

LEWIS MESSERSMITH, HAZEL MESSERSMITH
First Interview

Interviewed by:
Sam Schrage

Oral History Project
Latah County Museum Society

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I. Index

LEWIS MESSERSMITH
HAZEL BRAMLETT MESSERSMITH

Lewis: Lapwai; b. 1889
blacksmith

Hazel: Lapwai; b. 1888
worked in store, homemaker

1.7 hours

minute page

Side A

- | | | |
|----|---|--|
| 01 | 1 | Lapwai folks send Len Henry to a liar's contest in California. There he tells a Texan that we only hunt with knives in North Idaho. When the Texan pays him a visit they go on a hunting trip. Len runs a bear into the cabin where Tex is, yelling "You skin him out, I'll get another!" Next day Len finds a rattlesnake on the trail. |
| 09 | 3 | Len was a squaw man. He could entertain you with ridiculous stories for hours. Len's dog gets cramped on a curve. Seeing a big rattlesnake on the other side as he jumps across the stream, Len turns around in midair and goes back. Len jumps across the cliff by roping a rock on the other side, with the Indians in hot pursuit. Len believed his own stories. He made do on the allotment money. |
| 15 | 5 | Mrs. Messersmith's father complained about the misrepresentation of crossing the plains. It was hard on them to bury a family member on their journey. Father could have bought land at Lewiston cheap. |
| 20 | 7 | Squaw men were held in low esteem by the Nez Perce; and Mrs. Messersmith also thought little of Len. She found Indians to be either very bright or dull. |
| 25 | 9 | The early day Indians were call "blanket Indians" by whites. They received rent from leasing land, through the Indian Agency. They always repaid debt to Lewis. He feels very sympathetic about the troubles they have had. Her father used to tell how an Indian said he (he father) was safe because there were no white men around. The Nez Perce said little to them about Chief Joseph, but she thought they admired him. The Indians would have kicked the |

Lewis Messersmith / Hazel Messersmith

minute page

Side A (continued)

weapons.

Side B

- | | | |
|----|----|---|
| 00 | 12 | Difficulty and progress in adapting to white man's ways. |
| 04 | 14 | Attitude towards whites in Lapwai in the early years of this century. Lapwai was a "thrifty" town until it declined when bypassed by the highway, and when the agency was moved to Moscow. |
| 10 | 16 | Aunt Kate MacBeth and the Presbyterian mission. A shipment of fancy women's hats from New York looked funny in the Sunday service. They trained Nez Perce ministers, and the mission ended when the Presbyterian Board refused to accept that training as qualification for the ministry. The Crawford girls came up the river in 1904. |
| 18 | 19 | Jenny Barton, postmistress and store operator, was Marcus Whitmen's niece, and was very close to the Nez Perces. She spoke the language extremely well, and often gave them advice. How Nez Perce women made purchases at the store. Jenny trusted her customers with credit and kept no records. Corbett Lawyer was a tremendous source of information on early days. |
| 26 | 22 | The blacksmith business served mostly farm related needs. No horse ever left the shop without getting shod, it that's what he came in for. "We shoe everything that passes...Horses, mules and jackasses" was first sign on shop. He made camas digging tools and hooks for salmon fishing. He fixed up the Indian rigs for their summer travelling to huckleberry country, and was always given huckleberries by them. |

Lewis Messersmith / Hazel Messersmith

minute	page	
Side C		
00	24	If you are a friend of an Indian, you're always a friend. He roped unruly horses to shoe them. Horses can tell right away if you know what you're doing. He feeds a horse chewing tobacco so he'll get shod. He got kicked only once, by a strawberry roan.
06	26	The ingenious hitch that Lewis Messersmith invented and patented. The tongue had a sector gear instead of a solid tongue, so the machinery wheeled around corners, instead of dragging. Three years apprenticeship to the blacksmith in Pennsylvania at 13.
10	28	Their blacksmith shop burnt down around 1930, when times were so tough that they had no money to pay the premium on their insurance. He had been trading work for produce. The day of the fire he had made top money for shoeing a horse in Genesee, and went straight home instead of stopping by the shop. The day after the fire they went out hunting groundhogs, and cried. He rented the car garage next door, which had gone bankrupt, and salvaged what he could. The Moreland brothers brought in a new forge on their own, asking no money. The hardware salesman told him to buy what he needed because his credit was still good. How the fire started.
22	33	She was very interested by the Nez Perce knowledge of nature and design. The beaded gauntlets he had made into gloves and sent back to Pennsylvania fifty years ago. (continued)
Side D		
00	36	Back East no one noticed the gloves, and their niece just found them and sent them back.
04	37	Segregation of Indians and whites - dances and skating. Religious folks frowned on war dances.
(9 minutes)		

with Sam Schrager
January 21, 1975

II. Transcript

LEWIS MESSERSMITH/HAZEL BRAMLETT MESSERSMITH

This conversation with LEWIS MESSERSMITH and HAZEL BRAMLETT MESSERSMITH took place at their home in Genesee, Idaho on January 21, 1975. The interviewer was SAM SCHRAGER.

LEWIS MESSERSMITH: As I recall the time I've lived in Lapwai, I have a little story - I'm just going to use his first name- Len- his name is Len Henry; he used to come down through town there and he could cross his legs and sit down and tell you more doggone stories ^{about} history and things that he'd done, and he was a good storyteller.

A number of us there in town, we saw where there was an ad or something in the paper that they were putting on a Liar's Club down in California, so a lot of us knew that Len Henry told a lot of good stories and we decided to kind of get together and raise enough money to send him down there to this contest. And by gosh we did, he got to go down there and this was his story:

When he came back he says that, "Yes," he says, "It was wonderful. But," he said, "the last night we were there, we got in the hotel and got to meeting with different ones that was in this contest- in the Liar's contest." "So," he said, "I met a Texan." So Len asked the Texan, "Oh," he says, "we never go out with anything but a bow and arrow." "Oh, that must be a lot of fun." And after so long a time the Texan asked Len, he says, "How do you fellows- I hear so much about that hunting that you do up there in Northern Idaho. How do you fellows hunt up there? What do you use?" "Oh," Len says, "we never go huntin' up there with anything else but a huntin' knife." So, the party broke up that night and after about two years, why, the Texan got to thinking about this, and he thought, "Gee, that would be a thrill to go up to Idaho from what Len told us, and to go on one of those huntin' trips with him." So he came up and he hunted up Old Len, and sure enough, Len had a few mules and he did a little packing

and so on and he knew the mountains and so on. So, he said, "Okay, we'll go up on the Craig Mountains area, I think you're just about right ^{that we can} do some hunting up there." So, they packed up and took a little grub along for a few days supplies. And when they got up there Len knew where there was an old cabin that was kinda not occupied, but thought they'd go up there. And when they got there, they began to unpack the old mules and put the supplies in on the table, and finally Len says, "Now, Tex," he says, "you kind of straighten things up around here a little bit and I'll go out and see if there's any signs of game here." He went on up the trail, he says it was in the summertime and huckleberries was ripe and bugging along up through the trail, and he says, ^{all at once} a bear just flashed right up in front of my eyes. The meanest lookin' thing I ever saw. And Len he says, "I just took on down the trail as fast as I could run and that bear right after me. And he was right on my heels by the time I reached the cabin door," he says, "when I run through the cabin door," he says, "that bear followed right in." He says, "I run around the table and as I got out through the door I slammed the door shut and hollered back to Tex, "Skin that damned thing out, I'll go out and get the other one!" (Chuckles) And then the next day or two they decided to maybe go down a little lower country and see what the game was there. So, went down there and they set up camp again and Len says, when they got camp set up, "We'll go up here and see what we can find ^{up here} in the way of game." And Tex said, "Wait a minute, Len, I'm going right with you." "Okay." They started up the trail and after while Len being in the lead, all at once he just stopped in the trail and backed right up, belly right against his back, and looked over and there was the biggest damn rattlesnake that he ever had seen. Stood

there for a while, just quiet, never saying a word. Finally, Tex said, "Len," he says, "are you going to do anything?" "Just a minute," he says, "I think I have."--Now if you can figure that one out!

SS: (Laughter) That one flew by me! Len brought the rattlesnake out?

LM: No. Didn't we get that across right? That's the best part of it.

SS: What did Len do?

LM: Len hesitated on the track because there was a rattlesnake right in the trail, see, and Tex as walking along right back of him and he walked right up against him; his belly right up against Tex, see, and they were standing there looking at that rattlesnake, just arattlin' to beat hell! And finally Tex said, "Len," he said, "Are you going to do anything?" He hesitated for quite a while, he says, "I think I have!"

SS: I see. (Chuckles) This all comes out.

LM: You may have to ^{doctor} this whole damn thing!

SS: That's okay, that's okay. We just take the best stuff.

LM: I'm not a writer.

SS: Well, this is different. This is the way we talk, not the way we write! But I guess Len always told his stories, he didn't write 'em down did he?

LM: No. (Laughter) He didn't write 'em down. He was a squaw man. Len Henry was a squaw man; he married an Indian woman, and they're called a squaw man. And maybe that should be put in somehow. But he was quite a character, and there's a lot of kids down there, good kids, too, of the Henry kids. Lot of good kids. But he could come in and cross his legs and sit down and tell the most ridiculous, damn stories! And just keep you entertained for hours.

SS: Can you tell me another one of the stories that he told?

LM: The Indians was always after him, see. He always had his chest out on being a teamster, driving eight horses, packing things back in the mountains. And he had a dog, and he says one time he was driving those eight horses down around a damn trail, he says, and he got the eight head of horses around the darn curve and when he looked back, he said his dog was back there with a cramp in him, he couldn't get around that curve! And that would just go on for hours like that.

SS: Did he tell one about changing his mind when he was in the middle of crossing a creek or river or something like that?

LM: Yeah. Yeah. And that time there was a rattlesnake on the other side and he just turned around and went back.

SS: How would he tell that one?

LM: He'd tell it that he was going to cross a stream and when he jumped across the stream he jumped out there and he saw a great big rattlesnake coiled up, and he just turned around and went back!

Like one time he was riding his horse down the trail and Indians got after him, and boy, they were just about to get him he says, "And I threw the lariat out across one of the rocks out there," he says, "and hooked it on, and I spurred the old horse and just swung it right across the cliff on the other side!" (Laughter) He put a halfhitch around the saddle horn!

SS: The Indians I take it, didn't try to follow him.

LM: Oh, no. They couldn't get across there.

SS: How did he tell stories when he told them? Was he poker-faced?

LM: Yeah. I think that Len Henry told those so many times, these stories, so many times that I actually think, and I've talked to a good many more that's heard him, that he's told it so many times, that he thought they was the truth. And by gosh, if you would question it he'd get

indignant. He was ready to fight you if you'd just question any of his stories!

SS: Did he know a lot of 'em?

LM: Oh, hell, he could set there for hours and tell you just one ridiculous story after another that couldn't be possible.

SS: Did people try to match lies with him?

LM: Yeah, they did when they sent him to California. They tried to match him and he came back, I don't know if he got anything out of it. We just paid his fare so he could go down there and get him back home again. (Chuckles)

SS: What did Len Henry do to make ends meet?

LM: There was a big family of 'em, and of course in those days the Indians they had an allotment coming- they had a little money coming every month through the agency. All of 'em had a little land, you know, and they leased it to the white men and they had a little money coming every month; enough to keep 'em going. Some of 'em quite a bit, who had their land, enough, leased to the white people. ^{at my age I recall.} And they didn't live like people; didn't have to have the things that we have nowadays.

SS: Looks like your wife getting home.

LM: But there was really no other characters there, that there was stories, that you know of?

HAZEL B. MESSERSMITH: No. He was the storyteller, alright, but I don't know too many of his stories. Did you tell him about the dog that-

LM: That couldn't get around the curve? The bend in the trail or the road? Put an eight-horse team around there and his dog got cramped on it! Maybe you can think of some of 'em.

HBM: The old-time stories, my father disapproved of a lot of them. He

says that these stories they write, the pictures they show of the West were exaggerated. And he crossed the plains and he said they didn't ^{endure} a lot of the things that they picture and he kind of complained about it, that it was wrong to mislead people like that.

SS: I think that's true, it is. That's something that Westerners, a lot of us know that other people don't know.

HBM: They don't know whether it's true or not. But, he didn't approve of it because he said the stories were all exaggerated and. . .

SS: Did he think that a real, true story was a good story to tell?

HBM: No, he didn't tell too many stories. They lost, in crossing the plains, a member of their family. And the hardest part of that, he said was just burying a member of your family just out in the wild, ^{like that} and going ^{he died of} on without them. He said they did have that trouble. ^{I think it was tuberculosis,} And he said that was the hard part of it for them, they had to bury a member of their family right out there; wild and open spaces. . .

SS: Where did he come to?

HBM: From Illinois he came to Columbia County Washington, down around ^{Dayton} Walla Walla. ^{and}

SS: Did he homestead there?

HBM: His father homesteaded there. And you've heard him tell how they came into Lewiston. They freighted from Walla Walla up to Lewiston. And Father was quite a teamster, he loved horses, and they ^{freighted} from Walla Walla and into Lewiston, it was just nothing but bunchgrass. He said he could have bought the whole- where the city is for a song and a dance! That was the only way they had of getting freight in there. I'm not a very good storyteller. ^{Lewis better.}

SS: You express yourself very well, I think.

- LM: Her parents is more pioneer than I was. I left home in Pennsylvania at fifteen years old as a green country kid; came out to Portland, Oregon. But her folks were regular old pioneers that came out here to this country.
- HBM: I'll say they were.
- LM: And, you won't find very many people, I don't suppose, that's any older that would be able to go back any further than we are. She's eighty-five and I'm going to get up to her in age, February the 15th, and then I get to take over again, I'll be in charge then after the 15th of February, ^{were both} eighty-five years old.
- SS: But she'll be ahead of you again before' much longer.
- LM: I'll have the pleasure of being general manager, you know, from February til next November again!
- SS: Tell me this; was Len- he was really well known for his sotries, for his lies when you were around Lapwai.
- HBM: Yes. but we - Lapwai people didn't have much to do with that class. It just happened that you'd run into him someplace, but, really, the white people didn't associate too much with the higher class of Indians. And the Indians had very little respect for a white person that would marry an Indian.
- LM: Yes, and he was a squaw man.
- HBM: And he was supposed to be a white man and he lived with the Indians, you know, married an Indian. They raised quite a family of boys.
- LM: And the little kids turned out well, too.
- HBM: Yes, they did pretty well. Those boys did pretty well, but they did it on their own, they didn't do it from any help from him, because he just didn't have it. Isn't that funny now that he would become popular just because- he didn't amount to anything, but just a-

SS: I'll tell you why; because he was a good liar and there aren't very many left. And I don't know of a one in this county, of all the people that I know in the early days. I know one guy that used to like to tell lies, but his reputation was very low, ^{cal} I don't think many people knew about him; just a few people around- right around where he grew up. So, I don't know, Len Henry seems to be known as quite a character, and I don't know why. He didn't seem like quite a character to you.

HBM: ^{He seemed like} Somebody that you just wanted to stay away from, you know.

LM: He wasn't what you'd call boring; he'd come into the store there in Sweetwater and just set down ^{on the floor} and cross his legs and if anybody'd listen to him, he'd just set there and entertain you, but I didn't have time to listen to all of 'em.

SS: He came right in the blacksmith shop where you were working?

LM: Oh, yeah.

HBM: Did he get horses shod?

LM: I don't think he ever spent a dime.

HBM: I don't think he had a dime to spend.

SS: Your blacksmith shop was a place where guys used to get together?

LM: Oh, no. These are stories that I've told you that somebody else told me.

SS: I was thinking that maybe it was a place where guys would congregate.

HBM: Not around his place.

LM: No, it just seemed as though he had nothing else to do and if anybody'd listen to him, he'd set down in a store or anyplace, you know. When he was in the shop there, I was busy, I didn't have any time to listen to him, but if somebody else would, he'd set and entertain 'em.

HBM: I never heard him talk. I've seen him and I thought- oooh, how

could anybody live like that?

SS: He was pretty dirty?

HBM: I don't know, you'd think of him as being pretty dirty. But the Indians to me were very clean or very dirty. Exceptionally bright or very stupid. I taught there, just Indians, one winter, just substituting and filling in for a government teacher, and the Indian children were either exceptionally bright or exceptionally stupid, there were no mediocre classes of children.

SS: I wonder if there were just like two classes?

HBM: I can't account for that. I don't really know. Now I know sisters who married and have families and one of them ^{that's} Slikpoo woman, Nancy Slikpoo was very clean; her floors were just spotless, and her sister was the dirtiest- Of course, I was always rather fond of ^{the} Indian people. I like them, I like their history.

LM: I did, too. The Indians have always had my sympathy, always. And still have. I've lived with them there twenty-seven years from the time that we first landed in there with the old blanket Indians, you know.

SS: What are the old blanket Indians?

HBM: They didn't wear pants.

LM: Well, they were the original Indians that was allotted a certain amount of land on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation. And their land was leased by the white people, and their money was handled by the agency there at Lapwai. And every month their rent money was prorated and they'd go up and get their money the first of each month. And they were a wonderful class of people. They were like the people of today that's on Social Security. They knew they were going to get a check at the end of the month and they spent it, and they were

honest. If they told you, "I'll pay you next month-" I never had a one beat me out of an account. They were there and paid it. But you had the next generation then. Then the Indian got up to the place, some of 'em, that they were called "class". First class, second class and third class. Now, your first class began to get the deed for the land. Now, the Indian never could cope with the white people, so the white people beat 'em out of the land. ^{As I see it.} But anyhow, your next generation then, that was all split up whether there was two people, two kids or maybe five or maybe ten, til, good gosh, they didn't have anything to live on in the second generation. So, I don't know, they blame the Indian for a lot, but they got my sympathy. ^{That} They never was trained to work because their fathers didn't know how to work; didn't know how to do anything.

SS: When you say first class, second class, where did that come from, this idea?

LM: The government. The government, after they got educated well enough and understood enough, why, they would give 'em a deed to their- to this piece of property of 160 acres.

SS: Then oftentimes that land would be bought by Whites? Then they'd lose it?

LM: Yeah.

HBM: They leased a lot of it. The white men leased a lot of their land.

LM: There's very few of the Indians anymore that ^{as got of their} any land. We've got a few up in here that are still holding onto their land and taking their lease money, and they played smart. Yeah, the Indians have got my sympathy, and always have had.

SS: Quite a few of the old-timers in Latah County out at Deary, Troy and the country through there feel very much that the Indians not only

had a raw deal but that they took better care of the land than the white people do.

LM: Oh, you bet they did.

SS: I've found that expressed often by old-timers. And just like you're saying your father didn't like the way it was portrayed, well, you know the pioneers are supposed to not like Indians, well, that's not exactly true from what I find. It's not true at all.

HBM: Papa asked one time, he said- now wait, let me see if I can remember- Somebody said, "Well, what about this property, is it safe?" Now I don't know whether it was horses and wagons or what it was, and this Indian said, "No White man miles and miles." So it was safe. But Father said- he'd tell this story, he said that was this property, whatever it was, wagons or horses safe here- "No White Man, miles and miles., safe." Dad was quite fond of them. He kind of liked 'em. When we came there to Lapwai, they were just wearing their blankets, I think they wore long johns, and then their blanket and the big black hat with a feather in it. And they dressed that way for a long time. I don't know when they made the change to white men's clothes.

SS: Did you ever get much of an idea of how the Indians there felt about Joseph and the retreat, the war in 1877?

HBM: I think they were very proud of Joseph. But I have never- The friends we have who had the most information have passed away just recently. They had so much information. I think the Indians as a whole were very proud of Joseph.

SS: You probably heard and know that at the time there was a pretty strong split between the Indians on the reservation and the dreamers, they called them, Joseph and those others that didn't want to go.

HBM: I never heard them express themselves too much, except that he was

quite a hero to the Indians as far as we knew. ^{them}

LM: I've often looked back now as I get older, I look back over life, and we have progressed so fast and progressed to the point, as I see it, that the Indian is ^{just} way behind us. And I have always made the remark when I hear some people just demeaning the Indians; yes, they did this and that- I just kind of get red behind the ears, because I feel this way: If the Indians way back there in Columbus's time, when they first come if they'd had the same equipment, the guns and things that the White man had, ^{when they came here} there wouldn't be any White men in here today. But just imagine, all they had was just a spear to fight against the-

SIDE B

~~to~~ ^{begin to} train them to work. We're just getting to that place now. The young kids go into high school and is realizing that they're going to have to work and get this dollar. And you have to have that to buy things with. So, they're learning right now to live more or less like the White man.

HBM: Too much so. When the White man came in- that's what started it. The young people- I have some wonderful friends there among the young people.

LM: You bet, I do, too.

HBM: And when the White man came in with his brand new cars and the liquor- ruined one couple that I just thought so much of. The finest young people. And they came in with liquor and sold them a car and they wound up in jail. Fine young couple.

SS: I read about the real efforts to keep liquor off the reservation. That was one of the most serious and usual problems that they had on the reservation. And the court cases, half of them-

HBM: Indians cannot handle liquor. It just ruins them. My very best

friends among those young people; I just thought so much of those young people there. I had the post office and I worked in the post office, and those young fellows, they came back from school, back East, you know and they were just- they would just help you, they'd do anything in the world for you. If they liked you, they'd do just anything in the world for you.

LM: Our Nez Perce Indians, especially, I think are a wonderful tribe. And I think now that they are making progress there at Lapwai.

Have you been down in there; know anything about the area?

SS: A little, yes.

LM: I think they're making progress. They are now training them to live like White people. They have built, I don't know how many, homes ^{right} around Lapwai. And they didn't build them for 'em. They had what they called an engineer- what was it? But anyway they had help- it was up to the Indian to help to build this home. They put 'em right in on the project. "We're going to built this house, but you're going to help." And ^{we} ^{went} down there and see the whole darn family, maybe, up on the roof there, putting the roof on and so on. Well, now, they'd never been able to learn that before, because their forefathers didn't do such things. But I think they're living now more like the White people, especially ^{I'm talking,} the Nez Perce tribe down there. They're training (them) their kids has gone to a school and changing to the place that they know they've got to work somehow to make the dollar. They never were trained to use their land. You take a lot of 'em down there still got maybe two and a half or maybe five or six acres- well, you give that to a Chinaman or a Jap, they'd make a living, but the Indian has never been trained to do that.

SS: I'd like to ask you about when you first came to Lapwai, how it was; what it was like there and was it hard for you to get established there

in town? Was it a friendly place? What was it like?

HBM: The Indians resented you, didn't they? Didn't the Indians resent, more or less?

LM: No, never did. When I came in there, I'm a stranger from the East, see, and she was born and raised right in this area. Maybe she can answer your question better than I can.

SS: You both can.

HBM: I don't think- I think that the regular old Indian was not too friendly, they were suspicious, I think of us, more or less. And I don't know; they didn't accept us. They became athletes after the high school came in. They were athletic people. And they were artists, natural artists. In school the little tots could draw their animals and they make their own designs for the bead work. And I think they resented us coming in.

LM: I think, as I recall it, as I say, I come in here as a stranger, you were more or less born in that area over there, but I came in there as a stranger and I didn't feel out of place. Lapwai, to me, was just a little thrifty town. It was just thrifty as the dickens when I came in there and I bought this little business. It was a thrifty town for the simple reason the agency for the Indians was there, see, and every month the agency of the Indians got their paycheck. So the stores all did well and everything was just going fine.

HBM: That was in 1910-'12. I was here in 1903.

LM: Yeah, way back then. Yeah, what happened-

SS: You were here in 1903?

HBM: Yes.

LM: And I came in there in 1912. We were married in 1913.

SS: You were living there for all those years before he came then.

- LM: She was born and raised up in the Gifford country. Country folks.
- HBM: I was born in Dayton, Washington, but my family moved there and put a gristmill in.
- SS: In Lapwai?
- HBM: In Lapwai. And they had no high school and I had finished eighth grade when my family moved in there, so I had to leave to go to school because there was no high school at that time. But I think the Indians resented the ^{white} people coming in there on the reservation.
- SS: Were most of the business people in Lapwai white people at the time?
- HBM: Oh, yes. There was the postmaster and he had a store there in connection. And then there was- let's see, when we came there- they had a general store, a livery stable right on Main Street, and a grade school. That's all they had in schools. And ^{the} Indian Agency, they did have the Indian Agency up there. Superintendent and a doctor. And the children came in for their education and their treatments for their health; they had good care. The government took good care of the children.
- SS: But no high school education and all.
- LM: They had the agency there; Lord, the sanitarium they had there for--
- HBM: No high school there.
- LM: Quite a payroll then.
- HBM: Oh, yes.
- LM: Good for that little old town. We had how many stores? Thrifty stores, too. One, two, three, four five-
- HBM: Well, I was trying to think.
- LM: There was about six or eight stores there.
- HBM: A drugstore-
- LM: ^{It was really} A thrifty burg in 1912- '11, '12, '13, '14, til the road changed. The

highway finally just passed, and cars came. And the agency left. They picked it up and brought it up to Moscow; okay, we had no pay from that anymore. The Indian, when he'd get his money up there, before he got home it was all spent either in Moscow or Lewiston before he ever got back. And the town just fell to pieces in just a short while, too. Went down that way.

SS: The old road had gone right through Lapwai?

LM: Well, the new highway just went by the side of it. But they didn't bother my business; our business, we depended on ^{the} farmer area around there. Repair work, such as shoeing horses and setting tires. I was setting there right in the horse age then.

HBM: They had the Presbyterian Mission there. The MacBeth sisters were there as missionaries.

SS: When you were there?

HBM: When we were there. Very fine friends of ours. And I knew Aunt Kate MacBeth real well.

SS: Can you tell me some of how you remember her?

HBM: I remember her so well. In fact, I have a book in here. Mrs. Clyde, I've given Mrs. Clyde quite a little bit.

SS: Oh, really? I know her very well.

HBM: I've given her a few notes on the Mission. But Aunt Kate MacBeth was Scotch, rather heavysset, blue hat, always wore that on the back of her head and a ^{basket} on her arm, and she'd come down for the mail every day. Very strict. The Indians, why, they wouldn't think of buying anything on Sunday! They'd go to church and come home, they'd go without food, ^{they} wouldn't stop and buy anything on Sunday, because Aunt Kate said it wasn't right. They had that ^{little} buckskin horse, and drove the horse hitched to a little old buggy back and forth to Spalding after

you came, didn't they?

LM: Yeah. Put shoes on the horse a number of times.

HBM: Every Sunday they'd go down to Spalding.

SS: Every Sunday?

HBM: Drive over Thunder Hill, conduct their meetings. Things would be sent from far away places to the Mission for the Indians. And I spent a lot of time up at the Mission. And one time there was boxes of hats sent from New York. So Aunt Kate and Miss ^(Cousin Kate) her niece, decided they'd distribute those hats among the Indian women. So the next Sunday morning, here they came all decked out in those hats! ^{she said} You never saw anything so funny in your life!" She said, "Well, I think you'd better go back to your handkerchief, you look more at home in your handkerchief! (Chuckles) And they'd tell that story and just laugh! Oh, that Sunday morning with those Indian women all decked out in those fancy hats from New York! She said, "I guess you can put your handkerchief back on, you look more at home in your handkerchief!"

SS: Did they do schooling, too? Was that part of their mission work?

HBM: Yes, they taught principally their Bible. They ^{took} adults and trained men for the ministry. That was really their business; training the-- And they did a good job of that until the board got so strict they wouldn't accept Aunt Kate's ministers as ordained ministers.

SS: You mean the Nez Perce ministers? The Indian ministers?

HBM: Yes, they wouldn't accept her training-- the ministers she trained, they wouldn't ordain the ministers she trained finally. And then they closed the mission.

SS: Is that the reason why, do you think?

HBM: Yes, more or less. The Church Board wouldn't accept her ministers, as ordained ministers without going through the Board.

- SS: As I remember there'd been a large number of Indian ministers.
- HBM: Oh, yes, they have a lot of Indian ministers who were trained right there at that mission. But they got so strict about it that they- the Indian men had to go through a certain schooling in order to be ordained.
- SS: Do you know if the sisters traced the history of their mission work back to Spalding and his work in the very early days?
- HBM: Not too much. They didn't do that too much. You didn't hear much about Spalding through them. I don't know when Aunt Kate came, I don't know the dates that she came there. But the neice, Elizabeth and Mazie Crawford came in 1904. They came up the river on a boat. That's how they came into Lewiston. *They had some fantastic stories*
- LM: Now Mazie ^{Crawford} came - when did you say? 1904?
- HBM: Uh-huh.
- That's when the Crawford girls came in 1904.
- LM: Mazie and what was the other one?
- HBM: Elizabeth. But Aunt Kate came before that.
- SS: When you say fantastic stories, you're thinking of Mazie Crawford's stories?
- HBM: Oh, I wish I could remember some of the stories she told about her boat trip up the river.
- SS: Oh, her boat trip? I see.
- HBM: She told some wonderful stories. And I have her book. Just a little paperback.
- SS: Was it a very strong influence, do you think, the presence of the mission on the people?
- HBM: Yes, I think so. With the Indian people?
- SS: Yes.
- HBM: Yes, oh, yes. Yes, I think so.

HBM: They depended a great deal on the⁺ mission. And they had a great influence among them. I think. They respected them very highly and the lady there who has the post office spoke the Nez Perce language just as well as any Indian I ever heard. Spoke it beautifully. And that's where I learned most about the Indians as they would come in and talk with her, they took her advice, you know. ^{IA} They didn't go to the mission, they would come to Jennie, and Jennie would always help them out with whatever it was; their renters or their money or anything, they could come to her and she would advise them and could tell 'em in their own language; explain. But the mission had a great influence.

SS: How do you think she learned the language? Was she raised there?

HBM: Well, her uncle was up at the agency. Mr. Barton- let's see, Whitman was an uncle of her's.

SS: Which Whitman?

HBM: Marcus.

SS: Oh, really? And her name was Jennie?

HBM: Jennie Barton, but her name was Whitman. Oh, I just wish I could speak it like she could!

SS: So it sounds like she cared very much for the Nez Perce people.

HBM: Oh, yes, very fond of them. They had a store and ⁱⁿ post office; grocery store, and blankets and shawls and ^{these} silk handkerchieves and the beads. And the Indian women would come in there and say, "^{Where's} Jennie." And Jennie'd come out and they'd explain what they want, talk things over with them. Oh, it was so interesting to hear them because Mrs. Barton just spoke it so well.

EM: You worked for them there in the store, didn't you?

HBM: Yes, I worked in the post office and then I'd help out in the store. On my vacations, during my vacations, I'd come home and help her in the store. But they fascinated me, I was very fond of them, they fas-

minated me. I liked to wait on them. They'd buy something for a dollar and a half, they knew what a [?] was [?]. And the women carried their money tied up in a red handkerchief tied to their belts. Well, if they'd buy three yards of material for a dress, they'd pay for that, but they'd turn around this way, get their money out ~~and~~ they'd pay a dollar and a half. Then they'd buy something else, maybe, a package of beads and [?] [?] [?] quarter. Turn ~~there~~ back again.

SS: They'd pay for each thing separately?

HBM: Separately, then they could keep track of it better that way.

LM: Back in that time that you're talking about the Indians really did ^{not} know nothing about a penny or a nickle or a dime. It was [?] What was that?

HBM: That was a dollar.

LM: Wait a minute- what's a quarter?

HBM: They called it a quarter.

LM: No, they didn't. Two bits. Four bits. Six bits. They didn't know anything about making change at that time. And really you never saw a ^{damn} penny or a-

HBM: No paper money.

LM: And ^{very few} nickels in those days. Down in our country there was more quarters, because the Indians, they didn't know anything else in figures but two bits was twenty-five cents; four bits was fifty cents. Six bits then a [?]. So the stores worked on a pretty good margin all the time. (Chuckles) When we came there, I never saw a penny. For years there we never saw a penny, when we first ^{came} to this country. And very few nickels, and especially where we were down there. Two bits, four bits, six bits.

SS: What did you say if you wanted a blanket?

HBM: Shawls and blankets. You tell 'em ? That's ten dollars. And they had money. They never came in there to buy unless they had money. She did trust some people. She never kept books; Jennie never kept any books. When she'd ask me to help her in the store, I'd say, "Well, Sophie bought a blanket." "That's alright, she'll come in and pay it next week." They had no books, never did keep books. Those Indian people would buy those things and ^{Jennie} knew and trusted them. They'd come next week or whenever they promised, they'd come in and pay her. I'd say, "How can you do that? You don't have ~~any~~ books." She had a good memory and she knew all those Indian women and she knew they'd pay.

SS: It sounds like also that she was very accepted by them.

HBM: Oh, wonderfully. Yes. They knew that she was a Whitman, you know. A descendant of Marcus Whitman. They trusted her. They'd go to Jennie or they'd go to the Presbyterian Mission there. The missionaries, too, they trusted them.

SS: Do you remember any of the kinds of matters that she did help people with? Say, like allotments and that sort of thing?

HBM: No the most help that I can remember that she'd give 'em would be in their buying, you know, their shawls and handkerchieves and their bead work. They always kept a lot of nice beads for them. And they would ask her advice about property, I suppose, more or less, but ~~no~~ ^{have} no specific thing.

LM: Yeah, all that old timber is gone. That old timber that we're talking about now. That's all gone, see.

HBM: Corbett Lawyer was the last one to go, and he was just bundles of information that he could have talked with you. He was ninety-eight

when he died.

LM: Yeah, I think he was, pretty close to that.

HBM: And he was just bundles of information of all kinds. He'd been at the agency, worked there.

LM: That was quite a loss to them.

HBM: So that was quite a loss.

LM: You talk about the old timber that's gone, it's like I am, I'm the last apple hanging on my tree and she and her sister that lives over here is the last two apples hanging on their tree.

SS: Can you tell me some about what smithing you did? What the blacksmith business was like? The kind of work you did back in the early days here?

LM: When we started there in Lapwai, it was in the horse age then. See, we didn't have any automobiles til 1915, was the first automobiles that came into Lapwai. So we were there, started in our business in '13; really in the horse age. So our business was shoeing horses in the harvesttime when they hauled all the wheat and everything up over the hills there and bring it down to Lapwai, ^{it was} our business was to shoe horses and repair the wagons, set the tires and any repair work that might be needed on equipment that they used in those days. Then about, oh, along in '15, '16 in there, why things began to change from the horse age into the mechanized machinery.

SS: Were you pretty aware of that at the time that there was a change on the way?

LM: Well, yes, I was aware of it. I was among the first, and I'm not saying this to stick my chest out, but I was among the first to put in acetylene welding; among the first when acetylene was first developed. And they'd try to sell it to a blacksmith because he was supposed to know a little

something about heat and so on. And I was among the first when arc welding came in. So we progressed as ^{the} thing went on.

SS: What kind of equipment did you have there when you first started?

LM: When we first starteeted?

SS: Yes.

LM: Well, I'd say we had two forges in my old shop, always had a hired man as a general rule. And we had a tire setting machine and a drill-press and emery wheel. And that's about the extent of it. Worked nine hours a day, six days a week, and so on.

SS: What was most of your business?

LM: At first it was horseshoeing. Well, in fact, when I first started in I just put a sign out, "We shoe everything that passes, horses, mules and Jackasses." And by gosh, they kept me busy. And I've got pictures that shows sometimes if you want to see 'em.

SS: That's what the sign said? You'd shoe everything that passes?

LM: Yep, we did, too! A horse never came into my shop if there wasn't iron on him or shoes on him that he went out with shoes on. Never! Didn't matter if we had to tie him down, rope him, ^{or what} they never did. Now, you'd bear me out on that one, too! Never! So, our business at first was practically all horseshoeing.

HBM: Did you tell him about the hooks that you made for 'em?

LM: Yeah, for the Indians?

HBM: The tools for digging camas?

LM: Yes, I've made many of the camas digging tool, which was just a kind of a curved tool, pointed at each end, you know, when the Indian women would dig- is it camas or ^{couc} ?

HBM: Camas.

LM: And then when the river ~~was~~ the Clearwater River every spring was

running high, why, I used to make hooks out of old discarded rake teeth, and I worked out quite a deal on the thing, so they could throw it-- I designed this myself; welded a little weight on the end of the hook so when they throwed it, it would always go over the- and tip right down over the log. I made hundreds and hundreds of them in the spring of the year when the water was high. Gosh, I'd sell them for six bits apiece. And just about the time that it was running good I'd rake a whole armful down at Spalding, and they were running out of hooks. Lost 'em. So that was part of my business. And I had a lot of friends among the Indians. I don't know- I had so many friends, among the Indians. It was nothing unusual in the summertime, the squaws would go to the mountains huckleberrying and so on, I'd usually fix up their old hack or set the tires and shoe the old horses and so on. It was nothing unusual, that when they got back; we never bought any huckleberries, they was all given to us! ^(END of Sigeb) And they were always a friend. And if you were a friend of an Indians, they were always friends.

SS: Tell me about the horseshoeing that you did. How did you deal with problem horses? Did you have a pretty good way with horses, yourself to get them to take it?

LM: Have a pretty good what?

SS: Have a pretty good way with them? I would think that's a typical problem, I understand. Some horses just won't take being shod.

LM: It's like any other business or any other trade, you learn how to handle the horses. When they come in there they want their shoes on- the person wants their shoes on- it's up to you to know how to get 'em on. So, if they were unruly, and I never could afford a pair of stocks to put 'em in. If they were unruly and we couldn't handle them any other way, we'd just simply rope 'em and throw 'em down and tie

'em up in such a way we could put the iron on without getting hurt ourself. And we had not too many. I just always think that I was just a little bit lucky, understood from my training from a boy how to do the job, and how horses are smarter than a lot of people think they are. They realize the minute if you know your business or you don't. Now that may sound ^{funny to you} _^, but it's a fact. If you know your business and you go up to that horse right, he won't give you much trouble. But they sense in a minute if you don't know ^{your business} _^ and they'll give you a bad time, a lot of 'em.

HBM; Tell the tobacco story.

LM: Yes. Lot of tricks, you know, you learn as you go along. They had an old ornery stud horse up at the government; he was just an ornery old cuss when you'd go to shoe him. He'd lay down or he'd jerk you and all this and that. And I had a Missourian working for me and he was a darn good horseshoer, too, but he took a dislike to him. And whenever he came in there, why, Charley'd just throw up his hands because he just give him a bad time. But you know, that old horse loved me. I'll tell you how I got along with him. That big, old ras-cal'd come in there, I'd say, "Charley you fit the shoes today and I'll put the shoes on." I'd go over and get my plug of tobacco out and cut a chunk off of it and hold it and he'd take that and the slobbers'd run out of his mouth, and I'd pet him and he'd let me put on all four shoes. Now, this is telling the truth; and they discovered that, the fellow that drove him a lot of times, and they drove him in teams, you know,-and what was their names? But anyhow, the fellow drove him, he says, "That old stud horse, when he'd get in sight of that when they come down through Lapwai to go somewhere delivering," he says, "his old mouth would just slobber." Thought he was going

to get down to the shop to get shod, I guess. Well, that sounds foolish to you, doesn't it?

SS: If it works, it doesn't sound foolish, if it works! (Chuckles)

LM: Well, I guess I only been kicked once, is all. And all the shoeing that I did, I got kicked once, and that was my own fault. A horse, they don't give 'em credit, they're pretty smart.

SS: How did you get kicked, the time you got kicked?

LM: Well, he was an old- you've heard of the Strawberry Roan, haven't you? Old, lopeared, about as ornery damned horse that ever come in the shop. Looked like he didn't have sense to pound sand in a rat hole, and mean disposition, he was, just didn't want to- that kind of horse, that he didn't want anybody- he wanted to do just what he wanted to do. Well, to get shoes you've got to perform a little so you can-- But anyhow, he was one of them kind that every move you made he kept his eye on you, watching you. When I had three shoes on and the fourth shoe on the right hand side, when I was clinching, my gosh, but he hauled off you know and just jerked that leg away and let me have it! That was the first time I was kicked, because I thought I had the job almost finished. That old devil, anyhow, he kicked me and kind of laid me up for a few days. (Chuckles) But otherwise than that- you learn as you go along. *Any damn trade you learn as you go along.*

SS: Did you do a fair bit of work on the old farm equipment to keep it running?

LM: Oh, yes. It was a general repair shop, was what we did.

SS: Did you fashion a lot of your own parts?

LM: Yeah. Make 'em; not only that but I designed one of the finest hitches that was ever made. But there isn't a hitch made today that beats the hitch that I designed and patented. That's for the equipment we

have today, pulling say fifty or sixty feet of harrow- you know what I'm talking about. A big hitch for three or four seaters.

SS: What kind of a hitch did you design?

LM: Well, it was a dream that I had. And, oh, hitches that are made even today still got a solid tongue, and I designed one that had a- sector gear, ^{the end of} which was set just like the front of an automobile wheel, that every move the tractor made, why, the tongue would work with it. On a hillside or ^{turning} on a corner, instead of dragging the hitch around and the machinery, why the wheels turned and we wheeled around a corner. And on a steep hillside the tractors always working uphill, well, my tongue pulled the wheels off so the wheels was ^{feature, a piece of equipment.} ~~that was the~~

SS: Was he a pretty good blacksmith, eh? Spunds to me like he was.

HBM: Well, he should have been, he took that training from a man that knew the business.

SS: That is who he was apprenticed to back East?

HBM: In Pennsylvania.

LM: I learned my trade from a Dutchman, ^{Had} a little old shop on the four corners of the road; not the city, out on the road. And we did everything the hard way. We had no equipment, no power equipment. Everything was done by hand. There wasn't such a thing as power, those days. The old bellows you know what a bellows is?

HBM: They got one out to the museum.

SS: And when did you start? When were you apprenticed?

LM: I was thirteen years old when they threwed me in the blacksmith shop. Had a third grade education and what education I got after that, why, I got by experience.

SS: How many years was an apprenticeship for?

LM: ^{Three} years. They threwed me in the blacksmith shop when I was thir-

teen and I left home when I was sixteen; three years.

SS: What did you do? Would you be mostly watching him do the laboring jobs?

LM: No. Hell no. when you come three years of apprentice. ^{was so I} I could shoe horses just as well as when I left home. We had to be pretty good shoers if they put on more shoes than I could in a day. And I learned, too to twist iron around in the forge and so on. Oh, yeah three years of apprentice, you're right in the shop where you see it and you do it. Don't do that any more.

SS: Uh-huh, not at all. But the blacksmithing is becoming a lost art, anyway.

LM: Well, yes, to a certain extent. But many a welder has told me, "I'd give my left arm if I just knew a little bit about the forge work.

SS: I was just going to ask you if there were any experiences that you had in Lapwai that really stand out to you?

LM: Yes, during the Depression I burned out. Things got so doggone bad we couldn't pay our premium. After paying it how many years?

HBM: During that Depression you couldn't collect anything. Farmers could give you potatoes and wood and what have you, but, money, no. So we lived through that, you see. That Depression; no money.

SS: So you burned out when you had no insurance?

HBM: Yes.

SS: Oh, that's terrible!

HBM: ^{werent the whole thing.} We had a family of seven.

SS: Children?

HBM: No, my parents were with us and we had three sons and then ourselves. And, we had to start in all over again. And that was in '23 that we moved down there- oh, between '23 and '30, 1930.

We burned out.

LM: You'll have to have my wife help me out a little bit, bear me out on some of the things, I may get a little radical on that. During the Depression, 1930 wasn't it?

HBM: I was telling him that that fire must have been between 1925 and 1930, because we had moved down on the acreage. It would have been about 1930.

LM: That's right, about that.

HBM: Father was still alive.

LM: If you ^{don't} know what hard times is, and I'll bet you don't. But during that '30, was really rough. It was rough. We never lived any better since or before- before or since, I mean to say- because I could trade my work for stuff to eat, alright. But that depression was a blow to us. It got so that we just couldn't get money enough, we couldn't pay our premium. And it went along, but anyway a fellow called me from Genesee here to come up and shoe his stud horse, and I hesitated because the darned old devil always hurt me every time that I'd shod him. So I begged off and I said, "No, I won't shoe him." "But I don't want anybody else to shoe him." "Well," I said, "I can't come up there for the price that I've always come. I'll come up ," I says, "and shoe him for fifteen dollars." Well, fifteen dollars, was really something if I'd get this cash. He says, "You come on up I don't want anybody else to shoe him." So, I got my oldest son, I told him about it and he was pretty good help by that time. I said, "Let's go up Sunday morning and shoe that old devil." Which we did, and we went on back home and instead of me going up to the shop and putting my tools away like I usually did. My brother-in-law and sister ^{in-law} they went along down- followed us on down- and we had dinner, played pinochle after dinner and so on. And after dinner, they beat the devil out of me, and after dinner I said, "Come on, go outdoors while the womenfolks are cleaning

up the dishes and you can't beat me on a full stomach." And we got outside and the smoke was rolling out uptown, I says, "My God, there's a fire uptown!" And we took off up there and my shop was on fire from one end to another. So, we were in pretty bad shape now I want to tell you. I think we had twelve dollars and fifty cents in the bank, wasn't it? Two dollars and a half in my pocket.

HBM: But an Indian saved your books.

LM: Yes.

SS: Really?

LM: Yes. There was an Indian who broke through the front window and got my ledger out. Oh, it didn't amount to too much for the simple reason that ^{damn} nobody come to pay me even then, because they couldn't. That left us in pretty bad shape.

As I said, I'm going to make a long story short; the next day after the fire we had a little old T Model Ford and she and I went up to Soldier's Canyon road where we'd go up there with ^{our} .22 and shoot groundhogs and so forth, and we drove it up there and drove it into the camp in the evening and set there and bawled like two kids. Now, if you want to know the truth! Well, after so long a time she said, "This isn't going to get us anywhere." "Hell, I know that, we got to get down there and think what we're going to do." Well, in the Meanwhile, the garage, it was during the Depression and they went broke, absolutely broke, and that building was vacant right next to me and I saved the building by getting on top during that fire, I and another feller, and what little water we had we shared over the top and saved their building. So we went over the next morning, we saw the lady that owned it and she says, "Come in, I was expecting you." And I asked her if she would rent her building. And of course, that was a garage and it had some tools and equipment in there. So she

rented the building to me, "If the first month if you'll just put the windows in that the kids broke out." And they was just covered with burlap and so on. "You can have the first month's rent free. And until you get on your feet," she says, "I'll just you rent that to you for five dollars a month." Can you imagine that? So that started us. Well, I could salvage quite a bit from the fire, such as the anvil and many of my tools that went through the fire that I could - once I get a forge I could heat treat 'em, you know and put them back in shape. Which I did. So it took quite a while to get started again. We made it ⁱⁿ about ten or twelve days. I had some help. No one ever came in to volunteer to give you a real lift, with the exception of three fellows who did, oh, kind of cement work; Moreland brothers. There were three brothers of 'em. Then after I got in the shop, in a few days, I could see that the first thing I needed was a pair of sawhorses built, to begin to make something, see. ^{I just hunted} _^ Nothing came right because my tools was all gone. As I was getting kind of sorry, why, these three brothers backed up their truck at my back door there at the shop with a whole load of brick, and one of 'em said, "Say, Lew," he says, "where you want that forge?" ~~And~~ I says, "What are you guys doing? What are you talking about?" They says, "Where you want that forge? We came up here to put you up a forge." "Now wait a minute," I says, "I haven't got any money and I can't pay you guys." "Who the hell ^{says} _^ anything about money? Where you want that forge?" And the three of 'em got in there and by night they had the forge and everything built for me! And I believe the next day or so some of the salesmen came along, and that's where I appreciated where I was really setting, was the fact that my credit was still good. The hardware salesman came in, wanted to know if there was anything that I needed. And

I was just trying to get organized again. And I said, "God, I need so much stuff but I can't buy anything." "Now listen," he says, "just before I left down at the hardware, I had orders that anything that Messersmith wants, you sell it to him." "Okay." Give him a nine dollar order; a couple of bars of iron, sack or two of coal. (Chuckles)

SS: Sounds like you bounced back pretty well.

LM: Well, that's quite a story. *That's a fact.*

SS: With no money I'm just thinking that's really something.

LM: But I was so anxious; that fifteen dollars that I got for shoeing that stud horse- I overlooked a little bit there- that fifteen dollars, I tell you, that was a biggest fifteen dollars I ever saw. That's what happened. That very day that I did that I burned out. And I probably would a caught it had I gone to the shop like I should have, and put my tools away. I'd a caught that fire before, because it really didn't get a good start until a long time in the afternoon.

SS: Do you know what caused it?

LM: Oh, yes, I can tell just exactly what caused it. That Saturday, this was on Saturday when they ^{called} me and I was anxious to make this fifteen dollars, and I knew just exactly the size shoe that was to be made for the stud horse, that I got busy and fixed those shoes up and I had done some acetylene welding that day, and it's an old wooden shop and I never left the shop without taking the hose and wetting everything down, you know, there was manure and stuff underneath there, but this time I was more or less excited, I was going to make fifteen dollars, and I forgot to put that damn water on there. So evidently sparks or something from my acetylene welding got to the manure and stuff and finally burned over to where they'd got air, and once it got that, why, it was gone.

LM: Now, that's quite a history, isn't it?

SS: That's quite a story.

LM: Well, that's not a story, it's a true story. We've been awful lucky in our life since. We're thankful. Every day we wake up and say we have so much to be thankful for. We live different than a lot of people.

HBM: I wouldn't take a lot for our experience in Lapwai-

LM: Oh, no, I wouldn't either.

HBM: -because I really like the Indian people. I really like them. I didn't care so much for Old Len Henry, but the genuine Indians, I liked- the Nez Perce Indians. They were interesting.

SS: What do you mean by interesting? Could you expand on that a little bit? What was there about them that made them interesting to you?

HBM: Well, they were attractive to me and their mode of living, and they're ^{cooking} .. They cooked some very fine foods. And their knowledge of nature, you know. The foods that they dug out of the earth and the berries; they way they can handle those things was interesting to me. And their bead work; that was all by hand, they didn't have any patterns for anything. Their patterns that they put on their baskets and all were all original. They didn't have patterns like we have for our crochet and our needlework. That was just natural ^{talent for} them. What they could do with so little, is what interested me. And they got so much good out of nature. ^{what} Nature provided for them.

SS: Did you ever go to any of the ceremonies?

HBM: I went to their churches, yes, went to the Indian War Dances. We often went to their war dances.

LM: Well, we did go one time to their deal up there out of Craigmont.

HBM: ?

LM: Yes.

HBM: The ^{Palmkiki} every year they have a religious gathering; campmeeting they called it.

LM: Used to be Ilo and now it's Craigmont.

HBM: They conduct that themselves. Fine meetings, speaking and singing. And they have good voices. We had a quartet there in Lapwai that was real good. They'd meet there and sing. Scared of going home at night sometimes those fellows would sing all the way down the railroad track. It was a good quartet. And they played musical instruments too. Didn't they?

LM: Well, yes.

HBM: Those younger fellows went to college, they came home from college.

LM: It wasn't high-class music like you hear on TV today, but they had their-

HBM: Oh, no, but David played and quite a number of those fellows played musical instruments, cornets and saxophones. They asked very little help of anybody. And they still do quite a little bit of the corn husk work, they don't do so much bead work but they do make corn husk baskets. They do a lot with ^{corn} husks. But the Indian women still wore the same old clothing. ^{the dresses.} They had no patterns for anything, they make their dresses just the same way as they did then. Of course, the young people don't, but the older women make the same- use the same materials and same patterns.

SS: I've heard that some of the young people are interested in the old ways of doing things. So maybe the arts won't die.

HBM: I'm afraid they will. I'm afraid that they will. They say on Tuesdays the Indian women still demonstrate at Spalding there; some of their work and how it's done. And I hope that they do that again this

summer because I want to take the family down there. And one Indian woman I still know, does that type of work, I want to see her and talk with her.

SS: Did you see them work when you were down there? Or was that done usually out-

HBM: At ^{Spaulding} _?

SS: Well, when you were living down there, yes.

HBM: Oh, yes. I watched them do their work. And I hope that they will still be demonstrating at Spaulding this summer. Because, as you say, it will be a lost art, the young people are not learning it. And there's just a few of those older women left who do it. I want to be sure and go down there.

LM: I really think that they're working on that pretty strong. They're trying to bring that back. Kind of interesting here- When did I send that pair of gloves? Less than a week ago to my son- little short story here to tell you about. We had a pair of gauntlet-gloves here-- Well, to go back to the original, when I was running the shop there at Lapwai, there was a young Indian came in the shop one day; one afternoon, late; end of the week, and this was nothing unusual, and he said, "Say, Mr. Messersmith would you loan me two and a half? I says, "Hell, no, I'm no bank." Something like that is about the way I told him, probably. "Well," he said, "I'll leave a little security, I need two and a half pretty bad this weekend." And then he showed me a pair of gauntlets that was the most beautiful piece of bead work you ever saw, and he says, "I'll leave them til I get back Saturday and pick 'em up and give your money bank." Well, okay, I gave him two and a half and I threw the gauntlets into the little office I had there, the desk I had, lifted the lid and threw it in there. And those darn gauntlets was in there I guess six months and

he never did come back to pick 'm up. Beautiful piece of work. Well, then they had an Indian lady there, well, we were just well acquainted with her and we still don't know whether it was Mrs. Black Eagle, you say or-

HBM: No, I don't think it was.

LM: But anyhow there was an Indian lady there that actually made buckskin gloves, and she looked and she says, "Oh, that's the most beautiful work I have ever seen." And it was, too. ^{Beautiful} Bead work. She said, "Let me make you a pair of gloves for 'em." Okay. So she measured up my fingers and she made me a pair of gloves. Well, they were so beautiful, and I had ^{not} left home ^{not} too long and I had a sister back in Pennsylvania, and I thought, now that would really be something to send to her! And I sent 'em, plus three beaded moccasins, for her three daughters not realizing, you know, that people back there- oh, just no value at all, see. So, I sent those gloves. Well, this summer one of the daughters ^(END of side L) conversation somehow, I don't know how it came about, but she brought up this subject about the gloves that we sent back there to my sister, which is back there in 19- - what would you say? 1920, along in there. That date don't matter anyhow. Finally the daughter says, "I don't remember a thing about 'em. Not a thing." And she didn't even remember the moccasins that I sent to the three girls; she was one of 'em, she was the youngest in the family. And after so a long a time she says, "That pair of gloves means so much to your Uncle Lew,"-- am I quoting this right? "If they are still there and nobody cares for that, I'll bet you your Uncle Lew would sure like to have them." "Well," she said, "when I get back home, I'll sure look around." 'Course, my sister's dead now, was at that time, and for many years she's been dead. And sure enough, after

she was back there a month or so, I guess, here came a box with that pair of gloves in there. And she had insured 'em, I guess for two fifty, wasn't it?

HBM: I don't know.

LM: Because we had made such a damn fuss about 'em, see. So, our youngest son is kind of gathering that kind of stuff together, just a couple of days ago that we sent 'em to him. ^{Sent} them to him in California.

HBM: Beautiful gloves.

LM: Oh, beautiful, and I insured those things for \$250^h ^{because} My oldest son, he saw some in an antique shop somewhere up around Coeur d'Alene, up there, and when he looked at 'em, he said, "My God, they're prettier than the ones that I looked at and they had a price on 'em of \$1,500! (Chuckles) Too bad I don't have 'em here to show you. Just a few

days ago, we sent 'em.

HBM: ^{I haven't anything. I gave him my}
Beaded bag.
[^] he's

LM: Yeah, collecting that kind of things.

HBM: I've just given everything away, because Dick really went to school there, and the Indian boy played the piano for him, he played the trumpet and the Indian boy played the piano, and he's very fond of him. I thought that it would mean more to him than it would to anyone else in the family. We've tried to give him most anything we had.

----- (Left out a small bit of personal conversation)

HBM: The boys were athletic, the Indian boys were, and they played basketball and were champions all the way through, but they weren't allowed to take any part in the school affairs. A white girl wouldn't be allowed to dance with one of those boys or date them or have anything to do with them at all. And so, this one Indian boy was a neighbor,

would come in our home and play the piano for our boys, and the boys all had instruments and played at school. And this Indian boy was quite a musician and he sang, and our oldest son and this boy put on quite a duet and sang for school affairs. But they didn't play together and work together like they do today.

SS: Did you tell your sons Indian stories when they were young? Bedtime stories and that sort of thing?

HBM: No, not too much.

LM: Well, you didn't have to because our oldest kid was born right up there- born and raised right there among 'em.

HBM: A little Indian boy came in one day and said; he was out in the yard playing with the boys, and he came in - oh, no, I happened to be outside and I heard this little Indian boy say, "Mrs. Messersmit, Dick he cheat, marbles."

LM: Yeah, I remember that. (Chuckles)

HBM: I told Dick about that when we were down there. "Mrs. Messersmit, Dick, he cheat, marbles."

LM: Yeah, the Indian can't cope with with White men at all. (Chuckles)

HBM: But the boys played with them.

SS: What do you mean? White man is going to get away with whatever he wants to? Just can't deal with what he does?

LM: Well, I'd say up to date, that the White man is just advanced a little farther, I guess than the Indian, and the White man takes advantage of him.

SS: Did you ever hear any of the Indian stories, like about the coyote?

HBM: I've got all of that. I have all of that in this little book. And you're welcome to read it.

SS: I was just wondering if you actually heard those stories when you were

down there; if the Indians ever told stories about- like about coyotes and that sort of thing.

HBM: That story is in Miss Crawford's book. All those stories that they told. But, my association with them ^{was} in the schoolwork or in the church work. And those stories were not told.

SS: They didn't have dances around there like they had in some of the pioneer places, where people just got together and had dances, like at night in somebody's house, or that sort of thing?

LM: Oh, Lord, no! Now, wait a minute, on New Year's night, yeah, the Indians-

HBM: They had their dance; we had our dance. Never mixed at all at that time.

LM: Down at the old Fenderson building on New Year's night- oh, they had their regular war dances, you know.

HBM: Yes.

SS: But you had regular dances- you folks would have dances and get-togethers, the white people would?

LM: With the Indians?

SS: By themselves?

LM: Yeah, sure. Sure, we had our dances and skating rink there at Lapwai at one time. But the Indians never came to the skating rink, that I knew of. Did they?

HBM: Well, an Indian woman said to me one time, she says, "Doesn't it make you jealous to see your husband skate with all these pretty girls?"
(Chuckles)

LM: Yeah, the Indians had their dances there. Their dances on New Year's was quite an event.

HBM: Strictly war dance. Now they dance our style.

LM: Yeah, now they-

HBM: They have their war dances, too, but we call them heathens! The mission people called them heathens. They didn't like these war dances and these stick games. They said, "Those are the heathens."

SS: So, the religious Indians didn't take part in those?

HBM: Oh, no! Oh, no! They called them heathens!

SS: So there was sort of a split between those that did?

HBM: Yes. *Definetely.*

END OF TAPE

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins, December 6, 1977.