

HELMER RINGSAGE
Interview Three

Interviewed by:
Sam Schragger

Oral History Project
Latah County Museum Society

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HELMER RINGSAGE

Park, Central Ridge; b. 1888

farmer and logger.

2.1 hours

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Helmer Ringsage

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with Sam Schrager

March 5, 1976

II. Transcript

HELMER RINGSAGE

This conversation with HELMER RINGSAGE took place at his home in Moscow, Idaho on March 5, 1976. The interviewer is SAM SCHRAGER.

HELMER RINGSAGE: Well, the way those ponies in the winter, they would go down in that canyon just south of us there. See, that was called the Big Canyon. There's a Big and a Little Canyon, you see. The Little Canyon was north of us, and the Big Canyon was south of us. And that's where they grazed in the winter, because they were smart. Just as soon as grass got ready on top of the hill, they would come-- we seen two-mile strings of 'em, single file, all colors of the rainbow, coming, going up the ridge, higher ground, they would pasture during the summer. The grass would be good up there, then just as soon as it come snow and they couldn't feed up there, they come back down in the canyon. Not only that, but it was a warm place. Don't you see? The wind didn't hit them so hard. And they did come up; once in a while they'd come up on our place. We had a scab on Dad's homestead, was a scab, we got mounds of dirt, you understand? The scab rock was around it, you see what I mean? And this pile of dirt, nature just brought it there, see. And that would grow, while they were out somewhere else feeding in the summer, that grass grewed up this tall. But when it come three feet of snow, you still would see them ponies get up there-- they were pretty active buggers, and they were smart. If ^{their} feed got a little low down there, they'd afraid-- or something, anyway they got nervous, they come up on the hill and I'd get over there-- and all I could see was them apawing around to get this grass.

SS: Right through the snow.

HR: Right through the snow. And we had a straw stack below the old cabin

that Dad lived in when he homesteaded. The very first one that I was in. And, I ^{CAN} remember, these ponies, in the winter, if they couldn't get the grass on top, they got smart, they searched around and found this straw stack of ours, and they started eating there. Well, Dad or us neither one bothered 'em. Only thing I was a little kid, I don't know how old, maybe, oh, I should judge, I wasn't over nine or ten or eleven, along in there. No, I wasn't eleven. About nine or ten, 'cause it was shortly after Dad moved, 'cause he still had the cabin there. That's why I remembered. And, I was going to be smart, or I thought I was. Little colt was in there, see. I had a twine string, and I thought, "Well," I told the boys, "I was gonna jump on it and put this string around it so I could hold it." Well, I stayed about two jumps and that was the last of that! (Chuckles) That's all I wanted of that riding stunt. But, our neighbors, the little Irish boys-- there were three boys, brothers, that had--their dad had bought 'em some saddles, you know, little saddles, little kid saddles, made just like a grownup saddle. They only cost 'em eight dollars a piece, and so they had caught up one of these roan ponies, yearling, or two year old, I guess it was, and they told me-- we celebrated down at Peck, ^{that's part of Peck,} we celebrated Fourth of July down there, and had probably a dime apiece -- that was after Mother died-- well, their mother would have dinner for all of us. She would bring the dinner. But these boys ^{they seen that} I was anxious to ride these saddles, so they said, "Well, Helmer, if you want to ride that roan out here in the field and try to stick him without getting bucked off, and don't pull no leather, see,"--

SS: Don't pull no leather?

HR: No-- that means, don't hang on, see, just try to ride him without getting ahold of the saddle horn.

- HR: Well, I said, "Okay." I got on this one, he wouldn't guide, you know, he just struck out and all of a sudden he lit into bucking, see. Well, I had to pull leather. They didn't know whether they was going to let me ride to Peck or not. Well, "You better let me try it anyway. I'd like to try him once more." That was the old grade, and it was right along this little canyon breaks, and ^{got} just good and started, we had rode, I guess about a mile to get to where this place was, and that little bugger started bucking. He acted like he was going down the canyon, you know. I told the boys-- 'cause it was all steep going down to Peck, it was all hill, ^{I figured} like as not I'd get bucked off for sure.
- SS: Well, what was the trouble then? Did they give you a wilder horse than they was riding?
- HR: The same one that started bucking in the field, see.
- SS: Well, did they have trouble riding?
- HR: No, they had ponies of their own, see, already broke. But this one here was a plumb wild one, just picked up off the range. But, finally my Dad, he caught a pony, a bay mare, just pretty nice pony, and rangy, built like a Hamiltonian . There was all kinds of 'em you know. And that was a dandy, outside of--when the boys would be getting to riding Sunday-- we'd be riding together, and they found out by hollering that this thing would try to out run 'em, just curled his tail up like that and just took off and I couldn't hold it. It'd rare up and go, you know. It didn't buck, but it just simply run away. And I got disgusted, you know about that, I didn't like it. "You guys quit that hollerin'" But they wouldn't do it, they got a kick out of it, you know how kids are. And it went on-- let's see now,--

SS: You kept that pony?

HR: Oh, yes, I kept that pony for several years. But, when I become eighteen years old, that's the time when I got rid of it. There's a neighbor from over to Park come over there and he had a little bit of a brown pony, and I thought it looked awful cute, mine was kinda on the rangy side, and I got fed up, see, with that racing stuff. I asked if this one was gentle, "Oh, yeah," he said, "it won't run. You gotta beat it along to make it go at all." Well, I rode it a little bit and I thought it'd be kind of a comfort. So, then the year that I run away-- the spring that I run away, this is the thing I had. He got the best of my deal. I don't if I told you about how I run away.

SS: Oh, yeah, you told me all about that.

HR: Well, that was the thing that I had to-- I guess I told you about how I had to walk.

SS: Yes.

HR: Well, that's enough of that, then.

SS: Well, now, wait-- about these ponies. These ponies, were they wild ponies?

HR: Oh, they were Indian ponies. The Indians had a lot of 'em there. There was one day-- that was when we lived in the old cabin-- the one that Dad first built when he homesteaded. And an old Indian buck come by there, and of course, poor Mother-- Dad was out harvesting- Mother was kinda scared of 'em, you know, and us little devils. We were only eight, nine years old- I- and I was the oldest. She only had about-- let's see- '97- wait now- I was eight- or nine- Simon, the third boy would be, he'd be two years old. He was just a baby. So, he motioned he wanted something to eat, see. He couldn't talk

English. Boy, she fed him. Cooked some potatoes- we did have potatoes that we'd raised during the summer, see. That ground would raise good vegetables. That's all we had one winter to live off of. ^{Practically.}
^ Potatoes and rutabagas and carrots. And us kids was full of vinegar, you know. We didn't dare go outdoors. I told that before, I guess, we only had one pair of shoes a year. And the Old Man when he brought 'em home, you know, all three of us started circling around with 'em. He made us come in and take 'em off. And that was in October, when it was cold weather, too.

SS: You kids couldn't really get around during the winter you had to stay in.

HR: Oh, no. We had to do our playing in the house.

SS: What about the chores?

HR: No chores, then. No, no chores then. No Dad only had-- well, he had a cow and two cayuses, that's all he had, now, that's what I'm telling you, how he struggled. That's all he had. That first winter, he didn't have feed to feed ^{hurry,} he had to feed his ponies. He had raised enough hay on that twelve acres that he had seeded, and he had butched this cow; sold half of it to buy this hay, see, the first year. And the next year he had hay enough to sell to buy seed-- flax seed- to sow. That's how he struggled. And I was a little boy then, had to walk them tracks, four o'clock in the morning-- I guess I told you that.

SS: Well, now, these Indian ponies, could people pick 'em up if they wanted to?

HR: Well, they did. I'll tell you- you had to get one that wasn't branded. See, get one that's branded, them Indians could make you trouble. ~~There~~ was an uncle of mine, Adolph Swenson, for one, he picked

one with an SP brand on it, brown. And Adolph^{my uncle,} could ride a bucking horse to a T, you know. He rode that thing over to Park, and he got by with it, 'cause he went over there. Indians over there didn't catch him, see. And he traded that horse off. But that horse laid into bucking, but he broke him to ride and traded him off, see.

SS: You said that your Dad got into horses and that's where he made a little money.

HR: Well, he got into horse raising. That's what put him on his feet. After a few years. The army come in there one time and bought horses. You know how much one farmer got for his horses? He got six hundred dollars for a nice gray span of-- they were half Percheron. Six hundred dollars! They were well matched, arched necks; they were regular prize winners. They kept running the price up. The Old Man Rogers was the boy that sold 'em. And Dad sold horses for around two hundred and fifty; two and two hundred and fifty dollars a horse. Four and five hundred dollars a span. That's what put him on his feet, the grain didn't bring it. What little crop he had in grain, that didn't bring it.

SS: Where did he get his horses to start with?

HR: There was a fella name of Settle, had a stallion, and he bred his mares to this stallion, see, and kept raising 'em. Saved all the mares he could. He'd have like four, five, six colts a year, after he got lined out, see. That's how come. And he wasn't the only one. Old Amos Fredrickson was another one, raised horses. Well, pretty near all the farmers started raising 'em, that could, see. But the great, big farmers they'd rather buy 'em than to raise 'em. Lot of 'em did. Just wasn't interested in raising 'em.

SS: Well, I want to ask you a dumb question. Dumb one.

HR: Yeah.

- SS: Why was it that it was easier for him to make a little money raising horses than off a crop on his ground?
- HR: Oh, that didn't bring nothing, compared to horses. He just fed the stuff he raised. He was getting more money to feed it to these horses, don't you understand? ^{Them days.} Not only that, but he had that trouble of marketing going that old grade with that team. And did I tell you about how I wrecked, when I was working for Dad?
- SS: Yes, you told me about --
- HR: Pretty near going over the Clearwater River grade.
- SS: You told me, that was a rough grade.
- HR: That old grade was a bad one. But it wasn't that that done it. I've got over the grade, and a lot of 'em didn't. Wes Thomas, he broke a leg there, because his brake beam broke going down this twenty-three percent grade; it was steep, part of it, twenty-three percent and it was rocky. Right there's where my brake flew off, when I was a kid seventeen I had four hundred-- forty sacks of wheat and four horses and when that brake flew off the wagon just shoved on the wheel, and one of the wheels ^{ers} went down, see.
- SS: One of the what?
- HR: One of the wheelers fell down. See what I mean?
- SS: Sure.
- HR: And this brake-- I told Dad I wanted a long brake like the other farmers, so you could reach it here, settin' straight. No, you had to stoop down, like this, to get ahold of it. Little bit of a catch about like that caused my foot to slip off when I hit this big rock. There was three of us guys, one farmer ahead of me, Old Jimmy McBride, and Old Roy Malcolm behind me. And Jimmy Mc Bride's brichen broke

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and here he went back and we were trying to beat a bunch of farmers we could see coming down the Melrode Ridge grade, because if you didn't get down to the ferryboat first ahead of 'em, you had to sit there and wait maybe two, three or four hours, you had to take your turn, don't you see. And so, we all agreed that we had to hurry to get down there. Old Jimmy Mc Bride was ahead, and he struck out and I struck out, and of course, I was close enough behind him that I didn't see that big rock; I hit it, and that's what threw my brake off, 'cause it knocked my foot off. And there I was, five feet of slack with my lines, and I milked up my lines just as fast as I could. And I didn't want to get too close to the bank, I pulled a little bit, but I didn't want it too close, and I was just a settin' there like that; that old wagon, wide tired wagon, shaking. And I come pret'neat going over. I was clear out of the seat, the only thing that pulled me back was my lines. I had a good tight line and I pulled back and I grabbed the seat like that and set back in, and I didn't try that brake no more, I just let her go. I went about fifty or sixty or seventy-five feet down that steep slope to where I got to where it's kinda a little bit more flat, and this horse a dragging's what saved me. He had fell with his back towards the tongue, and the leaders, I had good leaders, if it hadn't a been for the good leaders I wouldn't a made it-- had got his front feet in the lead bar, and my leaders drug him down the hill. And the hind feet was just swinging. I was scared he was going to get under that wheel. See, I kept lookin'. If they had it would have jackknifed me off the grade. But it didn't, because they kept pulling him. Good leaders-- if it hadn't a been for good leaders, as I say, I'd never made it. We called him Gray Prince and another colt along side of him--

No, that was Ringbone Prince that was a good leader, this was Gray Prince I had that went down, just a colt. When I got down and got my brakes set, you know, that's when I commenced to get scared. I was thinkin' fast, see. Got the brakes set and stopped. Old Malcolm behind me, he come down pretty close. I was pretty shaky, I was worried it, I got him up and he stood there, like this, and I was afraid he'd broke his hip dragging ^{him} over them boulders. And Roy says, "Golly, Helmer, you come down there awful fast." "Well," I said, "I come down there like a bat outta hell didn't I?" I was just joking, see. "Roy," I says, "when I get out and get this horse straightened around a little I'm going to pull out; let you by and when you get to Peck, you tell that blacksmith, Sid Boyd, that I want this brake fixed just like yours so I can reach it and set it when I want to, with ease, not have to be stooping ^{for it}. And," I says, "I don't know what time I'll get home tonight, but," I says, "you tell Sid, I know Sid." But you didn't dare bother Sid, he was a busy old blacksmith, a pretty good temper. And he was busy shoeing horses, good horseshoer. I waited til he got through and he'd look at you kind of mean like, dark complected fellow,. I said, "Sid, did Roy tell you what I wanted?" "Yes, but, by God," he says, "I can't get it yet. Be after dinner."

SS: Be after dinner?

HR: Yes, after dinner. "Well, that's alright, Sid, "I said, "can you fix it today?" "Yeah," he said. "Okay," I said, "I'll just go put the horses up for dinner and feed 'em and get my dinner. And, I'll come back when you get ready." And, by God, he did. But it was about mid-night before I got home that night. And Dad wanted to know what's the matter. I said, "You're lucky me and the horses come home alive,

Dad." I said, "By golly, I'll tell you. I got that brake fixed, I don't care what the price is, but you've got to pay Old Sid Boyd whatever that cost." So, he didn't say another word. He took it. He had to. Well, that's when I was seventeen, see. And I'd been going through all this. And we couldn't make no money-- I told you all about that though, making money to go to Canada. *You got that.*

SS: Well, the deal about actually clearing the land so you could plant a crop on it. Now, that land, it was just bunch grass to start with? Right?

HR: Yeah. Bunchgrass and sunflowers.

SS: What was the clearing of that land like?

HR: It was a prairie, but you had to plow it.

SS: How did you clear it?

HR: Here, now, wait a minute, I'll tell you. Dad only had a fourteen inch breaking plow, and he had to borrow another cayuse from Oscar Nelson to help to break this land, that is, the first year. And, he couldn't break til in June when the grass was good, 'cause he had no hay, he had no grain, and he got the blacksmith to sharpen that shear. He said, "Don't make it hard, make it soft, so I can coldhammer it." You know what coldhammerin' is? So that he could have it just razor sharp to cut those great big sunflowers. They had roots this big. And he was smart enough to figure it out that he could go down deeper but that made it hard for the horses to pull. But you couldn't hardly cut through the main crown, you had to go under it, get down to the taproot. And that's the way he struggled. And while his horses would eat, he'd turn the plow up and he'd take the hammer and maybe

a wedge and sit there and sharpen it up. See?

SS: How much could he clear?

HR: Well, I don't know-- that I can't remember. I know he plowed this forty-seven acres up, I think, that one summer. And he just kept adding a little bit, little by little every year, see. Til he got it all broke. And then, when us boys-- no, that's before Mother died that I started plowing. I guess he got most of it broke up before she died. She died in 1901. He homesteaded in '96. He homesteaded in the year 1896.

SS: That's when you moved over then?

HR: That's when we moved over there.

SS: He had it pretty much broken up?

HR: Yeah. It took him about five years, you see.

SS: Well, what about you as a boy using that walking plow? That was pretty rough work for a kid, wasn't it?

HR: Well, like I told you, I was only eleven when I started out with it. It was up high here. The first time it was a fourteen inch plow, and then finally he got a new Canton Clipper plow, see, sixteen inches, but--

SS: Canton?

HR: What they called a Canton Clipper. That's the name of it. And it scoured better. Being a fourteen inch, that's always sticky. Just that rich and it'd be sticky. So he got wise and got a sixteen inch and the Canton Clipper seemed to scour better anyway. And the bigger the plow the better it scoured.

SS: When you say scoured, what do you mean by that?

HR: Well, clog up. It didn't plow it just pushed the dirt. By golly--

So, he had me plowing-- well, heck, it'd be snow-- a foot of snow around Christmas. I had to plow two or three months in the fall to get the ground plowed with only one plow, a hundred and sixty-five acres. You can't plow them short days only about two acres a day; them three cayuses. Well, then--

SS: You'd been working on this all day?

HR: I worked-- well, it was only about six, seven hours, but I'd be out there that long steady. From nine o'clock til three o'clock was about all I'd work, in them short days. But that's six hours and I didn't even get a lunch out there. And that snow would be flopping down here on this leg from the side of the furrow.

SS: For a kid, it sounds rough.

HR: Well, I was eleven years old, and I kept that up-- he didn't get a gangplow til I was-- what was it I said? I was about-- wait now, I got to figure that out--

SS: Well, wait, you told me about the gangplow, when you got ready for it and he got it for you.

HR: I was about fifteen, I think then, fifteen or sixteen.

SS: Listen, I want to ask you something else about his locating there. You told me where he picked and how he laid it out. Was he the first one in that vicinity?

HR: No. He had a neighbor, Pres Regan. Pres Regan come from Park-- he had a homestead in Park, too. But Pres Regan and Dad I guess musta located about the same time, because-- Then there was another fellow there, John Thomas's uncle, Wes Thomas, he located, I think, about the same time.

SS: Did they get-- Did they have to draw numbers to get that?

HR: No, it was throwed open; free homesteads. First one, first served.

But, I'll tell you, one farmer there-- oh, yes, I got two or three of 'em I can tell you about. Let's say, I guess I better start down on the Ridge first-- Rogers, his name was Reuben Rogers, that was the old man, and Mel Rogers was the son, And Old Reuben Rogers homesteaded, we'll say on the--let's see, it was on the east side of Rasmussen. Rasmussen was a single bachelor, living out here on the breaks, and he'd took up a homestead. Mel Rogers took up forty acres-- no, I'm getting ahead of-- yes, he did, too, take up forty acres. Then old Reuben Rogers-- well, it'd be a son-in-law to Reuben Rogers, that lived in Montana, he had a little money, he come down and homesteaded eighty acres, right just across from the Old Man. Then the Hamms, that was the Irish family, they had a homestead south of that again-- southeast. And that's another story I can tell you. I stood there when Old Reuben Rogers--Old Ham, the old husband was out just like my dad harvesting, and this Old Reuben Rogers stood there and cussed this woman with all these children. Had her acrying, wanted her to move off of that forty that they had. See, it was close to their place. Trying to jump it. And, you know what the farmers did then? They even built a cabin-- I mean these Rogerses had built a cabin on this forty, trying to jump it, don't you see? You know what the neighbors all did? They got kahooches one night, moonlight night, they took that cabin and rolled it down the hillside! That's how they treated them Rogers, and they didn't get to jump that place. They stayed there and homesteaded. See, the rest of the farmers from there on up the Ridge they were organized. And they also built this grade^{down} where there wasn't any grade when we moved up there. About a three mile switchback grade down the Briggs Point, we called it, right down~~wn~~ over the ridge; see, ~~only~~ they went ^{Along} the hillside, just switchbacking

like that, see, til they got down to the bottom of the grade, or down the hill.

SS: Now, they got together and did that as a-

HR: They got together, and I'll tell you who was the cook. Mrs. John Centers-- that's Old Man Center's wife, was the cook. They built up a little cabin down there on what they called the saddle, kind of a level spot, see, in this mountain. They built a cabin there, because then they could go up, work up above the saddle and down below and come back there to eat, see. Evenings, I guess they must a took a lunch along at noon. But everything was done handwork. No, wait a minute, now-- I was so small I couldn't say--they musta had those scrapers, two horse scrapers, like I told you I had digging the pond. That's about what they had.

SS: And that was the first road?

HR: That's the first road they got. Well, they didn't get the other new road til 1914. 'Cause, I worked on it. I was married then, see. Been married a year. Well, wait a minute, they had a contractor, I gotta think of who he was-- let's see. He took a bid on that-- building that new grade from, well, it wasn't quite our corner-- it was just about half a quarter from the Breaks to our place. It was on the place that my uncle bought, see. Right there they started, and they went along this canyon sidehill all the way down on the south side of this big canyon slope, see, all the way down. They made a seven mile grade agoing there. Some of the people down at the lower end they-- Old Settle ^{he balked} ~~he wanted~~ to have it built close to the old grade, remodel it, see, is what he had figured.

SS: How far was the old grade, or how different was the old grade from the new one. Where was the old grade?

HR: The old grade was the one that was switchbacking, see.

- SS: Oh, it switchbacked. This one just went right down.
- HR: Well, no, this was zigzagging along following the routine of the mountain. You had to go ^{INTO} them ~~coolies~~ and out and around the ridges. It wasn't straight by any means, but you did no switchback by going down the hill like the other one. See what I mean?
- SS: Did they keep up the old road after the new one?
- HR: Well, that was up to the people that lived on the lower end. And the Rogerses, just to show you, they stayed put. Well, Settler, well see he got so ~~disgusted~~, he finally just ^{sold} out and left. And the new guy was Deman, fellow by the name of Deman.
- SS: Why did they get disgusted?
- HR: Because he didn't think ~~well~~, he was in debt a little bit, was one trouble. He had a hard time making a go of it. And his boy left him. And he was plumb alone. He was a cripple, and so he damn near had to sell out. And Rogers, they played it pretty cute. They got it for little or nothing. Well, they ^{sicked} another guy in it, and they knew he couldn't make it, and they got it from him for nothing. And so, now, they own all that--not ~~them~~ they're dead. Old Man Rogers and his son is dead, but the grandson, Edgar, he's the boy that owns the whole works. From there on up I guess they got, oh, I guess about four or five places. Clear up to our place. See, it's a narrow ridge. And so, that's the way it went. Well, now, that's about all of that.
- SS: Let me ask you about something else in there.
- HR: Yeah. Yeah.
- SS: The cabin. Your father built the cabin.
- HR: Well, just a little cabin to begin with, see. That was the homestead cabin, and then he built-- here I'll show you a picture here.

- SS: The name of your farm? Did you call it Grand View?
- HR: Yeah, yeah. he named it that. Dad named it that.
- SS: Was it a grand view?
- HR: It was. Yeah, you could see ~~Cottonwood~~ Butte, way south. That's about thirty miles from where we lived. You could see the--? Let's see now-- What do you call this here? Big Potlatch Mountain. I think they that.
- SS: Big Baldy.
- HR: Yeah. We could see that on a clear day. Yeah, it was. That's kinda high up there.
- SS: Well, this ^{little} ~~new~~ house that you lived in, the first one that they built, that wasn't very roomy, didn't have much to it?
- HR: Well, we kids had to sleep up in the attic. You didn't even have a stairway, just a ladder. And, I can tell you another little story there. ^{laying there, I} I got a toothache, and Dad had went and-- yeah, let's see-- yeah, he was an agent for this Japanese Oil. And he'd been doing pretty good selling it. There was one old Dutch woman didn't believe it was any good, see. "Well, it's just strong enough," he says, "you put it on your skin it'll burn you." Well, she stuck her tongue on it, and she took to coughing, had to get some water. (Chuckles) That was very good for toothache, see, if you could hold it in your mouth a little while or put it on your gums. That's all you had to do, really. Well, I laid there asleep--- (Chuckles)
- I pulled it out alright and it come in this eye. Boy, I run down them- that ladder, I run around this log house here a hollering for Dad to help me. God, I had Japanese Oil in my eye, it was this eye- right eye. "Oh," he said-- he was groggy and sleepy, says, "Oh, go to bed." I said, "Listen, Daddy, it's Japanese Oil in my eye." I

said, "I had a toothache and I tried to get it in my mouth," I says, "and I was sleepy and pulled the cork out." He understood. I was just a tearing around, I was just as crazy as I could be. He got up and got me some water and I started washing and I finally got it out. Oh, that was a heck of a time. (Chuckles)

SS: You know, your mother, you said before she died she was sick for a long time.

HR: Oh, she was -- Dad had sent ^{her} to Spokane to find out what the trouble was, to a specialist.

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And he shouldn't atold her, but he said-- the doctor told her that she had TB and wasn't going to live long. He told her that right to her face. She says, "Will I have time enough to get home to see my family?" "Oh, yes," he said, "you might live six months, eight months maybe a year," he says, "if you take care of yourself." Well, she lived, I think, let's see. Yes, not quite a year. She was up there in the spring, the spring before, and she died February 22nd. See. About ten months, I guess she lived.

SS: That last year, did she still try to work and do everything?

HR: Oh, Dad give her what they called Scotch Emulsion. That was 'sposed to cure TB. And she'd drink that, but it didn't help her, she was too far gone. And she'd cough up, I guess it kinda loosened up this stuff. I've seen that poor Mother of mine just strangle sometimes, and tears come out of her eyes and she'd be all exhausted and fall over. And you'd think she'd died. That's how bad she was.

SS: Do you think it was much rougher for her living in a little cabin that it would have been in a house?

HR: Well, all them old pioneers-- she wasn't the only one died on them

prairies. Mrs. Hart was another one that died of TB, and Mrs. Tettler was another one that died with TB. It's like this cousin of mine, she was a visiting, her and her brother and their husbands-- and this young-- she was kinda dumb, she says-- when I said Mother didn't live quite to be thirty-two, she would have if she'd lived til May, see, she lacked from February til May of being thirty-two. That'd be February, March, April, May-- about three months, a being thirty-two. So, I took her over here, I said, "Looky here now, here's the bedroom." Dad moved it for a chickenhouse, he had ^{Attached} onto that log cabin I showed you-- on the west side. And I said, "Us kids wasn't big enough to cut wood, Dad had to do it all." And, I said, "That's all the heat she had was that wood stove." I said, "How would you like to live in a thing like that, being sick?" And he warmed her feet by putting hot bricks-- either bricks or flatirons by her feet, to keep her feet warm. How'd you like to live like that? And pull through it?" She shut up. "Listen," I said, "I'm proud of my parents," I said, "boy, they was just the most honorable ones I ever dreamt of," I said. "This is my dad here, see. And Dad knew it, too. Course he kinda favored me then, I guess he did. He didn't do too much favoring. I'm glad he didn't. He made us kids get out and dig. Now, he helped that uncle there, and he helped another one, Sigrid, that went East. Same as give him seven hundred dollars. 'Course, Sigrid made good, though. He went back there and got educated. That was the thing in them days. Nobody got educated. But he went back there. He was a horse man. Went back there and he got married to a woman that had a little money, and she put him through veterinary school. And he became a veterinary back in North Dakota, I think it was; North or South Dakota. And he made good. As far as I know

he never did pay Dad back.

SS: And so your dad, he was more likely, maybe, to give money to the-
his brothers than to his sons.

HR: Yeah, he helped them out more than he did us kids. Oh, he helped me, I won't say he didn't say he didn't help me. The first year I was married, why, we didn't get only-- Well, he done this way-- Before I got married, I was sewing sacks up there on the Ridge for this Settle boy-- he had a threshing machine then-- he was running his dad's threshing machine. And this Bob Thompson come down there. He heard I was - you see, our name was all over the prairie, and they knew who was to be depended on and who wasn't. And one reason was, Dad had been in that insurance-- I told you about that fire insurance plan. And so they got well acquainted and they figured from that he was an honest guy and the children'd be pretty good. So this old Bob Thompson come down and he seen me working. I was sewing sacks to beat the devil. 'Course, I was twenty-five there, a young man, husky. And he come over to where I was at and he says, -- I guess the machine had stopped a little or he had a chance to talk a little-- maybe it was noonhour, I don't remember. He says, "Say," he says, "I'm looking for a young couple," he says, "I understand you're gonna get married this fall." "Yeah." Says, "Well," he says, "I'd like to hire-- he says, "I'd like to have you go into partnership with me for cattle." Well, I kinda darn near wanted to buy half in, see. Well, Dad talked me out of that trap. "Don't ya do it," says, "I've heard"-- He knew something about this guy, see. He says, "You better get acquainted. You'd better live there for a year first. Work cheap for the first year, by the month. Put forty, forty-five dollars ^{A month} for the both of you, and board." Which we did. I put it up

to him, I said, "I and the misses'll work for you for forty-five dollars and board." And I had already bought my stove, just a cook-stove, wood stove and some furniture and bedding-- bed and bedding. And I'd made that much money that I was able to do that much. And I told him that. Well, that's just what he wanted, see, somebody that was kinda equipped. And he had dickered for a place over-- that was on a mountainside, too, Angel Ridge side, just up from Peck about three, or four or five miles, and about four or five miles down to Lenore, they call it. It's all on a hillside, but he had bench land, see what I mean? With springs on it. Thought he was going to go into cattle, see. Cheap land. He got that land cheap. And there was just a shanty, old board shanty, that we lived in. And so, he agreed to pay-- and he did-- pay forty-five dollars a month. We got our money.

SS: Did he have a **house there** of his own besides?

HR: No, we all lived in the same house wth him. He ate with us. My missus cooked for him, see. That's what he wanted.

SS: So that was the work she did for him?

HR: That was it. She was the housekeeper, and I was to do this plowing and hauling hay and whatnot. And if he bought cattle go out to help him get the cattle home. So, here now, here's an incidence I want to tell you. We borrowed a sled from a neighbor, Updike, I guess that was his name, or similar to it-- Dykes was his name. And that was a good sled. We made it alright. But one time he had to buy hay from Springston's up on Angel Ridge. We had to go up a mountain to get to their place where the hay was. And they had a bobsled, but it had a big hole in the front bolster with a kingbolt, and it just rocked, just like a rocking chair. And Springstons told us

"You can have that sled, but look out, it'll tip over on flat ground."
Well, it's the only thing Bob could see, and he had an overcoat on,
we'd got the hay on, ^{we had a pole on it,} loose hay, tied at both ends, and of course, I
was driving the four horses; cayuses they were. And we started down
this mountain, didn't have no roughlock on, just a little bit of snow
but there'd be rock, it'd hit rock once in a while, kind of slow it
up. And I could feel that thing arockin'. And old Bob was settin'
behind-- or in the middle of the hay load-- two forks like this--
with his overcoat on. And I was young, see, ^{catty,} I stepped over here to
the edge, I said, "Bob," I said, "you better get back to the end there
this thing's gonna tip." Big chuckholes, you know, now and then. And
I couldn't make the horses go slower, they was trottin'. All of a sud-
den, BINGO! she went. And I jumped. Bobsled, I hit the front
bob and it accidentally did happen to hit me in the crotch, I jumped
off, I was catty, and I jumped off to the side and I was still hold-
ing the horses. And I tied 'em to the sled. The whole load of hay
rolled down, and it just happened that a yellow pine tree just about
four foot in diameter, about as far down as to this barn, right down
a bunch of shale rock, and old Bob was shoved all the way down. He
laid right square under the middle of that load of hay, and I could
hear him, you know. He says, "Get me out, get me out." Just barely
could hear him because he was clear under the middle! "Well," I said,
"you got both the forks." Well, I was excited, but he did tell me
that, he said, "You better cut the rope, get the pole off." Well,
that did let the rack back and loosened the hay and I pawed it with my
hands. Got him out. You know what happened to him? He broke three
ribs for his smartness trying to tell me what to do, and he didn't
listen to me. -- So, I got to tell you more about that guy-- that

was quite a trip we had there. So then, oh, he couldn't help me. I had to carry all that hay up and haul it home myself. Carry it! I don't remember how long it took me, but I had to get that hay carried up because we had to have the hay at home, didn't do us any good down the hillside.

SS: You mean you didn't have no sled there?

HR: Well, the sled was up there, but I had to get the hay up to the sled. Steep! Hell, as far as that sled was to the barn, I had to climb that shale of rock with that hay to get up there, and then when I got just in the gate, last gate, to where we lived by the barn, the damn thing tipped over again. That's the last time we used that sled! "Bob," I said, "I won't go with that sled no more. Now, the next load, I want that other sled." And he couldn't help me, I had to go up the mountain and go over to Springston's to get that load of hay myself. But I was glad of it. Felt a darn sight better off. I had to work a little harder to get the load on maybe, but--

SS: Did this guy have enough land to raise cattle?

HR: Oh, he went broke.

SS: You need a lot of land to raise cattle.

HR: Naw. He only had fifteen or twenty head of cattle. He was a dumb-nut. That old farmer, ^{Wheat Farmer} thought he'd rent his wheat land-- he had a little wheat land up there by Mohler, thought he'd make enough to keep this other goin', I guess. to tide him over. Oh, wait, I gotta tell you this-- this wasn't all just beef, kind of a dual-purpose cow, see. He was selling a little cream to pay us for staying there. Well, God, the cream didn't bring much money. He'd get maybe one five gallon can of cream a week, and he had to haul that clear to Peck; five, six miles. And then, in the spring, when it come to

planting this corn; I'd plowed up some timothy sod for him-- he wanted that plowed to put into corn. So he made a marker, you know to plant the corn in-- rows, you understand. He made a marker and I had -- you didn't need more than two horses to pull this marker-- so he says, "I'll go to Peck with the can of cream, and you take the the two and mark that corn ~~ground~~" I said, "Okay." Well, he hadn't made it quite right, it was running along the nose and it would jump around on this bad ground. So I stood on it, behind, to hold it down. Well, of course, that made it tough going for the horses, two cayuse team, I had to puff 'em, rest 'em. And he come back along in the afternoon. That was in the spring, see. That's what started the ~~of~~ fugalty, see, misunderstanding between us. So, he says, "Alright, kid get off there. Why didn't you put a rock on there?" Well, he put a rock and it didn't work very good, he had to change the hitch. I told him it wouldn't work, it had to be just about my weight to hold it down. He found it out, he had to change that hitch on there. I don't remember just which way he had to change it, but he had to change it. But, anyway, one cow he bought was a great, big, roan Durham, see, and she was supposed to be a kicker. And he was sitting over there milking on one side of the barn, and I was over here, and when he said that she was a kicker, I was just kinda curious, and I was settin' there looking, you know, watching him while he was milk-^{ing} away, but I was looking to see. All of a sudden, that cow just reached up with her hind foot-- if he'd a had her in the stanchion it'd a been fine, but he had a long chain, she had room to back up, see, and she backed up enough she got her hind foot up here just as clever as could be, and kicked him back like that and just as he went she give him another kick in the rear! And I ^{WANTED} laughed, oh, I coulda

died! I didn't dare, I's afraid he'd get mad at me, see, ^{I seen} he was a spunky guy. He was a man about sixty-five then, and I was only a young buck, twenty-five, you know. He had a cream separator and he was turning that cream separator and I come in there and I said, "Bob, you don't know how bad I wanted to laugh when I seen that cow kick you." And he was good-natured then. Well, he'd made this remark; ^{he} wasn't supposed to whip a cow. Made him so damn man he picked that stool up and, boy, he stood there and he pounded that cow. He was a husky old devil. He had a good, big, heavy neck and he was compact built, you know, sturdy built. So, he pushed up against the wall, ^{That held her pretty good,} he didn't get much milk, I don't think! (Chuckles) They claim when you fight a cow she'll hold her milk.

SS: Well, did you stay with him very long?

HR: Well, not a whole lot, then. Here's another thing that happened. He had a daughter going to Normal, down at Lewiston Normal. She come up there along after we'd got the planting all done, and she was only a kid, oh, about around sixteen or seventeen, along in there, going to that Normal School at Lewiston, going to try to be a schoolma'm, I guess. So these ponies was all out in the pasture, you know, grazing, and she had a girlfriend come there with her from Lewiston, and she ordered me to go get these ponies up and saddle 'em up. I guess Bob had a saddle or he'd borrowed some, I don't remember that, but he had saddles, and wanted me to saddle these ponies up so they could go take a ride. I said, "Okay." And I went and got 'em and saddled 'em up and brought 'em up there and they got on, took a ride, and then they come back, they just dropped the reins-- and well, the horses just took out in the pasture, and I didn't know nothing about it til they was gone, see. Then she started fussin' at me. "You gotta go catch them ponies." I said, "Jesus Christ, I caught 'em once,"

I said, "it's your turn now to get 'em." I was about ready to ~~balk~~ anyway, then. I said, "Goddam, they gonna order me around like this, they're gonna get fooled." So, of course, that brought the old man. That made him pretty--- I don't know, maybe they'd planned it that way, too. By God, I stayed put, I stayed with my ideas. "Well," he said, "I guess I can't afford to keep you people." I said, "That's fine, I'm ready to quit anyway." So, Dad, of course-- that's why I say Dad helped me-- he knew I had furniture up there, and he had friends at Peck. He got a place to store our furniture, he had no room at home. So, he come over with a four-horse wagon and he got to arguing with old Bob you see. Well, Dad told him off! "No wonder," he says,-- they used to raise hogs up at Mohler, see-- he says, "No wonder they call you Hog Thompson up there!" Oh, Dad was good and mad. He didn't answer Dad. I tell you Dad was pretty mad. See, how old was Dad then? Well, he was only forty something. He was nobody's fool. He could a took care of old Thompson alright. Thompson was at least sixty, maybe sixty-five. And he wasn't too catty, he was kinda muscle bound. He was pretty husky, but he wasn't near as good a man as he thought he was. Well, that ended that! Well, then, that was '14. 1914, see, that this happened, 'cause this was the first winter that we were married, that was 1913 and '14. Well, then that fall of '14 is when that new grade was being built. And I got this job down there, two bits an hour; ten hours, two and a half. From this contractor.

SS: What did you do on the grade, then?

HR: Huhhhh! Pick and shovel, please! And I and my uncle, the one that married my aunt-- Al Stamper, we didn't know nothing about digging rocks. You were supposed to take-- move one whole rock of hillside,

rocks included and everything ten foot, make a ten foot wide grade. One rod in ten hours. Well, we was up there scratching like little chickens! We didn't get noplac. Just happened to be an elderly man there, one that had worked in the army, and he knew how. He come over to us boys, nice old fellow, smiling, and says, "Hey," he says, "you boys are working too hard." "Well," I says, "what do you do?" "We's trying to get this much dirt out." "Well, yeah," he says, "but you can't do it that way. Look at me, I'm digging underneath. It'll come to you. Dig underneath and it'll come to you." Boy, after that we had it easy. "Dig underneath and it'll come to you." That's just what it did. All you had to do was dig in and undermine it and that dirt would-- maybe one lick or two would make it come. Hell! After that we got going fine and got along swell. And we was boarding at this house-- this camp was in this house that I moved for a hoghouse that Dad had bought from this Skelton here. The place where--

SS: You were boarding at-- was it Skelton's place at that time?

HR: Oh, no, no, no! This Skelton house is the one I moved over for a hoghouse.

SS: Right!

Hr: Yeah. But that was before I moved it, see. 1914, when I was coming twenty-six. When I worked on that new grade. And we had to walk up pretty near half a mile-- I guess we took our lunch at noon, but night and morning, see, we had to walk up the hill to get up to this place to eat. And, of course, I went over home to sleep. Well, anyway-- wait, now, let's see-- We were working there like that and a fellow -- my uncle and I we got to talking. The job was about petered out, we were pretty near through with it. Along there, we was worrying about a winter's job. Talking, you know how men'll talk.

Well there happened to be a fellow from-- the powder man, in other words, one that was doing all the blasting, and he was saying, he says, "Boys, why don't you come up to Orofino? And get a woodcutting job?" "Well, what kind is it?" We got curious. "What kind of a job is it?" "Well," he says, -- "And who do we get it from?" He says, "Go up there to John Nix- was the name--go up there and see John Nix. He does the hiring of the men to cut this wood on that place, or his place." And, he says, "You gotta go up three miles from Orofino to the job, but they've got a log cabin up there-- big log cabin-- that you live in." Well, I and the wife was young and no kids then, we was free-- But here's the deal-- I was sympathetic for my uncle and his three little kids my aunt had. They was just plumb gettin' starved. They was living over here to Park where St iner is, on a rented place and them poor little kids standing in rags, and I felt so sorry for 'em. And I had a few dollars saved up from this other job. I said, "Al"--- He said, "How can I get ov er?" I said, "Al, by God don't worry, I'll see that you get over there." "I've got a little money, and we'll hire some guy over there"-- Fellow by the name of Bill Gellaburg in Park, had a good team. I said, "We can throw in whatever we need to get over there." -- I'm getting a little ahead-- This fellow when he said cuttin' wood-- I says, "How can you make money doing that? What kind of wood?" He said, "It's red fir, most of it. And that don't freeze up, it'll split right in the dead of winter. But the yellow pine, stay away from that, that'll freeze up." "Well," I said, "Okay." So we agreed to be pardners, to go up there, see. And I got this Bill Gellaberg to haul us over there. End cassette.

HR: -- get a big yellow pine, how the hell would you open it up?" Well, that's where he was smart, he could handle powder. Says, "I can just

stick a little dynamite in there and open it up. I'll cut a log maybe twenty foot long and open it up, then I can place a quarter of it or half of it into wherever I want to saw it, and the rest of it'll split pretty good with a wedge." Well, that was all new. I was just off of a green farm, you know, just been raising wheat and choring for Dad. It's all new. But, by God, I had the guts. I went up there. Moved my uncle up there. And it was a two story affair; this cabin was two story. And so, I said, to my uncle and aunt, "You live below, you got the family. We can climb the stairs and live up above." And the farmers would bring pork in there; hundred pound pigs, for four dollars-- four or five dollars, them days everything was cheap. Boy, when you're cutting wood in the cold weather, you could eat like a pig. I bought, I don't know, two or three of them small pigs. They were nice and tender, see.

SS: So your wife was with you and you lived upstairs?

HR: Oh, yeah. But we had to get our groceries-- first, before he got the job of hauling wood, we had to walk to Orofino, three miles and down and back was six miles-- we'd have a packsack on our back to carry our groceries. Believe it, or not, by God. I bought a six and a half foot Simmonds saw and I hadn't learnt to file it--I bought two, still got 'em--and so, I didn't know how. I cut my drags too much. For one man you can't do that. It worked pretty good when Al and I was sawing together, but when he was a teamster, he'd been on the farm, and he just loved to drive horses. Old Nix he wanted one of us deck this wood out to where they could shove it down the hill to a flume. And, Al said, "Oh, I can't ^{quit} you brought me over here." "No, Al," I said, "if you'd rather have that, if you like horses, and he's got to move wood, that'll work good for him, and everything'll be hunky-

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dory." I says, "I'll learn how to cut by myself." "Don't worry."

And it just so happened that there was two woodcutters that knew the business, I mean filing the saw, they had a little saw, five and a half foot saw, and they wanted to trade with me, and I tried their saw. Well, I could see that would be no good, because it didn't have the weight. I said-- mine was stiff, too, and it was a little limber, see-- I told 'em, I said, "How do you file a saw so it'll cut better for one man?" "Oh, you've got the drags too short. You just gotta cut that out." And I looked at theirs, and they wasn't as short as mine. And I says, "Well, how do you gauge that?" "Well, you gotta have a gauge and set that," "there's a little set screw, see I've got it yet. You set that, about this thickness, and you don't cut 'em off for one man in the winter like that, when it's frozen timber, or hard timber like red fir, about the thickness of a newspaper or not more than a playing card. And, Jesus, I got good at it. I got so I could fix it, you know. And I'd swedged it to cut it, the drags a little bit so they'd ^{grab} it, and Jesus Christ, they'd just plane it right out. And I got good enough that I could fall my own timber. I'd cut me a little sapling with a little twig like that to lay the back of my saw in. I'd start in over here, if I wanted to fall that tree, we'll say, over there. Wait a minute-- let's see-- no, if I wanted to fall that tree here, I would cut it off over here and then I'd hold it here so she'd go where I wanted it. I kept going on around and when I thought it was enough, about three or four inches, if it didn't go I'd put a wedge in; make it go where I wanted it. And that's just why I had luck when I was working in the woods. Here's a picture of me a coming back out of the woods in 1936.

- SS: Oh, you told me about that 1936.
- HR: And we got these pictures. I looked pretty husky there.
- SS: Sure do.
- HR: Well, by God, I'd cut about forty acres of timber. Had three partners--
- SS: Yeah, you told me that.'36. But you worked this time in Orofino by yourself, then.
- HR: Oh, yes, in Orofino, I worked after Al got the wood-- I mean, teaming job, I worked by myself.
- SS: How much did you cut?
- HR: I'd cut-- good days, I could, when I was feeling good, I'd make two cords a day. Four foot wood. You didn't cut it in sixteen inch woods, four foot. But, just the same I had to split it all and you had to deck it down-- if a tree was up here in the mountains, you had to roll it down here to the flat where you could get at it with a team.
- SS: What about the fellow with the dynamite? Did he work with you at all?
- HR: No, no. We didn't see him no more. Oh, no. I don't know where he went or what he done.
- SS: You know, you were talking about the first year you were married, and I was wondering how you met your wife. How you met her and--
- HR: Oh, I tell you, when I first met her was--that was out here in the Endicott country. You know where Endicott, Washington is?
- SS: Endicott, Washington? Where is it near? What else is out there besides Endicott?
- HR: Well, do you know where Colfax is?
- SS: Oh, yeah, sure.
- HR: Well, you go about south-- no, wait a minute-- northwest to get to

Endicott. Then, there's what they call Dusty, but you don't go that far. Well, you don't go that far. Endicott--

SS: Were you working in the harvest or what?

HR: You see, I went to this school ^{Agriculture school} here, ^{at} Moscow University, and I met a guy-- I'll show you a picture there-- Haley Jones-- let's see that was in 19-- wait a minute-- yeah, that was 1913. See, I was 1912 and '13 when I worked at Bovill in the logging woods, then when spring come I didn't want to stay up there and fight fires in the woods. I just didn't like it. I'd had enough fire experience on a little Moscow fire and I didn't want no more of that. So, this Haley Jones said, "Helmer, why don't you come down to Endicott and work for my brother. He's got a big farm, and he hires men; quite a few." He says, "There's a lot of girls, lot of pretty girls," is what he said, which there was. Well, I was young, you know, I thought, "Okay, boy, that's the place for me!" And, it was nice, they had church there, you know, I'd go to church. And this other guy that was working with me, I got a job for him with his brother. And this kid that was working with him-- with me-- on that place, name was Brocky, seventeen year old kid, and he went to church with me, you know, and I just happened to spot this-- my wife, it was--. I didn't tell you, I'd been going with these guys' sister, too, see.

SS: Brocky's sister?

HR: No. No. No. The man I worked for, and the one I went to school with, see. They were brothers. So, I took her out for a buggy ride, hired a buggy team, just out for being friendly, you know, because she was a sister to the boys. But she was only seventeen. And, oh, they was a lot of pretty girls there. Jesus Christ, everyone of 'em flirting to beat hell. She was really, I thought, a dandy, but she was a slick-

er, too. You had to watch out. You know them slickers, they can play dirty tricks on you. The way I found that out-- they had these masquarade-- no, no, wait a minute-- they had ice cream socials, like, at the church, see. And you're supposed to pick out a pardner and treat 'em. And so, I and this banker's daughter, that became the friend of my wife, she was only sixteen and she was a little flirt, and she was cute. She says, "I want to go with you down to-- what was it? We had to get something, and then she had to go into her dad, and he was a banker, see. Oh, it was-- we was hauling on a little wagon, I think it was-- and I was hauling her on that, see. She was a laughing over that. I don't know what he thought, but I didn't give a damn. Got back, you know-- so this other girl that was so pretty, she wanted me to buy her something to eat-- and I don't remember if I did, but I found out she was a tricker, you know. So, to hell with that noise! I think maybe she did-- I bought a little something and she went and ate with somebody else. See what I mean? That settled it with me! Well, then, I got acquainted-- No, I didn't get acquainted yet with my wife, see. Oh, I got acquainted, yeah, that is-- No, wait a minute, no I didn't either, because, when I went to church and this young kid, Brocky kid, and I seen her up there. ^{She was dressed in white.} She was in the singing choir, see, singing-- her dad was a preacher. I got his picture. Her dad was a minister-preacher of that church. And Brocky was sitting alongside of me, and I says, "Who's that girl dressed in white?" "That's the preacher's daughter." Kinda loud, you know. I nudged him and said, "You son of a gun, shut up." And her dad--I even brought this other girl to church, don't you see--and the old man he kinda kidded me. You know, he'd always get out here to the door to shake hands with us

going out. "Well, sir," he says, "there's a time in a young man's life, that you like to be around the young ladies, ain't there?" "Oh," I said, I answered him quick, "oh, you've experienced that, too, have you?" "Oh, yes," he says, "many, many years ago." Well, I didn't know then that he had a daughter, see! Then, by golly, she, (my) wife got a job out at the same dang ranch where I worked in the cookhouse to cook for the men during harvest. And we was into hay then and I was hauling hay. And this other girl that I'd been going with she was there, and both of 'em standing there y^kaking at me and I had a Jackson Fork to set in the hay-- and I could show you that scar yet, one time, it went right down the top of my shoe and into my ankle bone--

SS: What's this? You weren't paying very good attention to your work?

HR: Well, the girls was talking and I tried to talk and work, too, see. Two girls to answer. So then, I didn't say a word, see, that hurt so bad-- and finally they asked, "What's the matter?" "Oh," I said, "God," I said, "I run that doggone fork right down my shoe." And I got my shoe off, and it just pained me so bad -- well, I finished that load, but I didn't do no more. This man, this brother to the girl I was going with, you see, Jones, he had a one-horse buggy, so he said, "Well, I'll take that buggy and horse and go into the doctor." So, we did. Well, I got acquainted out there at the ranch, that's right. She was cooking, see, and she'd come out and play a little bit in the evening after supper, see. The farmer had a swing to swing. So, I'd swing her, don't you see? And she talked pretty interesting, too, to me across the table. And Jesus Christ, I thought, "That's the one, I believe, I ought to have." And I thought I'd find out anyway. She finally said, after I'd swing her a little while, you know, "I gotta hurry and go do the dishes." I says, "How about me helping?"

"Yeah, you can help, if you want to." I said, "Okay, that's fine." That give me a chance. I had a jumper on, you know, and I said, "What can I do to help?" "Oh, you can wash the dishes." I said, "Okay." Then I approached her, I said, "How would you like to correspond with me?" Just like that. She says, "I don't play no second fiddle." I said, "You don't have to, you'll play first fiddle, if you say so." (Laughter) That started the whole thing. Well, then, it just seemed like everything was cut out. See, I got hurt, I had to go to town to see that doctor every so often, 'cause I couldn't work, I was laid up. That foot was sore. And he put a gut string, opened it, so it would drain, and he wanted me to come in so he could keep it open, and see that it was draining good. God, it was right on the ankle bone, you know, ticklish place. Then on a Sunday, she was free, and we went out buggy riding in this ~~single~~ buggy, see, after I'd seen the doctor. And the doctor and the-- his family was out car riding, and we was sittin' there spooning, and so when I come in there to pay the doctor. "Doc," I says, "how much do I owe you?" "Well," he says, "I'll tell you, I got about ten dollars' worth of scenery, ^{you} out there spooning," he says! "I'll just make it ten dollars!" (Chuckles) Oh, we like to never heard the last of that! Well, then, she got through working on this farm, you see, and she got a job for a fellow, Mitchum, was his name. About five miles and this banker's daughter and her was the cooks-- he was a bachelor, for that man. And so, every Sunday, I'd get this pony and ride out there to see her. And I think that was after we were engaged, though. It wasn't too long, I don't think it was over a month after I started going with her til we got engaged.

SS: Well, of course, corresponding isn't the same as engaged. Corres-

ponding is just going with her.

HR: Yeah, to start with.

SS: Right.

HR: Yeah, we were engaged while we was out there on the Jones place. I took her into town, see, on a Saturday evening when she was going to be at home on Sunday. And I approached her kinda odd, I said-- I said-- I guess there was a gate there on the farmer's place-- I said, "What would you think if that was our gate we was going through?" Like that, you know. And she talked favorable, see-- and-- Well, something hung in my head. You know, the Old Man, after I got to going with her, he kind of was quiet. I said, "Well, I don't know," I said, "I don't know about your Old Man, I don't believe he cares for me." "Well," she said, "that don't make any difference, as long as I do." Well, I thought, that's right, too! But, heck, I ain't marrying him! If she was feeling like that, that was what I wanted. That's the kind of answer I wanted. I thought I had already overstepped; thought I'd said too much. You know, it's kind of a ~~shack~~ shack for a young fellow, the first time you approach somebody like that you know. You ain't used to that kind of a answer. But, I was old enough and I loved her. Well, just to show you, there's our fiftieth anniversary plate. And here's some more presents we got, right in here.

SS: Oh, beautiful.

HR: Oh, well, she lived fifty-four years, three months and six days after we's married. And raised that big family.

SS: Helmer, her father was a preacher?

HR: Yes, he was a minister of the United Methodist-- preacher. I'll show you his picture, so you can get an idea.

- SS: Had you gone to church together every Sunday?
- HR: Well, she was working out there at the farm, you see. That other farm, and I went there. Then, when this harvesting was done on that place I went to the Central Ridge, to get another job. And that's where I had this sack sewing job. That's when that old Thompson come down there, you understand what I told you? I got that job? That's before I was married.
- SS: Well, did you have any trouble from her father? When you asked her father?
- HR: When I asked him, see-- I asked him alright. I wasn't just gonna let her pass by without saying something. So I told her, ^{we were settin' beside each other} and the Old Man out there, across from us. I said, "Say," I says, "Mr. Geisler," I said, "have you got any objections to me and Ethel getting married this fall?" Well, he kind of ~~lied~~. He says, "Well, no, I haven't. Have you got any work lined out?" See, like that. Well, I'd worked in the woods the winter before. "Well," I says, "I think I can get work back-- I'm not sure," I says, "but, I think I can get back up in the woods." Says, "I worked up there last winter. I believe I made it pretty good then." "Well, alright," he said. But I didn't go back to the woods. Took this other job. I'll tell you, in the woods in the winter, it's pretty ^{bitter} ~~bare~~, you know. Well, I'd a had to a been away from her. Getting this job together on the farm was a whole lot nicer, see. Being the first year married. That's how I come to get that.
- SS: What do you think---?
- HR: Wait a minute-- Now, that's all of that. But I was going to tell you how I got lined up to get me a home. Want to know that?
- SS: Well, wait a minute. I'm not done, really, asking you about when

you were first married. To me, that's a time that's really important in a person's life.

HR: Well, Okay.

SS: And I'm wondering how you found it to be-- what it was like to be a newlywed in those days. How was it when you were first married? Like in those days, did you and your wife get along without any disagreements?

HR: Oh, yeah. We just loved one another fine. I'll tell you-- 1915, that was two years after we was married, see-- now remember, 1915. My dad went my note to buy a team to farm Oscar Nelson's place-- that is, sixty-five acres of it there. And she was supposed to keep house there and I out in the field working. And, I had to go in debt for that team, see. I didn't have no money, and I didn't really want to go in debt-- I mean to buy the team. Gee, it cost over three hundred dollars to buy that team. And I had to buy feed and seed to keep the horses and to seed the farm, don't you see? And, I told Dad, "I don't know about it." "Well," he says, "that's pretty good land, you might get a good crop." He was game to let me try it, he was going to back my note. I said, "Okay." So, we got it. And I bought seed oats-- that's what we put it into from a fellow the name of Pres Regan. Give him a dollar and a half a hundred. And when fall came I was just lucky enough to have a good crop of oats. We had got the ground worked good and we went along fine until-- Well, when I was a plowing, of course, I didn't go so fine-- I better tell you that I guess. Old Oscar, he-- Dad says, "Now," he says, "I got my plowing done, you can get this gangplow and four horses from me, so you can get your ground plowed quicker." This old Swede, he was a bull-headed old devil and I took his advice that time-- that's where this

this Gilbert, I'm telling you about, that Uncle Gilbert of mine-- he was hard up, he was farming another place then down there, but he was hard up, and he'd got around this Oscar Nelson, see, talked him into making me hire him, because I had to ~~use~~ him to do the drilling, 'cause Dad was busy drilling on his own, and so he come, and he said get him to not use this gangplow, just ~~make him~~ just use a walking plow and that way I had to hire him. Oscar says, "You can get Gilbert Swenson to come and help you, with two sixteen inch plows it'll go just as fast or faster." Which, of course, that other gang was fourteen. But, here was the deal; he thought a walking plow would go deeper. ^{He WAS A MAN THAT WANTED HIS LAND PLOWED DEEP.} ~~A~~ The spring of the year, mind you. Crazy idea, is what it was. Well, he come and checked me on a corner where it was clay, well, there you can't make any plow go down very deep. And that's when he ~~set~~ his foot down. Made me quit. Had to take Dad's gangplow home; the other four horses home and get that daggone Gilbert. Well, then I'll tell you how we wound up; When fall came I'd been out-- John Shod was running the threshing machine, he done the threshing for me, and I was running my team and bundle wagon at so much a day and my wife was still in the house with this bachelor cooking, see. And she was baking bread one day and the phone rang, he had a phone. He had a carpenter working there, Old Settle-- another Swede, and had the carpenter working there, so she had to cook for him and this bachelor, too, see. He was building, oh, he had a spring down there and he wanted to get-- he had dug a hole, but he wanted some buildings put up over it, so it'd be sanitary. And a kind of a ^{And make it more water.} tank. It was down low, he could run the water into it, see, ~~He~~ He didn't want to be hauling water during the harvest. During the harvest you had to furnish the water for steam engines. And he didn't want to bother his neighbors. He didn't hit too good with his neighbors

over the water, and then, of course, he had to go about three or four miles to get it, too. So, my golly-- the phone rang when she had her hands in the bread, she says, "Oscar, would you mind going and answering that phone?" He says, "Ethel, I told ya to go answer that phone." "Well," she says, "Oscar, I've got my hands full of bread dough." "They're ringing." And he stomped the floor like that at her. God, when she told me that, boy, that made my blood boil. "God," I says, "I can't hardly wait til I can get ahold of that son of a bitch." And yet, you had to be careful not to hit that old bastard, his eyes just danced in his head, you know, he couldn't see good. Yet, he was a man could play five or six instruments. He knew music. And he could read if he'd take a book up like this, I'll be goldarned if he couldn't read, but he had to hold it close. But it made me so damn-- I had worked for that bastard when I was a kid-- well, I mean, before I was married, pitching bundles for three wagons for him, and he run stallions, see, he had three stallions. And he worked two of 'em on a wagon. That time he was hauling, one of 'em got kinda slow, I guess, or kinda trying to balk, that was a big black one, old sire, and he took the fork like that to hit him, see. And he finally made it up the hill. And what he had claimed-- and that's the story I started to get his attention-- See I told Settle, "I says, I don't want to hit that old bastard if I don't have to," I said, "you're a good witness. You just watch and listen to what's said. I'm going to try and bring it up slow," I said, "In case I hit him--" he had lots of lawsuits with guys, see, this Truckee, I didn't want nothing like that, but, God, I thought that if I got too mad, I might hit him anyway. So Settle said-- he agreed-- he was a friend of mine-- he hated him, too, he

said, "Yeah, he's a stubborn old devil." "Now," I says, "he's gonna admit it, or I'm liable to slap the hell right out of him." So, I says, "Oscar, you claim you didn't never--" Now, first I started out - how he was telling about Charlie Coon and Gilbert- that was my uncle- well, he was rough on horses-- and he didn't believe in 'dat lickin' horses.' I said, "That's what you said, Oscar, but--" "No, sir," he says, "I don't believe in lickin' horses." I says, "Oscar, you know something?" I said, "By God, one time I hauled hay for you, pitching in the field, and you had an old black stud on, he balked a little, and you took a goldam pitch fork and you started lickin' him with that," I said, "if that ain't alicking, I'd like ^{to} know what." "Well, sir, I never took--" "You mean to call me a liar?" Pulled my sleeve right up to my elbow, you know, walked right up close to him, and ~~stood there like~~ I meant it. I said, "You bastard, you told my wife, too, the other day." I said, "By God, you ain't talking sassy to neither one of us from now on." I said, "We're through." "Well," he said, "your grandparents won't like that." I said, "They never buttered my bread." I said, "By God, I know what they are." I said, "Don't worry, I'm not worrying about--" Trying to work on my conscience, see. Jesus Christ, I knew where I stood. I knew my grandparents, they wouldn't pay no attention to a bullhead like him. And they didn't, either. But, anyway,-- Just to show you, he ~~figured strong on~~ get ^{thing} us for the next year, because he'd already bargained the neighbor-- he wouldn't let you cut hay on that place, in other words. He wouldn't let me cut hay off a that crop for the next year. I had to buy it from a neighbor. That's how stubborn he was. He wanted to be sure he got the third exactly in threshing deals, don't you see.

SS:

I'm not sure I see, because, he wouldn't let you cut his hay--

HR: He wouldn't let me cut hay on his place for my horses! I had to buy it from somebody else. He wanted all his crop threshed, so he could get a third of the threshed grain, you see.

SS: He was trying to get every nickle out of you that he could.

HR: No, but, he just got that idea in his head. And he'd been getting renters, but they kept quitting him because he was so damn stubborn, see. I was the second one on that same place.

SS: Did you leave right away then?

HR: No, by God, harvest wasn't over, you betcha. I stayed.

SS: --- The kind of qualities that you were looking for that you saw in your wife, that you didn't see in others-- other young woman. What was it you were looking for that she had?

HR: Well, honesty. Honesty; truthful. And she was brought up with Christianity in her soul. All my people-- my grandparents and my parents, all of 'em belonged to the Lutheran Church. Come from the dol country--they all was church people. Over here to Park, where Steiner is them Lutherans all built a church- Lutheran Church. And I can remember when my granddad and grandma would come there to church, when we were little kids over there. They'd come there, I guess, whenever they had preaching there, see. There was a preacher by the name of Andressen, he was a Lutheran preacher. And later on, there was another one-- they were a nice couple, they were more-- you might say, more modern-- they was Olvestaad .. He had a job in Deary, and then he'd go to Bark, those little country place every so many Sundays, I don't know just how he had it arranged. But they were nice people. And when Steiner and I, that's my brother that's living now in Park, we had been up at school in 1910-- we'd been to preparative school--

finishing up our seventh and eighth grade-- we finished that in eight months-- the longest term we ever had. And we come home to visit Grandma and Grandpa, I guess that was during Christmas vacation. It was in the winter. We got to Deary, well this preacher, Olvestaad, had us come there and he treated us sociable, you know. Give us a meal and was nice and friendly. Then my uncle come out to get us-- he had to come with a team, you see, to get us into Park, where the grandparents was. And, of course, when we got in there, then there was young couples over there dancing and that's something-- we already knew how to dance. We joined with the crowd, you know, and have a big time. See, I was twenty-two then. Steiner was twenty.

SS: The thing is to me that's kind of interesting is that you didn't get married for a few years.

HR: I was twenty-five before I got married, three years afterward.

SS: Were you waiting for the right girl?

HR: OH, not necessarily, no, hell, I had girls on the Ridge, but I didn't like 'em. No sir, I had plenty of 'em, but I just couldn't see it til I met the right one. Something just come over me: That was the one. Ain't that funny? When she was in that choir, that's when I got that feeling. And she used to play an organ herself. But she was up there with the choir, singing, and she was dressed in white. I got a picture-- see, where's that young picture of her? Oh, there's one up there. See, that's when we was first married. That's our wedding picture, right there. See, there's two of 'em. You know, this was taken at Spokane. And that guy that took that give us this-- We bought two dozen small ones-- this is my parents, here-- she was only eighteen and he was twenty-five. That's my own parents. Mother and Dad. That's their wedding picture. That's why I stuck it up there. I said, "They're above us."

SS: That's a beautiful little picture.

HR: All my relatives and all my friends-- Now, Steiner's oldest son and his wife, God, that wife of his says, "Helmer--"

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins May 13, 1976

- HR: Steiner's oldest son and his wife. God, that wife of his says, "Helmer I'm gonna give you pictures that when you arrange 'em---
Come on, I'll show you their children.
- SS: You told me now--- on the job.
- HR: Yah, yah. I got fifty cents an hour on that. That was only eight hours, that's four dollars a day, you see. But I only got-- yah, wait a minute, yah, I did get that on that. That's what lifted me through. I paid ten dollars a month that winter for that house I rented on Polk Street, it's still there. And they were rocking Lewis Street down here, that's the one I remember the plainest. You see the only street they had pavement was on Main Street. That was in '38- now, wait a minute, '32, '33, '34 long in there. You know them poles that are marked-- I mean painted yellow that shows the street signs? That's one of the WPA works. 'Course at that time I only got-- that is when I was on WPA in town--then I only got forty dollars a month and board my family, see, and live on. But out there at the rockcrusher; seem like that only lasted-- well, we were still working in '34, because that winter it rained all winter long. I can remember that. And they had to use four horses on one wagon, and the wagon sunk down half way on the spokes when they was distributing these rocks in the street, they couldn't fool around and pitch 'em off, they just threw 'em and had these planks. They'd open up the planks, don't you see, and one load would drop right here and another one would go ahead and drop another one there. But I wasn't driving no team, I was out there pounding these big nigger heads, so they could get 'em through the rockcrusher, with a sixteen pound maul, don't you see. And that was a big sledge; square point, and if you hit a little cockeyed it would break the handle.
- SS: That's what a nigger head was, huh?

HR: Well, they was big rock, you had to bust 'em. so they could get 'em fed into the crusher. This Old Kammeyer was the foreman, you know. and I cracked this handle one day. He was a bigger man than I was and he says, oh, he talked kinda coarse, "By God," he says, "that ain't gonna look very good on your check." I said, "By God, you don't take that outta my check." And I talked right up to him. And he laughed. He knew better. He was just trying to kid me, you see. And we got along swell after that. Somebody told me, I don't know, quite a few kinda kidded ~~me~~ about him, they said that he was a little overbearing, some fellow had knocked him on his hinder, I don't know whether he had or not. That might have been a story, too, you know. I never saw anything like it, I watched and I didn't see it happen, but it could have been.

SS: What did you think of living in Moscow here after living in the country all your life? What did you think of living in here? Did you like it?

HR: When I went broke farmin' in Park, I had them forty-four head of cattle and let the bank take it for \$1000 that I owed 'em. But I quit the Ridge, Dad's place, because I got outta debt with my hog money. I cleared up \$4,400 that time, and Dad just begged me to stay there. I'd stayed there seven years, but the first few years I was going in, behind. Wheat didn't bring much, and the first bunch of hogs, like I told you only brought me six cents; twelve dollars for a two hundred pound hog.

SS: Yeah. Yeah. But the thing is, when you were in here, working in Moscow, what happened so far as -- did the work change after '34?

HR: Oh, no, no. Boy, summertime- ^{was} this along in the winter when it was hard to get jobs. Summertime, I'll tell you, I sewed sacks for Fred Reeves out here for four dollars a day, and board; twelve hours. And I sewed sacks for Johnson out here in the country, he's out here- no, he lived down there, but he had a farm over here by this Joel country in

that mountain country. And then I went and sewed sacks one year for-
in the harvest, fellow at Palouse City. There, I got bigger money, be-
cause I could sew and hang my own sacks for six dollars a day and board.
I'll have to tell you how I got that job. I come there in this old Mo-
del T that I'd bought from Dad, ^{on this sale,} an old Jalopy, you know, and I sat down
on the street and here was about a hundred men settin' on the main street
lookin' for work. I set down alongside of an old-timer there and he got
friendly right away and says, "Don't look very good, does it?" "My God,
it sure don't. Don't look like there's much employment around here."
He says-- wanted to know if I had two bits to let him have, he hadn't had
a meal for a couple of days. I guess he was kind of a bum, but I don't
know. Anyway he was kind of aged, little gray hair and all. So, I
felt sorry for him, "Yeah," I says, "I got two bits." And I gave him
two bits. Them days you could buy a loaf of bread and a couple of cans
of sardines, you know. Make quite a little lunch. Then he got awful
friendly, and said, "Have you got a place to sleep?" "Nope." Carried
your blankets; them days you had to carry your blankets in the harvest.
Nobody kept you, you had to go sleep in the straw stack. I said, "No, I
haven't found a place." "Well," he says, "I know where there's a straw
stack three miles out. What's the matter with going out there tonight?"
I said, "Fine. You bet." Well, I got a bright idea, thought I did. I
says, "I'll tell you, instead of running around the country with a car
and spending gas money," I says, "let's get up early in the morning.
Get downtown just about daybreak, if we can, when the farmers start
hauling in their grain and start hittin' 'em up for a job, if they come
in; grain haulers." "God," he says, "that's a pretty good idea." Well,
the next morning I couldn't start that car, you know, that old Model T
you had to crank it to start 'em. I jacked up the hind wheel, they'd
start a little easier that way and cranked it; way it went, pretty soon

and he was still in his bunk and I went over there, I got the thing, I let it idle and jacked up the wheel, wanted to get it good and warmed up. I said, "Pardner," I says, "you ought to do like the old sayin' "Early bird catches the worm,"; we'd better get outta here." He jumped up and got his clothes on and in the car we went and just got into Main Street and here comes a truck; grain truck, and I took my white handkerchief out and I hailed him, like that, and he stopped. "Hey, Buddy," I says, "you know where a couple of men could get some work? We're out here looking for harvest work." Says, "You don't happen to be a sack sewer?" I said, "Yes, sir, I am." "Well," he said, "the boss told me to bring a sack sewer out if I could find one." I guess them days it was hard to, especially ^{that} on a machine. SEe, he wanted somebody that could handle it by theirselves. He didn't want to put two men on a little machine. It was only a twenty-six-

SS: Twenty-six what?

HR: Twenty-six cyclinder. Now, I sewed on twenty-eight inches and it didn't seem to take any more wagons to fill that with straw than this twenty-six. That little twenty-six would eat most straw I ever saw. 'Course, there's only two inches difference.

SS: So, he took you. What about your friend?

HR: Well, wait, now. The friend, he didn't want to- they wanted to put him on a wagon and team to haul bundles, 'cause they seen he was an old man.

No, He wanted to pitch, he didn't like to take care of a team. Well, he balked on that. He thought he could handle pitching in the field. He got out there; he lasted two days, - two or three days- so he was all in. Well, the first day that I started out, of course, I was soft and boy-the sweat was running down. And peas, they roll under your feet, you know, they're hard to stand on. But what luck had helped me, it was one of these long spouted machines that held two sacks-- well, it'd

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hold more than that. It'd hold a good two sacks of oats even, and an oat sack is bigger than a wheat sack. It'd hold probably two and a half sacks of wheat, so you had more time, don't you see, to get your sewing done. Get it out of the way. And just as quick as you get back to the sack, you had it full right now. She'd dump down and you could take it and go again. Well, so we got into oats one day; that's what I wanted to tell you. Got into oats one day and there was a farmer, he wanted to haul the oats to his bin, or barn, anyway. I think he dumped it, you see they could dump it and ^{they could} bring the sacks back. And the boss said he would, in oats, said he would furnish me a guy to hang sacks. Well, he was just right square in my way. I says, "Kid, you help that farmer get them sacks outta here and leave me alone, stay outta my way. Keep the sacks away, I can't stack 'em, but I'll throw 'em to you and you keep 'em outta my road, and I'll sew. ^{And I'll jig 'em. There was 'nuch jigging} You see, you only take about six, seven or eight stitches in a oat sack, and they're easy to run the needle through. A oat sack is porous, while a wheat sack is kinda stiff. So then, they kept on like that, you know, from nine o'clock it happened that we started on the oats till twelve o'clock—believe it or not— I sewed two hundred and eighty-five sacks of oats. And I kept them fellas just so doggone busy, they was both sweatin', 'course I was, too, but-- and that was Kammeyer's brother that was my foreman here in town that had a farm down there that we was threshin' on. "(he stutters some in imitation of the speaker) Ringsage, I don't see how you could do it the hell so fast." I said, "Take them sacks outta my road." I just timed it, see. Boy, I had them two guys just a jumpin' hauling them sacks out from under me. But, course, when twelve o'clock come I was so damn tired that I couldn't a done that in the afternoon. Just luck we got into wheat in the afternoon, but I got my six dollars a day. And that farmer says, "Ringsage, if you

want a job next year, let me know early. You're a good sewer and you fill the sacks good when you got a chance." ^{I know why I didn't go back.} "I got a job closer to home. See, that's quite a ways down to Palouse City. I got a job; I thought I did anyway. Well, let's see, wait now-- I kinda got mixed up on my years--that was in '28- no that was after I'd sewed for Lyons, I guess. One year, that was them rainy years, you know, '26-- let's see, was it '26 and '27, yeah. '26 and '27 was the rainy years. And I got a job down here about five miles out of Pullman on a sixteen foot combine, and he had a young fellow there with glasses on, to hang the sacks, and he had a-- it was a big stick, just like a baseball bat to fill the sacks. This farmer, I was going to tell you, had been a druggist, he didn't know sic 'em about a farm; he'd been a druggist so he didn't understand the ropes. And he even had a block, square block, triangle for the sacks so the corners would fill good. I told the kid, I said, "For God's throw that bat away and just fill 'em good and full, cause I can jig 'em down to where I want to sew 'em." Well, the kid, he was one of them little tenderhorn kids that thought he had to mind the boss, you know, he was going to college. "Naw," he said, "the boss told me to use that stick." By God, I didn't fill 'em, I just squirted the grain out, and hell, there was-- That was a big, awkward combine, it was as big as this room, and just like a dancehall. So then I told the combine man and the driver, I said, "My God," I said, "that farmer and boy," I said, "they sure don't know nothin'!" He says, "I don't blame you, I wouldn't fill 'em either." Well, one day it happened! The kid had kept comin' and knocking my sack, see, when I got ready to sew.

SS: What do you mean "knocking it?"

HR: Bunted me. Slid off back away from where he should have been. He come scootin' back when the combine man set the brake on, don't you see. And then he come back and I got wise, and I stuck my needle this way, about

half an inch of it stick him. He said, "Oh, you stuck me." "Well," I says, "stay up where you belong." Well, that didn't cure him, til one day we started down a steep hill, God, the horses was way down there, you could hardly see 'em, and that front rudder wheel, brake wheel, was about this wide and when this driver slammed that brake it socked that old wheel down in the earth, see, about six, eight inches, and of course, that stopped the combine sudden. Then this kid come asailin' backwards, and I see a rod over here and I throwed my hand over and caught the rod and held him from going backwards down among those horses. "Now, kid," I says, "you stay up there. Don't you use that stick from now on, or I'll use it on you." I said, "Goddamit I told you, I know what I'm doing. I'll fill them sacks." That farmer was ahollerin' about the sacks not gettin' filled and all. I says, "I'm gonna start fillin' them sacks." I can do it, and you don't have to have that old bat in there." I said. "And if you don't, the next time this happens, you're going down among them horses." I said, "You'd a been killed if you'd a went downⁿ there." Boy, that put the fear in him. He left that stick alone. I started a fillin' them sacks, and the old farmer come out and instead of five-fifty, six hundred, I got 'em to weighing seven and seven-fifty. "Hey," he says, "what's the matter," he says, "the drafts are getting bigger. God, it must be better wheat." I wouldn't tell him. Well, we got along then. We worked, behind these other guys, we worked for twenty-one days-- I got to tell you some more. He had a car that he could spy on us guys when we was out in the field. It was a big field, and we had to rest them horses. We had thirty-three head of horses on that big, heavy combine, but it worked 'em anyway, because it was hilly country, and they sweat. Hot weather. And they would stop and rest the horses a little bit and he'd come-- along in the evening

then, we got to the supper table-- they boarded us, you know, his wife did. He kinda started jackin' up this driver for stopping the horses. He was just that green, you know; just an old druggist, he didn't know nothin' about farmin'. Well, the old driver, he was cool headed, he says, "Well, I'll tell you, mister, if you had anything besides cheese rinds," he says, "maybe we could."

SS: If you had anything besides what?

HR: Cheese rinds. He called his horses cheese rinds, see! Just like they wasn't much. That shut the old farmer up. He was smart enough that he could take the hint and he didn't like it, see. And the combine man-- us three, we were the bosses, you might say, after that. Because it rained so hard we had to quit after twenty-one days, and we said that it would have to be awful nice weather before we'd come back. I knew they wasn't comin' back. Well I left my blanket 'cause I thought- I just had to work- So, when I got back to go to work after it kinda half cleared up; see I lived at Park, it wasn't too far to drive. I don't know where them guys lived, I don't remember that. Anyway, I got into Pullman in the Pastime and all of a sudden I seen a sign up there, "Sack sewer wanted", Fourteen foot cut; seven dollars pay. And this devil out there on a sixteen foot was only payin' me five. And I asked this farmer then when he come in, I said, "I wish I could see that farmer," to the fellow in the poolhall. He says, "There he is, across the street, I'll call ^{and tell him} him over." And, I says, "Okay." "Just how much of a job you got?" "Oh," he says, "I got about two weeks run." "Well," I said, "how much should a farmer pay on a sixteen foot?" He said, "He should pay eight dollars." "God," I says, "he's been underpayin' me three dollars a day? Just for that," I says, "I'm going out and get my blankets and I'll work for you." "Good," he says, "I'll wait for you." I drove out and got my blankets.

Oh, that man, the druggist, was madder'n hell. There wasn't another soul out there, either. He never got no more. "Course, it turned out alright. ~~GRAIN got wet.~~ I got out there to this other farmer, so he had an Indian there to help hang the sacks. He didn't need to have. He put him there and we'd hired him and then he had a farmer that had a farm of his own that had to go tend to his farm, I mean his threshin' after a few days. And the field was wet and the wheat was wet. You couldn't fill them sacks with that wet wheat. But he was a big-hearted farmer. He was well pleased with my work and he says, "Well, Ringsage, do you suppose you could handle them sacks if I got the Indian to do the driving when the farmer goes home?" "God, yes," I says, ^{'Nothing to it.} "Well," he says, "I'll give you a dollar more. I'll give you eight dollars a day. We'll ^{probably} only work eight hours, too wet, morning and evening." "Boy," I says, "that's a go. I'll do it." Well, there was nothing to it for me. That was play for me. But I wanted to tell you about the Indian, you know. Come from Toronto, Canada. Winnipeg, it was. And he held the lines; two lines they have on the leaders, the others are all tied together with jocky stips-- sticks they call 'em and holdback straps. The fast ones they put on the outside and they got holdback straps for them so they don't go only just far. So, Indian started throwing clods, you know, making them horses try to go pretty fast. The farmer, he was smart, he was a farmer. He wasn't a-- hadn't been a druggist; he was a real farmer. "Hey, Buddy," he said, "don't drive them horses that fast." We was only takin' about half a swath ^{it was that wet,} anyway, and the field was soft, and ^{poor} the mud in the logging ~~could pull~~ the horses like everything. So he says, "Now, just hold 'em," he says, "if anything, hold 'em back. We gotta go slow, them horses'll be wore out 'fore night." "Alright." So, he paid attention, he was alright. Then when it come on a Sunday,

you know. He had some squaw he wanted to go see down here at Lapwai. And I thought he was a poor devil out looking for work; no, he had money. He had a whole check book of, I don't know, if it was fifty or a hundred dollar, these cashier's checks. Showed me, you know. And when he went to dressing up, he had a five dollar silk shirt and he had five dollar great, big, wide rimmed Indian hat, too. God, that was big money for a hat, them days. "Man," I says, "how can you afford to pay five dollars like that for a hat." "U me, me roll 'em up. Two dollar hat, roll 'em up, they wrinkle. Stay wrinkled." He wanted something nice, flexible. I got the point. "Okay," I said. When he come back from Lapwai, "Did you have a good time down there, Buddy?" We bunked in the same-- they had a bunkhouse; he had one bunk and I had one. And so, he says, "Ah, me no likum squaw down there." Well, he was a married buck, he had no business. His wife, he said, was making \$1800 a year bookkeeping. And then she had a farm; three, four hundred acres of farm that they got big cash rent off of. And I says, "What you working for?" "Ah, me get tired layin' around; spend money. Me like work little once in a while." But one day it happened kinda sad. I had to take care of six horses, just like he did, that was the regulation on a combine, regardless of what your job was. Sacksewer, six horses and driver, six horses and the combine man, six horses. Each one had to take care of his own string, see. Curry 'em, feed 'em and harness 'em. So, he was standing there hitching up, you know this team of his and bridling 'em, and one old bald-faced one just reached over and bit one of these others that was close to this Indian, and that made the other horse dodge, you see, and he hit the old Indian right square in the nose, and the blood just squirted. God, yeah, I knew it hurt. I just happened to look, just as it happened. Then he took a bridle, see, and was gonna beat up on the

bald-faced one and just about that time here comes the farmer out. He says, "What's a going on?" He thought he was beatin' up on his horse for nothin', you know. I said, "I just happened to see it all. That bald-faced devil bit the other horse and that horse is what hit him in the face. And he was smart enough to see who caused the trouble and that--" "Oh, yes," he says, "that bald-faced one's always a bitin'." So that dropped it, see.

SS: Well, I wanted to ask you now; just a couple of things. Now, what year was this that you were doing this?

HR: Well, that was in '26 or '27.

SS: They were already pulling the combines across the fields all the time?

HR: No, when he got hurt we was just getting ready to get out there to the combine.

SS: I mean, they had gone already from the stationary thresher to the combine?

HR: Oh, yeah. Yeah, sure they had. You bet.

SS: And as sacksewer you just rode along on the combine?

HR: I rode on the combine, sure. You bet. Then we had a chute. The slide would hold about five sacks, what they generally dumped.

SS: Oh, yeah?

HR: Yeah. I'd just dump 'em down the chute and then when it got five sacks in it, I'd trip the rope and they dropped in the field.

SS: And this stick that this guy was using-- this guy that was using a stick, a crazy idea. What was the stick?

HR: Well, he was trying to fill the sack a little fuller, by stirring with that damn thing. Crazy idea.

SS: Instead of jiggging?

HE: ^{I could} Jig 'em, I told him so. See, he had that square block there, he didn't

have to do that. I'd sewed enough so that I knew how to fill a sack re-

ardless if they had a block there.

SS: What was the block supposed to do?

HR: It held the sack- the center of the sack up so that the corners would fill easier. Then you didn't have to jig so much. But, God, I sewed on rigs over there on the Ridge, ~~those~~ stationaries, before I got on combines, and boy, you had to do all the jiggling. I'd had so much practice sewing ^{that} I knew where I was at. I wasn't just a golddamned ^{First} beginner out there. That's what made me so Goddam mad at him, and the combine man and them knew it, too. They knew I could do it. You see, the way you do, when you want to jig a sack-- the same sack-

SS: Yeah.

HR: Now, let's see, I gotta illustrate to you. Here, like this. Let's see now, how would I do it? Here's the end of the sack, and you grab down far enough that you get a little wheat in it- that's what it is. And that gives you a better grip on that sack. You have that wheat inside, it fills the palm of your hand, in other words. I've busted sacks. Jig 'em hard enough, if they wasn't good sacks you could bust 'em. You get used to it and know just how much to fill 'em to fill 'em what they should be full. My ^{draft} on pretty near all I sewed, if it was any kind of wheat at all, would weigh over seven hundred to the draft. That's considered darn good. Lot of sewers would go round five ^{Fifty} to six hundred to the draft. That's five sacks. So, I knew where I was at.

SS: Just one more thing about that. This farmer, did he own the combine that you were working on? This druggist?

HR: Oh, yeah. He owned the land.

SS: The land?

HR: Sure, he just bought that land, he had twelve, fifteen hundred acres.

SS: Where was that?

HR: Five miles northwest of Pullman. I know right where the house is today. 'Course, he's dead and gone. That was way back in '27. That's pretty near-- '27, '37, '47, '57, '67, '77--

SS: Pretty near fifty years. So you worked for that farmer there, and you worked for him-- how did it go in that wet harvest? Could you get much done in that wet harvest?

HR: That's what I told you. This farmer that I finished up with after the rain, he-- a lot of his grain spoiled, 'cause he couldn't dry it fast enough in those sacks, though I didn't fill 'em. He told me not to and I never did. You fill 'em about three fourths full. ^{and sew 'em} And he kept turning the sacks of wheat, see. Oh, there was a lot of grain spoiled those years. Well, now, you see, if I'd a been on Dad's big farm, there's where I'd a went broke instead of this little place out here by Deary. And I would a been harder run- I mean deeper in debt, chances are- if I'd a stayed over there. Well, because that rain sat in would a spoiled my crop-- whatever debt I was in would a still been there. Dad didn't see it til afterwards, after I told him. He didn't live long enough to know what I done afterwards. See, after he died is when I started making my-- I was fifty-four years old when I took up that there welding ^{burning,} course. And I went down and took that job in Portland, ^{burning,} that first summer, but I couldn't take that burning, so I joined up with the union. I'll show you a union card that I got here to prove to you -

END OF THE THIRD INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Frances Rawlins, October 20, 1976