, they'll make a noise just like that. That's bear. We've got to go." So up they got, rain or no rain, and got their rifles loaded, and oh they hated it. They'd cleaned their rifles at night, as tired as they were. And they went out and there were three big old grizzlies. And they didn't know, they didn't usually go in three, never saw that, a pair you could see once in awhile. And they didn't know they'd gotten into grizzly country, and that's what one of the guys said, "We got into grizzly country." Well it so happened that they decided the grizzlies had gotten off their beat and had come down there. But Mr. Roberts assured us that they got all three of 'em (chuckles). I don't know whether they did or not. And he had all kinds of trophies, you know, like moose horns and elk horns and all kinds of little deer horns. Of course he sold a lot of those to people that came and wanted them. But their house was filled with them, and Mrs. Roberts got good and tired of having 'em around there sometimes. The

moose horns stood up on the organ, she'd have to clean 'em. "Well you don't need to clean 'em, do you think the moose cleans 'em all the time?" He said, "That's all right, let it go." (Chuckles.) And I don't suppose he would've bothered about it, but she would.

SAM: Well how did Mrs. Roberts tell stories that made her stories so special?  
Because you don't often hear of real good woman storytellers.

W C: Oh you do too! What kind of a male, what is it...

SAM: Chauvinist?

W C: ...Chauvinist are you? (Mrs. Utley and Mrs. Carlson laugh.)

SAM: I'm not, I'm not! I like to hear it when I do. But let's put it this way, nowadays I think--at least I haven't run into too many yet. You're one of the best--

W C: Well then I'm sorry for you, because you haven't heard anybody very good then. I'm not especially good at telling stories. You know I don't make a habit of telling many stories. Of course children in school--I've been a schoolteacher--and they love stories. And they've surprised me sometimes by, "Oh please tell this story again. Please tell it." And they're tickled to death. Well, I'll tell you one thing they liked with me was I do have a sense of humor, and most kids liked my sense of humor. Now and then there's one that objects to me; but then as I say before, I believe in teaching children, and when I see that there's a youngster that objects to my storytelling, the way I tell it, I try another tact. I attack him a different way and I try another approach, and pretty soon I find what he likes. And after that I have him. I do a certain amount of experimenting.

SAM: Well what about Mrs. Roberts, how did she tell--

W C: Well she was just her own self and she just told the way it was. She told the way it was, and then she had her ringing laugh, and she'd laugh and tell how this thing came out, you know. And oh I know I used to ride with them,

they'd take me along. And he was one of the first ones on American Ridge to get a car. And I don't know (chuckles), an old second-hand car--what kind was it? Maxwell! A Maxwell car, one of the very first kind of cars that was ever put out. And it was high. Gee whiz, you had to step up on a step, and then you had to step to get up into the thing. It had no top on it or anything, and the steering wheel was imposed upon the car, and here it was out in front of him. And he'd get in that and sit up there, you know...He was always offering me a ride. My folks didn't like me to ride with him. Poppa said that he was gonna scare our team to death one of these times, and scare 'em into running away, and there was going to be a mixup, and Al would be killed and so would I if I was along. But I still survived. But I'll tell ya, sometimes he did have some trouble with that car. Well, usually Mrs. Roberts went along; she didn't mind, she liked to ride, she was daring. And I loved to go, I'd go anytime I got a chance, and sometimes when I didn't have the chance they would let me go, and if I could get out of asking, why I'd get to go. So I remember that we'd ride in that car and go places. And then Mrs. Roberts was along, sometimes, you know, she'd see something in the road. "Now Al be careful! We're coming to this!" And when we got there and it didn't amount to anything, maybe he'd lean over, "Well, Fannie, what do you think of that now?" And then he'd ask her, you know, what she thought of it. "Did you think that was a black man standing there in the road?" And just the way he'd say it to her and her answer, and she'd kind of laugh, and of course she was sort of embarrassed and yet the same time amused too-- she couldn't help being amused by him. And I don't know what made her stories different except that she herself was different. It's the individual that talks.

SAM: If you compare her to say, what a lot of other people were like, not specific people, but just what it was that set her off. I'm still trying to understand--

W C: She dared to live. She dared to live. She dared to say what she thought.

Men were talking politics and saying a lot of things that she knew was foolishness, and if they would have admitted it, they'd know it. But she would chime in with some little remark that actually, if they'd have only known it, cut them off at the base. And it would be rather funny to anybody that was looking on and listening and knew exactly what had happened. And Mr. Roberts would feel piqued. Oh they just had lots of little jokes between them and it'd always tickle people. Now my folks lived right across the road from them, and they used to come. In those days people went visiting a great deal. You never knew on Sunday morning, when you got up you'd better be prepared. You'd better have a cake baked and a little baking done. If you didn't you were sure going to be surprised because you didn't. And certainly you weren't to be caught without light bread. Now you couldn't run down to the store and buy a loaf of bread, had no way to run down to the store. It took the team a long time to get there, especially ours, which was a team of work horses. Mr. Roberts had a pretty good driving team, cayuses that I think he'd bought from the Indians. Anyhow, he used to have old Buck and Rowdy, and they were buckskin horses. You know what that is--kind of a funny brown, tannish brown horse. Old Buck and Rowdy. Rowdy lived much longer than Buck, and Buck died of colic, and I was supposed to keep out of the way, but I remember watching through the cracks of the board fence.

I watched many things through the cracks of that board fence. And my brother who was four and a half years younger than I, of course didn't want me ever to go without him. And if I would be taking care of him (and they always trusted me to take care of him), I sometimes got by with things that I never would have gotten by with if he hadn't been with me. But he was a nuisance. And I would help him up a couple of boards on the fence. Had lots of board fences, and they also had a rail fence. And we used to climb up on



that rail fence, watch things. We were perfectly safe on there looking out through. But one time we went down to look when they were getting a hunting party ready, and we weren't supposed to look. And there we were, looking through the boards of the fence so interested that we forgot to hide ourselves. And so we showed, and enough of my face showed to show who I was. And of course as soon as they had that picture ready and showed it around, why everybody just laughed, why here was Willa and Orville, (laughs) looking through that fence. We were having a good time. We saw the hunting party off, but my mother didn't know it until she saw it in the picture. So such things as that happened--

(End of Side A)

Of course it was just a little way to Roberts'. Of course here'd come Poppa down there yelling for us every now and then, we'd have to show up. But we knew enough to stay out of the way. They said we'd get hurt down around among those pack horses. You see, people came from all around, Chicago men, especially two men, people, one by the name of Ford Robbins and one named Dr. Whittaker, who was an M.D. from Chicago. They came out to Moscow, they knew somebody by the name of Monroe Hibbs up here at Moscow. Now I only knew him through seeing him at Mr. Roberts' sometimes. But they would come out, and of course they had plenty of money to buy a good camping outfit. And they would come, getting their camping outfit, and Mr. Roberts was to rustle the horses. And he'd get these Indian ponies or some kind of ponies, and they'd have eleven and twelve ponies.

MLU: Did you say Mr. Roberts rustled horses?

W C: Well, not in the sense that he stole them! I mean he got out and hustled and rounded them up. He rented them or bought them. They had money to buy them.

MLU: I see, yah. I was wondering if all my illusions about the wonderful Roberts were suddenly going to be exploded (chuckles).

W C: Oh no, no, no, he didn't steal anything, nothing, absolutely not. They were in civilized country.

MLU: Well it used to be a crime. You could hang for that.

W C: It was a crime then too. Believe me it was a crime.

SAM: So these two guys would come out and he would pack them?

W C: He'd pack them but always with two or three people from Moscow. Monroe Hibbs would always be along with 'em because they were friends with Monroe. And then one summer I know Mrs. Hibbs and Mrs. Bob West, who was another man from Moscow that went hunting, came and stayed with Mrs. Roberts while they were gone. And they thought those women you know would love it out there in the country--get away from town for the summer, get away from the city. Well of course Moscow wasn't much of a city then, but they called it a city, I remember that. I thought it would be grand to come up here and stay in the city awhile when I wouldn't want to be out in the country. I think I thought there was a lot more going on in the city than there was in the country, and I guess that's what those women thought. Not so much Mrs. Hibbs, but Mrs. West. Mrs. West, I heard her saying one day, "Well Bob is supposed to give me, when he comes back, if I stick it out, stay out here the full two months that he's gone, I'm to get a diamond ring. And I won't settle for less than a \$250 diamond. Because this diamond I've got didn't cost that much." I remember her saying that. My goodness, I'd have to be looking for somebody that could offer a ring that cost more than \$250 if I was going to be in the swim of things, according to Mrs. Robert West (chuckles). Oh things like that were always coming up. Looking back at them is kinda fun.

SAM: May I ask you how you grew to be so close to the Roberts? I know that they were neighbors, but is it that you just hung around the place and got to be

like part of the family?

W C: Oh, they only had two daughters and those daughters were married and had gone away. And I had little problems. As I say, my childhood was not free from problems, and I never discuss them. They're not part of the story, but they did have a bearing on my story as far as that's concerned. Mr. and Mrs. Roberts just sort of adopted me as a third girl, and they often said that "She's our third daughter," very often. And they took me places and they did things for me. And my folks were contented with a bread-and-butter existence, if I may be excused for saying it about them. They worked hard. My father worked his fingers to the bone. And I learned, thank God, to accept him for what he was and honor him for what he was, because he grew a garden that was the horticulturist's dream. Actually it was just like a park. But how I did resent the fact that I had to work in it all the time, digging out the weeds and keeping it like a park, a beautiful park, and he cultivated it and all that. I wouldn't milk the cow, that was one of the rural things that I missed, because I was afraid of cows. And I stayed afraid of cows even after I got big enough that I could have overcome it if I had really tried, I'm sure. I've overcome worse things. But I did have to work outside, and I didn't like it, I didn't relish it. And Mrs. Roberts knew that, and she always tried to make me feel better about things. And Poppa had built up things, and he had an eye for beauty that I never realized until I was grown. But he did have an eye for beauty, and setting it up on the outside. He made lots of pictures, you might say, out of the things we had, the trees, the orchard, and it was kept so beautifully. But he was uneducated--he was an intelligent man but he was uneducated, and he was unable to see my terrible longing for reading matter. And if I weren't peeking through the wires of the fence to see something more interesting going on than what I was living, I was snuggled up in a corner reading a book. And I was maybe with a couple

of English orphans crossing the high seas, and in the home where they suffered, and I used to cry when they were in trouble, or I was some other place. Well Mrs. Roberts knew that, and she would get books for me. But then so did everybody else on American Ridge. I'm a product of American Ridge, I had lots of people help me. I was known as a book lover and so they loaned me books, people who had them. Not many people had a library you know in those days, and it was a mighty nice thing that they did. And I remember one family took McClure's Magazine. Of course that gave out a long long time ago, but my, it was informative. So I was practically on speaking terms with the Astors and the Goulds and the Vanderbilts in the early days, and how they built up, and also learned a little bit about the economics of the country-- how they got hold of the stock in the railroads and built up the railroads. Well I learned a lot of things when I was a youngster reading those things. And as I said, Mr. Mushlet in school, only had him five months in a year, but believe me, what he taught me--And then I had another teacher, Carleton French, who was a very good one. Now Carleton French, I expect you've run into his name too.

SAM: He's Burton French's brother?

W C: Burton French's brother, yes. Is that thing on now?

SAM: Yes.

W C: I don't want to say anything now. I'm not going to say anything about Burton. He didn't amount to very much however, as a representative, no matter what they say. Idaho's rather proud of him because he was from North Idaho, and naturally they were kind of proud of having one. But Carleton French, I think was a far better man than Burton who went as a representative to Washington, D. C. Carleton lived, and he always remained poor. He was always a kind of a country school teacher, I don't think he ever went beyond that. He had had academic work at the university and I don't know how far he'd gone.

But he was self-educated and he was a great reader and he was a nice fellow. He married a girl up there around Troy, and they had a family of children, I don't know, four or five children. He had one girl when he taught our school. And he taught around the neighborhood and taught others, and he was a good school teacher. I believe that was the first year that we had seven months of school. They decided on American Ridge to give an extra month, and then different people sent in their children from two or three school districts around. Only one or two were ready to take the examinations. He gave the eighth grade examination twice, and I remember the first one. I took the examination, wasn't quite twelve years old. But I'd taken everything at school and I listened to all the classes and I recited with them and I did a number of things (chuckles). And he was like Mr. Mushlet, he'd let me. Mr. Mushlet would let me, now not all teachers would let me. I could keep my mouth shut when the other class was reciting.

But anyway I took that examination, and at that time we had never had reading taught as reading, I mean going into the meaning of it. So along came the examination, and it was about a lot of things about the interpretation of reading. I hadn't been taught the interpretation of reading, and if I'd a known what it was, I suppose I wouldn't have made a stab at it, a better stab than what I did. Anyhow Mr. French said I would probably make a passing grade. I might make 70, you had to have 70 to pass. They were county examinations in those days. You know we didn't have it like it is nowadays. Well I tell you I worried about that, and asked the meaning of so many big words. I'd always been a terror for words, I liked to have words, but some of these had me floored. We hadn't had the readers. You know the teacher didn't have time to teach eight grades and teach everything, and then have a reading book and teach you out of the reading book. So we got through the fifth grade reader, we never read any more. What reading we got would have to be along

with the English, once in awhile a poem or something like that. At that time I didn't like poetry very well, I didn't know what a poetry fiend I might be in days to come. So he looked over the paper, and he said, well, he made out that I would get about 68 or 9, and they might possibly give me 70. If he were grading the paper and knew me, he would give me 70 and I'd pass the examination. But I had to make an average of 85 and I'd have an awful hard time making the average. Oh I didn't want to get an eighth grade diploma on a low average! No siree. I didn't want such a thing. So I told him that I guessed I didn't want it. So he decided he wouldn't send any papers in. And there was only one other paper that would do it all and he told her he knew she wouldn't pass, and that was Faye Mushlet, a daughter of Mr. Mushlet, who was teaching in another school, but nobody to take the examination down there. So he sent her and a couple of boys from his school over to have it in our school. I said that the neighboring schools sent their candidates for the examination over to take it.

Well I went home that night and Poppa was so angry, I never saw him so angry and he never was so angry at me, because I had said I wouldn't take that examination. That's the first time I knew he cared whether I passed it or not (chuckles). I was horrified. I said, "Well if I'd a known you wanted me to so bad, I guess I would have done it. But I can do better next time." "Well how do you know, you'll probably do a lot worse." Oh he said a lot of terrible things, just terrible things. But as I say it was the first time I knew that he cared. He cared, as I learned...

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W C: (Marshall Hays of Troy), he was the town marshall, heaven only knows why or how. But he was so mean, the old man, and he drank, and then his triplet

sons, they drank and everything else. I was too young to personally know them, but later on, I got acquainted with the old lady Hays. That was after the marshall had been killed, many years. She had, as I told you the other day, those three children she was bringing up (her grandchildren), Eleanor, Johnny, and I don't know the name of the other boy. But they were nice mannered boys and she was bringing them up...And her daughter, she had married first this man de France that had the de France Hotel, and then he died and she continued to run the hotel. And I don't know whether they had run it as a house of ill fame or ill repute, as they called it, before he died, or whether she just instituted that afterward, as the widow. But she run it there.

MLU: Is this hotel in Troy?

W C: No, that was in Lewiston. But that's where she met Landquist. He and his father lived in Lewiston. They were from Sweden, and he (his father) was a Swedish aristocrat, belonged to the aristocratic class. Well he was a high degree mason, thirty-third isn't it? Whatever the head man in the mason lodge is, that's what he was at the time all this happened. So it nearly killed him. And that's when this son went to see his girlfriend, the woman that he was about to marry. And she was a school teacher, and a very good school teacher, had a wonderful reputation in Lewiston. And they had set the wedding date, it was to be that June. And then he made a detour on his way home or he was with the boys, and they got him to go with 'em down to this hotel, which was a disaster. But I never did feel sorry for him, I don't feel sorry for anybody that gets caught in a mess like that. Unless they're given a drug and taken in bodily as some people have been. It was done sometimes. Somebody would take 'em in and then when they woke up, why there they'd be in this awful hole!

SAM: So, what happened to him?

W C: Well they found him in bed the next morning, or he found himself in bed with this old woman. And he'd been married in the night. Of course she had her contacts around town, she could do anything she wished. She had money. She'd made a fortune down there, oh she'd made a fortune! She had these two greyhounds to back her up, Nebuchadnezzar, and I don't know what the other one was, some other big Bible character. I remember those two outlandish looking dogs, great big funny--They were hounds, I said greyhounds maybe, but they were some kind of hounddogs, you know, big ones, those fancy ones. She never had them anywhere but on a leash, but she went with those dogs for protection. And they said a revolver in her pocket--I don't know about that, but I suppose so. Anyway, she had decided she was going to live a life of respectability and she wanted this up-and-coming young dentist. That's who she decided on. When she got him there, he fell into the trap. I don't think she went out to get him; maybe she'd sent these fellows out to get him, I don't think so though. As far as I know it was of his own free will, he went in with the boys out having a time. He lived to regret it, of course. She got an officer in, you know, to write up a license, even though it was a Sunday night, I heard. But whether it was or not, she made it legal. She'd bribed people to make it legal.

SAM: Did you say that he was to get married the next day?

W C: No, not the next day, but in a few weeks. And lord here this awful story came out.

MLU: This is Landquist?

W C: Landquist. And Zella Morris never married. And I'm sure it wasn't for love of that fellow, I sure she wasn't the kind that ever wasted a moment on any man like that, afterward. But then she just decided she'd have another kind of a life.

SAM: So what happened to Landquist after that?



W C: Oh I told you, he went from bad to worse. She made him stay in Lewiston awhile, and I guess he drank himself to death. And his father was going to shoot him--I guess (chuckles)--Oh now, I'm supposing something. The father was the one that it just nearly killed. I don't remember what he eventually did, but I think he left town, probably went back to Sweden.

SAM: Did you tell me that he was eventually dentist in Troy, Landquist was?

W C: Yes, yes, of all places to come to, he came back to her--well I wouldn't say her birthplace, I don't know where she was born. I don't know how old she was when the Hays' came to Troy...She was an old woman by this time, great big robust looking thing, you know. And they said that the Hays' were part Indian. They might have been, I don't know. She really looked like an Indian princess, and a lot of people called her Pocahontas. She went with beads, long beads, and lots of big, flashy, gaudy jewelry. And she had a sister, looked just like her. Well Mrs. Hays anyway said that one of the girls had offered to take those children of Henry's, but she said she wouldn't allow 'em to raise those children, she was gonna raise them right. And she did--Eleanor was a nice girl. She'd asked me if I could help her some and I did. I was just in high school then, in Troy. The boys were nice kids.

Paul went to California, oh it was back before we were married. He went to San Francisco and he got a job out at Halfmoon Bay, construction job of some sort. And he got hurt and lost his job or gave up his job, and he was in the hospital for a few days and then came back home. I was in high school, but anyway, while he was there, he wrote that "Who do you suppose I saw in the boat as it came down?" He went on a boat from Seattle to San Francisco. He said, "Johnny Hays is a steward on that boat." He was one of those grandchildren that Mrs. Hays was going to raise right. I heard at one time--I used to try to keep track of them because I wanted to know what

happened to them--Eleanor married a fellow. She went to school someplace. I believe the grandmother died. And I'd been away from there, it was after I was married. Yes, and she left the house to these kids. And Eleanor came back, her husband was going to manage the sale of the house. And they had a raffle in Troy. They questioned whether he could do that, raffle off the house. You buy a ticket and see if you get the house. And Paul bought several (chuckles), and I thought it was foolish to buy that house. I said, "You don't want it, I wouldn't have that house anyhow, I don't want that thing." "Oh well, you might get this for nothing." You know Daddy was a great guy to want things for nothing. You paid a dollar for that raffle. And I think he sold about \$2500 worth of tickets, and the house, they said, was probably at its best worth about 1200. He sold a lot of tickets, but I believe he sold an all day sucker with 'em, to catch the suckers, and that's what he caught. But a fellow named Seth something-or-other, was a teacher in the schools, seventh and eighth grade teacher, and he got the house. It was genuine.

SAM: Would you tell me about when Landquist was dentist in Troy, you said that he was afraid of her?

W C: Oh yes, he had said he would leave, he was going to get out. She was afraid he would try it. And she told him she'd kill him if he went. And that he didn't have enough money to take him around all over the world, and that she didn't care where he went! Around the world or anyplace where he went, she'd follow him and kill him. And he figured she meant it, and I suppose she did. But anyway, eventually, after being a number of places, I don't know where--all--I heard he'd been up at Stites and up the river until he'd run himself out. And then people heard he'd been diseased and they didn't want to have anything to do with him, especially as a dentist. I wouldn't have gone to him for anything in the world. But they said he was a

very fine dentist because his father wasn't satisfied with anything but the best, so he'd been trained in the best schools.

Well he came to Troy and rented the same old rooms there that a dentist had occupied, and he got a girl named Virgie Skenes. She was a friend of mine. I knew her well enough to be very friendly with her. As an office girl she was, a very nice girl, and she wasn't a real young girl, I suppose five or six years older than I was, and by that time I was married. So Virgie was the office girl, and she said that every day, when the train came up from Lewiston--at that time we didn't have buses, but we twice a day did have two trains a day. And it was great sport to go down to the train, meet the train, meet the train, young and old, but especially young or the idle old. Of course the people who were doing the real work didn't go. But he was in the drugstore, and the drugstore had a door that went right on through. And the local telephone office was in the upstairs of that building, the drugstore was in the downstairs, and the doctor's office was across the hall from the dentist's, and the dentist was there, some other rooms up there for other offices. I worked there, when I went to school I worked as a relief operator. So Virgie said he'd go out and stand--There was the back stair and on top there was a kind of a porch that extended out and a railing around it, a very crude thing, but nevertheless that's what it was. (We used to go down that back-stairs lots of times when we were going someplace and took a shortcut somewhere, or didn't somebody to know that we'd gone. We'd go out that back way instead of going out the front way and down Main Street. It was a frame building but it was the biggest building in Troy at the time.) And he'd go out there and stand on that, or he'd stand in the door and look, and watch until everybody that had gotten off the train and came off the platform and up town. Somebody had said something once about watching who came, and he said, well there was one thing about it--and she noticed that--he never wanted a date,

an appointment with anybody, at that particular hour. He said he never felt comfortable until after he knew that she hadn't come on that train.

SAM: Well what would happen when she'd come up visiting?

W C: Well, he never turned his back on her.

MLU: But she would come to see him?

W C: Oh yes, she was up there every now and then, ordering him around, maybe she'd give him some orders. He grunted. As I remember it, she said they were never very friendly. He was always polite but very, very cold...I did meet that old woman down in Lewiston. I saw her enough times that I knew know she was. I never met her. But now old Granny Hays, as they called her, I knew her, and I never did share the bad feeling that the people around town did. And I felt sorry for the old lady. She was going around, trudging around, taking care of those three kids, and seeing to it that they weren't into any meanness or anything like that. And she gave them meals, you know. Why I remember when I graduated from high school, she sent me a gift, a white blouse of some kind. She had Mrs. Wallner get it for me and sent it to me from her.

SAM: What was it that the Hays' boys did that gave them such a bad reputation around Troy?

W C: They chased women, and did more than chase women. They were rapists of the worst kind. And that's one thing, and the thing that most people hated them for. And they gambled and took the money from people, but then of course the people can be blamed for gambling with them. Of course I heard of them only by reputation, now I didn't know either one of those men. Thank heavens I didn't know 'em. And one man married a Norwegian girl by the name of Armstrong, and those Swedes and Norwegians, they don't say much about her, but they never forgave him. He took her, and used to send men up to the house. In other words, he sold her, sold his wife, and she dared not say

anything or he'd kill the kids and things like that. Of course she soon died. A blessing. But Mrs. Hays knew that that woman was a good woman originally, and that's why she made every effort to bring those children up all right. And Eleanor married that fella and Eleanor was only about sixteen I think when she got married. She was kind of a pretty girl. She had bad eyes, but they all had bad eyes.

SAM: Eleanor married which fellow?

W C: The fellow that sold the house, raffled off the house. She was the youngest of those children. I don't know who it was they stayed with. Some of these details of that story are missing in my life.

SAM: What was the story behind the feud between Sly and Hays as you remember it?

W C: Oh they were both drunken sots. And Hays had threatened Payne, if he ever got drunk again and disturbed the peace, that he was going to throw him in jail and let him rot in jail, and oh a lot of things. I don't know what all not. So I heard. But I remember I was a little girl five or six years old when that happened. But that didn't keep these boys--they didn't have their dad to fight for 'em. I don't know how old I was, I wasn't too much older than that.

SAM: That was 1904 when Hays got shot.

W C: Was it 1904? Oh well, then I would have been eight years old. I was born in 1896.

MLU: Who shot him?

W C: Payne Sly shot Hays, but Hays was shooting at Payne too. And he hollered at him to come down. Here was the law ordering him to come down the hill. Payne said, "Go back, Ann, go back, you don't need to come up here." Payne had married one of these women, these strange women that had come to town to be in one of those houses, what they used to have in Troy. And they had flourished, according to the stories that I've heard about it, they had

flourished at the time when the railroad was coming in, see. And the things that he (Sam) wanted to know about Troy, well they had houses like that and it was a rough town. And drinking, a terrible lot of drinking went on. And one of the women that was involved in all this was what Mavis wanted me to tell you about--is that on?

SAM: Don't let it stop you, you don't have to use names if you don't want to.

W C: Well there was a woman there that ran one of them, that was related to a very fine woman--one of the nicest ladies in the country and one that did the most for many people. And here she had a sister who--well, funny enough, that woman had a big heart. She did a lot too for people who were in trouble. She took care of a lot of people who were in trouble. Yes she did, regardless of what people thought of her and they didn't think much of her, naturally. But she would take care of them. She was married and her husband had to leave her of course. She ran him off, that was the story. But she was mixed up in with that kind of business.

SAM: She was the madame of one of the houses, in other words?

W C: Yes, only she ran the hotel, and she turned the hotel into that kind of a house, which was doubly bad. And her husband went off, he was a miner in the beginning, and he went off up to Stites, and got interested in a mine up there and made money in this mine. Well after many years she got married to another fellow, and she left town, and they said conducted herself the same way up in Stites...I'm telling tales out of school now, I wouldn't want to name any names. But anyway she married, and I don't know how old she was when she married. And there was one girl who was just my age, a little bit younger than I. And then she married and she had this awful cute little girl, pretty girl. She was a great, big, good looking woman, a very good looking woman--it was hard to know that she'd been such an old bat. Then that man died. But what I was going to tell in the first place was that when her first husband

died, she was notified. He didn't have any other relatives out here. And she got their son to come, she knew where he was, and he came, that boy. He had sent him someplace to be raised by another relative and to get out of this brothel. So she sent for him to come and then she took the youngest girl. They went to the funeral, and I heard some other people telling about it that knew her. Said that she was chief mourner, and she just mourned like nobody's business. She followed him the cemetery and she told the minister what a good man he was, how good he was, and oh just all kinds of things. And they said she was genuine about it, they all felt that she really was genuine. And they didn't accuse her of any crocodile tears either. And she mourned this other man, too, I guess, they said she did. Well she went over to Seattle and I don't know what she did over there, I don't know at all. I'd hear from her once in awhile because I knew the sister. And she had a baby born to her there when she was 53 years old, I'll never forget that. That's getting pretty old. I saw her at a funeral once, and I heard her telling how old that child was. I think she said he was eleven years old. Good healthy looking child.

SAM: Where did these girls come from for the houses that--

W C: Oh heaven only knows. I don't know that. I don't know that. I don't know a thing about it.

SAM: From cities, I wonder?

W C: I don't know. Those two Hays were reared right here and gotten ready for it. But, I don't know. And down at Lewiston, Lewiston was a tough place for a long long time. There were people going through there and it was a river port, you see. They used to have the boats going on the river all the time. And there were people staying over. For example--now this would be part of Nez Perce history and you're not taking Nez Perce history, are you?

SAM: If it's interesting enough, you can say it, that's all right.

W C: Oh, yes! This would be interesting enough all right, if I told this.

SAM: Then tell then.

W C: No, I'm not telling it. I wouldn't put this on record. I'll tell you the part of that man--the Latah County part of it, I'll tell you all of that that I know. And I don't know enough of it.

SAM: Well see, if it's related to the County, if it has to do with it then, even if it happened in Nez Perce. Like Mademoiselle la Francoiseienne, she went down to Lewiston, but she came from around here, so that's part of it. But you go ahead and tell what you want.

W C: Well, at one time--but please don't put this on the record--is it on?

SAM: Yeah, but that's--

W C: Well I'm not going to tell it because I don't want to. (Pause.) Well, I will. J. P. Vollmer was supposed to have been the richest man in Idaho. And when I went to school and got my geography, it was said that he was. They also said that his wife had been a hurdy-gurdy girl. And the hurdy-gurdy girls were written up in Idaho history. (By the way C. J. Brosnan wrote the Idaho history that we used in the schools. And I think there were some errors made in that book too, a few that were made, but then I don't believe they were important ones.) But anyway, the hurdy-gurdy girls, they were a bunch of entertainers that came in. And of course they were the kind of girls who supplied these places, some of them didn't leave town. I expect some of them took up their abode in these places. Of course I don't know that. I wasn't around, I wasn't old enough to be around. And believe me, that's one of the reasons my folks didn't want me to get away from home to go to school even. It used to be that they just didn't like to see such things happen. But by the time I was sixteen, they figured that if you were living with decent people, why you had a chance to be as good as anybody else. And there was one thing about it: those bad places were segregated,



they were kept away from the people, the so-called respectable people. They were very carefully shielded from them. Of course these hurdy-gurdy girls, they had their own little audience. There was entertainment and then there was entertainment, backstage and so on. And the story was that J. P. Vollmer and the dentist, Squiers, went together, and they married a couple of hurdy-gurdy girls. So Mrs. J. P. Vollmer had had a history, but of course that was forgotten and forgiven. You don't get married to the richest man in the county and not drop your past. You can drop it if you have enough money. I remember that her name was Sally, and I heard a man say once they used to call her Sal (chuckles)...

(End of Side C)

They tried giving it (Vollmer) the name of Romeo. That was because our friends down south here named their town Juliet (Julietta). So they said, "We thought we'd give them a Romeo up here." So we named it Romeo, and they got their charter ready and sent it, up here, but technically they'd made an error and it got sent back to 'em. They'd have to fix it up and they suggested that they get a little better name than Romeo for it. So they had met that night to consider the fact that they had this rejection because of a technical error and the suggestion (chuckles) that they get a better name. So after thinking it over, S. A. Anderson said, "After all, you know, the Swedes"--and he was a Swede himself--"the Swedes have a little trouble with 'W'-ollmer, and that won't do." But they had to give it another name because the railroad company was out of sorts. Now I don't know exactly what that was. I remember that Mr. Botten did tell something about it, but I wasn't so interested in their financial problem. But it involved the site for the depot. Of course the railroad company demanded a free site to bring their valuable (chuckles) railroad track into the town. And J. P. would like to

have something out of it for himself. And he had already built the flour mill in anticipation of the railroad track coming in and hauling out the grain that would be hauled into the mill to be ground into flour, and so forth and so forth. So they had this little problem, but he had given his consent before they ever got the charter ready with the name Romeo on it, that was rejected. Now different people have told me, "Awww, that was all hooey about that Romeo," but of course I believe it, because J. H. Botten told it and he wasn't a man that made up stories. He was an old man at the time. He had a hardware store there in Troy, had it there for years, and was a council member, I think, until he died. I'm not quite sure of that, I would have to verify that. That's why I went to him, because I was told by different ones, "Well go to Botten, because he's the only council member left living." And he told this. Oh he remembered it he said like yesterday. He certainly had all his faculties, and he got a great kick out of telling this about S. A. Anderson. He said, "The Swedes saying Wallmer, it just didn't go. And the railroad company refusing to handle the mail that would come to town named Vollmer anyway." So S. A. says, "We've tried the literature, and we tried our best to get a mate for Juliet, and they rejected our Romeo," so he said, "why not go back to the classics, and we can take Troy, the city of the Greeks? That ought to please them." Well some fellow there from Troy, New York said yes, that was a very good name. So they would have that. That sounded pretty good, and they voted on it, and decided right then and there to have Troy, and that's how Troy got its name. I've heard some other versions, but then none of them sounded as good as that. It's like the way Moscow was named. I know I have that, because Mrs. Sterling Davis had found the son of the man who had been here when it was changed to Moscow, and what he said about it.

SAM: It was in the manuscript.

W C: Uh-huh. It is?

SAM: Yes. So Vollmer and the Pacific were having a disagreement, that was part of the reason for the name change.

W C: Well, part of the reason. He (Botten) talked about other things afterwards, and he said one of the reasons was that a lot of the people were dissatisfied with it, as far as that was concerned. But they weren't only dissatisfied with it because they couldn't say the name, he said, it was partly because they were dissatisfied with Vollmer's tactics. And he went around building up these mills. Now you ask how he got to be so wealthy? Well now I stayed with Mrs. Eastwood who was his niece, and I knew Mrs. Crutinger, his sister, very well. She was an older woman, Mrs. Eastwood's mother, and lived right next door to her, and I used to talk to her lots about early days. She told me so many things. She said that they had had some money, and I do not remember that his sister told me the source of their money. But their parents had died, and I believe they were of German descent, I'm quite sure they were. And the children were left to his guardianship and he brought them West. And I don't even remember where they'd come from; that might be in that manuscript, I'm not sure.

SAM: I'm not sure either. But you were going to say how he actually wound up making the money.

W C: Well he did use the inheritance money, no doubt. But he had to take care of these sisters. Now there was at least Mrs. Crutinger and her sister, Mrs. Truscott, who also lived in Lewiston. Mrs. Crutinger had one daughter, Lula, and she was Mrs. Eastwood--Mrs. A. E. Eastwood in Lewiston, and she's the one I lived with, thought the world of. Mrs. Crutinger was her mother and she was married to a man named Alfred Crutinger. And then Mrs. Truscott--Truscott was her second husband, because her first husband had been Shearer, and she had two daughters by Shearer. And Virginia Shearer was a teacher in the Lewiston schools for many, many years, in Lewiston High School. And then she

had a daughter named Bess--that seemed to have been a family name, they all had Bess's, and I remember Mrs. Crutinger told why, but I don't know what that was. So there was Bess Shearer, she married a man named Bodine. Well now this Shearer and Bodine and Crutinger, they all had money too and had to go in partners with the richest man in the state of Idaho. And they got sheep, and they just peopled the hills around Lewiston with sheep, and made money hand over fist. Mutton and wool. And they sent their wool away, and that's when sheep-shearing became a great industry around Lewiston. And of course where did he fit into it? He'd loaned 'em money and charged 'em interest. He got the interest and he also had had an interest in the sheep farming itself, so he made money. Money, money, money! And all his partners, they took the brunt of the sheep-shearing. J. P. Vollmer didn't go out and herd any sheep.

Then came the panic of '93. There was a U. S. panic of '93, and this country suffered, and then, to add to the burdens of the people here, and especially the farmers, there was a farm crop failure. They were unable to get their crops harvested. And they tell--and I've heard Poppa tell, and Mr. Roberts tell-- how the grain just sprouted in the shock. And they did try to raise pigs, and Vollmer got in on that pig raising too, they said. Helped some farmers to get them so that they could get out and eat this grain, but not all of it. He'd given mortgages on these farms. They got so they couldn't live. They'd had a failure in the spring. It had been a wet spring, and a lot of them hadn't gotten in the seed, and they'd had to buy seed, so they'd gone to him for money. He established these little banks all over, and also flour mills, because there was a railroad coming in, and they'd have a way of shipping out their grain and a way of shipping out their flour. So if they got flour mills and got millers in here to mill that wheat, they'd get more money than they would out of shipping the wheat. What was the use of sending

back the money for milling the wheat back to some miller in the East? No purchase in that. So we had Vollmer Flour, I remember when we used to have "Vollmer Clearwater Mills" on the sacks of flour. We used it all over. Then these farmers--how did they get their money? Well they mortgaged their farm to get more money to put in more seed or to buy stock. And they bought stock and then they couldn't feed them, and they had to sell them for little or nothing. And what happened? Vollmer foreclosed. And he had good partners--Crutinger was one of 'em. Mrs. Crutinger didn't say much about that but she did say Alfred, Fred--she always called him Fred--Fred was one. And then a fella named Fix. And Fix bought the ones mainly that went on Fix Ridge, and that's where Fix Ridge got its name. And then his family finally went to Spokane, and they had one daughter and about six sons.

SAM: So he was a partner of Vollmer's?

W C: Oh yes! All those guys were partners of his. And of course Vollmer got the lion's share of everything.

SAM: So that's why the people around Troy still don't remember him too fondly, Vollmer?

W C: That's right. That's right. He didn't take as many for a ride around Troy, get up there and take as many for a ride, as he had out other places. Why? I don't know. Well, it was better settled, and they were better able to take care of themselves. They were better able to fend for themselves, and it was a race of hearty pioneers. A lot of them had the same spirit Mrs. Roberts did. They weren't going to be taken in by any--

SAM: Well did the people trust him not to foreclose when they took out the mortgages with him?

W C: Well I suppose so. I guess they didn't know that he was going to do that. They'd never had a panic and a crop failure at the same time. And a money panic in the United States where they couldn't get a cent of money from

anybody else. That was back before the days of Woodrow Wilson and his bank, and Franklin D. and the moratorium on banks and so on. That was in days before that. The people back there, they allowed panics to happen.

SAM: When you were young, did you hear talk about Vollmer that put him in the bad light around Troy, or is this just more recent than that?

W C: I didn't hear very much about him. I didn't circulate much. I was out on the farm, and I didn't get out much. Poppa said he was terrible. He went out and solicited these--that's the way Poppa felt--that he solicited people to come in and take money. Oh yes, at the bank he'd see to it that they'd let them have money. And then he didn't say he was going to foreclose on the mortgage, when they got up there to get the money. He couldn't let 'em have money without security. Well they didn't have any security. They'd had to sell their livestock, because they didn't have anything to feed 'em. They'd had a crop failure. I heard that, believe me.

SAM: I've heard that he charged too high interest, higher than the going rates.

W C: Oh he did! I don't know what the rates were. I was a child. I didn't even get around to that, I'd heard it and I'd listen wide-eyed to a lot of it, but I didn't get down to real economics, I didn't know what economics were. So you're getting this word from somebody that's pretty young at that time. I'm not young now, but I was then. And I'd have a different story now believe me, if I could get hold of that old J. P. Vollmer, I didn't care for him a bit! (Lee chuckles.) But I thought, "My goodness, he's quite a man to have amassed such a fortune." They had a big house in Lewiston, and they had a big wall around it. Well I can see why they walled themselves in. In the first place I guess maybe she needed to wall herself in. And she had a nice cultivated garden and she got a gardener to come and take care of it. It was divided in about half. But half of it--and I did see that from over the wall (they had a big fence around it, high fence, you saw the top of the

house of course)--and then this untended garden. But Mrs. Eastwood told me about it and so Mrs. Crutinger did, that he had the idea that you should just plant stuff and let it go untended like it would in the wild. That's what he wanted to see--he wanted to see a wildwood. And we got some benches and stuck 'em around inside that, so they said, because he just wanted to go out in the woods, and he'd have a wildwood there on his own place. It was a big lot a great big place, right at the top of the Fifth Street grade, or close to the top, is where the house was. I guess the house was torn away, the wall was torn away a long time ago. Then they had five children. They had this Bess who married A. E. Clark, and he was put in as the President of the Vollmer Clearwater Valley Bank! And he was a banker who knew how to make money! And he succeeded, little dried up shrimp, but he married Bess Vollmer, the oldest girl. Well they made money but they never had any children, and it didn't do 'em any good. The house now is gone to somebody else. My friend, Ella Follette owns it, made an apartment house out of it. I can't help saying to some of my good Republican friends (chuckles), they've lived to see a lot of things whither on the vine.

MLU: I wish Nixon was withering a little more quickly.

W C: (Both she and Lee chuckle:) And then they had Genevieve: she married a guy named Bonner. Well I don't know what ever became of the Bonner kids but none of 'em ever made a name for themselves, for either good or bad as far as I know. And the third one was Norma, and she was just about Mrs. Eastwood's age. She was a pretty good looking woman, I remember seeing her. But she married a doctor--Dr. Scott Bruce-Hopkins. (Bruce-Hopkins was a hyphenated last name.) And Bruce-Hopkins became a doctor like his father, he was a doctor in Spokane. Well she died years ago, she died early. And there were two boys, I don't know where they came in the lineup...But he very youngest one was Norman Vollmer, and he was crazy, supposedly--that's what they called

it. I suppose maybe mentally ill, I don't know what it was, I don't know. But he married a school teacher from Couer d'Alene, a girl who went to the Normal, and she had to divorce him. Oh they had a terrible time, and there were all kinds of stories connected with that. He'd been taken to a sanitarium, and that was the last I ever heard of him. I never did trace him through, I don't know what became of him. That would have to be looked up. (It may be later on, you know, that somebody did look him up, because looking up all these Idaho encyclopedias, you can find the Vollmer family. I've done it a time or two in the past.) Rallston had a family and he lived over at Clarkston for a long time, but none of 'em did anything worthwhile, Rallston didn't himself. They were the Vollmers. So they didn't amount to anything.

SAM: Okay. I want to ask you a few things about Hays and that business. One thing, did you say before that you think that Payne hated the Hays' boys because they had been sort of after his wife?

W C: Well I didn't say that, I don't believe. They might have been because they were terrible, they were women chasers and things like that. I don't know though, I don't know that.

SAM: OK, I sort of thought you had, but maybe you didn't.

W C: No, I'm sure I didn't, because I don't know it. If I did, I misspoke myself, because I don't know that. I could well believe it. But I know that she was a woman who had come in and was one of these people that wasn't regarded very highly. And she had a little girl that was hers, it wasn't Payne's. And this little girl had run out in the yard and said, "Poppa killing momma," or something to that effect. And screaming and crying, screaming loudly! Then somebody told Hays. So Hays came out and he yelled, "Payne! Payne! Get down here. If you don't, I'm coming up to getcha." Well Payne just asked him to come on up. So I don't know, I understood that he started to go up the hill. Anyway Payne just shot at him and he was standing at the corner



there at hotel. And for a long, long while, the signboard, they'd point to it, and say, "There's the shots that Payne put through that signboard."

SAM: I've heard tell that Hays' death was not mourned by the people.

W C: Oh no, it wasn't. I'll testify to that. That's what I heard from everybody, and I lived out in the country and I heard the country people saying that. Then as the years have gone on and the people have discussed it and the Hays come up, why a lot of people will say that. Or they'll say, "Well that's another legacy that the Hays left us," you know, trouble that they'd stirred up. So I'm sure that that is a correct thing. However I never knew one of those men. Why should I be living to relate their awful story?

SAM: You did tell me though about how Al Roberts and you father got involved in the events of that day and that night?

W C: Yes. That night, you see--we didn't have telephones. (We got a long distance telephone through Spokane and went through to Lewiston, and it went over American Ridge. They didn't want to go down through the canyon. And it went overland. That was in 1909.) But somebody always came. And Mr. Roberts of course was always the messenger. He wasn't in town, but they'd always come and tell him because he'd tell them what to do. He was kind of, you know, the man that said what we'll do. He was the Republican head man, and Mr. Harland, who lived on the other side of us, was the Democrat. And Mr. Mushlet was a Democrat. Well I recognized even as a little girl that Mushlet was the brain of all of them. And as far as actual brain was concerned, by the time I was twelve years old I knew who was brainy and who wasn't. And I knew Mr. Harland knew more than Mr. Roberts. Mr. Roberts was an awful nice fellow, I like Mr. Roberts better. But he was a bluff, hearty good fellow. He'd been brought up Republican so he was still Republican. But Mr. Harland, he had studied the Populist Party and he knew about all these different things. I heard about that from him. No, I became a Democrat when I was preparing

for debates in high school. I weighed the brains of people that I'd met, and I knew who had brainy ones and who weren't, in spite of Wade Keene saying to me, "You know, Willa, it just hurts me when I see you being a Democrat, because," he says, "what do you think Al Roberts would do? Or your dad?" He said, "You know, good Republicans?" "Oh shucks," I said. They would say, "Well, Willa, well I guess you're right." I said, "They've said it many times to me, Wade!" (Laughs.)

SAM: I'd like to talk about that later, about the politics, but what about the night that Al Roberts--

W C: Oh, all about that night. Well, that night, and I don't know what time of the night it was, but we were all asleep and I was sound asleep. I heard this terrible knocking at the door, and Mr. Roberts' voice and, believe me when I heard him saying, "Charlie! Charlie! Charlie!" in an excited voice, I knew something was on. So I woke up and was all ears, so I remember that very well. Poppa said, "What's the matter now, Al?!" (Chuckles.) He said, "Charlie get up! Get your clothes on!" He said, "We've got to go down to old man Sly's." "Go down to old man Sly's? I don't ever have to go down to old man Sly's," Poppa said. "What should I go down there for?" "Well," he said, "they're having a hard time holding him down, they're afraid he's going crazy." "Oh he's got delirium tremens," Poppa said. "We don't have to do that," he said, "it'll be delirium tremens," because the old man was known to be a awful drinker, he'd come out yelling. He said, "I suppose he's come home yelling?" Well he says, "They brought him home." "Who brought him home?" He named some fellas around there, but I don't remember who. "They had to bring him home because Payne killed old man Hays!" "He did?!" That woke Poppa up real good. "Killed old man Hays? What happened?" And then he told this story about the little girl yelling that "Poppa's killing momma," and old man Hays challenging him, and Payne started down with his gun, and he

just dropped Hays. He said, "Old man Hays was going up there," and said, "he killed him." "Well, six of one and half a dozen of the other," Poppa said. "Payne was no good but the old man Hays was no good either. Did he get either one of those food-for-nothing boys?" "No," he said, "the cowards, they stayed out of the way, they didn't go out to their father's aid at all." So that was that. But Poppa got up and went--reluctantly--but he went. He was quite interested after he heard this. And they went down there, and by that time they had the old man quieted. I think they'd gotten a doctor there to quiet him. Gave him more liquor or something.

SAM: It's funny to me that they had to go all the way out on the Ridge to get people to quiet Sly down.

W C: Oh well, Sly came out there. That's where he lived--he was a neighbor. Oh no, Poppa wouldn't have gone to town to have quieted anybody. But they lived less than mile from us by the cut-off, and of course Poppa and Mr. Roberts knew the cut-off road, so they went the short-cut to Sly's place. If they'd have gone around on the road it'd have been a couple of miles. Of course Poppa thought it was all foolishness, going down to Sly's to quiet him down, as far as that goes. And the old lady, she was gonna go in. They said that she said she'd kill Payne. "And if she kills Payne then I'll kill her, that's what I'll do," old lady Sly said. She was quite a woman too.

SAM: You said that she was sort of laying for Sly after he got out of prison, is that right?

W C: Mrs. Hays? Yes! People said that's what she was doing. We saw her go down past our house, and people said she was going out on those roads to get Payne. And when Payne got out of the pen and came up, he had a car. And she'd said, well, he couldn't ride around, she'd stop him doing that. And she came with this little old cart that these three children drove around a lot. And she drove every now and then out in the country. She was out and

got cherries from Poppa one year, driving in that kind of a two wheeled cart with this one white horse. But she did, and she'd said she'd kill him. I don't know whether she had her gun or not. But people were kind of waiting to hear if she did, if she'd kill Sly. But she didn't. There were a lot of people that said that they'd protect Sly, because they thought it had been a lot more peaceful since old man Hays had gotten killed. No, I don't think there were very many people that mourned Hays' passing.

MLU: How long was Payne in prison then?

W C: Well I don't know, it wasn't very long. Six or seven years, maybe--I don't know whether it was that long or not. You know I don't know. I just can't remember that. I know it wasn't very long. I'd hear people say, "Well they shouldn't have let him out," and then there were others that said, well they didn't know why.

SAM: Was his wife still there when he got out?

W C: No. She went away. She went to Boise to be near him for awhile, but I don't think she went back to him. I think he married another woman. I think that's the story, but I'm not quite sure about that. I guess I got so I wasn't too interested in Payne Sly after that first debacle, because as I remember it, you know, I don't seem to know about things like that. But I'm quite sure he had another wife. And they said that he was just outraged and so mad at that kid, at that little girl that told on him.

MLU: Well was the mother frightened for the child's life, then?

W C: Oh I don't know, I don't know whether she knew enough to be frightened for her. She and Payne were in a fight, they were in a drunken fight. She was a drunken stupe too. So they said. Of course I didn't know her. And that's wrong for me to say that, because I didn't know her. I couldn't say that for sure, but that's what the people of that time said.

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