

HELMER RINGSAGE
Interview Four

Interviewed by:
Sam Schragger

I. Index

II. Transcript

I. Index

HELMER RINGSAGE

Park, Central Ridge; b. 1888

farmer and logger

1.4 hours

minute page

Side A

- 00 1 After mother died, neighbors cleaned up the house; then the men were on their own. Simon cooked under father's direction. Father was strict: he beat Helmer for fighting; because of his strictness the boys turned out good.
- 06 3 Attending Spokane Lutheran College to finish the eighth grade (1910-1911). His brother's success. Church service every morning. They sent the students downtown to be instructed in sexual diseases. Preparatory courses from one teacher. They roomed with a professor. He also took violin lessons in Spokane.
- 20 9 Six month short-course at the University of Idaho in agriculture (1911-12). Boarding at a homey place in Moscow.
- 25 11 His first job, washing dishes at the Potlatch Hotel, didn't last long (1912). His first job in the woods with Prune Joe, but he couldn't take the lice. Working for Potlatch.

Side B

- 00 14 The miller at Peck ground his wheat despite the rationing during World War I. Growing wheat completely by himself; harvesting 47 acres in 2½ days. He started farming in 1918; father wouldn't help him rent another place, but backed him on his own place. He treated his horses well; a neighbor who didn't. A horse that floundered. Financing from father, and repayment. A bank loan for raising hogs.
- 12 19 He seldom went to Peck for entertainment. Father's determination. Family food. The boys tried bronco riding when their father was napping; he spared Helmer a licking, helping to make a man out of him. When he rented to Helmer he had already tested him thoroughly. Father came to his defense after a grown boy bloodied his nose at Sunday school. Father caught two boys trying to kill his dog. He fought one of these boys for swearing at him; the case was taken before the trustees, and both were suspended for a week.
- 28 26 It was hard to enjoy school because he had to lay out to work at home, and the term was three months. Neighborhood togetherness. (continued)

Helmer Ringsage

minute	page	
Side C		
00	27	Neighbors danced with the boys because they were motherless. Central Ridge cemetery isn't cared for; the family plot.
05	29	He quit farming on the ridge when he had a chance to get out of debt. Father wanted him to continue.
08	30	Father sold his farm for less than it was worth; he was afraid of going broke, as he'd seen happen to many farmers around Genesee. Father displeased his second wife by not coming in when she called him to dinner. Division of estate after his death, without a will. Brother Steiner took the Park place, leaving Canada.
16	33	Relief money in the depression. He set pins to make a bit extra. His purchase of a home with inheritance money. Moving to Portland for war work. His first job there. He studied acetylene welding in Moscow before going to Portland.
(25 minutes)		

with Sam Schrage

April 1, 1976

II. Transcript

Fourth Interview

HELMER RINGSAGE

This conversation with Helmer Ringsage, took place at his home in Moscow, Idaho on April 1, 1976. Interviewer is SAM SCHRAGER

SS One thing about when you were a kid that I wanted to ask you about: You said to me after your mother passed away that you kind of got some of the neighbors, and the neighbor ladies kind of looked after you kids, some. Didn't you say that to me? And I was wondering about that.

HR: Well, listen. That day that she died there was two women come there and cleaned up the house. That's all the help she got- or we got. The rest of it we had to bach and get along the best we could. That's the way it was. That's all the help we got there.

SS: Well, what was it like afterwards with you guys having to do all that work?

HR: Huh?

SS: What was it like doing all that work yourself? Was that rough for the kids?

HR: Well, we got along, we just kept aworkin' and strugglin'. All we could do. Nothin' else. Old Daddy, that's what I said, he was the best daddy that ever was on this God's green earth. Because of that he kept us children together. Well, he took the two-- I told you about that-- he took the two younger ones over to grandparents, didn't I?

SS: No.

HR: Well, he took them over there. Julius and Joseph, they were the two youngest; took them over to Grandma-- to his mother and dad, and they stayed there til-- the young feller, Joseph, ^{the youngest,} he stayed there - I don't remember now, but quite a while, several years, I think. And Julius, the other one he come home, I think it was that fall. Well, let's see, yeah, that was 1901. Well, he come-- I can't remember, I can't be too sure about that. But he come home sooner anyway, than the younger one did.

SS: Did your dad do the cooking then? Your father?

HR: Well, now, there's a thing- let's see- wait a minute. 1901-- I said I was thirteen-- no, Simon was old enough then-- Dad did a lot of it, but the brother, Simon, that died with cancer here a few years back, he was only six or seven years old, he was put in the kitchen. He was a dependable boy. And when we ~~boys'd~~ go out and shock grain in the harvest field, why, he was in to take care of this. Daddy was smart enough to know a little bit about cooking, so he would say, "Put on a soupbone to cook and some vegetables." And Simon would tend to it. And then, Daddy, too had to bake bread, and he learnt me how to bake bread. When he couldn't do it, I had to do it. That's what I said, I been baking bread ever since I was thirteen. That is, off and on, when the wife was able, of course she done it, but when she got disabled, why, she showed me her way and I baked bread her way. And so, that's the way we kept goin'.

SS: You know, when you said, too, that your father made men out of you little devils.

HR: Yeah, he did. He was strict. He was strict. I told you about where he give me a lickin' when I had a fight with a kid, didn't I?

SS: Huh-uh. No.

HR: There was a kid and I got into a scrape coming home from school, and he was smaller than I was but he had two bigger brothers. So, I knew better than to hit or do anything to him til he got too bad and he got to throwing rocks at me and hurt me with a rock, I just grabbed him and laid him down, see, and it made him awful mad and he knew what my dad was so- and he went right by the home, cause they lived beyond us, went right by the home and he told my dad and Dad, he just grabbed me, and them days, he pulled my pants down and give me a good spanking, right before that kid! Well, the next day I told it to his older brother, ^{to sit down and straighten things out.} the one - Tim, his name was_n-- now Ralph and I we were pals, but this

Tim, he was a friend to this Albert Satlo and Mable Satlo, that is, she was his girlfriend, you might say, so he depended on what they'd say. So I told him, I said, "You ask Albert and Mable who started this ~~family~~." So ^{when} he asked them and they told him it was Joe, his brother. And he went and slapped the heck outta him, you see. That's the way that wound up. But that's the way Dad was. That's alright, I didn't see ^{into} it then, but I took my medicine. Dad was the boss. And my brother, Steiner, he didn't savvy it that way, but I talked to him, I said, "Listen now, if we'd a had a lenient Dad like Hardmans, that give 'em everything, they landed in jail. And they got throwed outta school and everything." I said, "Us kids didn't." And not only that-- I guess I mentioned that before-- he bought a share in the Christian College there at Spokane-- didn't I tell you that?

SS: Yeah. You didn't really tell me about it, though. What was the deal on that?

HR: Well, I told you that-- yeah, I told you that-- that's why I wanted to know what you had marked down, you're repeating some of it.

SS: No, we didn't put that down at all. You told it to me, but it wasn't down.

HR: Well, I'll tell you; here's what it was. These fellows that come around to organize- that was before they built this college, see? They want any parent that would to donate money to help build it. And Dad and all his relatives ^{and the offspring} in the old country-- I was just readin' in the history today or the other day- I've got it here from the Scandinavian countries -- They're 97% Lutheran; and that's what he was. And so, anyway, they said that any parent that would donate money could send their children there free of tuition. So, we played lucky, we got enough money to send, - that is to pay the board. The board was only \$2.90 a week, at that time. We got two rooms for four dollars a month, each, that's eight

dollars. Right at the college, that was only about two blocks away.

SS: What was the name of the school?

HR: It was Spokane College. That was the name of it. But it's broke now, but that's what it was; Spokane College. Up there, it's about, I think it's six or eight blocks south of Manitou Park- was- don't know what they got there now. I haven't been back there since. I got pictures here I could show you of us in the Manitou Park, me and the students. I'd better get them and show you. So you can get a better idea.

SS: Yeah.

HR: There's the girls and here's us boys. Steiner- oh, yeah, I'm over here. I weighed the most there of any year that I ever weighed. You see there we just come off of the farm, we'd been a baching. And they had a woman cook there that knew how, and then we got a different diet, entirely. And regulations, more. Going to school, see, and gettin' relaxed, and not the chores that we had out on the farm. I guess that's what done it. I just kept a gettin' fatter, fatter, fatter. And I weighed a hundred and sixty-four; the very most I ever weighed, because I wasn't doing heavy work, just going to school.

SS: How old were you?

HE: Twenty years old, when we finished up the seventh and eighth grades, that's what I told you.

SS: Did you finish the seventh and eighth grades?

HR: Yeah, we did, in eight months. You see, we hadn't got it down on the Ridge in the grade school; ^{WE WAS} hit and miss. Maybe a couple of months; three months was the longest the school would go. But I was the one that was determined. I told my brother, I said, "Boy, we got a little money," I said, "let's go up to Spokane College and finish up our courses."

- HR: Dad tried his best-- Now that's one thing he done that was the makin' of us, ^{you might SAY} to really line us up. If we hadn't a had something back-- de-termination, of course we could have squandered, but he didn't spoil us. He put his foot down every time we got a little fresh or foxy, you know. Made us step to his music, and, by darn, I'm glad he did.
- SS: What did he do about this college? Was ^{he} ~~he~~ you guys---?
- HR: No, he didn't do nothin', only he just donated money.
- SS: I mean, as far as you guys- was he in favor of you going up there?
- HR: Oh, he was in favor. Now, this one brother that he died with cancer- he helped him out, after us boys growed up and got to working out- he gave him a chance to go to Peck to finish his schooling. And this little brother-- the one next to the youngest-- well, he helped both of 'em. The youngest one, after he got moved to Kirkland, Washington, that's when I was married and farming this big place. And he give him-- furnished him money to take up a trade; mechanics. And the younger brother I mean the next younger one, Julius, he give him-- Seattle, that's what it was-- my brother at Seattle had got started into brick service station and Dad give him a lift there. And, today, that kid has got more- he got less education than either one of us-- only about the fifth or sixth grade, but he had the getup and go and discipline from Dad, and today that man is worth thousands of dollars. He could have been luckier, maybe, if he'd a married another woman, but by golly, they done pretty good. She was a table waiter and he was running this brick service station. Then, when the war came he took up this electric furnace equipment. He's smart enough to see into things. He got a course in that- just like us kids taking this other little course- and he went through that.
- SS: We didn't put any of that on tape. What did you think of Spokane? Was

that the first time you'd ever been to the city?

HR: Yeah, that was the first time I'd been up there at Spokane, yeah.

SS: What did you think of the city, when you got up there? Kind of different from down around here.

HR: Well, I just didn't think much about it. We's busy going to school. That don't amount to much, I'd rather tell you about when we-- I mean how I got lined out making money to buy my home, than that. I wasn't interested in Spokane at all. ^{at the time}

SS: Well, we'll hit that this morning, but I do want to ask you what going to school there was like. What that college was like?

HR: Oh, I'll tell you. It was a Christian college. I'll tell you something-- I got to tell you that. Every morning, Doctor Glosco, was the president's name, and he had a choir; religious choir. Every morning, now that's one blessed thing; ^{we was brought up,} every morning, you might say, was just the same as going to church. And he had this choir singing, and he was the main leader of it. And then they had, I guess there was an organ play-in', every morning. I don't remember, but I think it was a half an hour or maybe more. Every morning. And say, I enjoyed that. And then they even sent us down to town-- there was a certain place in town where you could find out about sexual diseases-- one place for the men and one place for the ladies. And, I tell you, we was greenhorns. You see, Daddy never told us nothin'. But we got in there and seen-- it just showed on plastic the different stages of different diseases. Now that was an awful good lesson. It just made men out of us in that respect, too. That's why I guess I was able to pick out a good companion when I did. You see?

SS: Why?

HR: You know how it is when you're young, you can flirt with a lot of young

girls. I had lots of 'em. And I could a got 'em! No, they didn't suit me til I found this particular one. I was going with another one from up here on-- you know Daughertys?

SS: Yeah.

HR: Well, Mrs. Daugherty's sister-in-law; Clarence's sister. You see, we got acquainted in this short course- I told you about this short course we was taking-- after we got through at the Spokane College, didn't I?

SS: No, you didn't.

HR: Yes, I did.

SS: You mentioned it, but we never put anything about that on tape.

HR: Well, anyway-

SS: Now, in Spokane, you stayed there at this course for about seven or eight months?

HR: Eight months, exactly.

SS: And did you have a teacher for each different--?

HR: No. No. We just had the one teacher, and she was thorough. She was a little Norwegian girl. And now, grammar, she just put the stuff on the blackboard and explained it thoroughly, til I got that into my noodle. Well, on the Ridge, I didn't know sic 'em about it, 'cause we didn't get there at the beginning of it or nothin', so that was that.

SS: She took you straight through and you learned?

HR: Oh, yes. We got through the seventh and eighth grade.

SS: How many kids were there in that school?

HR: Oh, there wasn't too many, that was why-- she was a private teacher, see, for preparatory courses; ^{what} it was called.

SS: Did you have to spend a lot of time studying when you were up there?

HR: Well, we had a room. We was lucky. We was rooming with one of the professors; Doctor Van der Walker. He was one of the professors in the

college. And it was nice and quiet. We were on the upstairs floor; two rooms, my brother and I. And they had a little four-year-old boy, but, of course he'd squawk a little, but it didn't bother us much, he was way downstairs. And not only that, but I took up violin lessons. I bought a violin for \$55, and a young man, he was only fourteen, he was just a kid, he was a professional, he played in some band in Spokane, and he come and give me lessons for a dollar a lesson. So I took that up, too while I was there.

SS: Did you learn how to play good?

HR: I learnt how to play by note, but I didn't keep on practicing long enough to make it real good, you know, but I got so I could play several tunes by note. And then, to top it off I finally-- my wrist give out, I was too old when I started. And that's what I'm trying to tell all my great grandchildren and my grandchildren, I told them, they gotta start early. The younger the better. They teach 'em now when they're three or four or five years old, if they got music in there. But some of 'em, ^{if they haven't,} they just as well forget it.

SS: You know there's one thing, when you say that they showed you the course of sexual diseases; was that like what they call sex education these days?

HR: That's what it was. Sure it was. That's what it was.

SS: I'm surprised they had that back then.

HR: By gosh, they had it-- not in the college; downtown. Spokane. But they knew where to send us kids. That's what I mean. That was another good thing about that college. They really-- and we met a lot of nice students there. There was some of 'em from Montana; some of 'em from out here in Washington and there was two, a brother and a sister from Moscow here. No, there was three; there was the Ryearsons, Richard and Ruth; brother and sister. And then there was a preacher's daughter that

used to be a preacher, Andreas, and he used to be a Lutheran preacher, and he come clear to Park to them little churches. I think it was his daughter, or his granddaughter, I don't remember which, went to school there. And some of 'em clear from out in Washington and out in the Big Bend Country. We really got in with a good bunch. They were all Christians, of course, been brought up in a church environment, you might say. I told 'em, "My, we were lucky to get into such a good environment as that." And when I told Dad about it, he thought that was dandy that we had got into it and got through like we did.

SS: I wondered how they taught sex education in those days, compared to the way you do it now. Now it's in the schools, more or less. They have classes in it, so kids will have a little better idea of what it's about. They won't be entirely unprepared. Did they actually have a teacher who gave you a lecture or explained how--?

BS: Oh, they lectured on several things. I can't just exactly quote all of that, but-- because I can't remember it. But they was pretty good that way; things that they thought was important, you know.

SS: You said about this short course. Now was that the one that you did at the university?

HR: Now, do you want to get on that? Yeah, well, I'll tell you. That was the next year after we'd been to Spokane, see. We was in Spokane in 1910 and '11. 1911 and '12, we come and took this short course in Moscow. It was a six month's course. Did I show you the pictures of them students I went to school with at the University? I'll show you them. So you can get an idea.

SS: Six month's course; now was this a--? What was the short course in? What was the subject?

HR: It was agriculture. And it was kind of a dual education, was what it was. We got some arithmetic, some soil erosion-- soils, they called it.

You know studying of soils. And animal husbandry. Stock judging. And poultry- and what else now was it? Oh, yeah horticulture, and plant life, and I think irrigation. Say, I got that picture here; I've got it in another place, but it don't matter. I'm in a picture by the Administration Building. I'd better get you that one and show you.

Equipment was turned off for a while)

SS: *... going there?*

HR: Oh, we was renting. That year we was renting from a widow. She boarded and roomed us for twenty dollars a month. She was a widow with two boys, down on the-- let's see, what do you call that place?-- Student Union place, that is. I don't remember the street, but they called it Student Union Avenue, I think. It's off beyond Sixth, anyway. So, we all there was about seven or eight of us rooming in that same house. She had a big house.-- He was from Southern Idaho and he was a-- and she had a piano, she was teaching the boys piano lessons and he could play the piano, see. And so we had singing, oh, we was all enjoying ourselves, having a regular Home Sweet Home place to live in.

SS: Did you have any trouble getting that twenty a month? Was that your money or--?

HR: My brother and I after the first year that we took that agriculture course, we was lucky, we rented some bean ground over there on the Ridge and we got \$500 worth of beans.

SS: After you took the first short course?

HR: Yeah.

SS: Were these short courses good? Did they teach you a lot about- that you then used in the farming?

HR: Well, sure! I told you stock judging, soils, chemistry, poultry, and all that stuff.

- SS: Well, sometimes, you know, sometimes they do it, sometimes you don't--
- HR: Well, this was good. I'll tell you who the professor was, and he was a dandy-- old Professor Iddings, was our professor. Carlyle was the president of the university at the time. Now that was 1911 and '12. They're all gone, of course. But that's the way it was. And, by golly, I'll tell you right now that was just as good or better-- well, if we hadn't a went to Spokane and got that preparatory school, we wouldn't have got as much out of it as we did. Oh, yeah, bookkeeping; I forgot to tell you that. I learnt bookkeeping there. Single entry. Now that was very interesting. And spelling. Just everything, you might say in the preparatory line but most of it was soil.
- SS: This was in Spokane?
- HR: This is university, I'm talking now.
- SS: I noticed there were a couple of girls there, too. Were they taking the farming courses?
- HR: No, just one. She was taking domestic science.
- SS: I see.
- HR: Yeah, just the one girl, and her brother was there, too. They were from Southern Idaho. Yeah, we enjoyed that course. And, let's see, that was '11 and '12. Well, the next year, that's when I started- the next winter of '12-- we didn't go back anymore, see. We was there '11 and '12. 1912 in the fall and '13 I went to the woods.
- SS: Oh, yeah, you told me about that.
- HR: Yeah, I went to the woods cuttin'-- First I got a job with-- NO. The first job I got was washing dishes down here to Potlatch Hotel. Forty dollars a month and board. Well, I couldn't do the dishes fast enough to suit 'em. I wasn't a dishwasher, and so they hired a little Dago, they call it, Italian from Spokane and I was glad to quit. It took me

all day and all night to do the damn dishes, you know, and all^{of} that. And so I went out and hunted me a job in the woods, and I got up to one they called Prune Joe, and I, of course, was raised on a farm, I thought I wanted to drive horses. I told 'em I'd like to get on the sleigh haul. Well he put me to choppin'- swampin' they call it. And I worked like a beaver 'cause I wanted to hold my job, and I was just-- let's see 1912, I was twenty-four, you see; a young husky, and he seen it and he put me on, working away, working away, as hard as I could. And pretty soon it come fall and he took a pity on me. I got to howling about-- I'll tell you them gyppo places were bad, lousy. I got lice on me and you had to boil 'em down in a coal oil can, that's all they had in the camps; in them camps. And they didn't have very good board there, either in that gyppo place.

SS: Very good what?

HR: Board!

SS: You say, 'boil 'em down', what do you mean?

HR: Well, kill the eggs that's in your clothes.

SS: You had to dip your clothes in there?

HR: No, you cook 'em! Boil 'em! You had to boil 'em, ^{you had to boil them to get them cooked,} I mean to kill those nits. But if a new lumberjack come in from a camp and you had to sleep together; bunking together; double bunk, they called it, you had to--- Then finally they got ahold of an ointment; I put that on me, then I got so I could work and sleep. But I kept ahollerin' anyway, I wanted to get out of there, I guess. And the boss he took ^a pity on me, he seen I was willing and able to work, and just wanted to try my best to get upper ^{there}, I guess, and he says, "Say, young feller, I believe you better go work in the Potlatch Company. They got better camps!" He was honest about it. And they did have. I went ^{there} over to Camp 8. I got a pic-

ture of that in the book here, too.

SS: I think you told me about that. That was the winter when you worked over there and your brother was over there part of the time?

HR: Oh, no, no, no. That was '36.

SS: There were two different winters you told me about.

HR: Well, no, it was just one winter. This was in the fall when I worked with my brother.

SS: Okay.

HR: In '36, the fall. But this was winter-- well, it was fall when I come up to Bovill, see; startin' winter. And I sent for a brother, the one that had the-- the one that died with the cancer. Simon. He was seventeen years old.

SS: Yeah, you told me about that.

HR: He's the one I got that winter.

SS: Yeah, you told me about that.

HR: Yeah, that's the brother, yeah. I forgot, I'm gettin' ahead. Anyway, we sawed together for a while, see, and them days they logged with highline. Donkeys. Way back in the hills, mountains. And they would have a choker, several chokers they'd haul to; twenty, fifty, depend on the size of the logs to a load on that highline. And they had a feller, Old George David, was a kid, about fourteen then, he was a ~~whisper~~ ~~ponk~~. He could-- had a wire running clear back up in the woods, see, to pull that cord and give signals to this particular-- this fellow that was hooking these chokers. Called him highline man. And after you got everything hooked up, you know, he'd holler-- well, if he wanted 'em to stop, he'd say, "Hi!" And if he wanted 'em to start, "Hi, hi." Oh, no, let's see, that's when he's loaded. "Hi, hi." He'd just hoist it up gradual. And when he wanted to take 'em down to the cars where they unloaded 'em,

it was three hi's; "Hi, hi, hi." And away he'd jerk that whistle,^{three times}
 and the engineer knew just what to do, see. ^{That's the way they signalled.} And down they went. Well
 then, we sawed a while like that, and they give us an undercutter, he
 couldn't keep ahead of us. We was foolish for working so fast, but we
 did, 'cause them saws, there was good filers and they was nice, soft,
 white pine and my brother and I could saw like mad. He was husky,
 seventeen years old. And he come to be the biggest of all of us, and
 he was awful willing, nice to be with. And so, anyway, I told Simon,^{my brother,}
 I didn't like to have him running around. I went to Elk River to work--
 Well, because of that, they switched us on a different highline-- I
 mean on a different hoister.

SS: And he was no good.

HR: He was no good, he was just a sixteen year old kid, and they didn't want
 to fire him because his dad was a good cook. And, by God, they just--
 So we got mad, all three of us, because he just--

143.4 BC

HR: That was there when Graham was running that when I was a farmin' my dad's
 place. And that was during the year of-- wait a minute now, I was only
 farmin', oh, yeah, let's see, wait a minute, 1924. Oh, it was in 1918,^{WAR}
 I guess when they was talkin' of that bread rationing. Remember you
 had to eat dark bread? We was talking' of it anyway. And I'd go down
 to this Graham, this fellow that had the gristmill. I didn't want to eat
 that black stuff that we was talkin' about and I ^{my own} had wheat. I said,
 "How about gettin' you to grind up some flour?" He said, "You can have
 all the flour you want, Mr. Ringsage. They can't take it away from you,"
 he says, "you got your own wheat," he says, "you're welcome." So that's
 the way it went. I hauled home, I don't know, enough to last all winter.
 'Cause we didn't have no car, we didn't want to run to town every time
 we run out of a sack of flour. So, that's ^{what} we did. And the wife

she liked-- Well, this Harwood Marcus wheat was good for bread, but it wasn't good for cake, so she wanted the soft wheat flour for cakes, and I raised both kinds. Marcus was the hard wheat and ~~Forty-~~ ^{fold} they called it, or Gold Coin, that was a fall wheat, strictly fall wheat, and that was soft wheat. And that made awful good straw for the cattle and horses, too. It was kinda sweet joint, see. You'd cut it a little bit on the green side. With a binder you could cut stuff greener than you could with combine, see, and so that way, we'd get by a lot cheaper. I had seven head of horses to feed, that's what I farmed with. Two bottom gang. And I run that whole doggone place all by my lonesome, I didn't hire-- well, I did one year. ^{did} I ~~get~~ a combine in there and I got disgusted with him. He just poked around. He had an old Holt that wasn't any good and it was breaking down all the time. So the next year I got me an eight foot binder; I done my own binding, my own shocking. I'll tell you what I done: I cut forty-seven acres; it was laid good, half a mile long, forty-seven acres, and cut it and shocked it in two days and a half. Way I did, I had seven horses like I told you, I put four horses on and at four o'clock in the morning and I'd go out and cut til eight o'clock and then I'd come in and eat breakfast. Wife was cookin' then. But this one cayuse, he was a young horse and I called him Fox and he was ^{Foxy} and I worked him both shifts. So I laid the other three off to rest til the next day and then I had three fresh ones and this Fox ^{the rest of the} go ~~at~~ way til noon. Then in the afternoon I'd go out and shock up what I cut there in eight hours. I could set a shock up two and two, you know. That's the way we shocked. I'd dumped six bundles here and six bundles there and I just step in between and I could just average a shock a minute. I was young then, man around '18 then, I was, let's see, I was 30. Just in prime of life, you know.

And I was determined to make it. Now, Dad knew what I was or he wouldn't a rented to me. He had to back me in the first place.

SS: What was the first year that you farmed?

HR: 1918. Yeah, 1918. I moved in in the fall of '17; started in. And my oldest daughter wasn't born til in '18. The very first year that I farmed.

SS: You were married in '15? Right?

HR: No. Hell, no in '13.

SS: '13, okay. And you'd worked out before then, right?

HR: Yeah, I worked out.

SS: You were telling me about that, so we've already got that. But, when you were working out at these places, were you thinking of just making enough so you could start farming, yourself?

HR: I wasn't thinking, I was just doing the best I could; making as much as I could. That's the way it was. Did I tell you about I tried to get-- I could have got a place rented from a neighbor there, Settle, one year, if Dad would have backed me for \$1200 for the outfit, but he didn't-- I don't know why he didn't. I think he had in mind to wait til he wanted to rent out and he wanted me on the place, see. I don't know that he did- he didn't say that, but I just figured he must have. But he turned me down on that and so I didn't get it. So, then I just worked here and there, where ^{YCR} I could. Well, I worked one fall I worked on the grade, when they built that new grade there, Ridge grade down to Peck. There was about a seven mile grade.

SS: How did you get the money to get the outfit that you used on your Dad's--

HR: I told you I was farmin', he backed me. He took a note.

SS: Your father did?

HR: Yes. Father took a note.

SS: You took over his outfit?

HR: Took his outfit and I had to get more. I had a team of my own that I had doin' a little farming there^{for} one year for Oscar Nelson, and so I had that one team of my own, but I wanted five more. I told Dad I wanted seven horses on this fourteen inch plow, gangplow, instead of just six, so I could keep going, see, without wearing the dickens out of my horses. I took care of my horses. I had good, fat horses, believe you-me, they got feed whether I made any money or not. And they helped me out, too. And when I got out in the field, boy, I done a day's work. I wasn't fooling around. Because of that I give 'em an advantage. Powell
A neighbor over there, oh, I felt so sorry for them, he would starve 'em and he'd whip 'em and starve 'em, and whip 'em trying to make 'em go . I couldn't take it. No sir, I tell you, that's all the poor dumb brutes get is what they eat. And if they ain't worth that, we just better quit. That's the way I did. I had a lot of good horses. I bought five from Dad and I traded 'em in pretty good. Well, there was one little mare that I got from Dad, she was a little stubborn but I had to lick her a little bit. But she was a dandy. She lived to be oh, some twenty-some years old, and she woulda still been a livin' if it hadn't been she got foundered. See, after I went to raising hogs, I had a bin on the south side of the driveway, that big barn you see there, and there was a little leak, I guess a knothole, sprung a leak and she'd fight the rest of the horses away and keep eatin', see, and she got foundered. She was pretty near gone, laying in the barn all bloated up when I discovered her and I had to shoot her. That's the only thing I could do. So that's the way it went. And anyway--

SS: What was the deal that you and your father made when you started? I think maybe you told me. You told me when you quit, but I don't know so much when you started.

HR: Well, you see, when I started, gosh, I didn't have anything. I had to just charge stuff at the stores-- oh, I guess I had a little cash money to buy groceries to start with. And I owed him, see, pretty near twenty-one hundred dollars. And when I had the big bean crop, see that's what lifted me pretty good. The time that I had forty-four acres of beans I got pretty near \$2100 worth of beans, but I couldn't give it all to Dad, but I paid him some, what I could, and what I owed the bank. Let's see what year that was, '19 I guess-- no, later than that, '23, '24; about 1923 is when I had to borrow some money to push my hogs through. And I had a hundred and five pigs; fourteen sows brought me a hundred and nine, and four of 'em died, was all, and I raised a hundred and five. I'd been to the University, ^{here's where I said} that's where that helped me out; how to diet my hogs and what kind of stock to judge to handle, see. And I was smart enough to listen and learn. I was old enough to cut out foolish thoughts, I had to concentrate on gettin' some place. So, anyway, I stayed with it. I told this Dode, I said, "Now," I says, "I've got to have \$500 to feed these hogs through til I get my own crop." 'Course I hadn't stowed any ahead. So he said, "Well, the bank had been broke and he was elected president, but he was just a farmer, and he said, "I'll just have to see the directors. If they'll cater to it, alright." So, I said, "Okay." So, he said, "I'll come up tomorrow." I said, "Okay, Dode." See, he knew my dad and ^{They was} old-timers there. Well, his wife was the first person, you might say, young person, that I met in Peck. See, we stayed at their place, Wallicks. And she was just a girl, she was a little older than I was, of course, but she was old enough to be pretty talkative, and I was only a kid, eight years old, but I could remember it alright. Yeah, she become his wife. So Dode come up the next morning and when he come, it happened to be a

sunshiney day. And they were these red hogs, golden Duroc Jerseys, and they got scared when they smelt this stranger coming, see, and they run right up this ramp. They just filled it, it was a ramp, well, it was big enough to hold 'em- pretty near all of them, it must have been twenty foot long, and they were in nice shape. They were getting pretty near to the weaning age, they weighed around, maybe thirty pounds apiece, something like that. Just nice roly-polies, butterballs. So he seen that and he says, "Well, you sure didn't tell no fib, Helmer, I'll call the directors and see and I'll call you back in the morning if I can get the money." Sure enough the next morning I got the money, \$500 to get some feed. *Through to call.*

SS: You were telling me this before. Now, I'm thinking you didn't tell me that you were living in Peck. Why were you living in Peck?

HR: Oh, hell, we just stayed there while Dad went to moving his stuff up on the ranch. We didn't live there. No, we never lived there. We just stopped there til Dad could get his stuff moved up on the Ridge. That's what I told you. He moved it on two wagon wheels, and I was the boy that was with him, and he had a little, old cabin; dirt floor and he had sourdough there in the cabin and a piece of fat pork- that's all we had for breakfast. He throwed it up at the ceiling, he was gonna show me how good he was and he lost it, it went down in the dirt, but he picked it up. It tasted good, we was good and hungry.

SS: Did you go into Peck, when you were growing up?

HR: Oh, we was there, dances, sure we went there to dances, us young fellers. Sure, we would. And shortly after Mother died, why, the neighbors there it was during Fourth of July, Mrs. Hem, with these boys that we were chums with, that I had a battle with one of 'em, we, might say, we palled together, and she knew it and she just felt sorry for us 'cause we was

motherless, and she invited us to go with 'em down to Peck to the Fourth of July celebration. We'd probably have a dime or something like that to buy a little lemonade or a firecracker or two. You know you could get a firecracker package them days for a nickel, some of 'em, and some of 'em was a dime. And we didn't get many nickels, I tell you from Dad them days. He only made-- well the first year that he went out to harvesting, he only made \$35.00 and that's what I say, he had a hard row to hoe. If he didn't have a lot of determination to make a go of it he wouldn't a never made it. That's why I look back on the way he struggled, and the way he-- Now, he lived there about only thirty years and look how he improved that place. I was the instigator- got him interested in fencing the place hog-tight, mind you. And he never raised a hog til after I'd raised 'em.

SS: Helmer, would you say looking back on it, that he expected a lot of his kids?

HR: Oh, I don't know, he was determined to do something because the way he kept discipling us kids, I think he had in mind, that was it, that he wanted to see us git someplace, but he just wouldn't let no nonsense get in the way. Whenever we kids tried to be foolish, he'd -(claps his hands together with a spanking sound). Look out!

SS: When you talk about it, you say you kids were little devils.

HR: I don't know. Them days, I guess there was more vitamins in the vegetables and all. Dad raised pork, you couldn't have beef them days, it was mostly pork and he cured the pork by putting it in ^{Seamless} ? sacks. Sewed it up in ^{Seamless} ? sacks. Smoked it and put it in ^{Seamless} ? sacks and put it in the oat bin.

SS: What kind of a sack is it?

HR: Seamless sacks. They are kind of a heavy sack that would hold timothy seed. What they used 'em for mostly. And he would sew it up in that

and put it in the oat bin to keep the meat from bugs. And the oat bin kinda kept it cool, too, see, in the hot weather in the barn, it was in the bins; grain bins. And so, that way he always had plenty to eat. He had meat, pork, that is, bacon and ham. And we'd boil the hams a lot of time, we'd make stew, you might call it, or soup. He had learnt, I guess from my mother to make dumplings. Make dumplings and potatoes and carrots and stuff and vegetables. We raised a lot of good garden. Them days that soil was very good for garden. And he planted orchard. You can see that.

SS: Do you think you kids were so sassy and mischievous that---

HR: Well, you know, we just-- I don't know, it's just kinda natural, I guess for kids that certain age that they wanted to play. I guess I told you about that one time that he'd always take a nap at noonhour, see, when he was a harvesting; cutting with a binder. And that was 'fore we could get out and shock, I guess. But we was picking currants. Now, he'd taught me how to make jelly outta currants. You're supposed to pick 'em and then cook 'em on the stove. And so he'd take his nap, I got the idea, I guess I was a little bit too imaginative, I told the boys, I says, "Let's go down and saddle--" he was raising horses-- that's another way that he got-- made a go of it, was raising horses. In them days horse prices was good. And he raised a lot of 'em. He had six or eight colts sometimes. ^{IN A YEAR} So, anyway, I said, "Let's go down and put a saddle on--" He had a saddle. "Let's go down and put a saddle on one them colts, see him buck." The kids and I went down, that was before he got this barn, that was just a shedbarn that he had and haystacks ^{WAS STACKED} was all out in the yard, and they were fenced with wire, barbed wire, see, so we got thsi colt saddled, and you know they didn't get the cinch up tight,; couldn't, he was too small, and the colt-- and we had it on the colt and he got excited and started running and he got his

foot in the stirrup and turned the saddle underneath him and about that time, here come Dad running down through the orchard hollering, you know, and about that time I was making a streak for the currants, and he told me-- No, wait now, I guess the boys did get the colt in the barn alright, because everything went fine and it never hurt the colt. He coulda got in the wire, but he didn't. But anyway, Dad was pretty peeved, and he come up there to me and he said, "Now, Helmer, you go out down there and get a great, big, long switch; good limber one he'd tell you, and he says, "I'll see to you." So, I come back and I knew I was guilty. Well, he seen that and that kind of worked on him, "Well, " he says, "Helmer, if you'll pick these currants and never do that again," he says, "I'll let you go this time." "Yes, yes, Yes," I says--

(Laughter) That's where Dad put the pep into me. Right that one lesson. Now, wouldn't you think it? It seems reasonable. He just cooked my smart aleckness right then, see, for doing that deviltry. Don't you see? But, brother he didn't see through that.

458
SS:

He let you off?

HR:

Yeah, he let me off.

SS:

It was kind of merciful, really; he let you off.

HR:

Yes, he did. And, I tell you, he gained by it. He made a man outta me. And he finally decided-- You see, when it come to renting then, he knew what I was. See he had tested me out every way shape **and** form. He knew me from A to Z. After I grew up, I had fights with all kinds of kids, but he didn't care then.-- Well, there was one of 'em he did. I was only fourteen then, and we'd got to Sunday School, St. iner and I, that's my oldest brother, and this Gallagher, he's a cousin to the Hartman boys, and he got me down on the floor right in the schoolhouse, it was the schoolhouse where we went to Sunday School, see, and he bloodied my nose. Boy, and I had my white shirt on, you know, and I was a cryin'. I couldn't

help myself, he was a grown man, just about. He was crippled, he had one leg game, and Steiner and I-- Dad hadn't got there yet, and Steiner and I started down the hill and towards to where Dad was com- in' and, "Huh," Dad said, "what's the matter?" Well, Steiner and I told him, "That Gallagher boy jumped onto me and bloodied my nose." And, boy, that made him boilin' mad. He went up on the porch and says, "You boys ain't supposed ^{to come here} to fight, you're supposed to come here to be peace- able and going to Sunday School or church. If you want to fight, come on the whole bunch of you." They didn't none of 'em dared. There was some pretty big Hartman boys, too, they was gettin' up there, well, they was about as big as Dad. And I had made up my mind if I could ever catch that cousin I was gonna sure fix him when I growed up, but I never could find him. But I did meet these two brothers, see, Hartman boys, I fought both of them. And I licked them.

SS: That was to get back---?

HR: No, no, no. Listen, the youngest one, I got into it with him; he started it, I wasn't startin' it. He started it. I and this August Picard, he was a French boy, we were coasting over on his place, and this Dennis Whittit, that I'd had a little trouble with, and this Owen Hardin was coming along ^{what they call} Emil Gallen place, it was about three quarters of a mile and you could barely hear 'em hollerin', they hollered over and called me sons of bitches. And I said to this French kid, "let's go over there and clean up on them bastards. He was a coward, he wouldn't do it. And I thought, "I'll sure fix it. I'll get him at school sometime." After school I meant. And sure enough one day-- well the way that started was Dad had heard ^{of} him, and Dennis Whittit, they was gonna kill our dog, Carlo, see. And they was riding ahorseback right past our place and Dad was down there by the currant bushes doing something, I guess maybe

pickin' some, and he overheard 'em, and they was gonna shoot our dog when they come back. They'd go down the Ridge a ways and then come back and shoot him as they come by.

SS: Who was gonna do this now?

HR: These two Dennis and Owen Hardin. And they loaded-- Stainer's got the shotgun there yet, a repeater, 12 gauge, and he just shot in the air, of course, he didn't shoot the kid, but he shot in the air and scolded 'm, told 'em, by gosh, they better get on home and not try to kill his dog. And after he done that, he run in the house, he had a phone them days, and he run in the house and he called up Whittit and Hartmen (?) and asked 'em where their boys was, and Whittit says his'n was up up with Owen Hartman and Hartman says his'n was with the Whittit kid. "Well," he says, "I'm gonna tell you guys to take care of your boys, or I will. They're tryin' to kill my dog." Well, then, the next day when I come to school this little Owen Hardin he got smart. ^{he just stood there.} They had a pin on his coat them days, they was kinda dressed up, and I just happened to look a little at it, and he had a kinda resentful look at me anyway, in the first place, see, and I guess that's why I was egotistic enough to kinda look maybe a little staring at this pin. So he had his hands behind him. I says, "That's a pretty pin." I think that's what I told him. "You see anything green in there?" he says. I said, "No, I don't know." I said, "What're you doin' with that hand back there?" See, he had it drawed back like he was gonna do something. Says, "There's gonna be ^{one} less than-" That was before we changed our name, Swenson. "one less in the Swenson family." "Well," I said, "let's go out on the porch if you want something like that." I invited him right away. Well, 'course the teacher stopped it right there. That was too close. So, I told my friends, I said, Arthur Stamper and Carl Hardin, I says, "I'm just gonna have to get him off the grounds, I guess, sometime." "Well," they said,

"you better look out, he's gonna have a knife for you." Draw a knife.

"Well," I said, "that won't stop me. I ain't gonna get bluffed out like one or the other. that. That son of a bitch is gonna take that back, [^] I'm gonna find out who called me, whether it was him or Dennis. If it's Dennis I'll take it outta him. If it's Owen, I'll take it outta him." So, one day, and he wore a ^{great} big, wide cowboy hat- one day it happened. I said I'm gonna follow him today- and he had a little shed for his pony, he rode to school, see. He lived up the Ridge quite a ways, three, four miles. So I got up there and I says, "Owen," I said, "which one of you boys called me and the Picard kid that son of a bitch name the other day, the other Sunday when we were coasting over there?" "It was me, by God," he says and he was drawed up like this. I was standing just like this with my hands in my pockets, I was all ready, you know. "Well," I says, "Owen, you gonna take that back?" He says, "No." He threwed his hand up; I got him right square in the eye, see, and blacked his eye right away. And then he decided, well, he brought his knife, that's what he did, he jerked back and got his knife out and, of course, I wasn't gonna fight him with his knife out. I run around behind his little shed and it was just luck I happened to find a stick about that big around and a foot long, and I grabbed that up and I says, "Now, drop your knife," I says, and let's fight it out fair." Well, then the school ma'am had found out we was a fightin' up there, you know. We's called down to the school and then she didn't know what to do. She had to call the directors. Well, this Doug Hunter, he knew what the Hartman boys was, see, but Whittit was on the side of the Hartmans. But, Stanley, he was neutral; there was three directors. So, anyway, they asked ^e ~~own~~ Owen, you know, "How did the fight start?" "Well," he said, "he asked me if I called him a name, and I told him I did and then he up and hit me." Well, that ought to be

enough that I was in the right. But no; Whittit said that he thought that I ought to be canned without him being canned, see. Well, Doug Hunter didn't think so. And Stanley, he said, "The way I look at it, they both outta be. They're both in trouble. They outta both be out." Well, that's the way they decided it then ^{finally} that we both had to be off a week. We was ^acanned a week from school. I come back, but he didn't. He stayed off, I think, two or three weeks. (Chuckles) So that settled that, of course. But he finally-- just to show you how Hunters- they sure hated him, and I'll be doggoned if that Owen didn't marry the oldest daughter of the Hunters. And they resented it.--

(The time goes fast. You'll have to come back again if we're gonna get it all, that's all there is to it.

SS: Sure, if we don't get it all, I'll come back)

SS: But anyway, this going to school over there. Did you pretty much like that going to school? Or was it kind of a waste of your time?

HR: Well, here's the deal. When we was that young and had so much chore work to do at home, how could you get interested when you'd get started way late and way behind? You wouldn't know what the heck to think, don't you see. We was just kids. You know how you'd be when you're in a place like that. And we just done the best we could.

SS: You say you had to do all the chores and everything, did that mean you couldn't go to school as much--- you had to start late in the fall?

HR: And it was only three months a year, I told you several times, that that's all the schooling we-- that they had in those days. Just those three months, for several years. I guess when they got the schoolhouse down here, they had more then, but I didn't get to go quite so much, but we got as far as, like I said, to the seventh-- I think I was in the seventh but I didn't finish it til I got up into Spokane College. That's the

way that went.

SS: Well, you know, there's one thing I was wondering about was the difference between being-- the neighboring central--- over at Park. You went over at Park later, and I was wondering whether-- it sounds like in some ways maybe the people weren't as friendly.

HR: Oh, we had a lot of good friends on the Ridge. Gee whiz, we boys we were as welcome as could be because we'd lost our mother. We used to when my aunt was doing the cooking, that was Dad's youngest sister,--
(end of tape)

-- to dances and have a big time. Neighborhood would go up to Moore the neighbors up there and they'd come down to our-- either the schoolhouse or neighbor's places to dance. And all the neighbor women, we could dance with all of 'em. They just enjoyed dancing with us because we were motherless and, well, Mrs. Malcolm, her husband didn't dance, so I got to dance with her. Now, it's only their children that's left over on Central Ridge. I go over there-- but believe it or not, but the cemetery where my Dad's folks ^{where my} ^{is} are buried is right on,-- happened to be right on this one place that they bought. These children's dad bought this place where this acre lot where the Central Ridge cemetery is for the pioneers. And we go over there-- I got three great grandchildren-- granddaughters, daughters, takes me over there every year to clean that-- That's one thing they don't have over there. Now, it's a rich country, but you see now it's gobbled up with big bankers and rich farmers that's got great big places and they don't give a hoot for it. The old pioneers are gone. Now you take this little cemetery in Park, the county takes care of it; not over there. So we go over there every year and my granddaughters they promised that when I'm gone they was gonna keep it up. Keep it taken care of. Dad was smart enough to

get a big lot; regular family lot right up agin the gate, mind you. It's just south of the gate. And he planted two red fir trees, and they're great big trees now. See, that was after Mother passed away, about 1901 or '02, somewhere's along there, so they'd be seventy-five years old now, or six or seven, eight. No, be seventy-five maybe-seventy-four or five, I mean, if it was 1902. Yeah, they're big, tall trees right at the corner, southeast corner of the burial lot. And there's he's got these twins buried- you see, she had twins. And that was after St. iner, in between Simon and St. iner. They would have been- well, Steiner's eighty-six- they would have been eighty-three now. And then the youngest brother, he was not quite thirty-six when he died. They're buried there; them twins and the youngest brother and Mother and Dad. And after Dad died; he had put one tombstone for Mother, see, and that was leaning-- it happened to be a slab about so thick, and about so wide and about three, four feet tall. And that was startin' to tilt, so I goes over to these neighbors, Malcolms, they lived right there, well, we went there for dinner, they invited us over. And I said, "Roy," I said, "have you got a big angle iron? I'd like to get it to put under my mother's tombstone, it's starting to tip. If I don't do something it's gonna be tipping right over and lay on the ground." See them days they used them tall ones, big ones. Now they got 'em already flat on the ground. "Yeah," he says, "I might find something." He looked around and he found me a good, big, angle iron, so I-- that was the day that I had bought tombstones from this Moscow guy and he went with me- took me over there- I'd bought tombstones for my youngest brother and my dad. Dad had put for the twins and mother, that's right, I had forgot about that; the twins had tombstones, but Dad and the youngest brother, that I bought tombstones and was gettin them put up, see, the time that I

fixed that-- Mother's- straightened that up. So that's the way that went. And that's still stayed, my gosh, until this day that tombstone stands level. Just like I fixed it.

SS: Helmer, you were talking about when you were farming over there- When you farmed did you believe in planting by the signs and all that business?

HR: No. It didn't enter my head then. I was too doggone busy farmin'. No, I had my mind full, plenty full, of the work I was doin', you see. I had to concentrate on that. I tell you, I was busy. Like I told you, when I was doing all that-- I done pretty good. A lot of 'em told me they said-- well that fall that I quit, I was just a walkin' skeleton. I didn't weigh, I guess about 100, 135 pounds. And that's why I quit. The reason I quit, was I could see the hog money-- hogs come up in good price, I sold half of 'em for eight and a half and the other half for ten and a half. And the wheat come up to a dollar and a half. And I told my dad, I says-- I only owed Dad about \$1,160, that was all I owed him. And I said, "Dad, I'd like to just quit and cancel, give you all the outfit I got here, all but the one team, give you back"-- and I'd raised two ^{young colts} colts, "and extra machinery. There's a hundred dollar chopmill a hundred dollar gas motor and a binder and a drill, that you didn't have," I said, "that's bigger. That eight foot ^{binder} -- you had a six foot. Here's an eight foot and here's a ten foot drill you didn't have, and here's a good motor and a chopmill; all that and some brood sows." I say, "I'll give you all that." Oh, no, at first he wouldn't do it. He gonna try to keep me there. He liked the way I was doing. He got, I think it was a couple of years there, he got two thousand dollars cash rent from me. So, no, he says, "You're doing alright." The bank did, too, the bank didn't even want me to. Said I'd better keep agoin' I was just gettin' a good start. "Yes," I said, "listen, something could

happen and I wouldn't." Well, there was one thing, I had a neighbor there--

SS: Yes, you told me about that.

HR: Yes.

SS: And you told me about quitting, too. You made him let you. You went.

HR: Yeah, I quit because I told 'em, I'm just determined. I just got that in my head. Well, there was a lot of things happened. See my wife got sick that spring. I just had to tough it. She brought birth to a dead baby boy that weighed ten pounds. She went overtime, it was the tenth month instead of nine. And she damn near died, too. And my oldest boy was only eight and the oldest daughter only six and the other one four, and man, she passed out and I thought I was left with them three, and I said, "I don't want no more of this trouble. And if I sell out everything I can clean it up, and I want to get out. Go to work some place else. This farmin' don't suit me one bit." And the next year it turned rainy weather. '26 and '27, if I'd a stayed there I'd a went broke there instead of over to Park.

SS: Helmer, I would like if you'd tell me some about when you finally decided to leave this country and go over to the Coast and how--

HR: Now there, that's when I started-- after Dad died that was and I was gittin' to where I thought we was gonna start, in the first place. Yeah. After Dad died, that was in 19 and-- he died in '35; May 28th. He had sold the place; he hadn't sold it, he had give it away for \$10,000, is what he did. That whole big farm. That feller was smart enough. But Dad was always scared he was gonna go broke, see. He seen the farmers in Genesee in this country in the early days go broke by buying extra land and mortgaging their homestead and they'd lose the whole works. So he was worried and he a man that was getting to feeling bad. He had,

I'll tell you. He had several knocks; he got kicked by a horse in his belly, and he should have had an operation then; he didn't. They did operate when he died. There was a tumor grewed that big in his-- shut his water off. I was right there when it happened. And I told my Uncle Adolph and Charlotte, his wife, and my stepmother. See, Dad married again after several years. 1910, I guess it was. Eight, nine years after Mother died. And she was a good worker. A good cook, a good housekeeper, but she had a lot of spunk and they didn't get along too well, but that was alright. It was his fault, I admit that. He was careless. She would have meals right on the dot and she'd call him and he'd be waiting, waitin' making her irritable. That ain't no good. That was his fault.

SS: Had some work he wanted to do.

HR: Yeah, he had to finish. ^{After} He got a good cook, why didn't he appreciate that part of it? That was the only place that I could say that I didn't like him, was when he done that. She had her faults, too, alright, but I got along with her. Just to show you, she was catering to me for to be the administrator instead of Uncle Ed. So that's how I come to get by. Anyway, he died in '35. In '38 we got our-- we had to sell with a reduction, \$300 reduction to get him to pay cash, see. The farmer that bought. Raymond Parks was his name on Central Ridge. And we took the reduction. Well, then-- all I got out of it for all the struggle I had was \$1200; my share of the estate. Oh, I didn't tell you they adopted a little baby girl when they lived in Seattle, see, and she growed up and Dad and stepmother was schooling her over there to Park. And she became heir. So this lawyer we hired was a no-for-good he was a-- Shimky, was his name. I didn't know he was a crook til the next year, we found it out afterwards. He says-- he allotted her \$2000 and we boys didn't get nowhere's near that, see. I only got \$1200, and

my brother, Steiner, told him, I said, "The way I figured, whoever got the Park place--" Now the stepmother was pretty generous-- Dad told us that she was pretty reasonable, see. "You boys better not try to have any fights because if you go to fighting ^{with} law you'll lose it all." That's what he had cautioned us that beforehand, see. We was smart enough to know that.

SS: In his will, did he make you equal?

HR: No, he didn't make no will. No will. But the old lady, I talked with her and she says, "Well, I'll tell you," she says, "if I can get the Kirkland property--" See Dad had bought some property in Kirkland, Washington- it's northeast of the main city of Seattle. Yeah, we all agreed, and she said, "Whoever gets, wants the Park place," She was willing, she could a got-- she could a held more, you know if she wanted to. "No," she says, "I'll let you boys have that. We can't make no living on that." Which they didn't. Times was down then at that time, you see. That's why she was that generous, I guess. So she moved out there and so I made the suggestion to the boys, we was altogether there, to agree by the lawyer, you know, that if-- I said, like this, I says, "I'll take that as my share or someone else of you boys, either one of you, want that Park place for your share." If anybody goes in debt on that, I figured they couldn't make it; they'd go broke. And I wasn't willing to about take it on my hands for that. But Steiner, that lived up in Canada at the time, he just grabbed for it. Even told his wife a fib about it; what a good place it was just to get her consent.

SS: He'd been farming up in Canada?

HR: He'd lived in Canada for-- well, wait now-- I'll tell you-- '16, let's see, 1916 and this was '38--

SS: Where at was he farming?

HR: Well, he was up around Wainright, Alberta, some place.

SS: Was he homesteading up there?

HR: No, he'd loaned Uncle Ed some money up there. Steiner was working in the mines up there, making money, good money at that time, and so Ed got in debt to Steiner, and so Ed turned some land over to him, that's how he got started.

SS: He really wanted to come back to Park?

HR: Oh, yeah. Yeah. He sold out up there then. And after he found out-- we all agreed; we just signed that place over to him, and they come down. They had quite a struggle, they couldn't get on relief at that time, but her mother, his wife's mother, she helped 'em out that winter. The old lady was good enough, she had five or six milk cows that she turned over to 'em.

SS: Your stepmother?

HR: Yeah. Stepmother did, so they could be selling a little cream to get a little grocery money. So, she done pretty good. And there was a cayuse team to do a little ground scratching, you might call it. ~~But~~ all it amounted to; but they got by for a few years. And that's how come he and I in 1936, we was out cutting logs together.

SS: So what did you do? How did you come out----?

HR: Well, now, that's what I say-- then I got this cash money, see, \$1200-- and I was working on relief down here in Moscow. I was only gettin' forty dollars a month to feed my family on, crushing rocks. Them days they didn't have a street down here on Lewis street-- Lewis Street was muddy, it rained; 1934 it rained all winter. Took four horses to pull a wagon that was sunk down half way on the spokes to go through and dump these rocks in this mud, see. And I was out there pounding them rock to get 'em through the crusher; forty dollars a month. And that's the way it went on for a few years and when I got this money then in '39

well then, I had a appendicitis operation, too. I had to go in debt for that. We were renting then, that was just before I got the place, that was the last year before I got this little place in Moscow, before we got our heir money, you might say. That was about 1938 when I was operated on. And I was living right there down on Kenneth Avenue, paying rent, and I was so bad, I'd been settin pins for to make a little extra money besides the relief money, ^{for} a fellow was running a bowling alley down here at Moscow; 35¢ a line was all I got.

SS: 35¢ a line? What's a line? A game?

HR: A line, yeah. I mean a-- oh, them there, what's it-?

SS: An alley?

HR: It's a line-- oh, it's a line-- no, a score board. It's a line that they count ten.

SS: Right.

HR: Yeah. And it's one of them lines, near as I can remember it, was the way he paid it. I don't know, I didn't get very damn much. Well, then one winter-- now, wait, now, I'm getting too far-- So then, let's see now-- I got operated on in '38, and finally got to working along and I told the boys; kept talking, "Oh, boy," I said, "I'd like to get a place but I don't have much money, I finally got \$1200 cash for my estate money." And one guy spoke up and he says, "I've got an aunt here in town," he says, "that's got a two acre tract out here in Moscow; east Moscow. Over there the other side of D Street, on E Street. She'll probably sell it to you." I says, "I'm gonna see her." Sharp was her name. I went over there, "Yeah." Cash, you know, that talked. And I said, "Boy, I'll just flop that old check over for that place." There was a small five room house, very small, and it was cold, only one board shack, but there was a big barn on it. And Dad had given me

a cow, that's right, for doing some work for him and so we had our own cow and milk. And I put that into boysenberries and the first four years I told \$400^{A year} worth of Boysenberries off of it.

SS: Where was it at, now?

HR: East E Street. It's still there, but it's gone it's on big business there, you might say. There's a big housing department. I kept it for four years. I got that in '38 and in '42 we decided to move to that big war business in Portland. And I had this brother of mine down there, Simon, he had his own home bought that was the one that died with cancer when he was sixty four.

SS: He was living in Portland then?

HR: He was the maintenance of Portland City. He had a good job. A very dependable man, and the city honored him enough that after twenty years of faithful service they give him a certificate of award for his faithful service. He'd go out and donate work after work hours, see. That's why they done it, I guess. He wasn't like some of 'em, just lay down and strike. Lot of 'em, you know. No, he worked the way he figured he should and he'd keep good order out there on the maintenance crew. And when I went down there I was flat broke. I had this place, but that's all I had; didn't have no money. Around here you couldn't get no money. I mean wages. I sewed sacks around all over the country.

SS: Is that what you were doing besides the Boysen berries?

HR: Yeah, that's what I was doing.

SS: Did you go to Portland because Simon was there?

HR: I went and lived with Simon and his wife til I got a defense job. It's what I did. I stayed I think it was three or four weeks before I got a job. And I got tired of laying around. I says, "Simon, you know the city, could you rustle some place that I could go to work before I can

on to something else?" So he got me on what they call Iron Fireman. Them days, you see there was a lot of war stuff and ^hthey had to make these castings; great, big wheelcastings.

SS: What did you call it, Iron Fireman?

HR: Iron Fireman. That was the name. I've got the book, I had to join the union.

SS: You showed me that book, yeah. He got you on what? Iron Fireman?

HR: Iron Fireman. And so when I got on that, then they come up a place for sale. I told Simon, and his wife, Grace, my sister-in-law, she's gonna come up this summer, I guess, she said she was. I got a card from her Christmas. Anyway, I says, "I'd like to get some work." And, "Well," he says, "the only place I know is right down there at the Iron Fireman. It's pretty hard work." I said, "I Don't care, just so I get work." And I got on at eighty-one cents an hour there and you worked like a beaver, but I handled it and the little foreman, he says, "You know, Helmer," he says, "what you're doing?" And I says, "No." "Well," he says, "you're doing just two men's work." And so that give me a lee-way then. ^{FINALLY} I had to hoist it up-- you know what a truckbed is, high, and I was just about all in and I said, "Hey, you gotta a bar here that I can get five or six of them castings on at one clip?" See, we had a steam hoist there. "That way," I said, "I could make him holler or sweat." So, he finally did. And he said, "What you gonna do?" And, I said, "I'm gonna take several at a time," I said, "so I can cover him up, and make him quit hollering for more." Boy, I had that feller sweatin'. Well then, one day, the wife had heard over the radio that they wanted - Oh, I'd took up a school before I went there. I figured I had to learn something about iron- I'd taken up this acetylene welding.

SS: Where at?

HR: Here in Moscow. Right down on-- well, now, I guess it was right off a

Main Street, right about where Rosauer's is. That's where it was at that time. And I happened to know the fellow that -- we'd boarded when we went to school ^{here} in Mosocw, we'd boarded with the family there. His mother and his dad, Elmer Humphrey. And he was arunnin' this school. And when I went down there to get on, you know, he says, "God, Helmer, you're gettin' too old to take that." Let's see that was in '42. I was fifty-four then. "Well," I said, "I'd like to get something-- I gotta get some kind of a trade so I can get better wages. Around Moscow here only in Harvest time and I sew sacks I can get any kind of a wage." So he said, "Alright, I'll try you out." And, boy, I passed. I made a go out of it.

HR: Well, you'll have to come back.

END

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins, October 26, 1976