

WILLA CUMMINGS CARLSON  
Fifth Interview

Interviewed by:  
Sam Schrager

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## WILLA CUMMINGS CARLSON

American Ridge, Troy; b. 1896

schoolteacher; farm wife

1.5 hours

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with Sam Schrager  
May 20, 1974

## II. Transcript

SAM SCHRAGER: What about Mrs. Carlson's (her mother-in-law's) reputation as a midwife?

WILLA CUMMINGS CARLSON: Well, they couldn't always get a doctor out there, the roads were muddy and one thing another. Well economy was a factor -- doctors cost money, and if they could get somebody to do the work, why they'd get them. And of course you never thought of charging them anything. But they remembered her, and they would try to do things for her. She'd get many things done for her in the way of gifts and things like that, something that they could give. She would get things from them for helping them out. And they would come to get her and tell her that so-and-so was sick. Or instead of having a nurse, they didn't get a nurse at all, they'd have her even if they had a doctor. They'd have a doctor and then call for Mrs. Carlson. In fact the doctor got used to having her places. I remember her daughter, Ellen Duthie, counting up one time how many places Momma had been. She said, "I just counted up how many babies Momma has helped bring into the world. She'd practically brought in this generation!" She said, when she was talking. I don't remember the figure, but do you know it seems to me like she said twenty-two babies at that time. But I'd better not give that as a figure.

SAM: Are there any times that stand out when she was called on to be a midwife, situations?

W C: Well, the Lawrence Johnson children, after she went to the Ridge from Moscow, she was up there when they were all born. I know that, that Lawrence Johnson would come down for her and ask her to come. And Paul's father got so he

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complained about it, that she'd go off and leave him. My goodness, he had to get a meal or had to get a breakfast sometimes. But he'd get the kids out, they had to get out, they learned to get breakfast pretty quick. And he'd have to get them up. But they had no idea how they inconvenienced him, not to say anything at all about how they inconvenienced her he NEVER mentioned that. That she was inconvenienced or anything of that sort, but that because she left, why, "Poor old me, I had to suffer." That's the way he felt about it. I heard a lot of that. But there was a family that lived down in the canyon by the name of Moody. Down the canyon, and she'd have to go down to the railroad track, across the railroad track, and then halfway up the canyon on the other side where this bench was. And there this cabin was built. And I don't know how it came about that old Pete Moody bought that cabin, but he bought it, and they had several small children. She went down there when they had a baby, and then a little later on they drank polluted water from some stream around there. Of course you know there was cattle running in the canyon and everthing else. And they got typhoid fever, two of the children, and one of them died, it was a little girl. And I remember going to that funeral, because I was in Sunday School, and they said they were going to have a funeral for the little girl. And the superintendent of the Sunday School asked that all the little girls that were anywhere near that girl's age -- she was younger than I, quite a little bit -- that they would all sit up front and sing the songs that they'd sung for Children's Day. That's what we did. And they had to carry that casket out of the canyon. I don't know how old she was, but I think maybe about nine or ten. And then the boy was sick, Nils Moody, and they used to want her to come and help take care of him. I don't know why -- because the mother was sick, I guess. But she'd been over there helping take care of that typhoid child, and there were two children that had it. And she'd go, walk over there in the

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morning, get up and do up her work, hurry up, walk down that canyon, up that side hill on the other side. Why I was just given out if I walked across the canyon, believe me, I couldn't do anything more till I got a rest. I had to have a rest. That was just enough for me. It was a day's work, and I used to think that I was doing too much by jumping in and doing anything, because I didn't get to rest too long. But my goodness I couldn't do like she did! Oh she was a strong, husky woman, and she could do that. And then she'd go back, carry water up the hill from the spring, they told me. She wasn't doing that when I knew her, because as I told you they put that hydraulic ram into this wonderful spring. By that time they had the water pumped by the ram up on the hill, so she didn't have to go and carry water then. But they said she did when she was going to Moody's, that she'd come back, she'd leave her buckets there and she'd carry water up the hill, and then get home and (sighs) milk the cows, take care of the milk and get supper and everthing else. She did it. Oh, she was a worker. And I could never hope to work with her. I know I did an awful big day's work after I was there.

SAM: I'm going to ask you an ignorant question on my part, which is why would she be so sought after? What makes her a real midwife, as compared to just a woman helping at the birth of a child?

W C: Well I gave her the name of "midwife". I think she'd hesitate to have it that way. But she wasn't afraid of anything, she was a dauntless woman. I don't believe there was a thing that she was afraid of. And if a doctor once told her what to do, and she went someplace, she would apply that again. And still she could get panicky about something, so I don't know that she was -- she wasn't a trained midwife, only she'd gotten a good training by being called out so many times. I think because in that day and age it was rare to find a woman who was willing to do it! And she went because they asked her, because there was a need and she tried to fill it, and she filled it so adequately so many times that finally she became recognized for

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having done it. Now that's my explanation of that, because she wasn't a trained midwife. She was trained in a few things that most women weren't. And then she had a naturally even, nice disposition. For others I think she was kind, I felt there were times when I didn't see this kindness. I knew her as a warm human being who did an awful lot of good, and certainly I knew more good about her than I did anything else, but I also know her as a human being who had the frailties and the faults along with the good points of human kind. Now that's the way I knew her. Now her daughters deified her.

SAM: Do you know, around the birth, what practices people followed to make sure -- do you know what I'm driving at?

W C: Well she knew all about hot water and boiling everything that touched the patient, and the clean sheets. And those Swedish women were clean. All of them were clean. They knew about cleanliness. They were cleaner than the American women that I knew. I'm saying an awful thing, don't for heaven's sake put that down there (chuckles) or my name will be mud. (Laughs) But they were so clean, and you know, they understood the principle of cleanliness, and they scrubbed and scoured, and <sup>^</sup>were much more particular about their scrubbing and scouring I think than the ordinary woman. And so they would be clean, and Paul's mother was especially so. <sup>She was very, very clean</sup> <sup>^</sup> She had cleanliness and everything that touched the patient would be clean or be scoured. But beyond that I don't know what she had.

SAM: You said before that she believed in old wife's tales and the old ways. You didn't use the word "old wife's tales", but that's sort of what I draw from it. **There were the old beliefs that she had, such as the case when the young girl, who was buried, was she buried alive? That sort of what we might call superstitions now, Are there beliefs of hers that you can think of that are those old country beliefs that were brought over here?**

WC: No, I don't know about that. I noticed that her daughter, Ellen, when she was going to have her children, that she didn't have her mother. And of course when Paul Jr. was going to be born, she thought I should stay with her in Lewiston,

and I just didn't want to. And I went to the hospital, but I had a very bad time. Things were not right, and I always thought it was a blessing I was at a hospital, considering what had happened. But she didn't look at it that way. She thought if I'd been at home, that those things wouldn't have come up. That was her attitude, see. I never knew so much about that. However (chuckles) I didn't get to the hospital, bad weather and an awful bad time when Bruce was born. And I was in the country and wasn't prepared for this at all. But when it came along, I did have one awful good neighbor, and I called her, and she came down to help the doctor. But we had one terribly good doctor, and he told Paul what to get in town, so we had all the disinfectants and everything we could possibly want or need. And he came up and came in the door scolding like sin, to think I hadn't gotten out of there. But that was over in Kooskia.

SS: There's a mention of your mother-in-law in They Came to a Ridge. It says that she took flowers from her hat when there were no fresh flowers, when a baby had died, to put in the casket. Did you ever hear that about her?

WW: No. I never did hear that. I didn't know that she did. I wouldn't say she didn't do it, she would do it if they didn't have any. And she might have done it. But I didn't know anything about it. Now, I'll tell ya, I went through, I'm not saying I went through anything like she did, but I mean Harris Ridge when we lived over in Kooskia in Idaho County, was so primitive compared to Burnt Ridge, that you know you'd have thought you'd gotten into primitive region for sure, by the time I came to live on Burnt Ridge. And of course, she had lived there for some years before that, and it wasn't as settled up and as good when she went out there. She went out there when it was worse. Oh they went out there, let's see, they built that house in 1915, and they'd lived in the old house, I believe five years before they got that, and got the ram in. But all the children were born in Moscow, except the little one that died. The little girl that died. She was born after they went to the farm. She died of measles. But it was not so primitive, my goodness, I thought I'd hit a primitive, I found that what I'd complained about when my folks had was foolish compared to what I found over there. Because I went in as a schoolteacher, people thought I should know. I had never officiated at a

death. There was lots of older women. My mother might go to someplace, she didn't go much. My mother didn't go out much; but she did some. If someone was sick and dying she felt she should go and help. And she did. When I got to Burnt Ridge I was the schoolteacher and I was called on. I never will forget the first time I was called on. A young woman, married, and she had this baby primaturely, and it died. Well, that mother was a midwife and advertised herself to be, from Finland, and said she had had training in Finland. There was a bunch of Finlanders up there and they were fine people, but, no thanks. I didn't want 'em for midwives, not with me. But, nevertheless, Rita didn't get out of there, oh, the roads were terrible and they didn't get the doctor there in time. The baby was dead. And they asked the doctor, "No," he said, "it's pretty big baby," and all that, but he said it hadn't matured. It was just too young. And if we'd have had it where we could put it in an incubator and all those things, it might have lived. But it was dead. Well she was among Finlanders, and she wasn't used to it. I represented to them a schoolteacher that ought to know, and to her I represented somebody like she, I was an American girl, an American woman. I was just a young woman, mind you, and I'd never taken care of, yes, I'd taken care of a baby where the woman needed to have somebody take care of the baby after it was born and all that, but I didn't have anything to do with the birth. So I went and I prepared that baby for burial. And believe it or not, it wasn't easy. But I had this one blessed neighbor, oh, she was so good. And she said, "They didn't ask me but," she said, "I think you need company if you go over there tonight." She said, "Do you want me along?" And I said, "Oh yes, I certainly do." She was the one I had to come when Bruce was born. So she came down and we went horseback. Oh, the roads were terrible! And Mavis was a baby and Paul could stay home with the baby but he couldn't do anything else. And he gave me all kinds of instructions and all kinds of warnigns and I don't know, what all not, over there, and they'd gone to town, two of them had gone horseback. But they'd have to bring anything from town that they needed, and they had a number of things to bring. So they weren't going to get a casket. And the carpenter was there, he would make it. And he said, "I've got the boards out here, all planed and nice," he said, "they're beautiful. Sanded and they're white

they're beautiful boards," he said, "but you tell me how to make it." Well, Mrs. Fitting and I both had the same idea: he might make it a plain one, but one that was slanted, you know, sloped toward the head and smaller at the foot. And he did a beautiful job on that, he really did. Of course he was a carpenter who lived up there in that country, an old bachelor named Dietrich. I'll never forget him. And he said, "Well now, that casket's good enough for anybody." Well then they sent to town by the stepfather of the man she married for something to line it with. Well he brought up some cotton but nothing else. And I said, "Well, I've got something." I was going to make a driss, I think, for Mavis, oh no, it was later on, I think I said, "I've got something over home," and it was a yard and a half of material. "I've got some lace." The lace was intended for a dress. I went home and got them. Mrs. Fitting and I fitted it in and sewed it in. "Oh no," Mrs. Linding said, "I'm not going to put the cotton in there. We don't need cotton." she said. And they had sheep's wool that she'd washed and it was snowy white. They had sheep and she carded that wool, she carded it so fast and laid that carded wool in there, it was so nice and white and fluffy. And then we put the lining in. Mrs. Fitting and I fitted it. We did that. We did it all. We got the little thing ready and made the casket, lined the casket and took care of that, and then we wondered what we'd do for flowers. And I said, "Well", they had some tender, young spruce down underneath, and we had the boys cut some of the real tender spruce. I took a sack of that home, a flour sack full and made little wreaths after I got home. I said, "I've got ribbons and I'll tie ribbons on it." And my Christmas cactus, it had been Paul's mother's, a great big Christmas cactus was in bloom and there were twenty-one blooms, and they went around on that, you know, three of the wreaths and we had three of the prettiest wreaths you ever say, ribbons and the pink cactus. So when you mention putting flowers on something, now that's what Paul's mother would have done and so no doubt she did that, and they evidently knew something about it...Now, you see, Paul's father bought the original Carlson place, the original 160. He bought it as a                      from Jack Driscoll, one of the Driscolls. And at that time, they were having babies then and there were people that left the ridge before I ever got there. I might have been one of those and he probably went

with one of the men to take care of things and maybe saw all that and that would have been just the kind of a thing she'd done, and I expect she did. I wouldn't be at all surprised. But I didn't happen to see it, to know about that. But we did this for this baby. Of course, the mother was overwhelmed because she wanted something done for it, and she felt so lonely and so alone. But then, that was up there and that was quite a primitive place, believe me. Oh, Mrs. Fitting and I went on a lot of errands, two or three times we went on horseback. (chuckles) When we got together, we'd always laugh and talk about the places that we'd been to, where we'd be called out. But now, that's not Latah county.

SS: What I wanted to ask you about, we touched on it a few times, but it really gets down to something I think is very important. What was the difference in character among different nationalities, the different ridges and different places? I'm wondering what difference the cultural backgrounds did make to, let's say, the Swedes or Irish as compared to each other, Norwegian people. What were some of the differences?

WC: There weren't so many differences, and the differences were soon obliterated. It didn't take long. It was like the Bostonians, you know. The ones that lived up on the hill. The shanty Irish as they were called when they came over, well they soon found the shanty Irish could live in those big fine homes back there just as well as the rich something else. I don't know what they were, but the haughty English that they'd have so much. So, just about the same. The differences melted away. At first there was the language barrier, and of course they spent a lot of time trying to imitate the other fellow, the way he talked. Some time was given to that, that this Swede said that when he went in where the butcher was. And little things that they might think was a differences. I know there are little things that are differences, little things<sup>s</sup> in what you keep. As they were all so small. And the way things were cooked and the way things were served, that served as a medium of conversation for awhile, you know, among them. But then they began to taste things and they found that the Swedes were awful good cooks, and pretty soon the young folks were going over because they had such good feeds over there. And they ate so many cookies. Well, they never saw so many cookies in their lives. But they were

such good cookies. "Get the recipe." "All right", and pretty soon the English were making the Swedish cookies and so were the others, Norwegians were making this, that, or the other. Lutefisk, they were cooking lutefisk at Christmastime. "Well what in the dickens is lutefisk?" Some of these people had never heard of it. "It's good." "Well, find out how they make it and we'll make some." Pretty soon they were having lutefisk at Christmastime. And now, potatiskerv, you know what it is? Well it's really pork sausage with some beef mixed in, I guess.

Anyway they wanted it quite lean, and it's ground very fine and put through the...

Side B

WC: I have helped my mother-in-law make it. And she always wanted the sausage ground very fine, that and potatoes, and the seasonings that were put in. There were seasonings put in, of course, lots of pepper, and maybe red pepper and allspice, I think. She was always particular about the spices that were put in. You used allspice with meats but you didn't use allspice with fruits, and things like that because they used both of spice. Then they stuff them, they got a little instrument, you buy them at a hardware store. And those are what you stuff the sausages with. And they are the intestines, of course, that they clean out. And it's not near as bad to clean 'em, oh I thought, at first we all had our noses turned up, because we couldn't possibly eat anything that was inside that, never thinking about all the weiners and things of that sort that were being consumed, you know. And then when they found that out, of course, it wasn't bad then. But then how they could clean them, and we used to clean them at home. My mother knew how to clean them, put them on this thing and then just roll back the intestine and it was clean and tear it out. Tear out the inside, well then nothing could be cleaner. And they were soaked in salt water for so long a time and then washed and dried, and then if a little time elapsed before you used them, you had to soak them again so they'd be wet. Then you'd stuff that with the sausage. And that's potatiskerv. And it's very good. That's made every Christmas in every Swedish home. And my, it wasn't long till ever English home was having potatiskerv too.

SS: How did the Irish from Driscoll Ridge and the Swedish people from the nearby areas hit it off from the beginning?

WC: Fine, fine. They never had any trouble. But the Swedes and the Irish, and the Irish took in everything that was American otherwise that had lived there for a year or two, you know, if the Irish didn't have enough men to fill out. They had a tug-of-war to see which could outpull the other. And those Swedish lumberjacks they could usually pull pretty hard, but of course, there were lots of Irish lumberjacks too, you know, clear back to Paul Bunyan. They'd take those brawny Irishmen and it was quite a thing to see which one could pull the other one. But they always called it the Swedes against the Irish. But the Irish cheated. They had everything in the way of big men. Of course, they'd been here a long time and could talk the language.

SS: Was this just on celebration days?

WC: Celebration days, yes, that was all. Oh sometimes we'd hear about fighting, they'd get into, more or less good-natured when they got started. Sometimes they'd get pretty rough, but there was always somebody around to bring them into order. I never heard of anybody getting seriously hurt or anything on the fun days.

SS: I know in a lot of pioneering areas, those people who were English-speaking often tended to regard themselves as superior in the beginning, because the foreigners can't speak English well.

WC: Oh yes, in the beginning, like Vollmer, you know, the ones that couldn't say Vollmer, were looked down upon as though there was something the matter with them, in a way you might say. But believe me, wait til the next generation comes up, you don't. Oh yes, even as late as after I'd gone back teaching, no it was after I'd gone back teaching, made it worse. There were a couple of children who had been taught Swedish in a Swedish home, because they thought when they went to school, they would lose it, because they always did. Now Paul had never said a word of English until his brother and sister, just older, went to school. Then they came home and they told him a lot of words to say so he wouldn't be left out in the cold. They didn't want him to be regarded as too heathenish, so he knew a few words when he went to school. But they never talked English at home, they talked Swedish. And they were much better on the younger children, but when they went out on the farm, Paul's father and mother, he tried to keep her talking. And she

talked broken English, that wasn't good at all, but he talked pretty good English. But they talked Swedish in the home all the time, because they wanted their children<sup>all</sup> to learn Swedish, which is a good thing. I'm all for it. And people came to me, I never like to tell this because it actually happened, and they said, "Now you just get after those kids! You talk to those parents too. You tell them you don't want them talking Swedish to 'em at home. They've got to learn to talk like these other kids. You just see to it that they learn it. Don't give them the grade that you think they might have gotten or anything like that, but you grade 'em on exactly what they talk. And if they don't talk English, don't consider they've done anything." I had several people do that, as late as that!

SS: What's behind their doing that?

WC: They wanted everybody to talk English. When I went over to Kooskia, the same thing over there, Idaho County. "What do you think of it?" one fellow asked us. Crazy guy, he was up to our place right at the beginning before I'd ever taught a day of school. He knew I was going to teach." What are you going to do about these people that talk Finnish? If they don't like what the teacher says, why they start talking to each other in Finnish." they said. Or if anything comes up, or in class, right out in class, they'll break out talking Finnish. And then they'll laugh," they said. "That's the way they've been doing to teachers. What are you going to do about that? They want to see if some teachers will break them!" Well I said, "it doesn't worry me a bit, not a bit." They thought I was funny. "NO," I said, "I think it's interesting. I've never been in a Finnish neighborhood before and I intended to learn Finnish." So I said, "Well, I'm so glad that you people already know a language up here." About half of them were Finnish, but there was a good half that wasn't. I said, "I'm so glad that you know a language! You know you're so much ahead of all the others that still have all their language learning to do." I said, "I've always wanted to know about the Finnish." I said, "I've looked up a lot of things about Finnish, and you've got lots to be proud of, about those old Finnish patriarchs, and how they were subdued, you might say by Sweden, and still they never gave up their independence. They remained independent through it all." Oh, I traced the Finnish history, I just took it up big.

SS: What about the Norwegians we had in Latah County? Did they have a reputation for being especially hard workers out in the Deary area?

WC: I think so. All those woodsmen, whether they were Norwegian or Swedish. I don't think they were any worse than the Swedes, but all Scandinavians. The truth of the matter is lots of people used to stop and say, "Oh, you don't mean Norwegians or Swedes, you mean Scandinavians." And another thing that I thought about afterward that I didn't call your attention to, but that I thought was interesting and informative, that when they went to name American Ridge, a lot of different names were suggested. Names for their leaders: Brill Hart had called 'em out here, Brill Hart Ridge, and this ridge and that ridge. There were quite a number of names suggested. Mrs. Roberts said, and of course Robert's were here then, upon whom said, "Well, such a big lot of people on the upper end of the Ridge, not the lower, that came from Indiana, and they said, "Well we might call it Indian Ridge. There was such a big settlement here of Indianans. And then the big settlement of people from Ohio, well, that was hardly fair to them. And they thought about that section of the bountry but nobody really wanted to do that either. And then there was a bunch from Kansas and they said what could they call that? It was kinda like Kansas Ridge and after all, Brill Hart was suggested in the first place, had come from Kansas. And then somebody said, "Why not call it American Ridge because no matter what else we are, we're Kansans and Ohioans and we've even got a German or two among us, we've got all these different people among us and they were practically casting the German and the Hollander, they were practically classing them as Ohioans and Kansans, really. They said, "Why should we name it for any group? We're all kinds of people but first and foremost, we are Americans, Americans all. So why not call it American Ridge?" And that caught on at once when they named it American Ridge and they had a flag raising. And I thought that was interesting.

SS: You feel that there was an unusually high acceptance of whatever country the people came from?

WC: On American Ridge, yes, it was that was on the lower end of American Ridge, well up toward the middle it was getting pretty close to where I was. And the people

came in farther north of that where they were all in there from Kansas and Arkansas, there were some from Arkansas. It was Indiana and Ohio and Illinois, Pennsylvania, a few from New York, and people in there. Not very many in the first place from New England. After awhile we hear about somebody coming in from New England but there weren't so many from New England in there in the beginning. I think that they generally did accept it, that when they came out there would be people from everywhere.

SS: I've heard that people from Dry Creek, people around Nora, had a really tough reputation. Was that <sup>t</sup> true when you were young?

WC: Not so much when I was young, but, yes I would have been pretty young, too young to know much about it. Now Nora had a rough reputation but when I hear about the rough reputation of the early days, it was fighting and drinking, but my goodness, it couldn't match the immorality of the present times. That's what I always come back with: "Well, you're a nice moral lot to be talking about those people." But yes, Nora, you know where that was? That's a little place that was bypassed and now is gone forever. It was a post office there, there was a post office there I should say, and a dance hall there, there were great times there, in this building they put up when they had dances. And a saloon, I believe there were three saloons, I think I heard, I don't know why they had that. But there were lumberjacks in this neighborhood and lumberjacks in another part of the woods and the lumberjacks would <sup>1</sup> get together and they'd have fights, to see which were the best ones. I think they probably were very good-natured fights in the beginning. But, course, they get mad as they fight and naturally after they get the fire water into them that they had there because I'm sure it wasn't a very good grade of whiskey. Now my father didn't drink and he didn't go out among them and he never went over there. I never heard anything at home. I never learned anything about Nora. I'd hear once in a while, Mr. Robert would tell, "Well they had a great fight up there and two or three fellows got cut up to pieces. They had 'em in for Doctor Skallum to sew up." I never heard of anybody getting killed but I didn't hear about them being sewed up. That it was an awful place. But I never heard it at

home, you see. So it was a little different. But from my husband's people, who were Swedes themselves, and believe me, Paul's father was keeping track of the Swedes and what they did, and he would have horsewhipped the boys if any of them had shown up up there. And after they got a little older, I'm sure they did go up there to see what was going on. They didn't participate in the fights, I don't suppose they'd dare go home if they had.(chuckles). But they did know a lot more about it and I heard a lot more about it from them. And Paul said it was a rousing place. They'd just tear up everything at Nora every now and then. Then they finally got to sending the law out there, the marshall or somebody else. I don't know whether old man Hays ever went out there or not to try to keep order. I don't know about that.

SS: I've also heard that for some reason, the girls from Viola were not held in very high repute around Troy. Is there any truth to that?

WC: Oh, there's truth to it. But I don't think that the girls were any worse than the boys. I never heard that the people that were out in Viola were of a different stamp and they weren't such good people. I used to hear that. I was too young. You see, I wasn't brought up in a religious home, but I was brought up in a strictly temperance home. My father had no use for riotous living of any kind. Not any kind. And I would hear things but that's all. The Harland family, who lived near us, I heard most of everything I heard from them. And they weren't allowed to go up to Nora, I'll tell you that!(chuckles) Raymond and Millard and they would break out as much as any boys around in the community. And I used to get the word from Raymond and then I never heard from him about these vigilantes that formed a group around there. I never heard that from him until after I was thinking about writing a paper on it. And I said, "Say, tell me what you know about this." But he never got to know anything about it firsthand, at least, about Nora. He'd hear it from others. Viola, they used to say, was the cess pool of the country. All the rough necks go to Viola. It had a rough reputation and then Nora didn't help it any. You'd drive down there by it practically and all the roughnecks were there. There were plenty of rough Swedes too and rough Norwegians but they weren't that at home, they lived differently when they got out. Anyway, I wondered about that.

But as late as when I came in to teach, in Moscow, we, none of us wanted a school that was predominantly made up of Viola kids. They had run teachers out of the school out there, they had a rural school. Of course, you see, these schools were all reorganized by the time I taught but they, there had been years when they were rural school and they said they had run teachers out of schools. They had an awful time.

SS: What about Bovill? Did that have any kind of reputation?

WC: I don't know about Bovill. Of course they had lumberjacks and they always get a reputation of drinking and noise making and things of that sort. I don't know how bad they are. But no, Bovill, I get another impression of Bovill. Lord Bovill came in there, you know. And that was interesting, very interesting! I used to have my ears open about that. He was supposed to be a younger man, younger member of a family, not royalty, but next to royalty. What are they called?

SS: Lords?

WC: They are the lords, yes, but they have a name for that class of society. But never having been in that class of society, I (chuckles) only know about it from reading, but I used to read lots about it. So the set just under royalty was always doing the things. Once in awhile royalty would escape down into that group and get out through them. Well anyway, he was one of the younger sons that didn't get, so he was over here. That's what I heard. So they said this man that came, and he didn't look like anything different to any other man to me, he looked like an ordinary man to me. When I saw him. They said this was Lord Bovill. I was terribly anxious to see him. Lord! I thought he'd look something like a lord because that was my definition of lord. I didn't have the right one. I look back upon my ignorance, I know there were many things of which I was ignorant, but I learned that I was ignorant and I did learn one thing: that I could keep my mouth shut. As soon as I got so I could look in a dictionary, that I could write down the word as I thought it was spelled and I could look it up in the dictionary. And we didn't have a dictionary at home, at first. And when I got to school and as soon as I was through with my studies, and it didn't take me long, I studied the dictionary and I learned from the dictionary. And I learned what things were, learned the definitions. And I learned a lot like that. And I said that Lord

Bovill didn't look any different from anybody else. And Papa laughed and he said, "No, of c<sup>o</sup>urse not. He's just a man and that's a name they give them. But over there they have titles and they give men and women titles." "We don't here?" "No, only title you had here was Mr. and Mrs." So as far as that was concerned I didn't know anything about him; but he would come and he did drive that team of spanking black horses. Oh, they were beauties; high stepping. And Alder out on Burnt Ridge, bought that team. Of course it was getting older, a good deal older then. And he drove it to a buggy but he also drove it to a surrey. And he used to come into Troy every Sunday because his wife died and his wife, now, was a sister to Mr. Kellberg. So Alders and Kellberg were related and lived down there together. And they were both forward looking men. I always thought, no, I won't say that because I wouldn't want that to go down into history because I would be wrong. But anyway there was quite a bit of rivalry. And Mr. Kellberg and Mr. Alder were both borward looking men. And they wanted the rural free mail delivery to come in. And they wanted the telephones and they worked for telephones. And the telephone got in on American Ridge. In 1909, they put a telephone in trhough Lewiston; just the line but they didn't have any telephones. But in a few years they did put on substation and a few people got on. But I remember it was 1909 when the first telephone line went through and then it was just a few years before we got the line through. Somewhere in my notes, I've got the time when the free delivery was put in.

SS: What about the story in your notes about the phone that young fellow put in who came out...

WC: Oh, yes, I think I gave that a quite a bit of space because we were terribly interested in that.

SS: You did. Did you watch him buil that, put that line together?

WC: Oh a little of it. No, Momma wouldn't let me, she wouldn't let me, she thought it was terrible. And she always ran to papa with that story. Orvill and I, my little brother, he was little, four years younger than I, used to run out and go see Ford whenever we could. He was about sixteen or seventeen, was all and he was in high school. My, he was an interesting kid! We just thought the world of Ford.

No, I believe that last summer he was out, he was eighteen. And he told us, not very long now, he was going to get out and do thing and my, he was going to do lots. He came from Chicago but he did go to Berkely. And as far as I know, he went to Berkely, he was a scientist and did get a lot of honors down there. And I'm sure Ford made his way in the world because he was a smart kid. And in this situation, he got together some wire, he had to buy some of it, he had money of course, and this Dr. Whitaker always came out to hunt, was Ford's uncle and that's how he got out there. His uncle brought him. I think Ford's people were dead, at least his mother was dead. And he got a cigar box, he had cigar boxes and he cut a little hole in them. And he had paint and he said, now he was going to paint over this stuff. I don't know what he had but he had some kind. But it was heavy, heavy stuff and he cut around it, he had some tools along with him. He cut around that and put a little hole in it and that was the transmitter and then after you tapped it with a piece of strap iron and you heard somebody say, "Hallo", and you had your ear up close, and then you come up with "Hello" and gave your message and you'd say, "Now you answer me." And they you'd put your ear to it. You both talked and heard over the same thing which was lots of fun when you got to do it with neighbors. But I didn't get to see much of it because Momma wasn't going to have me down there either bothering Ford or playing with Ford. She didn't trust these kids from the city. And Ford was just as nice as he could be. My, what a nice kid he was. I was just a little kid but I knew Ford was all right. That would have been back in 1904 or '05. '06 at the most.

SS: Where do they go from the phone...

WC: Well, over on American Ridge, it went from where AN Roberts lived, up on the hill opposite to the way we went from there, up just upon the hill above them up to their daughter's, Russie, who married to Dan Helm. And that was where the Dan Helm's lived. But he had to raise it. It was raised through quite a bit of space to go up on the hill. And he was always figuring that. And oh! He let me hold the stake that he was measuring. MY, I was so proud of it! And I was going to go back to Chicago and study science with Ford. That's what I was going to do. I was going to hurry up and get through the eighth grade. "You hurry up and get through

the eighth grade," he said, "and we'll take our degrees in science. That's what we'll do." And he was always bragging on me. And he told me so much. The folks never understood that I was getting so much from that boy. Told us all kinds of things. And Orville, I think he learned more from him than he ever did from a school teacher because Orville didn't care, didn't give a hoot if he learned anything or not. Only this was easy stuff; he was just getting that.

SS: What kind of stuff was he teaching you? About science?

WC: Oh about science and about what you could do wit wires and what you could do with telegraph and telephone work. This was telephone. He'd tell about the telegraph and how the country would be connected and all kinds of things. After awhile, he'd have pictures and some things that I haven't seen yet. That we'd have television on the telephone. You'd take up the receiver and people could see whether they were talking to the right person or not. He was all afire with that, that that was going to be soom. He expected to see that in his day but I guess he never got around to inventing it. I don't know what became of Ford. I'd like to know what became of that kid. But I know he must have gone places. Maybe he got killed in the war. Bright head even if he did go down. But old Doc Whitaker thought he was smart. He was educating him. And he thought a lot of him.

SS: Last time we talked about the attitudes the people had on the Ridge has had towards the Negros and I realized after that I wanted to as you also, just briefly, what the attitudes that they had towards the Indians and Chincese. Were they the same as the attitude towards Negros?

WC: They didn't have the same attitude toward Indians. Of course, my mother was scared to death of Indians. She'd come out from Missouri. She'd lived in Missouri for some years, she was born in Ohio, but they lived there. And back there they were scared of Indians. They weren't afraid of Negros, they put them down, but they were scared of Indians. And I know that she, of courese, this is wrong onychology and wrong from every point of view, but my mother didn't have any psychology and I doubt if she'd used it if she'd had it. She used to tell me that the Indians picked up bad kids and I ought to be careful because the Indians did come through every now and then. She had me afraid of Indians tool I was afraid when I saw them

coming! I got to the house if I was out someplace. I didn't want to be caught out where these Indians saw me. Until the family of Mox-Mox came. Five or six Indians came and stopped at Mrs. Roberts' when I was there. And she said, "You come on out with me and we'll see them." Well, one came to the house and wanted to know if they could get some chickens. So "Yes" she said, they could have a couple or three chickens. I don't remember how many she let them have. And they wanted to give her some beads or something for it. And she didn't want to make them mad so they did, they made a trade with Mrs. Roberts. And Mrs. Roberts talked to them and just as big as you please. And they told her all kinds of things, confidential things, like Pete Mox-Mox had beaten his wife and another Mox-Mox had done something that he oughtn't to do. And then they left. And they were going up cranberrying, they <sup>w</sup>ere going up in the hills to go cranberrying. They knew a place up on Moscow Mountain where they could get wonderful cranberries. They knew how...

Side C

WC: And I remember there was one, I suppose it was a young Indian, I don't know. I couldn't tell then and I didn't know then. But he ~~reache~~ out with a kind of a whip he had at the end, and kind of tried to tickle my bare feet 'cause I was barefooted. And oh my, made a great fuss about that. And got back inside the fence. Well Mrs. Roberts said, "Oh, they're just teasing you. They're just teasing you. That's a good thing." she said, "that shakes off all the dust and you have to shake off all the dust." She wise woman and she also knew a lot of human psychology. I don't know how much she knew from books but she knew worlds from human beings. Wonderful woman. I loved her.

SS: So you had a pretty good impression of the Indians when you met them?

WC: Oh yes, and I was never afraid of them again. I never was afraid of the Indians again. But I will tell you what happened to me, grown up and just a few years ago. It was after I was through teaching here and I taught here til I was 70 and I'm 78 now and I <sup>then</sup> went to Lewiston and I taught, well, I lived down there three and a half years. And for two years I taught in Head Start. And this was after I was through teaching Head Start, I think. But anyway, an Indian family moved in across they way, and they said, my brother-in-law, my sister lived down there too, lived

right close to me, just a hand's throw away, and my brother-in-law told me what his name was. I can't remember what his name is now. Shucks. I wonder if I've forgotten that Indian family's name. Nice family. They had five children and he was at the head of the school for, Head Start school for the Indians up Lapwai. But he was living in Lewiston. I was wishing I could get acquainted with him and learn something about the Indians. I just figured I was gonna learn all kinds of things about them 'cause, the wife didn't look too awful friendly and she wasn't going to act as if she was terribly friendly. Proud woman. But I thought it would be so nice if I could get acquainted with her but I knew she didn't want to accept just an any old kind of getting acquainted and I wanted to get acquainted with her. Well, one night, one Sunday, afternoon, I'd been lonesome all day and I'd written letters all afternoon. And in the evening I was awful tired, but I had a good air conditioner so I wasn't roasting like most people were, nearly everybody was outside. And I didn't need to go out to cool off because I had a good air conditioner in this trailer. So I had a great big stack of letters I had ready to mail. And I went out to mail them in the mailbox and the mailboxes for the people across the street and on our side of the street. And there were only three of us in that trailer park, but right down below were two houses, so that made five mailboxes there, and I don't know, about five on the other side, mailboxes, regular little town of mailboxes. And I went out there to mail 'em and I put my letters in the box, and the flag up and I stood on to look at a sunset 'cause no place has prettier sunsets than Idaho. I just love that sunset. And of course, we got a lot of dust in the air and that's what helps make them beautiful. And, but I was looking at that gorgeous sunset and enjoying it all by myself. I just got lost in it, and all at once, a big, heavy voice said, "Hot enough for ya?" And I looked up and what'd I see? Great big Indian brave. Dressed in Bermuda shorts and barelegged, barefooted. And what'd I do? I screamed. I was so mad at myself! I was mad at myself! As soon as I got over that I said, he said "OH, excuse me!" And my goodness, he paddle off to the house so fast, you know, faster than I can say 'Jack Robinson'. He went into the house. Oh my goodness. I was so mad at myself. Here I'd been wanting to get acquainted with that family.

And I queered it that way.

SS: Let me ask you about the Chinese now. Were the attitudes towards the Chinese like the attitudes towards the Negros?

WC: Well, there weren't enoght here. When one came in, they treated him as sort of a, well, I don't know, just something entirely different. Everybody sort of noticed him, and, in noticing him they'd sprak to him and he was always nice and polite. Very polite. And he minded his own business. And I never heard anybody say anything about a Chinese. I read about them in these different places, in the mining camps and lumber camps where he went. They'd call him a heathen Chinese and a lot of that. And some would like him, but most of them would seem to make fun of him and so on. Here, you'd hear every now and then somebody quöting him and trying to talk like he did. For instance, I did that. I'd go to Spokane in the summertime to visit my grandmother and there was a Chinese gardener who lived right down below her, and he'd gotten to know her. And Grandma knew him. And Grandmother was a wise woman too, by the way, and she knew how to handle people. Nobody ever mistrusted my grandmother or mistreated her or anything because they knew she was a fine person. She was. And she knew this Chinese, I don't how<sup>s</sup> he got acquainted with him. But she knew him. And he was a g ardener and she'd go talk "garden" to him. She was a gardener too, at heart. So he would come with vegetables. Well, she saw him coming one day when I was there and she said "You go to the door, somebody's comenn. And don't you dare get scared, of anybody. You just see what he wants." I went to the door but I took a peek out and I saw it was a Chinese, but I'd heard them talk about this Chinese gardener. He had that pole over his shoulder with two baskets, one on each side. I didn't know it at the time, nobody told me about it, but you know that they don't say their "R's". CAN't say their "R's". So he said, "Missie Leed?(Reed)" And I said, "She's here, it's her house." "Missie Leed," he said, "I've got," I've forgotten what he said for vegetables, but he said, "Missie Leed, nice lfeshie lhubarbie. "You tellie?" And I said, "Yes, I'll tell her. Grandma, he says he has nice fresh rhubarb." I guess I didn't know what fresh meant either. I knew that it was rhubarb because I saw some loose rhubarb in his basket. And he said, "Nicie, just fo' Missie Leed." Her name was

soon be ready and he had enough for her for a pie. He had a cupful measured out in a little sack for a pie for "Missie Leed". That was free but she paid for the rhubarb. And radishes and onions and she took some vegetables from him. So then later on, after that, I always wanted to go see Gene Chang, I think his name was. His first name was Gene. The boys always called him "Hello Gene." But Gilbert and I were always saying the next one, because his chant was like a song to us. It was: Potato, tomato, sling beans, and slabbage. Nice fleshie. And so everybody around there knew him and would always holle r, "Hello Gene." "How are you, Gene?" "Hello, Gene." Everybody accepted him there. Now in the early days, a few would come into Moscow but not many. One got settled down in Kendrick. Papa said he was nice. He raised geese and was a nice good fellow and he'd pick those geese and Papa said he never saw geese picked nicer. Now I never saw any of his geese, but Papa had seen it and they would buy their Christmas goose from that Gene. Gene was a very popular name, or people out here thought it was anyway. They could call a dozen of them Gene, whether it was their name or not. In Moscow, there was one that came in here and did the laundry. He drifted in after these gold miners. Of course, they'd have to have a laundry up there near the gold diggings, like up at Pierce. There were several, there was quite a settlement, up there. And they were treated nicely. But as far as I know. I don't know of any mystery concerning the Chinese. But I think I wrote that down in my notes, about the Fourth of July celebration? And the great big fine concession that was built up by some group here in town. They had a barker and he was dressed in white and a black stand-up hat, and a long-tailed coat of red, white and blue. Oh, he was really Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam was bobbing up and down and calling out all the things and then just as he'd get finished, take his breath, Gene the Chinaman right across the street in the little bit of a place that was his laundry, right out in front, and oh, he had good, <sup>at</sup> time there was no bar on firecrackers, he had fine ones and pretty pictures direct from China. And of course he had lemonade and all that. And he'd say, smiling with a big smile, "Just the same here. Lots cheapy." That's all he said and he did get a thriving business. Now I didn't see that, that was before my day but my husband lived in Moscow as a little boy and he was tickled to death.

Said they always figured they'd buy everything they bought from Gene Chinaman. (chuckles) And then we never had Indians. The only Indians that I ever got a chance at were those that came up the Ridge in the summertime those that went up to Moscow to dig camus roots and those that went out huckleberrying. And they always came through, few loads and I just got so I waved at them and that was all there was to it. But they very seldom stopped. Once in awhile, I think they did stop once at our place, that I remember. But I suppose they could see that Momma was unfriendly and didn't know them. But if I was out where they saw me, they always waved at me and I waved at them. And I am sure that I never had it taught to me either, not successfully, I heard about it, but never took effect, any kind of prejudice against any race or any culture or anythin. I've always been curious; I want to know about them and I want to know what it is because I figure that, well, early in life, I read the book, history, Agastine's I think it was, and the first thing it says is "The real American has not yet been born." and then he goes on to say why, because he's a composite being. He's made up of this, that and the other thing and he goes on to tell how many things have come in to the make-up of the American. And he goes on and he says, "And finally you won't have the Negro and Indian and all those."

SS: Yeah, I have been interested in asking about that because I feel that you have an impartial perspective and I'm really interested in what the general attitudes were, as you perceive them. That's what you really have been telling me.

WC: Um-hm. Well there's an awful hard prejudice about Negros. I was married forty years before (chuckles) I discovered my husband was prejudiced. Now, he wasn't prejudice this way; he'd speak to the negros, but he wanted them to understand that he was superior. I didn't realize that; I don't, I don't feel that at all. There was a Negro family here in tow, the Settles, and poor Gene Settle got injured and he had to have his legs amputated and now he's in a wheel chair. They've gotten legs for him, but he's very popular and he was made commander of the American Legion. And my husband had a fit when he heard that. And then I had another one, because

my husband was saying that. "Well why not?" I said. "He's been a member for a long time and he's one of the best members they have. He attends regularly." I said, "Everybody here likes Gene Settle. I've never heard anybody that didn't and I sure like him. I like his wife." Well, I had a fit about that. But that broke the ice, he got to telling me. My mother used to sing a song that she unconsciously had picked up in Missouri. They'd been around a lot of Negroes and the Negroes lived right close to them and this one they called Aunt Chloe. Aunt Chloe used to come to their place and just loved my grandmother. Everybody loved her and I'm sure my grandmother wasn't prejudiced. She was nice to that Chinaman. My grandmother died when I was 14 and I was made the poorer for it. But I don't know because I never thought about taking that up with my grandmother.

SS: What was the song?

WC: Well, it was an old darky hymn, I guess, that they crooned babies. And mamma had sung it. I'd heard her, not too many times, but I'd heard her. If she'd been awfully prejudiced, she would never have sung that song, I agree with Paul.

SS: Do you remember what the song was?

WC: Yes, I remember some of it, not all of it. It was:

Go to sleep you little pickin'ny  
Underneath the southern summer sun,  
Slumber on the bosom of you old mammy, Ginny  
Br'air fox will get you if you don't.

That was one verse of it. I remembered that one and I knew another one but I can't think of it. But that was it. Why, he said, "Did you realize that you're comparing yourself to an old Negro witch?" I said, "Don't call her a Negro witch, she's a Negro woman. Just as much a woman as any white woman you've ever seen and possibly a lot more than a lot of them. Maybe less than some, but more than others." I'd never heard of such a thing. He said, "Well, it seems to me, that you were awful slow about making your ideas known about Negroes." We'd just had the upset about Gene Settle and that was what was the matter. And I said, "Paul, I did not know you were prejudiced." He said, "I'm not prejudiced. I just want Negroes to keep their places and I'll keep mine. I don't believe in mistrusting a Negro, I wouldn't think of it." And he wouldn't either. He said, "I wouldn't

mistreat a Negro.

SS: Can you tell me about the people's attitude towards Jewish people?

WC: They had wealth enough that they commanded respect among the people down in Moscow. I know that. And I've asked about people. Course, you see, I wasn't old enough to know then, fact is, I didn't know they were Jews. I didn't know Jews were any different from any other people. This business about knowing about Jews I didn't know for a long time. Because it never came up. There wasn't much talk about it when I was a child. But the talk came later. And then I found out that in the East they were terribly prejudiced against Jews. A lot of people didn't want to have anything to do with the Catholics. The truth of the matter was, the Irish that were down on American Ridge, there were a lot of people that weren't too happy about the Irish coming up to the church there on American Ridge because they were Catholics. And I heard a man say, it was Mr. Harland, he didn't want his kids marrying a Catholic. Well, they didn't marry a Catholic, but he also said that he wasn't going to let them go to Troy to the dances now that all those Swedes had come in to town. All those Swedes and Norwegians were just flocking to the dance halls; they were great dancers. All those that had been up to Nora. I believe he said that of the ones that had been at Nora. He said the first he knew some of his kids would be marrying them Swedes and Norwegians. And I said "I'll bet they will." I was a little girl when I was up there. And he said, "Oh, you think so? Are you going to marry one?" "I don't know," I said, "I haven't thought about it. I don't know whom I want to marry." But I married a Swede. But then a couple of his girls married Swedes, all right. You bet they did. They were brought up in this kind a, I always thought it was funny, I lived long enough to hear him say, "You know, the best son-in-law I've got is that Norwegian that's married to Ada." He said, "He's the best one of the whole lot" and he had eight children. I heard him say that.

SS: I guess he changed his mind.

WC: Yes, he had changed his mind.

SS: I thought he was a pretty sensible thinker.

WC: He was a democratic man and a better thinker than most of the people here. And he

would give many a man something to eat ahead of anybody else on the Ridge. He was a generous man, now and still had that one little thing that I heard. I don't think that he ever showed it; I think he treated people nicely.

SS: Just briefly, what do you think Al Roberts' attitude was? You said that he mixed with everybody.

WC: He did.

SS: Do you feel that he wasn't prejudiced?

WC: I know that he ate breakfast with Joe. He called him 'Uncle Joe'.

SS: He called Joe Wells, 'Uncle Joe'?

WC: Yes he did. And I'm sure there wasn't any prejudice in Al Roberts; I'm sure there wasn't. But in Manfred Harland; that was a Swede and a Norwegian and I don't know. I did hear him say that I was a child, and I heard him say it. I don't think he advertised it because it didn't become talked about. So I don't think he tried to influence people.

End of tape