

- 000 Start. Worked on status sheet. Talk about Blanche's activities. Plays bridge, goes to senior citizen's dances. Loves to dance!
- 015 Rides horses. She and her husband go to California and rent horses to ride. Hasn't ridden since husband passed away.
- 023 Has a son, a niece and a nephew, is all the family she has.
- 029 Goes to the Presbyterian church. Belongs to no clubs.
- 035 Rode in parades, rodeos.
- 038-
- 051 Advantages of rural area. Good for children; especially when sex is so prevalent around you. Children grow up knowing sex is a part of animal life and human life, no issues made about it. Is a good wholesome life.
- 054 Blanche enjoys going to the city. But doesn't want to live there, because in rural area know your neighbors but in the city you don't.
- 059 Compares rural woman to urban woman. Are quite different. Rural woman gets up early, long, busy day. Goes to milk, garden to weed, and children to watch. Early to bed.
- 073 Urban woman has entertainment and governmental activities. Rural woman misses many of the cultural events a urban woman is able to participate in.
- 083-
- 095 Blanche has seen phones, electricity, planes, dishwashers, washers and dryers, and other appliances bring great change to women's lives. Seen other major technological achievements, such as moon landing. She is interested in future and the advances society has made.
- 098 Speaks of temptations for the young, such as dope, peer pressure. Children not mature enough to deal with peer pressure and often succumb to it.
- 110 Children in teens have more knowledge and are exposed to more than Blanche and the people she knew. Children accept their knowledge. Blanche feels they are the future leaders and will do more with the knowledge they have.
- 120 No matter how old you are you have to keep up with things.
- 131 Things she did when she was young. Her brothers were good to her and her sister. Her brothers included her and her sister in things that they did.
- 140-
- 153 Mother a very good manager. Has a sweet, disciplined person. Mother trusted the children. Mother would discuss disciplinary things in the morning with her children. Mother a very understanding and broad minded. She wanted her children to understand the consequences of their actions.
- 162 Responsibilities were equally shared among Blanche and her brothers and her sisters.
- 170 Was expected that her and her brothers and her sisters would go to school. Her dad often hired a tutor to teach the children when school was not in session. She (teacher) would live at home with Blanche's family. When school in session school met at Blanche's parents home, until log cabin school was built.

- 183 Annual Ball held at Blanche's parents ranch. Parents did it because they knew everybody in town. Would be a big dance and dinner. Dinner not buffet style.
- 202 Dance in one bedroom, which were large. Play card in another bedroom.
- 214 Older sister Sybil dressed very much like Blanche's mother. Mother was a fancy dresser. Gay nineties type dressing. Wore the bustle, very little lace. Blanche's mother wore her clothes very well. Mother was a part of everything.
- 226 When harvest came around, mother would need extra help in order to feed workers. Also needed help in order to do dishes and laundry.
- 235 Mother always dressed nice even when working which was impractical according to Blanche. Mother also always wore a corset when working. Her sister wore a corset also.
- 238 Everyone worked during harvest. Boys worked with the men and the girls worked with their mothers. Brothers would drive wagons and girls helped in the kitchen. Brothers also hauled wheat to warehouses and cared and groomed the horses. Women even cared and groomed the horses. They also helped drive wagons to fields and to the warehouses.
- 250 Blanche was first girl to ride stride in Lewiston. She wore a special skirt so she could ride stride and when not on the horse a flap came across to make it look like a skirt. Some people were shocked when Blanche wore overalls. Her sister always wore a dress and rode side saddle. Sister would also race side saddle.
- 264 Courtship/Marriage. She and her husband came from pioneer families. They knew each other as they grew up. When Blanche lived in country she didn't go to country school because she had to walk alone and her mother would not allow it. Her husband went to school in the city and had a head start on Blanche as far as education is concerned. She had missed second grade. She had a tutor. When she started going to public school she started in the third grade.
- 276 One time when she was 18 or 19, her husband called her. Her husband needed help with Christmas shopping because husband's family was quarantined due to small pox. He couldn't have dinner with his family so Blanche's mother had Blanche invite him over for Christmas dinner.
- 286 He invited Blanche to the Christmas Ball. This is how it started. She admired him at first, but it wasn't love at first. It was seven years later that they got married. Blanche still had two years of school and her husband was in the Army. When ever he was in town, they would go together.
- 300 Both were the youngest children in their families. Both liked horses. They could stand up to each other in an argument. Both knew what was expected when they got married. Had ups and downs.
- 312 Married in 1920. Had first child in 1923. She had difficulty having children. Due to problems doctor recommended she not have any more children. Blanche took this as a warning and raised her only child a boy. She feared if she had more children she would die and have a motherless child. She blames it on her hips not being wide enough.

- 325 She felt had about not having anymore children. She never considered adoption. Was due to objections by husband. He felt the adopted and natural children would compete against each other for parents love and affection. She felt bad also about raising her son without brothers or sister.
- 330 When raising her son. she stressed that he should not be selfish and that he share things.
- 336 She had long engagement of seven years with husband. He liked to dance when home from the Army. He always went with Blanche.
- 340 Knowledge of child rearing/birthing. Some she obtained from her sister. She lived with her sister for two years.
- 357 Women didn't have much knowledge about birth control.
- 368 Husband took some responsibility of birth control. She and her husband worked together on birth control.
- 375 Has two grandsons. Ones 6, the other is 11.
- 382 Tells son to keep open relationship with children so they can come talk to parents about problems. Continues on about grandsons.
- 398 Tape ends.

Blanche Thiessen

CK: ...Thiessen's house here in Lewiston. I'm Connie Kiesler interviewing Blanche and we are just finishing our, uh, data sheet. And we've gotten into some interesting conversations about, uh, Blanche's um, funny how you talk into recorders.

BT: Well that's because you're, uh, thinking of something else, is the way I do, I guess it's [unintelligible] (laughter).

CK: We're talking about various things she likes to do and how frustrating it is for her now that she's a senior citizen, she doesn't enjoy participating in the traditional, older folks things like, what were you saying, like...

BT: Playing bridge and going to the senior citizen's dances and all, I love to dance very much but I, uh, you know when you're the fifth wheel you never attain those things.

CK: Uh huh. And you were a horse uh, horse woman up into your seventies.

BT: My husband and I, we were down in California and we used to go over and rent horses over there and ride in big parks. Just because we both...that was our amusement and we liked that. But I haven't ridden since, uh, I lost my husband because I moved up here to this apartment and it's too expensive and I'm too old.

SP  
?

Blanche Thiessen

CK: Well, I don't know. You're never too old for that sort of thing. Does your family still own horses?

BT: No, no I'm the last one of the family, there's no one left neither on my husband's side of the family or my side of the family. Except my son and I have a niece living in Colfax, and uh, a nephew here, another *? George Orriston ?* and uh, he lives *he's mine,* a nephew of mine on the Mounce side and that's all that's left of our family.

CK: O.K. Uh, do you belong to any clubs, groups or societies here in Lewiston?

BT: No. Only Daughter of the Niles of course. And the Presbyterian Church. *Federated* it is now.

CK: Have you ever received any awards, ribbons or honors?

BT: Well no because I didn't go into any of those things, competitive things, mine was more just for our own amusement.

CK: Enjoyment. So you didn't get into competition with the horses.

BT: No, no. We rode alot in parades and uh, at the rodeos and things of those kinds, for the showing of a town but not competitive, no.

Blanche Thiessen

CK: Alright. First I want to ask you, what are some of the advantages or maybe disadvantages of living in a rural area?

BT: Well, I think there's a lot of advantages for a child growing up in a rural district. In the first place uh, sex which is so obvious today, you learn through seeing animals, being around them, you know there's uh, like chickens and horses and cows and all of these things that are a part of your life, on, in a rural district. And um, so uh, you grow up knowing about that just through the natural way of living there, which I think very many times a child raised in the city doesn't, you see, they know nothing about animal life or, or, how the growth of things and all, which you get in a rural place.

CK: Just as a natural thing, a natural process.

BT: A natural part of your life. You make no issues about it or anything, it's just, uh, uh, you grow up and are exposed to all of these things. And uh, so I think it's very beneficial that way, and uh, <sup>and</sup> it's a good wholesome life that you have. But uh, I love the city too but I'm a <sup>small</sup> farm town gal, I, I don't like to live in a big city. I like to go and uh, go to all the things there, visit and keep up with how things are changing and all, but I don't enjoy living <sup>in 'em.</sup> there. I like to come home to a smaller place where you know your next door neighbor.

CK: That's, that's really good.

Blanche Thiessen

CK: Um, how would you compare the life of a rural woman with the life of <sup>a</sup>an urban woman?

BT: Well, they're entirely different. Of course, uh, rural life uh, are long hours, that is you have, uh, <sup>you</sup> get up early in the morning and of course you don't stay up late like you do, I don't think in the city. And then also it uh, you're busy, uh, very, you know there's canning to be done and there's uh, at least in my day, it's quite changed maybe now, but and the cows to be milked and all of this to be taken care of, the garden to be weeded, and of course the children did all of this. This is a part of it, why I never belonged to the garden club because I said, I had hoed the onions when I was young so it kind of lost it's charm for me. (laughter)

CK: You had enough of that. [BT: That's right.] That's the way you were brought up and people... <sup>in the city...</sup>

BT: I love flowers and love things of that kind but I, I, [I had] I just want to superintend. I don't want part of getting down in the dirt and working with it because I graduated in that yarn.

CK: You've been through that where other people haven't. Oh, that's good.

BT: But the advantages <sup>also</sup> of the city is that uh, in a musical field

Blanche Thiessen

and uh, and activities, and uh, governmental things and things of this sort. You have a easier, more accepted contact, you know, with and are more conscious of them, I think when you live in the city. So it has it's advantages too.

CK: So rural women would miss out on these type of cultural things or involvement.

BT: I think it was true but not so much now because of change, you know there's T.V. and everything, they're exposed to all of this, children are too, that we never had, you see. I lived in the day of oil lamps and the wood stove and just lived very much as our grandparents did, there wasn't, in fact it's been through my generation of all, uh, of the improvements that have been. I have, I've seen the automobile come in and the airplane come in, and uh, uh, the um, appliances and electricity and all of this has come, since, telephone and all you see, and uh, up till then we had none of that...

CK: So this all <sup>affected</sup> ~~affeceted~~ women's lives.

BT: This is right. Now I think rural people, there's not much change they have all of, all of that now, you see. And uh, this is the difference, as I said, the changing of uh, [unintelligible] made a change in it but I've even lived to see a man walk on the moon, you know, which uh, I remember as a little girl, <sup>They</sup> we used to laugh and joke about this, you know, about well wonder if, you



Blanche Thiessen

know, something about will they ever reach the moon and all this, and here I have lived to see <sup>them</sup> ~~then~~ that they have reached the moon, which I think is great, myself. That all of this has happened in my time and then you wonder where it will all go on from here because it still keeps a rapid pace.

CK: How have these changes affect, affected your life or the lives of rural women, how have they affected it?

BT: Well, personally I like it. I'm the type, <sup>That's</sup> I, I'm not the type that lives in the past. I like to, I'm interested in things of the future and I love young people. I don't think they're any different than we were when we were young. They're a little more open about what they do and how they do and I think there's far more temptation today for the young people than there ever was for us.

CK: What do you mean temptation?

BT: Well like the dope and the things that are put <sup>toward them</sup> [unintelligible] and you know how young people are, "all of you are square if you don't do this, and come on, come on, you know. They batter a young person and to be a part of things they'll weaken and do it, which is not, uh, that they <sup>aren't</sup> ~~are not~~ matured enough yet, to know what will happen to them, you see and uh, we had none of that, <sup>of</sup> ~~ot~~ course. In those days it was uh, they called them instead of cigarettes they were called cigareetes. Cigareetes

Blanche Thiessen

as they would call them if somebody was <sup>smoking</sup> somking and now women and grandma and everybody...

CK: Everybody smokes.

BT: ...you know, smokes, and it's just a trend and changing and I tried to go along with it. I'm not a part of it, I've never smoked and I don't intend to but I, I, what the other fellow does doesn't bother me. If he wants to smoke or if she wants to smoke that's her privilege, not my business. But uh, so those things never bothered me [unintelligible] though they do to some degree.

CK: Yeah, A lot of older people, I have the impression, think the younger generation is sort of going to the dogs.

BT: Yes, and it isn't true. You sit and talk with young people and they have far more knowledge today in their teens than we ever had because they're exposed to things more and they're bright and they expect it. And if they keep their feet on the ground and go in the right direction, they'll be far superior to us. And I, I have great faith in the young people because I feel that uh, uh, they are the ones that are gonna have to continue running our country. So they, you know, are entitled to our help. I think sometimes that through experience of many years, you can give advice that they are not aware of yet, but I try not to unless it's asked of me. *If its asked of me*

Blanche Thiessen

then I try to give my opinion, <sup>how right</sup> ~~alright~~ I don't know.

CK: What a beautiful philosophy you have toward life and so optimistic.

BT: Well, I think you have to have. You can sit with the corners of your mouth down instead of up as much as possible because uh, it uh, old man gloom gets you nowhere. You have to move, uh, have uh, oh a goal ahead no matter how old you are, you have to keep up as much as you can with things, and uh, I don't know how much longer I will but (laughter).

CK: It seems like a lot of people just give up though...

BT: This is what I mean and they just sit and oh, I can't do this and I can't do that but I have my limitations. I realize there's things that I used to do that wouldn't be sensible to do now. For instance, like getting up on the ladder to get that light, or something. I never do anything like that. I usually get some of the young folks or something to help me and uh, you know, and uh, get up there when I have to get those down or clean them or something but uh, I try to live within my limitations but I just don't sit down and fold my hands. I do all my own work and wash my windows inside and out yet and also I feel that I really am very fortunate that I'm blessed with being able to do those things.

Blanche Thiessen

CK: I think that has a lot to do with your youthfulness and you're young, you know, appearance, and enthusiasm for life. It's so easy to get off these questions, um. Could you describe some of the things you and your sisters and brothers did when you were children?

BT: Well, there was quite differences in our ages. The first two to four I would say were rather close together maybe a year or about two years apart, or something like that. And then there was about 8 years difference between my youngest brother and I and uh, and over 3 years between my sister and I and uh, so but our brothers were very good to us. I remember we used to go sledding and uh, they would put up with us, you know, we must have been boring but they could, but they would, we want to go and they would take my sister and I along with them. And then of course we had our horses, you know, we grew, I can't remember when I learned to ride and uh, so we had, this was our amusement out there, we'd do these things, you know, and then of course along with our chores that was expected of each and everyone of us [unintelligible] but my mother was a very fine manager and very, uh, sweet person. She had discipline but she never nagged us or harped at us or balled us out or anything. I recall when, uh when, I began to have, was a teenager and have boyfriends and all, I never had my mother say, "Now you be in at eleven o'clock." or "You...", uh, she'd come to the top of the stairs, so many mothers would holler, you know, "You come to bed, <sup>twelve o'clock you come to bed</sup> [unintelligible].", she never did things like

Blanche Thiessen

that to us. But the next morning, *if she did things* like summer time or set out there and giggle and laugh and cuddle up, you know, and of course they could get a little loud because uh, but um, next morning why she'd *would often* just up and say things like, " I want to talk with you because it isn't what I trust you but I'm just afraid what the neighbors might say.", you know, and in those days it meant so much. So she'd say, uh, "Dear come inside.", and then, "Don't be so loud out there because it's just not a good policy.", and this is the way she'd handle it.

CK: Really understanding.

BT: Very understanding. To me I , I just never could fault her because as I look back now that I'm an elderly person and I think oh, how broad minded my mother was. She was twenty years ahead of herself, you know. She never made an issue out of anything but she made us to understand what we were to do and what we were not to do.

CK: She also sounds very accepting of people.

BT: Very , very much so. The young people just loved her. Many of my friends would come over and pour their troubles out to her, you know. She'd say, "Well why don't you talk with your mother about them?", and they'd say " She'd never understand like you do.", they'd always say to her, you know and I've often thought

Blanche Thiessen

of that.

CK: It sounds like you've become, in a lot of ways, like your mother.

BT: Well, I don't know. I hope I have preferably because I always tried to be with my son as she was with me, you know, very understanding and all. I never told him he must be in at a certain hour and all of this, because uh, I think you have to let them use their own judgement on those things. They know which is right and which is wrong and so it's just to always do, I always say to my son, "If you would just stop and hesitate one minute and think is this right, is it wrong?", I said, "You'll be master of yourself all your life.", and uh, he's proved to be up till now a very fine man and I hope he continues to hold.

CK: Um, were the responsibilities, um, in your family, were they pretty equal, with brothers and sisters, year old.

BT: I think so. All of us were uh...

CK: You knew what was expected.

BT: Uh huh. And we were a very close family and a devoted family, and uh, we were all through our lives. Of course there was... my oldest brother died when he was only 27 and uh, and this of course and he was gone and then my sister, just older than I that

Blanche Thiessen

I spoke of, died when she was 21, and so she was never married. And uh, but the other four of us lived up in, you know, to raise families and uh, and <sup>be</sup> ~~to~~ together and we were all right here and fortunately they're all buried in the same block or lot in the cemetery, so we're fortunate that ~~was~~ way.

CK: A lot of family crisis.

BT: Yes. <sup>AND</sup> ~~Just~~ so scattered, you know and you're young and we're all up there.

CK: Was it expected that your brothers and sisters would both go to school, that you'd all go to school?

BT: Oh yes. And when we lived in the country, um, sometimes, you know, um, there were old, in those days horrible, and all, where they would have to ...they wouldn't have schools the whole nine months, you know, and so they would...my dad would hire a tutor and she would live right there at the house and they'd have school. It would go all day and uh, in the uh, we called it <sup>it</sup> the family room <sup>now</sup> and we called it the living room and then the parlor was off of course, we never went in there unless a minister come or somebody died (laughter).

CK: So it was just a special room, yes.

BT: Everything was just, you know just <sup>kept</sup> ~~so~~ so and um, but

Blanche Thiessen

the living room was where we lived and um, so we'd <sup>Wants... had</sup> have a big table there and they'd all gather around that and then they'd have school all day , you know regular school hours and then at noon why they'd have lunch and then...

CK: Now this was right in your <sup>house</sup> home?

BT: Right in the home. They had... the folks had it right in the home. And then when they built uh the...it did start out in a log cabin out there just one room at first and then the family grew, why they'd have <sup>lean-tos</sup> rooms on it and all but they built uh, present home out there in the spring and I was born that fall and so I was the only one that was born in the big house. And uh, it had ten rooms and five bedrooms up<sup>s</sup>stairs and three of those bedrooms were um, you could make into a ballroom, and they'd have dances out there, um. I know even since I've come up here, I read where 60 years ago they held a , uh, annual ball out at the Mounce land (laughter).

CK: Oh wow, it sounds like a beautiful place.

BT: Well it was, you know, because the folks knew everyone here in town and they'd come there so early and they were the longest, you know, been there so long and everything. And uh, mother was uh, oh a person that likes to dance and have a good time and go and do and everything and um, so she'd be a part of it and they'd have big size suppers , you know, and it was a supper, you didn't



put em out like buffet style, they served oyster soup.  
*at the beginning* and clear on through you know, and they'd...I remember  
I was just a kid and they'd give the call for the, the first  
call for midnight supper, you know, and then they'd go down and  
then the next batch would go down and this is the way ...and  
they'd come out from town you know, with rebbity reep going past.  
Um, they'd be taken care of there at the ranch with their horses  
up and everything and they had <sup>to</sup> danced all night because they  
need daylight to get home , you know , because it was...so it  
was <sup>an</sup> a all night session.

CK: Oh, so you just housed all the people? Or they just...

BT: They just danced, you know, and then <sup>they'd</sup> ~~then~~...

CK: Go home in the morning.

BT: Go home in the morning.

CK: What did the kids do? Were you allowed to participate?

BT: Well. This is what was funny about it, these three to five  
bedrooms and three of them as I told you were to uh, to make into  
the ballroom, so we had to move the furniture, of course, so one  
of those other big bedrooms , they were very huge bedrooms, far  
bigger than , than squared off like that , you know, like this  
room, and uh, uh, somebody would uh, put the beds in there and

Blanche Thiessen

then they'd put the, oh the, clothes, uh wraps I should say, on one bed and then ~~the~~ bed the kids all <sup>down</sup> got on the other, when they got, you know, of course they all didn't bring children but some did and we were there. And they'd let us watch them dance awhile, you know, until we'd get tired and sleepy and then they'd put us to bed. And uh, so this is the way they would arrange it. And those that wanted to play cards, didn't like to dance and wanted to play cards, why in another part, bedroom, why they had this great big old table and they could go up there and play cards, you know.

CK: In another room?

BT: In another room. Whatever way they liked to do. So it was part of <sup>such an occasion</sup> ~~spec~~ for them in those days.

CK: I guess so.

BT: So I grew up as I said, I can remember when I, I didn't dance because you know, they'd, the folks would tell brothers or older brothers and all, "Come and dance with me.", you know and I was just a shade and a little pot and of course I felt quite important. (laughter). So I just aquired a liking for it as well as...

CK: Did you have a nanny then, like that took care of you, sometimes?

BT: No, no mother did it all and um, and we were, you know, had our

Blanche Thiessen

rules and regulations, and all. And of course the older ones would teach the younger ones, you know, how to dress and undress and all and get ready for bed . It wasnt' too rough, you know how it is...

CK: So the older ones took care of the younger ones a lot.

BT: Yes. Because you see where there was six in the family like that and spaced like they were, why I never remember my older brother and sister, only as grownups because they were teenagers, you know, by the time I was three, where I could really re...know what it was all about, why there was thirteen years difference between my brother and I , you see. So he'd be sixteen and he acted and dressed just like my dad, long pants and boots and all, you know, and uh, then my sister was eleven years older than I, and I always remember her just dressed like mother with her hair done on top of her head in those days, they did, you know, and high heels and , and uh, she just dressed like mother did, so she was a grownup person to me.

CK: What kind of dress, did they wear, those big dresses with the petty coats on underneath?  
*neath*

BT: No, it was more in those days of the , well the gay ninties, you know, where they kind of wore the bussel. With the bussel and very little waist, you know, and uh, they uh. And my mother was a very fancy dresser, she, she wore her clothes well. ~~A real~~

A real...I'd call <sup>her</sup> it a trendy person. But uh, she was uh, she was a part of everything. She'd dance and all of um, how she ever managed, I don't know, and yet she superintended all of it before, you know, She'd just baked hams, big whole hams...

CK: By herself? With whom?

BT: Just that and the help of my sister. Of course at harvest time and things of that sort, why mother had help, you know, just like dad had help in the fields, why mother had help because, <sup>was,</sup> you had to, uh, they'd have um, there're eight men to a, what they called a heading crew in those days they used headers and men thrashed. The thrashing machines had come in and uh, so she would...there'd be, there was eight in our family of course, with father and mother, and then um, we always had a chore man there that came there when I was about two. I never remember him only as part of the family. And um, um, then all of the harvest hands and mother had all of those to cook for.

CK: So you had help when they'd come through.

BT: Yes, um hum. So mother would have to have help to come... when they'd come because it was just her to...she had to ugh, ugh, wait on the table and see they had the coffee, tea, milk, whatever they needed, you know, and ugh, ugh, that the dishes were kept filled and everything and if the girl dishing up in the kitchen, you know. And so, it was...but she kept

Blanche Thiessen

that ten room home and did...and they had washed on the boards in those days, all of the washing for those beds and everything, and washed on just bands<sup>1</sup>.

CK: I was wondering, you said she...you guessed so nicely with meals and ugh, you know, wasn't that impractical with all the work you had to do?

BT: That's what she did. You know in those days, I've often said, all through ...I mean when I was a teenager, we'd get...ugh, would buy a pair of shoes, you know you never had to match anything up. You just bought your shoes and you'd...we'd buy our shoes, when they got scuzzy looking we took em for everyday. We went ~~and~~ *in high heels* up and down the stairs and everything, we never thought anything about it. We never had loafers and things like they have today.

CK: And you always had to wear these tight fitting dresses?

BT: Yes. Mother would cautiously save corsets all her life. I *never* remember her without one.

CK: Where you'd have to ~~pincers~~ *pinch her*.

BT: Yes. I would have to pull em and pull em and pull em around, you know.

Blanche Thiessen

CK: How could they work with those?

BT: I don't know. They did, it was just a part of em, and my sister did too. She dressed just like mother did.

CK: Was it...was this a woman, uh, that your sisters would help in the kitchen and the brothers, would they help with the harvest? Is that the way...

BT: My, my brothers were...of course everything was done with horses, you know teams and they 'd have, uh, oh eight horse teams they'd have to drive with these blinds, you know, and uh, and uh, then three wagons, two trail wagons and... (There is a gap in the tape here).

Well, where was I on this. (laughter)

CK: Let's see, you were talking about the wagon that they had.

BT: Oh I see, I see...and so my brothers, um, drove those teams, you know. They had the harness and <sup>peepholes?</sup> peephole and my father was very particular that all the harness was, uh, kept soft leather, soaped down, it had to be on the pegs and all, you know, and the horses well taken care of and well groomed and fed and bathed. And they used to um, have to haul wheat down to the warehouse and then the boat would come from here up there and pick it up. This was years ago. And um, now of course they just put it in

Blanche Thiessen

~~Boys~~  
 bulk quite different from the way they used to, and put it in bins that they have. But in those days it was quite different. So they were ~~set~~ <sup>all</sup> very skilled, uh, horsemen in every way; in riding you know, they broke the horses and everything. They were bronko busters as well as, uh, um, teamsters, so they called them.

CK: And women do these things too, like break the horses and so on?

BT: Yes, to a degree. However, I was the first woman. I think, my sister always rode sideways. Never, I never saw her stride, but I rode stride.

CK: Was that hard to do in a dress?

BT: Well, I wore, uh, overalls, you know, like the boys did cause I was always out with the horses, so mother just fixed me like a boy, so I was off like that. But uh, and then I was the first girl in Lewiston to uh, ride stride. I remember then I was the <sup>first</sup> girl to have the pants outfit. We...of course we wore the bagged skirts, as they called them for a long time, you know, they were made so that the...they were like a skirt and you'd put em back and then you could get on, but they were very full, they looked just like you were in a dress when you were on a horse. And then when you'd get off, why you'd put this flap across, you know, and then it was a skirt to walk in. Wearing

pants wasn't good in those days. But I got my first set with the, uh...wearing the english briefs and the english outfit. And, of course, I shocked some people but...

CK: Did it make them angry when they saw a woman in pants?

410  
BT: Well, you know some did but uh, uh they didn't say how I did my wash, they assumed you did, and so on. (laughter). But I was always kind of the type that lived my life and didn't let em bother me.

CK: Doesn't effect you much then?

BT: uh huh.

CK: Do you think it effected people like your sister, that had to wear a dress and had to act older?

BT: Oh they were all very understanding about those things. They, they thought it was great and my mother always backed me up on it, you know and all. She used to say, " Well whatever's the most comfortable, I see no harm in that.", and all. She was just straight to go along with it, so she was...

CK: I can't imagine riding a horse for any distance sidesaddle.

BT: I can't either. My sister always did, she did it then bareback.



Blanche Thiessen

She would ride, uh, they called it a surcingle, and you'd just put it around and, and you know, and you would hold on, and , and, I've seen her race and everything.

CK: How would she stay on?

BT: I don't know, I guess through balance, you know. She never had the type that she always rode <sup>surcingle</sup> or the first thing which was <sup>just</sup> bareback.

425  
CK: That's amazing. Why don't you get into a few courtship and marriage customs. Uh, can you, uh discuss some of the things you remember about your courtship and your early married life?

BT: Well dear, of course we were both old pioneer families and we grew up here together. We never ran in the same crowd<sup>w</sup> or anything but we always knew one another, and all, my husband and I. And um, he was ahead of me in school, even though there wasn't much difference in...um, but he started early in life and I didn't because we didn't move in till I was eight, you see, into town. And I never went to the country school because it was three or four miles <sup>from</sup> ~~from~~ our place and um, I was so much younger than the others that uh, uh I had to go alone. And mother didn't want me to, so that's when we moved in here. But as I said, I didn't get as early a start as the others because of that house.

CK: Well, you just had the uh, person that came in and, and uh tutored.

Blanche Thiessen

BT: Yes. But of course I was too little then. I would just go in and listen awhile and when I got tired I'd get up and go out with mother, you know, I wasn't old enough when they were tutoring the older ones.

CK: So you missed out on your education when you were young.

450  
BT: Yes, uh hum, this is it. And I had to uh...but I, I skipped the second grade. I came in and went uh, normal change, you know they have the <sup>teachers</sup> pattern, teach the ones that were going into the normal. And um, it was close and so mother started me at the normal school that we lived near. And then I went to the public school and uh, uh the next year and uh, I skipped the second grade and went into the third. So I started in ~~the~~ public school in the third grade. And um, went on clear through then.

CK: Um hum. And you met your husband then in school?

BT: Well. And but we always knew one another, you know just through school and everything. And one time, after we were grown up, here, oh not our teens. I must have been about 18, 19, something like that and uh, he called me up because I never worked, and most all the other girls were either working or doing something like that. And he uh, his uh, brother's family lived in the country and they came in to uh, visit and they all came down with uh, the um, smallpox. <sup>They...</sup> So in those days quarantined. Well,

1  
468

Blanche Thiessen

they quarantined my husband's house because he was working downtown and he had to stay downtown. So he called me up and he said, "Blanche, I want to ask a favor of you." ~~X~~ He said, "I have to do the shopping for the kids for school...for Christmas. So they're gonna be quarantined and they believe in Santa Claus yet.", he says, " So my mother says I have to do the shopping.", and he said, " I wonder if you'd help me?", cause he says, " I don't know anything about it.", and I said, "Why I think it'd be fun.". So this is how it started. So we did the Christmas shopping and um, every afternoon<sup>why</sup> we'd go down after he was through work, they had the stores open then, and we'd go down and shop all around and get this, that and the other, and then he'd have to sit out and of course call his mother that he was coming after work. But anyhow, at, uh, then, uh, mother said to me "George will be uh, uh, up, at home for Christmas." So she says, "Why don't you ask him to come and have Christmas dinner with us?", and I said, "Well I will." So I did and he had Christmas dinner with us. And then mother um...he said to me, "Have you a date for the New Years Ball?" and I said, "No, I didn't have." He said, "Well, why don't we go?" I said, "O.K.", so that's how it started.

480  
492 CK: Did you like him right from the beginning?

BT: Well, I knew him so well that I, I don't know if it was really love. I think that I always admired him. We grew up...I asked him a lot like if he knew another fella or somethin' , well I'd

Blanche Thiessen

say," Is he alright to go out with, George?", you know (laughter).

CK: You never really thought of him as a boyfriend?

BT: No, never. Never thought of him like that. So then, as I said, it seemed like it was for seven years before we were ever married. I was back two years in school, of course, back east. And then 500 he was in the Army. And uh, so, um, we were in and out of here, we weren't going steady all that time, but every time<sup>That</sup> we'd both be here, we'd go together. This is the way it went and finally we ended up getting married. And we were married 43 years. Had a very sucessful<sup>SP</sup> marriage, as far as that goes and with the boy. And uh, but it, it was just funny, as I said we'd known one another, you know through the years, all our family had, you know. They'd stop at the ranch when they'd be going to the fair, dad was a big <sup>shootin'</sup> man.

CK: So the family were quite accepting of him...

BT: Wait dear, I'll get up. (Gap in the tape here)

But she said to me one time, "I want you to know that he knows you better than you know yourself.", she says, "I've often thought about that.", you know.

CK: Why was that?

BT: Well, I don't know. He'd always...and he'd just tell me off,

Blanche Thiessen

520 you know. I was always a kind of...being the baby of the family, I kinda run the show, you know how it was, and, and then he'd just go so far and then he'd just tell me off and this pleased mother, you know. She says to me, "I'm gonna tell you Blanche, he knows you better than you know yourself."

CK: So did you...he must of, uh, both been pretty uh, uh, what do I want to say?

BT: Well we was friends. He was, you know, he was the youngest of their family and, and so I was the youngest of mine, and then they had six in his family too. And so, uh, and he was a great horseman, lord oh, and I can't remember him when he wasn't on a horse. And I have a picture of him when he was only four years old and he was sittin' up there with all <sup>the regalia</sup> of his and everything, you know they just bought all this for him and everything. Because his father was a well to do, uh, uh <sup>?</sup> shoest<sup>man</sup> in those days. And then later had stocked cattle and horses, and of course, I was raised on the farm. So I think this is why we had...he was a lover of horses too and we had this in common.

540 CK: Didn't that create a lot of conflict, the fact that you were both ...pretty much knew what you wanted and you both stood up to each other?

BT: I think very much so. As I said we've had our ups and downs but

Blanche Thiessen

we'd always end up...and as I told him, I said "Well you took me for better or worse and you got the worst of it, so you gotta stay with it." (laughter)

CK: Did you pretty much know what to expect when you got married? Was it pretty much what you thought it would be?

BT: Oh yes, oh yes. I think we, we definitely did, uh, both of us, you know. We had both dated and, and uh, and uh, had different, uh, beaus and girls and, and so we knew pretty much that, that we could get along.

552 CK: Did you have to give in to him quite a bit because you were his wife?

BT: No. I um, I used to always say, " Fifty - fifty" always , you know whenever it would be, and he'd say, "Fifty-fifty, I think it's ninety to a hundred, if you ask me." (laughter). So we always have kind of joked but we stuck it out. We were...we had our ups and downs, you know, where we would argue something but uh, where we would differ, let's say but we would always end up, you know, with some wise crack or something that uh, and go right on from there.

561 CK: When did you have your first child then, was that right after you got married?

Blanche Thiessen

BT: No, uh, three years. I was married in 1920 and he was born in '23.

CK: What kinds of things affected, uh, how many children you have, uh, let's see. Back then, um.

567  
BT: Well, I always said I was gonna have four children. If my mother could have six, why I could certainly support four. And because I liked youngsters and uh, and I thought that they should be but things didn't go right for me when I had mine. And I had quite a time. I had to go back to surgery.

CK: Did they have medical facilities and everything for you then?

580  
BT: Yes, they did have. He was born at the hospital over here and all. But uh, uh when the doctor said to me then, when uh, uh, oh well Mac was so hard. I mean the ride and all, and he said to me, "You better, uh, you're not the type to have children." and he said, "You better live to raise the one you've got." ~~he said,~~ <sup>ok</sup> "Instead of thinking of having anymore children" So I thought that was perhaps a warning to me and so I only had the one boy.

CK: So you had such a rough experience with your first child birth that you were convinced that, that you might lose your life if you had more?

BT: Yes. Yes, this was it. And, and ~~lose~~ <sup>leave</sup> the child without a mother,

Blanche Thiessen

you see, and so...

CK: Did you check into other medical authorities when you got older, to make sure that was true, or...

BT: Yes, I think it was very true because I know that uh, they always said to me, uh, you know, every doctor that I would go to... well you can see I'm not very thick through here now. I'm very, very narrow through my hips, oh, I'm just the same in weight and everything that I was when I was a teenager. I, I never have changed in that regard. I'm bigger around the waist because we don't wear girdles as we did in those days. But, but uh, and then I think we, oh, just used to get around more, you know, and you naturally...here's where you get big when you sit around. But uh, I uh, I uh, I think there were changes in my stature that way. I uh, last year I measured and I, I'm still the height I was when I was a teenager. So I haven't drooped yet but then I don't know when I will. (laughter)

CK: Wasn't that hard on you because uh, you wanted to have a big family and your mother was sensitive and...

BT: Very much and I had always and also I uh, I don't think it's fair to a child to raise him alone.

CK: Had you ever considered adoption?



Blanche Thiessen

BT: No. Because my husband was uh, well he was always kind of considerate some way, you know, and I said, "Maybe we should try to find a companion.", and he said, "No, it would never be the same." It would with me, I could take a child and love it for my very own but uh, he was afraid that there might be conflict between them, ~~the children~~ as they <sup>SP</sup> acutally grew older and was aware that one was adopted and the other one wasn't, you know. But I always tried to stress uh, to my boy not to be selfish in anyway and he isn't now, he, he's very giving.

626 <sup>AND</sup> CK: He over came that.

BT: Because I was expecting the one thing I was afraid of...that we would wrap around him so and center our affections and all, until he'd be uh, you know, a little selfish and overbearing and everything. But I used to always say, "You have to share, you must share.", and I always insisted he share all his toys and everything, you know, with uh...

633 CK: So you made sure he had a good balance?

(Gap in tape here)

BT: I was 26 and he was just 27, you see and uh, there was a months difference between us and we were married on his birthday. And so, we just decided that we would get married because the war was over. The war came when we thought of getting married, then the war came, and then, uh, we decided to not marry because so many times that's bad and doesn't work out well until he came back from the

Blanche Thiessen

war, so this is what we did.

CK: So did you have a long engagement period before...

BT: Oh yes. I bet seven years off and on, you know, whenever we'd move here we'd be together, and all. But we rode together horse-back and everything. We had a lot in common that way. We both loved to dance. He was one man you never had to pull out to get him to dance because he was always for going. "What are we sittin' here for? Let's get up and go down to the Elk's.", he'd say, you know, and things like that. So we both enjoyed, uh, things alike more. We loved the outdoors and, and fishing and doing things of this kind. He was a great outdoor man.

CK: O.K. One more question about child raising. Where did you get your knowledge about, um, child birth and child rearing?

BT: Well, of course I, I didn't marry young and uh, I uh...my sister had two girls she raised and when I lost my mother, I was still single and the only one that was, the others were all married. And of course in those days they didn't ever think a girl, no matter if she was in her twenties <sup>could</sup> ~~that~~ ever live alone, but now they're in their teens, they've got to have their own apartment, even if <sup>their</sup> ~~the~~ family ~~to~~ be living in the town. But uh, I could never live alone, so we sold the home place and uh, I went and lived with Nyda, my sister, and uh, for two years before I was married. And of course, she had these two little kiddies and

Blanche Thiessen

two little girls.

CK: Did you see them being born or did she tell you about it?

678 BT: Oh, yes. See she had those when I was old enough that I could be with her and a part of it, and all, and so it was no problem for me. And then my mother was great to talk and tell us all these things. She was great to prepare us for these...now I know more of my girlfriends, and they didn't know anything, they knew nothing about it, were frightened to death, you know. Well mother prepared us because it comes earlier to some than to others and so she'd always say, "Now just don't become frightened by it because this<sup>is</sup> uh, a natural condition.", she'd say.

CK: She explained it to you.

700 BT: Always, you know. And ,and she was like that, she, she just prepared us for any and every occasion and yet she was great to have us make our, you know, like you'd go and ask her advice and she would always say, "Well, what's your opinion on this, and then I'll give you mine.", you know, to see<sup>how</sup> A..I can see now since I'm older, I couldn't see it then, but I can see it now when she knew it was, uh, uh, she was just feeling me out, you know, to know whether I was...uh, what my opinion was on something, and then she'd say, "Well I don't hardly<sup>Think</sup> that's right of me, uh, it seems to me if you would do it this way, or that way, it'd be a

Blanche Thiessen

better way" you know, and then she'd just talk along....

CK: But she'd always be interested in your opinion?

715 BT: Yes, always. She was always...she was a wonderful mother. And  
of outa the whole six of us, there were never any of us ~~EVER~~ <sup>EVER</sup> went  
wrong. So that proved it, I thought. Cause we lived out there  
where, uh, our place was a stopping place for everybody, it was...  
uh, I think this is why I understand people so, is because she...  
every walk of life came out there, be it with horses...(gap in  
tape here)...stay all night.

CK: So you entertained all kinds of people in your home.

725 BT: Oh yes, every kind. There was <sup>JUST</sup> the roughest and the toughest to  
the uh, uh, to the bankers, that came to our place. And  
the bankers, uh you know, the townspeople, men that father  
dealt with and all, they'd come out.

CK: So you were exposed to all these people...

BT: All these people.

CK: One more question on child raising. I wonder if women  
of the time had any knowledge about controlling that,  
or if they did, the number of children.

Blanche Thiessen

BT: I don't think they did so much, ah, in my days, I bein' married of course in my twenties and all. I think we had to a degree but our mothers didn't. I don't think they had. They just had children when they were supposed to have the children and ~~that~~<sup>this</sup> was it.

740 CK: Where would you get your information about how to--would that--how to control it?

BT: Well, I think it was just a natural thing that, ah, you would talk about. And people would, ah, you know, they'd tell you what they did, and all, this is what they did.

CK: Not something you went to your doctors about, huh?

755 BT: No, huh-uh. We never bothered with any thing of that kind. But, ah, it was, ah, with things in those days, I think, they just gradually worked in. Now of course, why, they don't, uh, they don't think any thing about talkin' about the pill or any thing else right on T.V. you know, which we never did. It was always just, ah, bosom friends or the family or ~~uh~~<sup>ah</sup>, something like that. But we were very close, my friends with my older brothers. If there was anything I wanted to ask them, I asked them. And they'd tell me, these things, so I learned about men, you know, and they were always real good, they'd say... they'd give you a warning, "If a fella does this, you want to look out,"

Blanche Thiessen

or something, you know. We talked things over like that with, ah, very close.

CK: So you, yeah, pretty well knew.

BT: Yes. And I know my brother would always say when he'd introduce me, or my sisters, he'd always say, "These are my sisters and I'm very proud of 'em." You know, he was always very...

CK: So you knew that, yeah.

BT: We always knew that we could go to him.

CK: Well, did the man in the marriage, then, take, uh, responsibility for child birth too, or was he...

780 BT: Yes, my husband did. He was very kind and considerate, in those times, very. They always did say that, and admired him for it. He was ah, he would help too, you know, in regard to those things when he knew that it was not well for me to have any more children. So he was very considerate of me.

CK: 'Cause I was thinking, back then they didn't have things like pills or...

Blanche Thiessen

BT: No, oh no, no no.

CK: Or not pills, pills and diaphragms and things so it would be the male's responsibility.

BT: Um-hum, right. And he was always very, as I said, considerate and kind of me.

CK: 'Cause what else would there be to do?

BT: That's right, 'cause he didn't want to lose me and leave a motherless child and all that, you know. And so we worked together on it. And he was always very considerate.

800 CK: That must have been awfully difficult for that many years.

BT: Well..(coughing) Excuse me a minute.

CK: What do you see as the future for your children? Or if you have grandchildren?

BT: Yes, I have two grandsons. One of em is six and the other one is eleven. They're, uh, both of em are being raised down in Los Angeles. That is, they live out in a suburb. Hacienda Heights, it's called. A subdivision of built up

815

Blanche Thiessen

824 you know, homes for families and all, but ah. My husba, my ah son, uh, in Century City, there, those powers that're, that is there. The ah, the division'll have their offices, the western home office. Their other one is in Newark, New Jersey. And, uh, so he has to commute, back and forth, sixty miles a day. Thirty in, thirty back, home you know. I worry sometimes about em being raised down there, you know, with that exposure and, uh, talk with my son a great deal about keeping their confidence of all things. So they'll always not be afraid to come to him with any of their problems. Because, um, so he can kinda keep a pulse on what they're doing, say, ya know.

840 CK: So they can talk with him like you did your mother.

BT: Yes.

CK: But you think <sup>that</sup> their lives will be different, living in that area.

BT: Yes, I do. I think and I think it'll be harder for the young people to stand on their own two feet because, you know, nobody likes to be made fun of, nobody likes to be called square or not a part of things, especially when you're young. But, uh, the ah, and they do that so much down there, you know. Trying to get em to try this or try that and, of course, you have to guard against that and yet



=Blanche Thiessen

862 not be too, uh, dictatorial about it. And uh. But I talk alot with the eleven year old. He and I--he comes home and tells me a little dirty story he heard in the school, you know. And oh, I just laugh and giggle with him with it, you know because. And then I'll say, "That'll be our secret. Now, don't tell it to some of your friends because I think they may go home and tell it to their parents and then their parents would think you were a naughty boy and they wouldn't let em play with you." So I said, "Ya have to thinka all these things." And I said, "Be careful who ya tell that to, dear. You can tell it to Granma and I get a bang out of it, but ya don't have to be, you know, the [unintelligible]." So then he'll come to me, "Granma, I heard one today I wanta tell ya bout. C'mon in here." And once you've started, you wonder how in the devil they ever find these things out. Ya know, at eleven years old, but I just go along with it, [unintelligible] he'll just come tell me ever' time 'cause I get a bang out of 'em and I go along with it. Then I get to tell him on the other hand, ya know. I always say, "But be careful who ya tell it to because you don't wanna get a bad name. 'Cause then when you wanna play ball with the boys and they won't let ya. This kinda thing to bring it home to him.

880

890

Blanche Thiessen

CK: Do you have any granddaughters?

BT: No, I have no granddaughters. I just have the two boys. And I only have the one son. But they're cute boys, one's dark like [unintelligible] and the other one is real blonde like his mother. She's Scandinavian so they're blonde and, ah, the youngest boy is blonde like she is.

900  
CK: So, ah, basically you see their future as being better than--

BT: Well, I hope so but you never know, you know, just how they'll turn out. As I say, you can't, you have to, ah... Because they're, ah, they're so advanced in this day-- you take a child that is eleven years old and, my land, he knows more than we knew in our twenties.

914  
CK: You were saying a little earlier, though, you thought that maybe that was a positive thing, that, ah, kids have. How is that going to help them to have all this knowledge?

920  
BT: <sup>I do.</sup> But also, ah (There is a gap in the tape here.)