



FALLS HISTORY PROJECT 2003

How do we actively engage students in the study of history? This is the ongoing challenge that history teachers must face at the secondary level. Historian David Blight of Amherst College suggests that “all historical experience... must be imagined before it can be understood.” One way to engage students and their imaginations more fully is to connect them to the actual process of “doing” history and relate that process to an increased understanding of their local environment. Indeed, the story of Black River Falls and the surrounding area provides a rich and diverse landscape for historical research.

**BLACK RIVER FALLS HIGH SCHOOL
SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT**

FALLS HISTORY PROJECT

2002-03 EDITION

INTRODUCTION

The Falls History Project was initiated during the 2001-02 school year with the intention of connecting our students more authentically to the history of our region and to grasp the connection of that history with the broader story of the American past. It is our intention that this project is ongoing, that it will involve a number of teachers and students, and that it will lead to the development of a permanent archive at the high school that focuses on local history.

THE 2002-03 PROJECT

The focus of our work this year was on Black River Falls in the 1930s. What was it like to be a young man or woman coming of age in this area during the Great Depression? How has the community changed in the past seventy years? How has Black River Falls High School changed in that time? How did the Depression impact young people? These were the kinds of questions that we hoped to pursue in this year's project.

We were fortunate, once again, to have marvelous people to interview. Each had experienced that period of time in a different way. Their stories provide terrific insight into that "long ago" time and will provide future history students with powerful primary historical research. We thank Osborne "Ozzy" Moe, Robert Pratt, Lillian McManners, and George Brudos for contributions this year!

Our 2002-03 Project Intern

Kristen R. Boehm was the FHP Intern this year. Kristen is the daughter of Harley and Kathie Boehm. She was born in 1985 and raised on a farm near Black River Falls. She has taken a wide range of Social Studies electives in the past two years including AP European History, AP US History, AP Psychology, and American Law. She will be attending UW-Eau Claire in the fall of 2003 and intends to pursue a degree in education. She did an outstanding job with this year's project.



For more information on the Falls History Project, visit our web-site at www.brf.org. Locate the Social Studies Department page and the FHP link.

Paul S Rykken: Falls History Project Advisor

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<p>Robert Pratt was born on November 6th, 1914 in Black River Falls. His father, William, operated a dry goods store and bakery in Black River while Bob was growing up.</p> <p>Interview Date: December 19, 2002</p> <p>Full Transcript: Pages 31-54</p>	
	<p>Lillian Lund McManners was born in 1917 in Garfield Township in Jackson County. She graduated from Osseo High School and began teaching in rural schools in the county in 1937.</p> <p>Interview Date: December 17, 2002</p> <p>Full Transcript: Pages 55-72</p>

George Irvin Brudos was born in a log cabin in Crawford County in 1904. He graduated from Lacrosse High School in 1922.

Interview Date: January 2, 2003

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THE FALLS HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEWS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE ON TAPE AND LOCATED AT THE HISTORY ARCHIVE AT BRFHS.

KB: Let's just start off with like you telling where you were born, when you were born.

OM: I was born Nov. 18th 1912 I just had my 90th birthday in Black River Falls.

KB: Oh yeah?

OM: The home is still standing down there on Fifth Street.

KB: Ok do you have any siblings? You said you had three brothers?

OM: I had five brothers

KB: Five brothers?

OM: All older than I.

KB: Any sisters?

OM: No sisters.

KB: Oh my.

OM: My mother had seven straight sons.

KB: Oh dear. What did your parents do?

OM: My parents ... my father owned a hardware store in Black River Falls. He came from Norway and worked in the woods and found out he was too little and not heavy enough to work in the woods. So he got a job at a hardware store and then he bought the hardware store and he was in that hardware business for many (repeat) years before the tum of the century and his grandson is now running the same store, at Moe's (rep.) Hardware Hank.

KB: Ok. Yep I've been there myself.

OM: Yeah.

KB: Do you have any like special memories from your childhood?

OM: Yeah a lot of them I had a very happy childhood we weren't rich but we were very comfortable and with all those brothers kinda helps take care of me and pickin' on me. But we (rep.) got along fine, we did. There wasn't much entertainment back then, ya know everything was ... you made it yourself. We would swim and play baseball and in the winter we would ice skate and ski and do all the things that were easy to do. But that's about all you could do (repeat) as a youngster back in those days.

KB: Where did you go swimming and ... ?

OM: In the river (repeat).

KB: Oh yeah?

OM: There was no pool here. In the river, the same river that carried all the raw sewage for the city. It's kinda funny we didn't have, (repeat) some diseases or something ... but we got by all right.

KB: Yeah that's pretty good. You said that you were you served in World War Two, doing office work ... like what memories of that do you have?

OM: What about office work?

KB: You said you were in World War Two with the office work ...

OM: Oh I was in the Quarter Master Corp, yes and I was finally in Personnel ... I finally went to Waceta (?) and got a commission and I was in the Personnel with the Kansas City Quarter Master General, a very nice assignment.

KB: Do you have any memories of World War One by any chance?

OM: I only remember that my older brother was in the army in World War One and I remember the day the war ended. I was downtown and there was one big parade and I remember when he came home and I remember he bought me a nickel for a souvenir from Kansas City. He didn't get in any action ... he was in the army that's all I remember about world war one.

KB: That was your oldest brother?

OM: Yes.

KB: Ok. Do you remember the first... who was the first president that you remember?

OM: Well I remember (repeat) when Calvin Coolidge was president. I don't remember anything about his policies or his politics. I only remember that he made the people in Wisconsin very happy when he made Wisconsin his summer white house at Superior to fish trout in the Crow River, which was one of the most famous trout streams in the country at that time and I remember everybody being kinda proud because the president was in Wisconsin and then I remember ... his successor made ... see he was succeeded by ...

PSR: Hoover.

OM: Hoover yeah. I don't remember about him, much about the politics I remember that he wasn't very popular. Times were tough and the people didn't like him very well. The one I remember the most was Roosevelt and his policies, although I must admit that I was brought up in a very (rep.) strict Republican family. My dad would have voted for any Republican but I also remember that he approved of a lot of Roosevelt's policies and the things that he was doing to bring the country back. Incidentally I had a five or ten minute ... a conversation with Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt.

PSR: Oh my.

OM: I was driving down the Wisconsin Rapid ... Wisconsin Avenue in Milwaukee when he was campaigning in an open, (repeat) convertible and we drove up to a stop sign with a red light on and a great big open car came right beside me and I looked over and he was closer than me than you and I being the smart aleck college freshman, I said hello Mr. Roosevelt how's the campaign going? He said fine young man and how are you? And then the light changed and (rep.) away he went. So I had five seconds of glory (inaudible). I'll never forget it. Yeah.

PSR: Incredible.

KB: So what was it like growing ... you know going to high school here in Black River? What was high school like?

OM: Well I (rep.) really enjoyed going to high school here. It was [a] very (rep.) plain set up there weren't many courses as I recall there were a couple of history courses and a couple of English courses and about two Math courses and one Language and that was about all they offered.

KB: They didn't have any science classes?

OM: Well yes. I take that back they had a primary science for Freshmen and they had some Biology for everyone else.

KB: Did you have a favorite teacher or a favorite subject that you can remember?

OM: Well I (rep.) guess history I liked best. Do you remember ... Did you ever hear of (rep.) Algavista(?) Olsen? She was a well-known teacher here and she taught here for many (rep.) years. I'll never forget her because I was only interested in Basketball and Football and she wanted me to go out for an oratory contest that they were having in Eau Claire and I couldn't talk her out of it and she'd come right down to the basketball court and get me by the arm and take me up to her room to practice. Nothing big ever happened, but I remember her so well. Yes, I enjoyed history.

KB: Do think high school is different now than it was or greatly different now than it was when you were in high school?

OM: Oh yes I think it would be like comparing Black River Falls High School now to the University of Wisconsin. We had ... they didn't have much to offer. We had encouraging teachers, and coaches were very simple and now we have so many wonderful things in high school. A lot of good teachers, you have a lot of good advantages that we never had.

KB: You were in basketball and football'?

OM: Yes.

KB: Did you ever win a Conference Championship?

OM: Yes, we won a Conference Championship in football and the trophy that we won is in your trophy case now with a silver football and right in the middle it says O. Moe, Quarterback.

KB: Oh that's you?

OM: Yeah we had won. Elroy Johnson you know ... You said you knew him?

PSR: Yeah.

OM: What a football player he was!

PSR: I remember hearing that.

OM: He was a fantastic athlete. Yeah he played college ball and made All-Conference and at ... in the Wisconsin Conference.

PSR: Did your team then get to advance at all or was it just played in the conference or ... that was it?

OM: There were no (rep.) that I ever remember.

PSR: How did (repeat) you a travel to the games, away games?

OM: Well.

PSR: Do you remember that'?

OM: Mostly by car. I remember we played a basketball game at Osseo. We took a train from Black River Falls to Merrilan in a little Toolerville (rep.) Trolley over to Osseo by train. That was the one time in four years that I played athletics in high school that we stayed out overnight. It was pretty simple.

PSR: See I remember hearing that they used to take the train.

OM: Yeah.

PSR: But that might have been back before, even before you were playing.

OM: We didn't take the train, but that one time is the only time that I remember.

PSR: Yeah, interesting.

KB: Did you ... (repeat) work in your father's store as a teenager?

OM: No I didn't I ... I'm ... I worked in my brother's clothing store, a men's clothing store. And after I got out of the college I bought half that store. And then I stayed in that business for (rep.) seven or eight years and then I went and opened a family shoe store myself. My brothers worked in the hardware store.

KB: Oh ok.

OM: Billy who owns the present hardware store, his father was one of the owners of the store too.

KB: Ok. (rep.)

PSR: What was his name again?

OM: Alvin was his name; they call him Beaner.

PSR: Beaner ok, and who was Junk?

OM: His name was Roland

PSR: And that was another brother?

OM: An older brother, yeah.

PSR: So you were all brothers and your father ... I might be jumping ahead of your questions here but I just want to make sure I get the connection right here. Did your father come here as a logger and then become a merchant?

OM: He just came here as a Norwegian from Norway and he didn't have any trade, he only ... no education. Second grade education was all he had. He started working in the woods and he found out he was a small man; he was only about five foot six. And it was just too much for him so he came to town and got a job at the hardware store. And finally bought it and was very successful. For a guy with no education he was a very successful merchant.

PSR: Very interesting.

OM: Yeah.

KB: You were the same age that I am when the Stock Market crashed. How do you think that affected the community in Black River Falls?

OM: Well we weren't interested in the stock market as (rep.) a ...

KB: Investments?

OM: Investments (rep.), but I know how it affected my father's hardware store. He had a very successful hardware store and it did terrifically good business. And after that crash of the market and the banks closed I can remember one time my brother next to me, Alvin who worked in the hardware store with him, I can remember sitting and having supper and my dad looked at him and said Alvin did we make a sale today? and Beaner said yeah we, I sold a \$1.29 cent milk bucket. And they were used to doing hundreds of dollars a day.

PSR: Sure.

OM: No one had any money and if they wanted something they had to charge it. We were very lucky it didn't affect our family too much we had plenty of everything we needed. But some people, some of my friends ... I know that a couple of my friends that were married very young, had children and didn't have a dime in their pocket. Fact I remember helping some of them buy groceries to take home. It (rep.) was really (rep.) tough (repeat). The bank (repeat) closed and they even closed the checking accounts. You couldn't write a check; you didn't have any money.

PSR: Did (rep.) people when the bank ... did they ... You know they talk about the run on the banks, the rush on the banks, Did that happen here, did people try to go get their money out, and they just couldn't'?

OM: Well they couldn't, the bank was closed. Roosevelt closed the banks right down tight.

PSR: Right.

OM: And nobody could get any money.

PSR: Ok so that was during the so-called Bank Holiday.

OM: I don't think there was any (rep.) run on the bank before then, because I don't think anybody really realized. That this was gonna get that tough. Yeah I remember those days, they were really hard.

PSR: How did the ... If I can interject with another question? How did the farmers get hit in your memory? How did that affect the dairy farmers here?

OM: Well they were better off than a lot of the laboring people. Where they ... at least they could have ... they had milk, eggs and meat, they had food to eat but no income of any kind.

PSR: Right.

OM: They just struggled along and most of the farms were very small and a lot of them were only forty acres. An eighty-acre farm was considered pretty good size.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: But, yeah they were actually, they were better off than a lot of people that worked in town.

PSR: Yeah.

KB: Was there someplace people could go if they needed financial help? Was there any place in Black River?

OM: Well ... Well those old timers were pretty tough on relief, they didn't want to give anybody anything. You know the city fathers, they ... It was really (rep.) bad. I suppose the churches helped some of their members and there were ... I don't recall that there was any ... a welfare office that ... where they passed out food or anything like that. But people helped each other. The churches helped their members and neighbors helped neighbors and (rep.) that's how they got by.

KB: How was Franklin Roosevelt viewed in the community as a whole, do you think?

OM: Oh I think he (repeat) was pretty popular, even my dad spoke very generously (repeat) about some of the things he was doing, and if he can say it, everybody must of loved him, because he was a real Republican!

PSR: Why do you think that was? What was it that ... was it just because they perceived that he was doing something and ...?

OM: Oh yeah! I think that the, the N.R.A. and the C.C.C.'s ... We had a big C.C.C. camp here and that brought a lot of money into the community and everybody thought that was great. Some ... A lot of those people that came here from the big cities and the C.C.C. camps stayed here and made this their home and brought up (repeat) families here.

KB: Did you know anybody that was involved in the C.C.C.'s?

OM: Oh sure! I knew all of 'em. Lot of 'em, not all of them but I knew many (rep.) of them. Sure. Used to go down to the Irving C.C.C. camp, know where that was? Just this side of Irving off in that big field on the left-hand side.

PSR: Oh ok.

OM: We'd play cards down there and we got to know a lot of those people

KB: So it was quite evident that there was a depression going on?

OM: Oh yes! Yes! Yeah we all knew it, yeah.

KB: Do you remember the presidential election of 1936?

OM: Do I remember what?

KB: The presidential election of 1936.

OM: Was that the last year that Roosevelt ran?

PSR: That was his second.

OM: Second?

PSR: Second time.

OM: I'm sure we talked about it, but I really don't. . .I don't have any memory of it. Who ran ... the guy from New York run against him?

PSR: He ran in 1932, he ran against Hoover.

OM: Yeah.

PSR: Ok that's when he won first and then in 1936, I think it was ...

OM: Wasn't it that guy from New York?

M. M.: Landon.

PSR: It might have been Alf Landon in '36.

OM: Landon.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: I remember when he ran.

PSR: That was in '36 and then it was Wendell Wilkie in 1940 that ran against him. And then in '44 ... I can't even recall right now without ...

OM: Somebody, some young ...

PSR: But ...

OM: Politician from New York ran against him.

PSR: Well it ... You might be thinking of Al Smith.

OM: No (rep.).

PSR: No, I'm not sure about that, but the '36 would have been Alf Landon.

OM: Right I remember that I had some campaign buttons with his name on them, but I don't know where they are now, but I had some.

KB: But you didn't vote for Roosevelt in 1936 ... or who did you vote for?

OM: I don't remember. I think I voted for him a couple of times. Yeah.

PSR: Because we figured out that ... we figured that '36 would have been your first time that you could have voted.

OM: Yeah I couldn't vote in thirty-two, because I ...wasn't twenty-one.

PSR: Right.

OM: Yeah I had no argument with Roosevelt I liked the things he was doing and he got things coming back very slowly. Things didn't really start happening until World War Two.

KB: Did you think his New Deal programs were effective?

OM: Well I don't (repeat) really remember how much we were advancing. The economy was growing but it wasn't going backwards we were ... At least he was trying to do something. And that, I think that's what people liked, he was trying.

PSR: Sure (rep.).

KB: Do you think that the Great Depression greatly impacted your life? How did it?

OM: The Depression? Well it. . . I don't think it made any difference in how I lived because we weren't rich, but we were very comfortable and we had all the clothing and food and I was going to Carroll college and my brother Bill was going to the University of Wisconsin and my father was taking care of very comfortably so ... But it made you realize that there was more to living than just having some money, that a lot of people were having difficult times. And I think that it made me a lot more compassionate and I think that I still feel that because part of it started back in the Depression days.

KB: What was the worst thing about the Depression?

OM: Well everybody was so poor and they were, they were poor to the point where they were suffering. There just wasn't any food. Yeah people were saying I can't even buy milk for my (repeat) baby. You know and (rep.) without the help of the neighbors and churches and the organizations that they belonged to some of those people would have, they'd of starved. I... That's the only thing that, you know, affected me. I think it affected my whole life. Because I thought differently about it. What you can do to help other people ...

KB: What would you tell future generations about, I don't know ... how to prevent things like the Great Depression, if something like that was about to happen again?

OM: Boy I don't know what I would tell them. I'd tell them, I'd tell them I think young people should learn to be a little more frugal and try to start to save a little bit and not spend everything they had every day they get the check and maybe they'd be ready for some tough times and, if that did happen.

KB: Save more.

OM: That's about all that I can think of.

PSR: Can we go back to, a little more about when you were in high school?

OM: Yes.

PSR: What kinds of things did teenagers in Black River Falls do for entertainment?

OM: Oh I've thought a lot about that Paul! There really wasn't any, there was nothing organized. There were no ... The only thing ... some of the teenagers tried to hang around was the pool halls and they weren't allowed in them and were chased off when they came in and there was nothing going on at school except athletics. If you weren't in athletics you were walking the streets not doing anything. And I don't know what girls did, I really don't. I don't know what they

did for entertainment or what kept them busy after school. There (rep.) ... everything was so limited.

PSR: Ok. Is ... Was the size of the town a lot different?

OM: Oh yeah! It was a sleepy little country town, it was going to sleep, it wasn't improving anything, it was ... streets were (rep.) dirt, no curbs, no sidewalks, very few sidewalks. I remember in high school or when I was in eighth grade school we used to rollePSR:skate in the summertime in the evening and there was only one block in town that I knew of that had sidewalks on all of, all the way, (repeat) around.

KB: Where was that?

OM: It was up between, right between Ninth and Tenth Street between Fillmore and (rep.) Main Street.

KB: Was there a movie theater around here?

OM: Yeah! Yeah there was a movie theater, not a very good one, but (rep.) we had a movie theater. But as far as any entertainment is concerned or anything that young people could do ... there was no YMCA in town, there was no clubs for a young person, girl or boy to belong to. There were no parties to watch or anything. Nobody could afford to put on a party. The only party at school was the Junior Prom in the spring. We never had any dances or anything like that (rep.) I can ever remember. So we just ... they made their own entertainment.

PSR: Did you ... How about the radio? Was that ... Did that When that came in, do you remember all of the sudden that that became more important or not?

OM: Well I remember when it first came in. Nobody believed it at first. I mean the ... some thought it was a fake. But that was (repeat) way back before I was in high school. But yeah everybody watched radio programs. We stayed home and everybody had a favorite one and sometimes they'd watch all of them run the whole evening.

PSR: Do you remember ... going back to Roosevelt, do you remember fireside chats ... at all'?

OM: Yeah, I remember hearing them.

PSR: Were ... It ... Did people ... Did they advertise that those were coming on or was it in the paper or...?

OM: Well I think (repeat) they must have because everybody knew it, got ready for them. And (rep.) so many people watched them. Yeah.

PSR: That's interesting because we talk about that in class and the kids have just been dealing with that in the last couple of weeks about what a change that was, for the President to be able to speak directly ...

OM: Yeah.

PSR: To people.

OM: I think people appreciated that it was great to see the president of the United States sitting there in a comfortable chair ...

PSR: Yeah.

OM: Talking to you like he was in your living room.

PSR: Yeah, interesting.

KB: Did you have a favorite radio program, at all'?

OM: Did I?

KB: Yeah.

OM: I don't think so. I listened to sports a lot, but I don't think that I had any radio program, I don't recall one anyway ... if I did have one.

PSR: What stations could you get?

OM: We could get WCCO out of Minneapolis, WGN ...

M. M.: Chicago.

PSR: Chicago?

OM: Chicago, yeah. And every once in a while you could reach out and get one from Cincinnati and you'd (inaudible) because you could get one from that far away. Yeah--- (inaudible)

PSR: You could get that here? Really? That was the days of clear channel radio, before there was all the clutter. Yeah interesting.

OM: I can remember standing outside a little shop that sold radios, the first ones in town and they were broadcasting a football game and I talked to a guy out on the sidewalk and he said I don't believe that. I think that they're a bunch of (inaudible). He didn't believe in radio.

PSR: Even ... I wonder (rep.) what he did after he heard it'? Whether he still thought it was a fake or ...? Do you have more questions or do you wanna ...?

KB: I was just wondering how old were you when your family first got a radio?

OM: When what?

KB: When your family first got a radio'? How old were you?

OM: I ... I suppose I was in high school. I'm sure we didn't get one right away, waited awhile. Make sure they were gonna work.

PSR: How about newspapers?

OM: Well we were ... All through high school I was the manager of the Milwaukee Journal here in town.

PSR: Oh really.

OM: I hired the newsboys, and they got commission on every paper they sold. I was gonna tell ya about that Paul. I made twelve dollars a week

PSR: Wow!

OM: And I only worked about ... three or four hours a week. My brother Beaner worked in a box factory in summer, sixty hours a week and he made twelve dollars.

PSR: Oh wow!

OM: And a lot of people with families were working for twelve, fourteen dollars a week.

PSR: Interesting.

OM: I felt like a millionaire.

PSR: You had a good job.

OM: I even had enough money to pay for a lot of my college.

PSR: Isn't that something? Wow!

OM: Course, tuition at Carroll when I was down there was five hundred dollars a semester.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: Now it's about eighteen thousand dollars a year.

PSR: Yeah ... How about your first car?

OM: I had a 1920 ... Oh man! 1929 red convertible. Man!

PSR: I bet you'd like to have it now.

OM: Man, yeah! I had it all the time I was going to Carroll.

PSR: Ok.

OM: For the last three years (rep.)

PSR: And ...

OM: Quite a car.

PSR: How about your ... When your ... Do you remember when your dad got his first car?

OM: Yeah I remember, just barely, I don't remember how old I was, I must have been about six or seven. He got a big Buick touring car, soft top.

KB: Pretty excited when you got that?

OM: I guess, yeah. We rode ... There [were] not many places you could go for a ride. The pavement ended right by Sunset Tavern. And then after that it went about five miles. And we'd go down to the end of the pavement and back. That's about as far as you could go.

PSR: Yeah. What's the farthest trip you made when you were in high school, do you remember? I mean as far as Minneapolis or Chicago or Milwaukee?

OM: The longest trip I ever took when I was [as] a youngster was up to Rice Lake. The Lutheran minister that we lived next door to had a cottage in Rice Lake. And I knew ... them real well and (rep.) had two kids and they wanted to take me up to [the cottage] one summer. Oh man ... first

time I was ever out of Jackson County! No I was never in Chicago or that far away until I was in college and then I went down to Chicago's World Fair.

PSR: What year was that? Nineteen ...

OM: Must have been about ...

PSR: 1937?

OM: No I was out of college by thirty-seven. It was in thirty-three or thirty-four, maybe thirty-five. In there. Yeah.

PSR: Now when you went to Carroll college ... when you went down there how often would you come home?

OM: Not very often ... ok ... every, maybe every three months. After I got a car maybe a little more often.

PSR: Ok. But that was a fairly long trip?

OM: Oh yeah (rep.) over two hundred miles.

PSR: Yeah, and it ... Were there ... Let's see what (rep.) would the highway have been at that time? What would the U.S. highway have been?

OM: Highway twelve to Madison.

PSR: Ok but ... that was in ...

OM: And then sixteen over to Waukesha. There were no freeways of course.

PSR: No (rep.).

KB: How many hours did it take to get there, do you remember?

OM: Why I would say maybe five hours, maybe more. My little Ford couldn't travel very fast. My first year I went by train. Took a train (rep.) to Madison and then from Madison over to Waukesha.

KB: What was the speed limit on the highway?

OM: I ... Think I could go around fifty, fifty-five miles an hour...

PSR: Yeah.

OM: In that little buggy.

PSR: Did you ever consider going to the University of Wisconsin?

OM: Yeah.

PSR: Is that just ... Carroll you just preferred?

OM: All my buddies were gonna go to Carroll and I thought I'd go along with them. (Otto?) and ... A couple of other boys.

PSR: What (rep.) drew you ... What got a group of kids from Black River to Carroll College'?

OM: Superintendent of schools was a Carroll graduate.

PSR: There you go. Ok. What was his name?

OM: Drew.

PSR: Ok, interesting.

OM: I thought about Wisconsin, my brother Laurence graduated from Wisconsin and my brother Phil. Phil was a Sophomore or Junior down there when I went to college.

KB: What did you go to college for?

OM: Me? Business Administration.

PSR: Did you intend to go into business in Black River when you went to college?

OM: Not really. When I got out things were tough, jobs were ... Man when one of our buddies got a job we had a party and celebrated! But I came home and (rep.) ... My brother was in the clothing business and he needed some financial, some help and so I bought half of the (rep.) clothing business with the help of my father. And then I stayed there until after I came home from World War Two. And then I opened up a family shoe store.

PSR: So that shoe store that I remember as a kid you opened up just after World War Two?

OM: Yeah a couple (rep.) years. Yeah.

PSR: And then you did that business for ...?

OM: Forty years.

PSR: A long time.

OM: A long time.

PSR: Long time.

OM: A long time yeah.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: I liked it. It was fun.

PSR: How far ... Were you still in business there when Walmart came in?

OM: No, no.

PSR: Ok you didn't go through all that whole ...

OM: I quit and Tom took over the store.

PSR: Ok.

OM: Tom didn't like the retail business so he sold out and went back to college and got a degree in criminal justice and went to work for the state.

PSR: Ok ... Being a merchant in Black River ... I mean I'm ... I have a memory as a kid and this would have been in the early sixties of a pretty thriving downtown.

OM: Oh it was! Every store was just booming it was! Anybody, any dummy could make money in the (rep.) retail business. Those were the good days for all of...

PSR: Why was that?

OM: I don't know.

PSR: What was the draw of Black River that ...?

OM: Well they had (repeat) (rep.) had five grocery stores downtown, three shoe stores, three clothing stores, five hardware stores. You could get anything you wanted in Black River Falls. People came from Tomah and Sparta to shop in Black River.

PSR: Was that because of Highway Twelve?

OM: Oh it made a difference, I'm sure.

PSR: Ok. I just ... That's really interesting because it must have been also due to the merchants themselves, they must have been good at it.

OM: Those were good merchants that treated on people.

PSR: Right.

OM: Yeah those were (repeat) good days.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: Anybody could be successful in business. Now it's a rat race and it's really tough.

PSR: Yeah.

KB: What is the biggest change you've seen in the community?

OM: Oh man, the difference between Black River Falls and New York. We were a sleepy little town and (rep.) nothing ... The schools were poor; the churches were poor. They did the best they could but they didn't have any money and they didn't want to take any chances. Now you have good streets, good schools, good churches. You have parks, we didn't have any parks, and ...

PSR: Do you feel that any changes you've seen have been negative? I mean does anything kind of bother you like you wish it was like it was? Earlier?

OM: Well I... Yeah I felt kinda bad about the stores downtown having to close. It was so ... such a thriving downtown business place. I felt kinda badly about that. But other than that the (rep.) town has just become a wonderful (rep.) little town.

PSR: When did the retail thing change?

OM: Well right about the time that Walmart came in.

PSR: Ok that ... Is that ...?

OM: I think it scared out some of them. They got out before they really got hurt. But that's about when it started.

PSR: And was the Walmart debate a pretty, pretty tough debate in the community?

OM: Well some of the merchants were pretty bitter.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: I can remember some of 'em who were really bitter about it. But you can't stop progress, you can't stop things like that. You just have to go with the flow and ...

PSR: Did (rep.) the ... You must have a real good memory of when the interstate came?

OM: Oh yeah, I remember when it ended at Eau Claire and (rep.) there was no (rep.) interstate between Eau Claire and Tomah. And all that interstate traffic came through Black River Falls on Highway Twelve. People who lived over at Pleasant View, a lot of them would drive over to Sparta to shop because they couldn't get downtown.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: Once you got off of, off the highway you didn't dare get off it again. Traffic was so heavy, bumper-to-bumper through town all the time.

PSR: I remember that even ...

OM: Yeah.

PSR: As a kid. But ...

OM: You came to Black River and then it was (repeat) nothing between Black River and Tomah.

PSR: Right. Then when the (repeat) interstate was completed did that, did you notice a big change? You know when the, when they didn't have to come through? Did that change the traffic a lot or?

OM: I don't (repeat) think traffic off Highway Twelve did any shopping in Black River Falls, except for gasoline and maybe some of the restaurants.

PSR: Ok. Oh ok

OM: They didn't stop unless they had to.

PSR: I see.

OM: I remember as a kid in high school I worked in a ----(inaudible) Gas station. It's where the bank parking lot is now.

PSR: Ok.

OM: And there was a steady stream of cars off the highway and sometimes they had to wait and wait (repeat) to get back on the highway because there were no stop lights. Wasn't very pleasant.

KB: What were some of the differences in prices of I don't know ... Different ...?

OM: Oh prices, I can remember even back in the (repeat) (rep.) early forties. We sold LEE overalls, for example, for a dollar fifty- nine cents. Now they're twenty-two dollars. And (rep.) they cost us eighteen dollars a dozen in Minneapolis and a nickel to get them here, that's a dollar fifty-five. We got four cents to wrap 'em, stock 'em, charge some of 'em. And never got paid for some of them. Real tough. Tough to make a buck.

PSR: Boy I guess, wow.

OM: Prices were, yeah ... Gosh I can remember when hamburger was six, eight cents a pound, coffee six, eight cents a pound.

KB: Oh wow!

OM: Yeah.

KB: How much did ... gasoline cost?

OM: I don't recall for sure but it was in the (repeat) teens. Twelve, thirteen cents.

KB: Oh wow.

OM: When I remember it.

KB: That must have been nice.

OM: Yeah.

PSR: I want to ask ... This is kind of a difficult question, but thinking back on kind of the change in the community going from a sleepy community to, you know a small, kind of becoming a thriving small town, were there some key people that you can remember that you think were partially responsible for that (rep.) kind of stick out in your mind you know when you think back on that?

OM: For the town ...?

PSR: To become ...

OM: Starting to grow up?

PSR: Yeah.

OM: Well yeah I think so. I think there were some people. Peeper Mills was one who, and Tom. They pushed for new things and stood up to opposition.

PSR: These were bankers?

OM: Yeah, well Tom wasn't, he owned the Coca Cola company --- (inaudible). But Luther Van Gordan was a modern thinking guy. And ... Well ... And I don't think of any more ... Ralph Lund.

PSR: Ok. Van Gordan, does he have a daughter that lives here?

OM: Yeah, two. Mary, no (rep.) not Mary, was ...?

PSR: I think it is Mary Van Gordan.

OM: Mary?

MM: Mary Van Gordan.

OM: Mrs. Dougherty which ... Joanne.

PSR: Ok That's their father ...?

OM: Yeah.

PSR: That you're talking about there.

OM: Yeah (rep.). They were people that had ... (Repeat) a little money and they were, they wanted to invest it. The town started to grow and improve and pretty soon everybody had some money.

PSR: Was there a time when ... I guess another question that came into my head was (rep.) there a time when the railroad came through here? Or did that go up through Merrilan?

OM: The railroad came through Black River. The railroad went right; you know where it is now?

PSR: Yeah.

OM: There was a big loop that came into Black River, well the main line came into Black River first. It went across the bridge right above the dam where that big pier is. And it went up past the cemetery into Merrilan, but then they wanted to cut that off. So they ... to make their land straighter. So it went out to where it is now. But there was a big loop that came into Black River. We had three, I think three passenger trains a day and a freight, a big freight out in this area. It was (rep.) an important part of the community.

PSR: Sure.

OM: And then there was a station out on the East end, and South end or on the North end. And railroad people worked in that and ran and ... twenty- four hours day. To change a direction ... to change into Black River.

PSR: Ok. And ... I wanted to ask you one other one too. That I was thinking of... what is your memory of as a kid, as a young kid of the East side of Black River, Brockway?

OM: Well ...

PSR: What ...

OM: They called Brockway Hardscrabble. And I think there was one house up ... cuz it wasn't a tar-paper shack. Now look at the apartment houses up there.

PSR: Yeah. Why was that? Why was that ...?

OM: I don't know.

PSR: That part so poor?

OM: I ... It was a very poor part of town.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: And there weren't very many homes over there at all.

PSR: Ok. Were there, were there Indian people'?

OM: Well I...

PSR: Or were the Indian people all out at the ...?

OM: Most of the Indian people were out at the mission.

PSR: Ok. Alright.

OM: The town was really divided, that was the poor part of town. Next was the Grove part of town. And next was the German Hill part of town, and then Priceville was the place to live if you had any money. And everything was neighborhood. Now like when I was a kid, we played football and basketball and games with the kids in the second ward. That was south (rep.) of Main Street. First Ward kids where we live now, they played together. And the Grove kids played together and (rep.) played each other in football games. And ---(inaudible) and baseball games and the First... Second Ward would play against the First Ward. We didn't have anything to do with them.

PSR: Isn't that interesting?

OM: Everything was neighborhoods!

PSR: Wow! That ... Now that's something that's really vanished.

OM: It was (repeat) so obvious you were, you ... We had a kid that ... Doctor Flant(?). Do you remember Doctor Flant(??)?

PSR: I remember the name. Yeah.

OM: Yeah. He lived in the Second Ward, he was a good baseball player. But his father bought a house over in the First Ward and we almost had war because we didn't want to lose him for our baseball team. He didn't want to play with the First Ward kids.

PSR: How about ethnic differences? Any ...

OM: Well...

PSR: Did people ... Did people carry any of that along?

OM: I guess some. The Second Ward was full of Norwegians. And the First Ward were, well everybody thought of them as a little bit Tonier(?) than everyone else. And German Hill, they called it German Hill because it was full of Germans. But I don't know about the East side, it didn't have anything.

PSR: How about the Bohemian people?

OM: We didn't have many of those in town but we had a lot of them out in Komenski and in that area where it's all federal land now. A lot of farmers until Roosevelt came along and bought them out. Most of them went back to Chicago.

PSR: Ok ... Because they didn't ... They came up originally up in the Hatfield area.

OM: Yeah they were there and on East... Yeah.

PSR: Yeah. How about when you were very young how far back can you remember people talking about events from before in our history? For example, do you remember anybody talking about the Civil War?

OM: No. There weren't Civil War Veterans in town. And no I don't really Paul. I don't remember.

PSR: Spanish American War?

OM: Nope.

PSR: Ok I'm just wondering when you start thinking ... Kinda like ... when you're a young kid you start hearing those things and when they start clicking in on ya.

OM: World War Two, I was only six, seven years old there.

PSR: World War One?

OM: World War One, Yeah.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: So the other wars ...

PSR: You know it's interesting that you tell me that you remember the Armistice Day because Bob Pratt has told me the same thing. It was his first ...

OM: Oh that... The town was just full of people! They had a big parade and there were some things that were very unpleasant, some of the German people were treated very badly.

PSR: In Black River?

OM: Yes.

PSR: Really'?

OM: I remember there was an old gentleman who was a baker... I know his name real well, but I can't say it. They put him on a wooden casket and made him ride up and down town in the streets and he was the nicest old guy you ever saw.

PSR: What... On Armistice Day or ...?

OM: What day ... Well, anyway, whenever they had the celebration of the troops coming home.

PSR: Really?

OM: People were so ... they thought it was patriotic, but a lot of German people were treated very badly.

PSR: Do you remember any reaction to that or ...?

OM: Well I think that people in town that knew better took those people in and told them not to worry about it (rep.) would go over and it did.

PSR: Yeah that's interesting, I've never heard that.

OM: Billy Krauss his name, Billy Krauss.

PSR: Krauss.

OM: He lived up on the river, near where Wilcox's live.

PSR: Ok. And that must have been very humiliating for him.

OM: Oh Yeah (rep.). He was the nicest man, everybody loved him. But he was German. Talked with a German accent and a few hotshots, trouble-makers got a hold of him and there were just a few people.

PSR: Sure. But it ... There must have been a lot of German people in town I mean ...

OM: I'm sure there were a lot of them, there were, I think Norwegians were the most. But I remember my dad talked about that, how awful he thought it was.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: But nobody tried to stop it.

PSR: Do remember when REA came in?

OM: Yeah.

PSR: Was that a big deal... do you remember much about that'?

OM: Well I think mostly farmers were interested in it. I don't think that anybody in town talked much about it.

PSR: And that's when Jackson Electric got started?

OM: Yeah, yeah.

PSR: Yeah I think that that was a little bit later like, 1937.

OM: Yeah.

PSR: Maybe in the later years of the Depression. How about any opinions that you can remember about Eleanor Roosevelt, anything come to your mind on that or'?

OM: Not really I never heard anything derogatory about her or I guess everybody thought she was a good lady. And very active, and had her own idea about things.

PSR: Do you (repeat) ...

OM: Respected her.

PSR: Do you recall Roosevelt campaigning anywhere in this area at all?

OM: No. I only met him personally in Milwaukee.

PSR: Yeah. Isn't that interesting.

OM: Yeah I never forgot that.

PSR: Yeah that's quite a thing. Was he in, riding in one of his cars?

OM: He was in a big open (rep.) car.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: I was as close to him as we are. I looked over, recognized him and I said hello Mr. Roosevelt, how's the campaign going? Just fine young man, how are you? And I said well I'm a college freshman and he said something about study hard, you'll be glad you did and then the traffic light changed. See if he had been president there wouldn't have been any traffic lights. But when he was campaigning he had to stop for them. I'll never forget that.

PSR: Isn't that interesting.

OM: Yeah.

PSR: That ... that really is. Oh so he wasn't president yet?

OM: No he was campaigning.

PSR: This was before thirty-two?

OM: Thirty-one.

PSR: Oh thirty-one ok that's real interesting.

OM: Yeah, they did a lot of campaigning in Milwaukee and I happened to be in Milwaukee quite a bit.

PSR: Who was your a football coach?

OM: Here?

PSR: Yeah.

OM: Jack Plankey(?)

PSR: Blankey?

OM: Plankey (?)

PSR: Plankey(?) ?

OM: Yeah, he's in ... That picture ...

PSR: Sure and ...

OM: He was a good football player. He played professional ball all the time he was coaching here.

PSR: Oh really?

OM: Played for the Chippewa Marines. Yeah.

PSR: Oh no kidding?

OM: He'd get in and mix it right up with us, make us be football players.

PSR: Now can you remember the Green Bay Packers from that period?

OM: Oh yeah!

PSR: Can ...

OM: Oh yeah, oh yeah I used to go to the games. I was ... I used to go to the Packer games when they were playing in the old wooden stadium over in a Green Bay East High School.

PSR: No kidding.

OM: Only held about 4,000 people.

PSR: That was back in the days of Curly Lambeau and ... ?

OM: Well Curly wasn't active at that time. I don't think. But I (rep.) ... The last game played in that stadium and I went to the first game played in the new stadium in Lambeau field.

PSR: Oh no kidding. Oh wow! Do you remember who they played, just out of curiosity?

OM: Well as I recall the games that we went to that Bill gave ... got tickets for are the same teams that are playing now, Las Angeles and ... And Chicago Bears, no Minnesota team.

PSR: Did people listen on the radio?

OM: Oh yeah (repeat)!

PSR: That was big. What other sports teams were followed?

OM: Baseball was big, everybody had a favorite baseball team.

PSR: And who would that have been for you?

OM: I didn't have one. I didn't care about that. I never played much baseball. But I remember the guy that owned the restaurant next door to us was a New York Giants fan and if you said anything about the New York Giants he'd kick you right out of the store. Really I saw him do it! Oh man he knew the players, their batting averages, how long they'd been with the team, everything about them.

PSR: And would he have gotten that from the radio or newspaper, or both?

OM: Well probably both, but mostly probably radio. He listened to every game.

PSR: Ok, interesting ...

OM: I went to a lot of Packer games. I preserved ... dedicated to the new stadium, Lambeau Field.

PSR: Yeah that must have been quite an event.

OM: Oh Yeah (repeat)! ... God that was ... It was fun!

PSR: I'll bet (repeat).

OM: I had ... I was in the shoe business. And I had a salesman that called on me that I bought shoes from that had four season tickets, two of them were up about 35 rows. (Aside) Wasn't that right? And two were right back of the Packer bench he and I sat right back of the Packer bench. And he (rep.) gave me his season ticket and I could pick out the number of games I wanted every year.

PSR: Oh wow!

OM: And so I had ... got a lot of Packer games in.

PSR: Pretty good deal.

OM: Oh yeah (rep.).

PSR: Well it's real interesting. I... (Aside) Do you have any other questions you want to ask?

KB: No.

PSR: Ozzie, this has been great.

KB: Yeah.

PSR: We've enjoyed it.

OM: Well I hope so, I hope it's what you wanted.

PSR: Oh it's fantastic, it's great I got ... There's a lot of good information in there.

OM: Yeah.

PSR: Interesting ...

MM: (To Mr. Rykken) Ask him about the flood.

PSR: What about the flood?

MM: (To Mr. Moe) Your dad ...

OM: Oh my dad lost everything in the flood.

PSR: 1911?

OM: Yeah.

PSR: Right before you were born?

OM: Yeah he lost everything he had.

PSR: No kidding.

OM: The books, the store, the building, the dock, everything was gone.

PSR: No kidding.

KB: Had to start over.

PSR: Now this is the hardware store?

OM: Yeah.

PSR: And he started from scratch then?

OM: Yeah, again.

PSR: Wow!

OM: Yeah he started from scratch.

PSR: What did they do?

OM: Oh I'll tell you they had companies that were ready to give them the credit they needed to get the merchandise. And, that's what kept them going. That's what happened to my dad. So ... He was ... This town would have been a junky wooden town if it hadn't have been for that. Everything up in the halfway up to where (rep.) Waarvick drug store was washed away. So every one of those are new buildings. They're all brick, they're not wood anymore. And one of the main streets at that time was Water Street. A lot of the big stores were in there, they were the first to go. So ... Yeah I heard my dad talk about the flood a lot. He never (repeat) was bitter about it. Said it was good for the town.

PSR: Really'?

OM: Yeah.

PSR: Just kind of...

OM: Built the town all up with new buildings.

PSR: Start over. Isn't that interesting. Can you remember anything about Prohibition in Black River'?

OM: Sort of, I remember I was a little bit young. But I can't remember talking about people that were bootlegging and people that were selling beer even in town in some of the houses.

PSR: I was wondering because there was ... wasn't there a brewery in town'?

OM: Oh yes there was a good brewery here in town, the Odapost (?) brewery.

PSR: Was it down at where the one is now'?

OM: Yeah.

PSR: Same building right'?

OM: I think it's the same building.

PSR: That's an old building.

OM: Yeah. Sure.

PSR: And they were ... Can you explain that to me during the Depression ... or during Prohibition they couldn't...?

OM: Make any alcohol.

PSR: So what were they doing then'?

OM: Well they were trying what they called Near Beer which didn't hardly have any alcohol in it, but it didn't work out and the brewery had to close. And that building became a turkey plant and that turkey plant became an ice cream plant and a lot of different things until Tom Mills got it and made a Coca Cola plant out of it.

PSR: I remember it as the Bottling Plant or the Rock Springs Bottling.

OM: Yeah.

PSR: Was that Tom Mills?

OM: Yeah that was Patrick Tom. The little wooden factory, the wooden place down in the Grove and he bought this place and moved into that. That's where he had the Coca Cola plant.

PSR: Because I remember going down there and kind of sitting around down there and he'd give you a bottle of pop.

OM: He was a good-hearted guy.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: I remember going down to the old one when I was a little kid! To get a free pop.

PSR: Yeah.

OM: Anybody who came he'd give a free pop to.

PSR: Yeah that was kind of a big deal.

OM: Oh sure. I remember. Talk about prices, Bob Pratt's dad had a bakery that had a soda fountain in it! You went in there with a nickel and he'd pile that so full of ice cream that you wouldn't believe it! Three scoops you know. He was a good-hearted man!

PSR: Now was Bob ... You were not in school with Bob. He must have been a little younger than you.

OM: I think he was four years younger than I.

PSR: Ok so you kind of missed on playing football together or ...

OM: He (rep.) never went out for football. He went out for basketball, one year I remember he was on the squad. But he never particularly liked athletics, I don't think because I don't think he ever played much.

PSR: It seemed like one of the things he told me was he ended up doing, was working a lot in his dad's store.

OM: Oh sure, his dad couldn't have gotten a long without him.

PSR: Yeah. Where was that store located? Do you remember?

OM: Yeah (rep.) you know where that computer store is now?

PSR: Yeah.

OM: That's the building.

PSR: Right there?

OM: First it was a bakery then he went into groceries and there was a soda fountain there. Yeah I remember that store real well.

PSR: Now the other character that I remember from when I was a kid that sticks in my mind was ... Besides you know I'd go in the hardware store, we went in the shoe store, but the other one was Tony Hauger.

OM: Yeah across the street.

PSR: What can you tell me about him?

OM: Tony was a good ol' boy, one of the city fathers. And ...

PSR: How would he have gotten into business?

OM: He was, well he had a kind of a mixture of ladies', men's' stuff over where Molly's is now. The one on the corner was a saloon. And he had a ladies' and men's' store, kind of odds and ends. And didn't really amount to very much. And ...

PSR: I just ... For some reason remember him being kind of a character.

OM: Well yeah he was (repeat) one of the city fathers and never believed in spending any money and fixing the streets or anything. I can remember when I was four or five years old, the first year they had a cement street on Main street. I lived a block away and I'd go over and sit on that bank and watch them pour the cement.

PSR: Yeah isn't that something.

OM: The city has really changed.

PSR: Yeah it has changed a lot. Well we really want to thank you for letting us come over here.

OM: Well I hope I did something for you.

PSR: Oh it's fantastic (rep.)! We'll make sure you get a copy of the tape.

PSR: Today for the Falls History Project related to Black River Falls in the 1930's. Our next interviewee is Robert Pratt. Who attended this high school during the late Twenties and early Thirties and we're going to focus questions for Mr. Pratt related to his attendance to our school and also the fact that he's a lifelong resident of Black River Falls.

RP: My name is Robert Pratt I was born in Black River Falls on November sixth 1914.

PSR: What was the name of your parents?

RP: My father's name was William E. Pratt, my mother's name was, the name she used all her life was Daisy. But she ... that's the name she used, but it wasn't her real name.

PSR: Oh ok.

RP: She found that her real name was very disappointing.

PSR: Ok so she had a nickname.

RP: So Daisy was her nickname and that is what she used when she was married. When she went to school.

PSR: Had she grown up around here too?

RP: No she was a Baraboo girl.

PSR: Ok how about your father?

RP: My father was a country boy. In Shamrock, in that neighborhood.

PSR: Ok. Now did you have original settlers here that went back into, you know, before the turn of the century and all that?

RP: No.

PSR: Ok.

RP: My father's family moved from the La Crosse area. Over this way.

PSR: Ok. Do you have any special memories of childhood in Black River or anything that would kinda stand out?

RP: Yes, that's a very sad memory, my mother died when I was a ten year old.

PSR: Oh no kidding, I didn't know that. Ok.

RP: My father married again so our home was kept together.

PSR: What was your step-mom's name?

RP: Emma Iverson

PSR: Ok so (rep.) you have a pretty good memory of your mother dying then?

RP: Very (rep.) yes.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: I can't forget that.

PSR: Yeah that's unfortunate. Did you ... How about as a kid, did you live in town?

RP: Yes.

PSR: And did you ... Can you describe the way the town looked at that time?

RP: Yes, we lived, our home joined the school property. On Third Street. We were on Fourth Street rather.

PSR: Where would that be in relation to the Methodist Church now? Is it near there?

RP: Well yes, it was more like two blocks. Down the street.

PSR: Ok and how about the ... Let's go back to the earliest memory you have of what the town looked like as a kid, when you were walking around the town, and how did it compare to how it looks today.

RP: Well...

PSR: And would you recognize it?

RP: Well ok I started walking around really before the days of the lumber barons. There were ... My folks often told me the story of there were only two cars in town and they had an accident.

PSR: That's kind of hard to believe. That's funny.

RP: I don't know, but there were lots of paths and not as many sidewalks. The traffic in the streets, there wasn't much traffic, just dirt streets.

PSR: Do you remember, was Main Street paved, do you recall that?

RP: Yes. I can't recall the Main Street before it was paved.

PSR: Ok. How about the East Side of the town, what we call Brockway, what do you remember of that when you were younger?

RP: Well I really didn't get over there very often. It wasn't an area as nice ... of nice homes like they have now. You know, people were financially stressed and ... The homes were kind of run-down and ...

PSR: It seems like I've talked to people in Black River who said it was even called something different than Brockway.

RP: Hardscrabble.

PSR: Hardscrabble, I wonder when that term went out of use, because I don't hear people call it that anymore, but ...

RP: Well I think that term came (inaudible) there yet, before the streets were good. That was hard for horses to pull a wagon. A loaded wagon up that hill in dirt, on the dirt streets. They had to scrabble to get up there.

PSR: Oh, ok I've never heard the derivation of that word.

RP: I don't know, maybe there's others, but that was the name of it.

PSR: Sure (rep.)

RP: The way we heard it.

PSR: How about ... See what was (repeat) the date, the year of your birth again?

RP: 1914.

PSR: Fourteen so can you remember; I mean what's the earliest big thing you can remember as a kid? You know like an event, something that really sort of stands out?

RP: I remember my mother and father talking about electing a new president. And they talked about the president... What was that man's name?

PSR: Would it have been Wilson or?

RP: His name was Warren G. Harding.

PSR: Harding?

RP: He was president and he was a candidate for re-election but he did not win. And I'll tell you the candidate that did win was Calvin Coolidge.

PSR: Coolidge. So do you remember them mentioning Harding? Do you remember your parents talking about him?

RP: Oh yes (rep.).

PSR: Sure and that would have been in 1920, so you would have been six if that, if my math is right on that. So do you ... I guess the one thing I was wondering ... Do you remember the end of the war ... World War One?

RP: That's my earliest memory ... the day ... the announcement that war was over and the celebration of people on the streets. All of them were so happy.

PSR: Do you remember that there was a parade in the town?

RP: I remember nothing of it (repeat) I was just running around.

PSR: Ok. Waving flags and ...

RP: I remember my dad had a ... was a ... had a bakery in connection with the grocery and he had a barber, not a barber, a baker who was from Germany. And he was ... People [were] lost to suspicion to anyone coming from Germany.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: And I don't know if he was (inaudible) to anybody. They came and got him and they had the fire truck out front in the street and [had] gone to a funeral home and gotten a rough box, the casket that you were buried in and they tied that behind the fire truck and they made this poor guy ride down the street and that.

PSR: No kidding?

RP: They humiliated him so he ...

PSR: Isn't that just terrible. You know ...

RP: It was just awful.

PSR: You know Bob I'm going to recount for you, we interviewed Ozzie Moe.

RP: Yes.

PSR: About a week ago.

RP: Yeah.

PSR: And Ozzie was born in 1912.

RP: Two years older than I.

PSR: Ok and he told us that story, he remembered that.

RP: Oh really!

PSR: Yes. Isn't that interesting? Because I had never heard that story before and now I've heard it from two of you separately and he, he told us the man's name too.

RP: Billy Krauss.

PSR: Billy Krauss.

RP: Kraus.

PSR: Billy Krauss. He didn't tell me though that he had worked for your father.

RP: Oh.

PSR: He remembered him being an elderly German man that he said lived out on the river.

RP: Well he did live out on the river all his life, he was at work ...

PSR: Isn't that something.

RP: You know, short sleeves like a baker would wear and wore 'em ...

PSR: Did they, did they come in and physically take him out? Now I guess it's easy to sit here all these years later and judge that, but do you remember anybody trying to stop that or anybody saying anything or? Do you think that was just kind of out of fear or being caught up in the emotion of the whole day or?

RP: Just caught up in the emotion, there was no, (repeat) basis for fear or none of it.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: This man hadn't been disloyal to ...

PSR: Sure. Well that happened to a lot of German-Americans during that period. I mean not ... they were persecuted ...

RP: Oh yes (rep.).

PSR: That's a tough (repeat) part of our history.

RP: See some (rep.) of them talked with a very German brogue.

PSR: Sure (rep.). Did you attend elementary school at the Union Place?

RP: Yes.

PSR: Ok. You went ... or how far did you go in school there at that time? Did you all just ... the first three or four grades or were you all in there?

RP: When we left that building when High School, Junior High started. Now that would have been seventh grade?

PSR: Seventh grade probably, sure.

RP: Seventh grade probably.

PSR: And then did you go to the next building over?

RP: To the next building which is now the office for the School District.

PSR: Ok and then, let's see by the time ... Now the ... My memory is that or what I've read is that the Third Street of today was the High School.

RP: Yes.

PSR: And it was built in 1926. And that would mean you must have been there when it was a pretty new building.

RP: Yes I... yes.

PSR: Do you recall that or?

RP: Oh very (rep.) well! Our property joined ...

PSR: Oh ok. I see.

RP: The school property and then they wanted, later on they wanted to remodel that building. Add to it and wanted to buy ... Our property, dad's property.

PSR: Ok. Did he sell it to them?

RP: Yes, but all they wanted to buy was a piece, a little piece of it. But he said no (rep.) if you want this you can buy it all.

PSR: Ok. Yeah.

RP: The price (repeat) they thought it was a lot of money.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: But it would sound awfully low now.

PSR: I'm sure it would.

RP: I don't remember for sure just what we got for it.

PSR: Yeah. Now, so you would have gone ... You would have been one of the early students in the new high school'?

RP: Yes.

PSR: Ok do you think you were one of the first students ... I mean did it open when you started high school, or? It would have been pretty close to that time I would think.

RP: Very close to that time.

PSR: Right.

RP: I just can't...

PSR: Can't ...

RP: I just can't remember.

PSR: Yeah. Ok so you would have just started high school, what year did you graduate from high school?

RP: Thirty-three, 1933.

PSR: Thirty-three. So you probably would have started in twenty-nine. So ...

RP: Yeah I do. I can remember school then. I was ... well I guess I was a Freshman. But I may not be right.

PSR: Ok. Let's move into that period of time a little bit and just talk about a couple of things to run by you. Do you remember your family getting a radio for the first time?

RP: Yes (rep.).

PSR: What was that like'?

RP: Oh that was great! The radio was great! Other people had one and we didn't have one ... Finally, dad bought the radio and we could listen to Amos and Andy. I don't know if you've ever heard of Amos and Andy.

PSR: Yeah I've heard of them, sure.

RP: Why everybody that had to allow for that for any school, any outside, any activity because people were always at home listening to Amos and Andy.

PSR: That's interesting. Yeah somebody was telling me, I think it was Ozzie that they could get, you know, WGN from Chicago and WJR Detroit and lots of far ... you know, clear channel radio that was ... you were able to pick up in those days.

RP: I remember Chicago; I don't ever remember Detroit.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: Maybe we didn't try it.

PSR: Ok. I guess the other (repeat) focus of our interest in our interviewing you is because of the Depression so we wanted to get into that a little bit. Do you remember the crash of the stock market? Do you remember that as an event?

RP: I remember the ... not that I was interested in stocks.

PSR: Sure.

RP: Because the president closed the banks. And people didn't expect that and here the banks were closed and oh it was awful! And our money, we can't get our money, what will we do!?

PSR: Yeah.

RP: And if the banks were left open everybody would have been there drawing out.

PSR: Sure.

RP: So he did the right thing.

PSR: Yeah. Do remember much, anything much about Herbert Hoover as a president?

RP: Oh?

PSR: Does he ring any bells with you at all?

RP: A little, yes.

PSR: He was president when the Depression hit and he was always kind of blamed for the Depression.

RP: I think he was.

PSR: Yeah and do you think ... Do you remember people talking about that or?

RP: Yes, I do, yes. I didn't pay much attention, but yes I remember Hoover. I don't know ... And he didn't take a hold or change anything, he didn't do anything.

PSR: Ok. He appeared, that's what, you know when we read and study that period it seems like he appeared that he wasn't doing much.

RP: That's the (repeat) criticism. I don't know what happened.

PSR: Do you remember then, the election of Franklin Roosevelt, does that ring a bell?

RP: Oh yes (rep.).

PSR: And he was first elected in 1932 and I'm trying to put that together. You must have been a Junior in High School.

RP: I was a Junior in High School

PSR: Ok. Do you remember people talking about that, his election?

RP: Oh yes (rep.) everybody was excited.

PSR: What ... Why were they excited do you think? What was it about Roosevelt that was interesting to them? Or why were they thinking that was a good thing?

RP: I don't know. I can remember him. As soon as he became president he took a hold ... And started and people were broke and out of jobs and so forth from the Depression and he started public activities, public works of various kinds and of course he ... Castle Mound Park, that was built during the ...

PSR: Really? Would that have been by the C.C.C.? Or something like that?

RP: Let's see, Public Works Administration.

PSR: P.W.A. Ok. Sure.

RP: And then they did other things too, natural resources and nature.

PSR: Ok. Yeah do you think that ... Well let me, let me go back a little before that again, I know your father was in the Dry Goods business, is that ... or bakery?

RP: Bakery (rep.) that's right.

PSR: Ok. Do you remember the Depression affecting him or your business or your family?

RP: No I don't. We never were very wealthy. But everyone else was broke anyway. So everybody was, everyone was broke.

PSR: Sure.

RP: Had no money, but we always had something to eat, we always had a warm house. And a kid, what did he care about it?

PSR: Yeah.

RP: If he could play.

PSR: Do you remember, did people come into the store that couldn't pay or?

RP: (inaudible)

PSR: Yeah and did that ... Was he ... Did he have to be more lenient with that during that period of time? What do you recall?

RP: Yes, he was, he trusted people and he lost money he never got.

PSR: Ok. There were ... there had to be young ... I always picture that there must have been young families that were just struggling to make ends meet and ...

RP: You would expect that, yes.

PSR: As a high school student ... You know it's hard ... I work with high school students every day, and I guess it would be just interesting for me to know a little bit about what your day would have been like as a high school student. You know when you went to school what, what could, what ... just kind of take me back there and what did, what did you do? Do you remember your classes, or do you remember any teachers or?

RP: Oh yes (rep.). Yes, we would go from one class to another. There's more ... There was a different attitude than now that I've seen in school.

PSR: What do you ... ?

RP: What's that?

PSR: I was just going to say what do you think has changed? You were going to say that, but I probably interrupted you. What's different in the attitude?

RP: Ok well let me tell you this, we sat in our seats, the teacher sat up ... stood up in front. The only person that talked was the teacher. And absolutely no whispering. Or monkey-doodling around. Now when I visit Third Street School, I have a daughter that's ... well she was primarily an English teacher and she has a class of gifted students and she had me come to class and they were up talking and walking around and no, no order at all, but man did they accomplish, they were, kept their thinking ... Right on the subject.

PSR: Kind of a different atmosphere.

RP: Different atmosphere. Yeah they were ...

PSR: Ok. Do you remember any particular teachers that stand out?

RP: I remember two teachers.

PSR: Can you tell us about them a little bit?

RP: One was very well, (in audible) awfully disagreeable with people. She shouldn't (repeat) have been a teacher, she was just, she just was terrible. She humiliated me frequently, she took a disliking to me. And as I remember the things she did, she happened to dislike me very much.

PSR: Was this in elementary school or high school?

RP: Yes, elementary school. Then I remember a high school teacher, oh a wonderful woman!

PSR: What was her name?

RP: Her name was ... see here, Olson, she was married to Clarence Olson. But her maiden name would have been Risto.

PSR: What was it?

RP: Risto

PSR: Risto ok. What did she teach?

RP: Well I had, she was my history teacher. But she taught, what do you call ... Economics ... Business.

PSR: Sure.

RP: Money and ... I wish I had taken it ... Over, but I took history ... but oh she was just wonderful!

PSR: Why was she such a good teacher?

RP: Everybody liked her, she accomplished a lot, we accomplished quite a bit. I was a out of school then, but she was with her husband in a car and he immediately, suddenly lost control of his car and it tipped and the door opened and she was, the car ran over her. And they had to have a place where they could hold the funeral to accommodate the people that wanted to

come and there was only one place in town they could do that and that was the high school gym.

PSR: Wow!

RP: And the funeral was there in the gym and it was just (rep.) packed, everyone was there.

PSR: What year, would that have been?

RP: Well I graduated in 1933 it was might be thirty-five. School wasn't too long out.

PSR: Was she a pretty young woman at that time?

RP: No, she had been teaching for years.

PSR: Ok. Just a tragedy.

RP: Just a terrible ...

PSR: Yeah.

RP: Terrible tragedy. She was getting close to retirement she would have to retire, but ... She just lived her, her work. That was ...

PSR: Yeah.

RP: She told us how she would listen to the radio at news time and they were just explaining something and giving something important and her husband began talking to her and she gave him the dickens! And she told us what he said, I don't remember what she said. I don't remember what it was. She told him keep still! And she ...

PSR: So she was trying to help you understand what was going on currently'?

RP: Yes.

PSR: That's ...

RP: Well yes (rep.)!

PSR: Ok.

RP: That's ... That was the League of Nations.

PSR: Yeah?

RP: That ...

PSR: Sure.

RP: Had they done away with that?

PSR: Well that was still in, that was still going in the 30's when you were in high school that was...

RP: Well she, see she was all for that. And she had a favorite politician. I can't think who it was, I'm trying to think of who it. For years ... Of the man that ...

PSR: Ok (rep.).

RP: She would vote for him no matter what! Because he was interested in the League of Nations.

PSR: Yeah do you think that she helped you become interested in those things yourself?

RP: Oh yes, yes.

PSR: And do you think she effected the other kids that way too?

RP: I think so.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: I think so. She ... and that's why she was such a wonderful teacher.

PSR: Yeah interesting (rep.). How about ... Were you involved in activities at the school, for instance, like the band?

RP: Oh absolutely yes.

PSR: And can you tell us a little bit about that? What (rep.) instrument did you play?

RP: I played the Baritone. I was the only Baritone player most of the time. And now I'm one of three, left living.

PSR: There were four Baritone players, is that what you're saying?

RP: No, no.

PSR: Oh ok.

RP: Of the whole band, the original high school band I'm, there are three of us living.

PSR: Oh! I didn't understand that.

RP: Elmo.

PSR: Elmo Johnson.

RP: Peter Lund, Art Martin. I don't know if you know Art. He's ...

PSR: I do know Art.

RP: Elmo, Art and I are the three living members of the original high school band.

PSR: What year was that first band, would that have been 1929?

RP: '29 was when the band was organized. We had band lessons the rest of that year and in 1930 in the spring we gave our first concert.

PSR: Isn't that something. Who was the director?

RP: His name was, oh I know it, oh it will come to me.

PSR: I'm sure it will come to you when you're not thinking of it.

RP: Oh my, my (rep.) ...

PSR: But was he ... was it a young man?

RP: Yes.

PSR: That came and started ...

RP: He was a young fella, yes.

PSR: Started a band.

RP: This was his first, his first school.

PSR: Ok it sounds like The Music Man, almost, you know ... that movie The Music Man where a guy goes to small town and starts a band. How about ... do you remember how many people were in the band? Was it a big group or?

RP: Seventy, seventy-seven or seventy- two.

PSR: Wow! And you told me that later on you 'll show me a picture of that.

RP: I've got the picture.

PSR: Ok and then were you in, were you involved in any athletics at school?

RP: Yes, Basketball and one year of Football. My dad had a job and had work for me.

PSR: Ok. Did you work at the Bakery?

RP: Well dad had added groceries to that ... Bakery and f wasn't concerned with the baking. I had helped with it sometimes, but no I was connected with the grocery end of it. We had a little delivery wagon that I, people would call and order and I would deliver it.

PSR: Ok. So you ... Would you drive that then?

RP: I got a special ... They had driver's licenses in those times. They would allow a young man a special license so he could work.

PSR: Ok. (rep.). And you must have been a big help then to your father?

RP: I thought so yeah.

PSR: Did you have brothers and sisters?

RP: I had one sister.

PSR: Ok was she older or younger?

RP: She is two, two or three years younger.

PSR: Ok. Did she work there too?

RP: No she didn't!

PSR: You ended up doing that?

RP: No, she doesn't work much.

PSR: Ok. And at that time then did you ... is the house that you lived in still standing?

RP: No.

RP: No, they had moved that and added another section on to that building. And so it's on a part of our old property. The house was moved up ... Oh the direction of the Golf Course. And I could ... it's changed, it doesn't look exactly the same.

PSR: Sure.

RP: But I could pick it out.

PSR: Sure. Ok. Do you remember ... well let, let me back up just a little bit. When you graduated from high school, did you, what did you do, what was your next ...?

RP: Worked down at the store.

PSR: Your next step in life. So you just went right to work?

RP: Right to work.

PSR: And that would have been in the middle 30's.

RP: 1933.

PSR: Ok, and so you were there working up until the war?

RP: Yes.

PSR: Ok and I know you told me earlier that you did serve in the military.

RP: Oh yes.

PSR: And when did you join the military?

RP: In 1942.

PSR: Ok. And you were older then?

RP: I was older then, they were taking young fellows right of high school.

PSR: Sure.

RP: And I got in training group with young rascals. But I was twenty-seven, at least.

PSR: Ok. Did you end up going overseas?

RP: Oh yes.

PSR: Where (rep.) were you?

RP: Well I did lots of flying. I was an aviator. In those days airplanes that flew over the ocean had a radio operator. And communicated with where they were going or where they left. So the plane was never out alone, never alone where it was.

PSR: Ok. Were you a radio operator then?

RP: Yes.

PSR: Ok. You had to have special training for that I would imagine.

RP: Oh yeah I had to go to school for that.

PSR: Ok. Were you in any particular situations of combat, or any, any fighting?

RP: Well no, you see we were, it was an unarmed plane.

PSR: Ok. For observation?

RP: No, either for carrying passengers or in place of a delivery truck. Carrying.

PSR: Ok and then what ... I don't know. You might have said this ... Where were you, were you in the Pacific Theatre or in Europe?

RP: We were stationed on the Hawaiian Islands. But then finally we got ... and I was all over the Pacific. Iwo Jima, Okinawa ...

PSR: What prompted you to join the military?

RP: I had my choice, I could enlist or [be] taken, I'd be drafted. I'd go anyway.

PSR: You were going to go with the draft'?

RP: I thought I'd have more choice if I got in, if I enlisted in the Marines.

PSR: Do you remember, I'm sure you do, but do you remember, can you tell us a little bit about how you reacted to Pearl Harbor in 1941? Do you remember the feeling that you had or?

RP: Very little (repeat). Surprise, but ...

PSR: Do you think ... this is something that I've wondered about in the last year, do you think there were similar feelings then as there were on September 11th of 2001 with the attack on the World Trade Center?

RP: Oh!

PSR: Do you think those are similar kinds of events for people or?

RP: Not emotionally to ... oh no. People didn't respond too much to ... but President Roosevelt was on the air explaining things and as I remember he declared war on Japan immediately!

PSR: The next day he did.

RP: The next day, and we were at war.

PSR: The next day yeah. That's interesting too. I mean you're bringing up a good point. That September eleventh there was ... immediately we were seeing it and the images were right there and Pearl Harbor wouldn't have been that way. We would have seen it in the newspapers and heard it on the radio.

RP: Well there you go, that's right we had (repeat) t.v. pictures.

PSR: Right.

RP: And yes people were so emotional.

PSR: Yeah (rep.). Do you remember ... I guess a couple of things I just ... I want to ask you about for my own curiosity. Did you ... Do you remember any of the, listening ever to any of the Fireside Chats?

RP: Oh yes! Frequently, but that's when I was still at home.

PSR: Ok. Did they ... I'm just ... Did they announce that they were going to be on and then people would kinda set aside time to actually listen?

RP: I ... yeah (rep.). I think so, yes.

PSR: Ok. And do you remember ... where was the radio located in your house, was it in the kitchen or?

RP: The Front room.

PSR: Ok. And did you sit around it as a family and hear those Fireside chats?

RP: Well, my mother ... well dad would be more apt to listen ... To it when he was home. My dad married again by that time. And I don't remember that mother was particularly thrilled by hearing the president.

PSR: Ok. Do you remember how you felt hearing the president? Was that kind of a strange experience for you to actually be listening to the president of the United States or? You were one of the first, that's that early period of radio, that's kind of.

RP: Yes, I made it a point to listen.

PSR: Do you ... I guess going ... you mentioned a little about Roosevelt before do you remember that your feelings toward what he was doing changed at all? I know you said earlier you felt positive about what he was doing.

RP: Oh yes.

PSR: Did that stay that way throughout his time?

RP: Throughout his time? Yeah, I wondered if I could tell this before for the kids.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: My father was not a Roosevelt man at all. And I never voted for him. Now he held a four-year term, and then second four-year term. And that was supposed to end it, but he was ...

PSR: Ran again.

RP: Again.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: And people voted for him.

PSR: Sure.

RP: Because he was ... he was running the country he was ... See the president was commander and chief of the Armed Services so he was in charge then and running it, and

winning and they didn't dare, people didn't dare vote for anyone else because they might not be able to handle it.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: And I finally realized that when he died. I mean he was reckless the way I was then (inaudible) and he died during the night. And I went out and here I had never voted for him, I didn't like him, I thought I didn't like him how wrong I was! Because he led the country, he's the ... led all the free nations in the world. He's been their leader and I didn't like him. How could I, how could I have done such a thing? I'm not sure I didn't cry a little!

PSR: Really?

RP: When it dawned on me how mistaken I had been and that he was a great man, and I now ... he should be regarded as Lincoln, George Washington, Lincoln and ...

PSR: Ok. That's interesting. I wonder if it had something to do with the way your father felt?

RP: It was, sure, (rep.) ...

PSR: Yeah. And I do know this Bob, from interviewing people from this period, that people either felt pretty strongly for him or, it was one or the other.

RP: One way or the other.

PSR: There wasn't much in the middle.

RP: It's strange, did anybody talk about Mrs.?

PSR: No.

RP: She wasn't an attractive woman at all.

PSR: No ...

RP: And I don't know ... and I'm not sure if the president was such a handsome man, you know, that people would naturally [be] attracted by him.

PSR: Right.

RP: They would judge by his looks. See he was crippled and had to be in a wheel chair to move and he didn't attract people like. Well you see he just wasn't strong! If you've seen him.

PSR: Yeah. Do you remember ... did you ... (Repeat) know he was crippled?

RP: Yes.

PSR: Ok and how did you know?

RP: You knew. But newspaper people were very, (rep.) cautious. They'd never showed him. So that you could see that he was crippled.

PSR: Ok (rep.). Do you remember him ever being in Wisconsin? Do remember him traveling through or campaigning or'?

RP: I don't remember.

PSR: Ok. What can you tell me about... I'll ask you a couple of other political type questions. What can you tell me about Merlin Halve?

RP: Oh! He was welcome by ... I don't know, he come home to Black River and he'd be on the street just an ordinary, everyday guy.

PSR: Ok. And didn't he live near where you live now? A block?

RP: Yes.

PSR: A block north of there.

RP: Yeah, it seems to me the house, well oh.

PSR: Would it be Severson's house?

RP: Yeah.

PSR: Yeah. And he was a Congressman for a long time.

RP: Oh awhile, yes!

PSR: Yeah. Do you remember anything about Robert La Follette, or Robert La Follette Jr.?

RP: Yes. A strange ... My dad never liked the La Follettes. But my mother some way, distantly, maybe through marriage, was related to them.

PSR: Your real mother?

RP: My real mother.

PSR: Your real mother ok.

RP: Real mother.

PSR: Interesting, (rep.).

RP: And ...

PSR: That must have made for some interesting conversation at home?

RP: No I think my real mother had passed away by that time.

PSR: Ok, (rep.).

RP: But we had visited other people in Baraboo that were related in some way.

PSR: Ok interesting, wow! Do you remember ... I'm gonna ask you a couple of other ones. Do you remember Joseph McCarthy?

RP: Oh I sure do.

PSR: What's your impression of him?

RP: Oh. Well people... Oh my! I ... Just terrible! Oh my goodness!

PSR: What was it about him that makes you react that way? What did he do that made you feel that? Kind of angry toward him?

RP: Well let's see, he supposedly was against Communism. He would accuse things of being a Communist influence The way he acted ... He was on the air quite often. He just couldn't ... I don't know people just ... I don't know how people could accept what he (repeat) was saying.

PSR: Why do you think he was so popular? I mean ... We were (repeat) studying him recently, and he defeated Robert La Follette Jr.

RP: Yes.

PSR: For that senate seat.

RP: Yes he did.

PSR: And I'm ... (rep.) curious as to what made him popular.

RP: I do too ... Except he sounded good at first. He was a (inaudible). There had been Communist influences in this country.

PSR: Sure.

RP: And he was going to drive them out. That kind of thing.

PSR: So that was a popular message?

RP: Yeah a popular message. But where were the Communists?

PSR: Yeah.

RP: I never ...

PSR: How about joint ... One more political question. What was your opinion of Dwight Eisenhower?

RP: Well, I thought he was ... (repeat) great.

PSR: Ok. Was that based, do you think on the fact that he had been such a great military figure...?

RP: I think so.

PSR: First and ...

RP: Yeah.

PSR: I know we've studied him too. That both political parties, both Democrats and Republicans wanted him to run for president for their party.

RP: For their party, yes, oh yeah. How could anyone be (rep.) against him?

PSR: Yeah.

RP: Because he was a great military man.

PSR: I guess, also I want you to recount something that I've talked to you about before. And I want to make sure I'm getting, kind of getting the facts right that your grandfather fought in the Civil War.

RP: My grandfather Pratt.

PSR: That's correct. Ok and you told me an interesting story about that, when he came back from the war.

RP: Yes he came back with a beard and Grandma saw a strange looking man come up the road, coming up towards the house. She was afraid, so she went and locked the door, locked the doors and hid. And it was her husband.

PSR: Now is ...

RP: No because they had to wait until they released him from the armed forces and he had to walk home.

PSR: Yeah I wonder how far he had to walk. I wonder if he had to walk from Sparta? You know sometimes they had to walk from Sparta the ... They dropped them off from the train in Sparta and they ...

RP: I don't know I just wonder how he got that close.

PSR: Ok isn't that something.

RP: I always hoped I could visit a place in Madison that has records from Japan and I could have maybe found out a little more ...

PSR: Sure.

RP: But I never got around to it and now I...

PSR: What was his name again? What was his first name?

RP: Let's see, oh my goodness!

PSR: I think I've seen it in the ... It was your dad's dad right, your father's dad? I just think that it is so interesting that I'm able to, in the year 2002 to talk to somebody who's grandfather fought in the Civil War. I just find that ...

RP: Yeah.

PSR: Doesn't that seem ... Makes history seem a lot shorter to me.

RP: Yeah I'm getting so terribly forgetful Paul.

PSR: Well you've remembered real well today.

RP: But what was my grandfather's name? George (rep.) William.

PSR: George Pratt, that's right I remember that now you've told me that. Well I thought that was an interesting story and I guess I ... One other one I'll ask you too is, do you remember when your family first got a car?

RP: When who's family first got what?

PSR: A car.

RP: Oh yes!

PSR: And do you remember what the car was?

RP: A Buick.

PSR: Do you remember what year it was?

RP: 1922.

PSR: Twenty-two. I bet you'd like to have that car today. I mean just to (rep.) be able to look at it.

RP: Wouldn't that be great.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: Have it restored, not restored. Have it in good shape so that I could ...

PSR: Now you would have been a young boy, a pretty young boy at that time. That must have been pretty exciting to have a car in the family?

RP: Well we had a good time with the car.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: Dad did the driving, always.

PSR: Yeah.

RP: Until I drove to help deliver groceries.

PSR: Sure. How far did you ... While you were growing up and through high school, how far do you remember that you ever traveled ... away from Black River?

RP: I don't ... Before I got in high school or in high school?

PSR: Or in high school or either.

RP: I can't remember if we had ... My mother's home was in Baraboo, we got there ... Occasionally. And then I played in the band and the band would go to various ... Contests.

PSR: So La Crosse or Eau Claire or that, that far away?

RP: I got to La Crosse or Eau Claire quite often. Because there was an Optometrist there that my sister saw and she'd be taken there ... and people, friends would take me along with them to La Crosse. Dad always had his nose held to the grindstone, you didn't just walk out. And neither could I.

PSR: I would guess that up until you went into the military you hadn't traveled a lot. That must have been quite an experience?

RP: It was.

PSR: To be going off to Hawaii.

RP: It was. Well you see it took a long time to get there.

PSR: Yeah, I'll bet.

RP: Because I had to learn all this radio business and I... They sent me to school, radio school there in California. In Sandiago. And then they sent me to the Marine Corp air base in North Carolina. I was there waiting, a year waiting to sign with somebody. And then joined a squadron of trains, which were not armed, to carry people over there. They put me there to keep the line in the country. Yes I got to Chicago and I got to the East places, Washington D.C. and places like that. And we always arranged to stay all night and then get a hotel and get a nice room and then we would get our money back. For that.

PSR: That was fun?

RP: That was a lot of fun!

PSR: I'll bet.

RP: I had never ... Like Washington and all over the world when I got there ...

PSR: Yeah interesting.

RP: And other cities.

PSR: You bet, Bob also I know that for a number of years, I know that you sang in a men's choir and ...

RP: (Inaudible/name of the men's' choir).

PSR: Yes, can you tell us about that a little bit?

RP: (Inaudible) it was that type of singing at a music school in Madison at the University and came home and he was so anxious to have a group like that and he came home and formed one and they started practicing and for four years until World War Two started. And then

PSR: That was it?

RP: That was it.

PSR: Did you sing for public occasions or?

RP: Well we gave an annual concert each year.

PSR: Ok (rep.).

RP: And once and awhile they'd ask us to sing. And we had another ... a number of concerts where joint ... where two dollar and a quarter a cost ... One was in Baraboo one was at Sparta, (rep.) I believe.

PSR: And this was a community choir? I mean it was mostly drawn from ... mostly from Black River?

RP: Yes.

PSR: Is there anyone still alive that was involved in that with you?

RP: I don't think so.

PSR: You don't think so, yeah.

RP: I don't think so.

PSR: And do you have; would you happen to have any pictures of that'? Maybe or ... It seems like I've seen pictures of that somewhere.

RP: You've seen pictures?

PSR: I don't know where I've seen them, but I've seen them somewhere. I don't know if it's in an old paper or ... I'm not sure.

RP: Yeah.

PSR: Yeah. Well that'd be interesting anyway.

RP: If it's ... Later on if I can find it, I don't know ...

PSR: Yeah. That must have been fun though?

RP: It was fun.

PSR: Yeah. Now did you play in any band after high school at all or was that ... '?

RP: I tried. For a long time I did, but there wasn't anything to really play. I thought I could start to play. I'd play fine, but no I had forgotten.

PSR: Had been working.

RP: There was a band in (in audible) and I thought I'd be better off trying than to ...

PSR: Yeah. Do you remember much about playing basketball in high school?

RP: I yes ... yeah, we didn't play well like they do now. Girls ... (Rep) play so much better now than we could.

PSR: Ok. Where was the ... What gym did you play in?

RP: What we began with we ... what's in the lower part of Third Street, the original part. The gym was down there, it was awfully small but ...

PSR: Oh man! I can't imagine it would be high enough. The ceiling, it must have been a high room in there or?

RP: I don't know, we played there!

PSR: Ok, I think other people have told me that and I can't, I cannot picture how that would have worked.

RP: I think that's remodeled a bit where ...

PSR: Yeah.

RP: And changed the looks of that area a little of that building. But ...

PSR: And then they built in the middle of the Depression, I think they built the gym that's there now.

RP: Yes.

PSR: If I remember correctly.

RP: Yeah.

PSR: So that would have been after you were out of high school?

RP: Yes.

PSR: If that would have been built?

RP: Yeah I was out of high school by that time.

PSR: I'm going to ask you one other question about when you were a kid. This is something I'm picking up from Ozzie Moe.

RP: Yeah.

PSR: He said that when, when he was a kid that what ward you lived in town was kind of important, that kids kind of hung together.

RP: Oh yeah, (rep.)!

PSR: By ward and that they would play ...

RP: Hardscrabble or ...

PSR: Yeah.

RP: First Ward or you were one of the elite if you ...

PSR: Yeah and he said there were even ball teams that would be from ...

RP: Yeah, (rep.)!

PSR: I found that real interesting.

RP: Yeah.

PSR: That seems real different than it is now.

RP: Lots of feeling ...

PSR: And do you remember along with that ... Do you remember any kind of ethnic feelings? Kids that were Irish, or German, or Norwegian did any of that kind of come into that or?

RP: Well ...

PSR: Or not so much?

RP: If you weren't Norwegian you weren't anybody. Really! I thought so many times too that stores had people who spoke ... If they had someone who spoke Norwegian, customers would come in and ... All they would do is talk Norwegian, when ... But in English that's all they ...

PSR: How about German? Or not so much?

RP: Not much, nope.

PSR: Did German Hill get its name from Germans living there?

RP: I don't know. I never knew.

PSR: Ok. I think I've heard that and I thought that was kind of interesting too. Well I think we've gone ... (Repeat) quite a while here and I really appreciate your time and we've got a lot of good information here and I could ... we could probably talk a lot longer about.

RP: We could talk a lot longer.

PSR: I'm real pleased that you came in and we'll make sure you get a copy of the tape and we thank you very much Bob.

KB: What's your name'?

LM: Lillian Lund McManners. And I grew up on a farm. I was born on a farm in Northern Jackson County in a township called Garfield in a little community called Levis and there they had the Levis store and the Levis school and we lived a mile and a fourth from the (repeat) school and so after I grew up and studied to be a teacher I taught there, my dad had taught in that school, my sister taught, and so did an aunt of mine and a sister-in-law. So it was ... And ...

KB: A family business.

LM: A family business you might say. So that's ... And I had two brothers and three sisters.

KB: What year were you born in?

LM: 1917

KB: And what were your parents' names and your siblings' names'?

LM: Martin and Amanda Lund. And my oldest brother ... I'll go down the line it was Lester, Wilbur, Alice, Ruth, and then I came in, Lillian, and then Mildred. So there were six of us.

KB: What special memories do you have from your childhood?

LM: I have wonderful memories of my childhood. Maybe it was because of the parents or maybe living on the farm, but all of the community, it was like one big family. My youngest sister and I had a lot of fun. We had a calf on the farm and it was a small ... it was a white calf and we called it Whitey. And we learned how to ride it, (rep.) was just like a horse. So we had lots of fun with Whitey, and my mother always let us walk, go out and walk in the mud puddles after it rained. And we would go out and build sand castles and so, and then ... And it was fun going to a country school. We walked a mile and a fourth. And I think every child should have that opportunity to let that ... to a rural school where the teacher teaches grades one through eight ... And our Christmas programs were something, I really enjoyed that.

KB: What special, I don't know, things did you learn on the farm?

LM: Well ...

KB: What do you remember most about living on the farm?

LM: Ok. I think it was the neighborhood, you know, the parents were really concerned about what their children were doing, you know, and they tried to keep the children together, you know. And my dad was great he was always thinking about some way to entertain the children. So he would write plays and we had a big farmhouse and the living room and dining room would be almost like one so he would write these plays and he'd get the neighbor children to come in and learn their parts and then after we, he thought we knew them well enough why then the neighbors would be invited to come and watch us perform. And one time we had so many people in the house that our dining room floor started to sink.

KB: Really?

LM: Yes, my dad had to get carpenters to come in and put braces on the floor because of that. And we had fun going hanging May baskets. I don't know whether they do that anymore.

KB: I don't know. I've heard of it.

LM: And then of course we walked a lot of places, we walked to school. And our church, a rural church was maybe two miles or so, we walked to Sunday School. And that's how we got around. We didn't expect our parents to take us everywhere. And if we wanted to go visit the neighbors, well we (rep.) walked!

KB: How old were you when your family got their first vehicle, their first car, do you know?

LM: Well I suppose it was ... My dad was a traveling salesman for the Lelivelle (?) Separator Company so the first vehicle that I can remember was a gold car that he had. And we always called the car Goldie. So we'd wait for my dad to come home on weekends and then maybe he'd take us, though he'd been driving all weekend, but we wanted to get to town because we were ten miles from town. So ... And I remember that was a Chevrolet that he had. And then I remember we had a car, which probably people have never heard of. We had a ... Oh now I can't even remember it! We had a Hanley it was called. And I can remember in the backseat there were two little seats that folded up and I remember my youngest sister and I thought that it was a pleasure to sit in those seats when we went someplace. And being a big family we had to have a big car. Miriam Hanley was the name of the car. So I don't know if anybody has an antique one that's still around. I don't know.

KB: I haven't heard of any. Who was the first president that you can recall?

LM: I can remember them mentioning Herbert Hoover, but Roosevelt was the one that made the biggest impression on me. My folks used to listen to his fireside chats and it was through his ... work program that my youngest sister got a job here in Black River Falls putting on numbers on the houses. And then they started the Rural Electrification and so that was quite ... And my dad was on the first board here in Black River when they started it for the Jackson County Electrical Company. And it was the people in each township to go around to get people to sign the papers to get permission to put the line in. Well my dad had everyone but a fella by the name of Peter Peterson and because they lived there, a small body of water, we called it a crick, we always called him Pete by the crick. And my dad would go there many times to try and get Mr. Peterson to sign. And he wasn't going to sign those papers because the line would go across the driveway. They didn't have a car, but their daughter would walk to the Levis store every day to maybe make change of a dozen eggs to get some groceries. And he was afraid that the line would fall down and his daughter would be killed ... The cows, if the cows got too close to the fence why the cows, the cows would be killed. So one day my dad said to my mother, I've got to see if I can get Mr. Peterson to sign because he's the only one left in this community that hasn't signed the papers. So he said I don't know when I'll be home. My dad was gone for over twelve hours!

KB: Oh wow!

LM: And he finally came home and said I got Mr. Peterson to sign. When they ... When he got there he said ... Mr. Peterson really liked to read and so they discussed everything. And my dad didn't bring up this Rural Electrification until they started talking about Roosevelt and what he had done and how it would benefit the community and Mr. Peterson after over twelve hours with my dad, finally signed the papers so that they could get Rural Electrification in Jackson, in the Town of Garfield.

KB: Do you remember what year that was?

LM: It was 1937. But it ... We probably didn't get it to our place until maybe 1939. And before that we had a radio that was run by battery.

KB: How far away from Black River did you live?

LM: We lived about ... Let's see I'm trying to think, about 40 miles.

KB: Ok ... So a little of a distance.

LM: You bet! A lot different than having a freeway now. With the back-roads and they weren't, you know, paved or anything.

KB: And your school, did you go up to the eighth grade?

LM: Yes.

KB: What did you do after your schooling?

LM: Then I didn't know what I wanted to do after school so I stayed home for a year and worked for a family. And then my dad had heard about the teacher's training department at Black River Falls so I came down here and I enrolled and I went one year to teacher's training and you spent one month out in a rural school with a teacher to learn the ups and downs of rural teaching and then you graduated and you could get a job. And then of course you would have to, after that, you'd have to get more education so it was either night school or summer school until you get a degree.

KB: So you taught all subjects then?

LM: Yes, I did one through eighth grade.

KB: Did you have, ever have a favorite class or favorite student group?

LM: I had one little boy in my ... And he was ... But he was a slow learner. But he was really my favorite I think of all of my other students that I had. And he had ... He was a twin and his twin sister was very bright, but poor ... I don't know if I should call him by name. But anyway I'd call on him and before he had a chance to answer a question his sister would answer the question for him. So somedays I'd say, ok, now you sit in your seat and do this seat work. And the boy sat up front and we'd read our lesson together. And of course we didn't have ... We had what we called Hectographs. Have you ever heard of a Hectograph?

KB: No.

LM: That's how we made our duplicate copies of something. And it was a board, it was a folding board and you would put this jelly-like stuff in these little frames and you'd have to use a Hectograph pencil. You'd write your copy and you'd wet this spongy stuff and put your master copy on there, press it back and forth and then you'd put a clean sheet over that after you take off the master copy and make as many copies as you wanted to. Now if you want to see an interesting place, go out to the ... If you get a chance, go out to the Spring Creek School. They still have that now.

KB: With no electricity or phone ...

LM: And the students go out there and they really enjoy it. They've done a lot to bring back some of the old things that we used. And of course in the rural schools we didn't ... Our music

came over the radio and ... But art work ... Why later on, not in the first years that I taught, but later on in the rural schools the art teacher from Black River Falls would come out and our Phy. Ed. teacher would come out from Black River Falls maybe every two weeks or something and we would go outside with the children during noon hour and play ball or play Ante-Over or you know some of those games.

KB: Did you always teach at Levis School?

LM: No I taught in a number of rural schools.

KB: Can you name them all?

LM: Well let's see, I taught in Levis, Church View, Tindale, Pleasant Valley, Kenyan Valley, Pine Hill, Spring Creek. I hope I didn't leave any of them out. And then it was in 1962 that Ms. Webb ... She was the Superintendent at the time and she told me ... I was teaching at Spring Creek and of course that was when the schools were beginning to be consolidated and so as each school consolidated it ... I guess it was my job, my job to close it up or something. And that was my the last year so then in the fall of 1962 I came into Black River and taught in the middle school until I retired in 1978.

KB: Did you teach all middle school grades or did you just teach one specific grade?

LM: No I started out with English and Geography and towards the end I was the reading teacher for the seventh grade. Some years it was seventh and some years it was eighth grade.

PSR: Can I interject a question on that too (aside)? When the (repeat)one room schools were closing was that a difficult process'!

LM: It ...

PSR: Were people upset, were people you know ...?

LM: Yes. Some communities the people just...were divided you know. And in some of these smaller towns when they closed the school some were for it and some were against it and it made hard feelings. And I think in some places it's still hard feelings. Now I'm going to use an example, when my husband was a teacher up in Glen Flora they closed the school and he was teaching at Hawkins. Now you ... From Hawkins you'd go to Glen Flora and then you'd go to Tony then to Ladysmith. Well when they closed the Hawkins school instead of going past Glen Flora and stopping at the school they built in Tony. They wouldn't, they sent their children all the way into Ladysmith. And some of those people I don't think the feelings have ever been the same as it was before because of the closing of these little high schools.

KB: How did you feel about it, the closing of the schools?

LM: Well I could see where, you know, that there was more advantage to having a bigger school. But in some of these ... I think that each child should have had a chance to go to a rural school. You know.

KB: A good experience was it?

LM: Wonderful because you know. Because the little ones, the older ones in the upper grades helped the smaller children. Yeah and there wasn't, we didn't have the discipline problem like they have now days.

KB: Do you remember, moving on, do you remember the crash of the stock market in 1929?

LM: No I don't, I was twelve years old at the time. Maybe my folks talked about it, but I wasn't interested.

KB: No, not at all. Did your parents ever talk about the future of the country, do you remember after that happened?

LM: Well no I don't remember any of that.

KB: What type of impact did the Great Depression have on you? On your family or on you?

LM: Well I was in high school at the time and because we were ten miles from town I stayed in town and rented a room for five dollars a month. And I would always bring food from own home and fix my own meals and someone would come and get me on Friday nights and I'd go home and get my clothes washed and come back on Sunday and. And some of the girls maybe if their dad had businesses in town why they would have maybe the money to go see a movie. But I never did. I never had any extra. And the year that I was a Senior, why that was in 1935 no one was very wealthy and so we couldn't afford a yearbook so our yearbook looked like this (shows the yearbook). And one ... This lady lives in Black River Falls now, she was the in same year that I was and she drew the pictures of all of the people in our class.

KB: Looking for your picture?

LM: Yes I am, I'm looking for my picture and here I am, right down there at the bottom.

KB: And it just had your name and your nickname and ...?

LM: And then I was in a one act play, so I really didn't participate in, you know, a lot of different sports or any sports or band or anything like that.

KB: Was your family able to keep their farm throughout the Depression?

LM: Yes they were and during the Depression time why we would plant big fields of green beans and cucumbers and then there would be somebody that would come around with their trucks and pick up the beans and the cucumbers and take them to the factories. And so that's how we would earn some extra money. And we always had a big strawberry bed and the strawberries that my mother couldn't can ... I remember one time when we took a crate of strawberries up to this little town called Fairchild and the crate and the berries and all sold for seventy-nine cents. So we thought seventy-nine cents in those days was really something and then at our little country store that was owned by the fellow that owned it was very good about charging, in letting people charge hoping that maybe he would get his money in some way or another. And I also remember that my mother and dad had a very good friend that lived in Chicago, her husband and son lived in Levis. But to earn some extra money she went to work for this wealthy family in Chicago. And they had two girls that were the same age as my youngest sister and they ... and every once in a while we would get a box of clothes from Chicago and we were thrilled even if they were hand me down, we didn't care, we got something new, to us it was something new. And of course my youngest sister when they'd ask her where she got her clothes why she would say, in the box. She wouldn't tell them they came from Chicago, they just came from the box. And so then of course we had chickens and pigs and cows and we had a great big garden and my mother canned, so that helped us out a lot during the depression days.

KB: What was the worst thing about the Depression, do you think?

LM: I think it was that there just wasn't any extra money for anything. You got along with the things that you had. But I would say that we weren't as hard, you know, as bad off as some of the people that you read about where the food that they, you know, their mother would make, maybe what she called a bread soup, you know, and she'd have boiling water and maybe salt and pepper and some vegetables and then she'd put in some bread and make it boil a bit for a little. And those three books that I have about the Depression days, it gives a lot of stories and a lot of recipes for that people had written in about the Depression days.

KB: Who do think was the most majorly impacted by the depression, the people living in town or?

LM: I think the people living in town.

KB: Because they couldn't grow their own food?

LM: Yeah because there were long lines of people that were, that went hunger and didn't have any place to live. To me that's the way I felt. That if they didn't have regular jobs they were laid off and so ... But I don't know. Now like our little town of Osseo where I went to school, I can't remember that any of the stores folded up, but ...

KB: They didn't close.

PSR: What was your father's experience during that time? Was he able to keep his job as a salesman?

LM: Yes he was, but I really don't, don't know, you know, how the fanners paid for those milking machines. These ... You know, that I can't remember that. But he was able to keep his job until he was, you know, retired from that.

KB: Did they have any soup kitchens around in this area, that you know of?

LM: Not that I know of. I don't know whether they had any in Black River here or not, but I know in the big cities, like Chicago and Minneapolis, and places like that they had the soup kitchens.

KB: How was Franklin Roosevelt viewed in your family.

LM: Well I know that my folks would always listen to his fireside chats and they were, they thought he was doing a very good job, or did a very good job. You know, trying to ... He started the New Deal and got some of these things, he got the banks reopened. And then tried to figure out a way so that the electricity rates weren't so high and had the public works and he'd call his program the New Deal. And also started the Rural Electrification, which was a big help to the fanners and tried to see to it that it was easier for farmers to get their grains for their cattle and stuff like that.

KB: How do you feel about Franklin Roosevelt'?

LM: From what I have read why I thought it was a rough time but now I can see after doing a lot of reading and that, I think he did a lot for the country. I don't know if everybody feels the same way as I do. I know a lot of people criticized him because of the things that he was doing. I think he did a lot for our country and people must have trusted him because he was in term of office

for a number of, you know, a number of years, I think it was four, four terms. Was it three or four terms?

KB: How did you feel when he died?

LM: I was sad. You know, you just wondered how the country would, what was going to happen.

KB: Not too sure about the next president?

LM: Right, or what was going to happen.

KB: In your opinion do you think that, I don't know, that Roosevelt's programs actually helped, in the long-term?

LM: I think (repeat) they did. I don't know if other people feel that way, but I wonder how long it would have been before we would have had electricity out in the country. You know and some of these people getting jobs again, wouldn't have anything.

PSR: When ... Can I go back on something again? The fireside chats, do you recall hearing them? Yourself?

LM: No I don't.

PSR: Ok. But let me talk about the radio for a minute.

LM: Ok.

PSR: Do you remember when your family got a radio for the first time?

LM: We were ... Well we did live in Winona, Minnesota for a short period of time. And I remember my dad brought home the first radio and it had earphones, so what my mother did ... so it was music ... What mother did is, she put the earphones in a dishpan so that everybody could ... it wasn't the best sounding music, but at least we could hear ...

KB: It worked.

LM: ... The music. And I remember that when we lived in Winona ... that's right because only one person could listen at a time.

PSR: I've never heard that before.

LM: You haven't?

PSR: No.

LM: Yeah.

PSR: That's interesting. So that would have been in the twenties, probably, probably the middle twenties.

LM: Well I ... (rep.) found a certificate that I got for perfect attendance in Winona and that was in 1925. That was in the twenties. And when dad brought home that radio we were really, really happy.

PSR: I bet.

KB: Were you ever involved in any of Roosevelt's New Deal programs?

LM: No I never was.

KB: Did you have any friends or relatives ...?

LM: Just my sister, you know, and then my dad with the Rural Electrification and my youngest sister working in ... coming here to put the numbers on the homes.

KB: What other New Deal programs were established in (rep.) this area, besides the Rural Electrification?

LM: Now I don't remember.

PSR: Do you remember any ... do you recall anybody being in the C.C.C.'s?

LM: Oh yes, across from our house in the country. The fellows came in and at one time why we could almost see from our place that ... We'd run across the road and stood on the knoll and we could see where our cousins lived. And of course it was supposed to be a swamp, it was never very wet between there. So we would always meet our cousins in the swamp and stuff like that and then they'd planted trees in this one big field and now you can't ... When I drive up there where I used to live, why the trees are so tall you can't even begin to walk through there. That was a wonderful thing to have the C.C.C. camps, I thought it was, you know, giving young men a job.

KB: It really helped improve the community back then?

LM: Right!

KB: What major changes have you seen in the community since you moved here?

LM: Well, of course back then we didn't have television, we made our own entertainment and you didn't hear about drugs, nobody smoked. If I saw my dad even put a cigar in his mouth, I thought that was really something. My brothers never, never smoked. And it seemed to me that there was more family. You know the families were interested in what the children were doing in ... Of course my mother stayed at home and my dad was on the road, but after my dad was retired, why he saw to it that the young people had things to do. The young fellows that in vaulting, they called themselves the Levis Cups used to go watch that and of course the church played a big part. And on Sunday nights there would be tutoring and we'd have our program and then we'd have lunch. It didn't make any difference how old you were, you could be ten years old and people would be in the fifties and we'd all go outside and play games together.

PSR: What church did you go to?

LM: It was called the Lebanon Lutheran Church. And in the 1940's it, why it was struck by lightning and it burnt and of course there was no fire department back then, ten miles out of town, so then they joined other churches around there.

KB: Have you seen any good changes in the community?

LM: In our community where I lived?

KB: Well like around here.

LM: Around here?

KB: Since you've lived here?

LM: Well they're trying to get kids, you know, not to smoke and use drugs and that. But it's quite a task for them to ...

PSR: Let me go back just a bit on Black River.

LM: Sure.

PSR: And I don't know if you had some questions in that area or not, but when, when can you remember the first time you came to Black River.

LM: Oh that was a big deal! Come to Black River because it was, you know, it was coming by car on the old roads ... Why we'd come down here to visit our aunt and uncle. And it would be half a day ... it was a day trip too you know and lots of times we'd stay over night. And if we were gonna go someplace, like if we were gonna go to Sparta, why we had to have a lunch! You know we never went into a restaurant so my mother would pack a lunch and we'd eat along the way and ...

PSR: So would you have first come to Black River in the 30's?

LM: Yes because we did our dental work here. And my dad being connected with the Rural Electrification, why he would be down here ... and then of course when I came down here to go to teacher's training.

PSR: Are there people that you met at that time that you still have contact with? Or are they mostly gone?

LM: Well I ... The daughter of, or the step daughter I should say of Anna Hendrickson that we stayed with when we were ... and there were three of us girls that stayed with her, my sister was working at Taylor and Jones at the time and my friend Elma Kiefe was working at the post office for Mr. Bean and so we rented two rooms from her upstairs and one room was our bedroom so the three of us slept together. And then the other room we had an oil burner and table and chairs, we fixed our own meals.

PSR: This was when you were in teacher training?

KB: What year was that?

LM: 1936.

PSR: This was after high school? And you'd had a year off and then which, which building did you go in? Where were the classes held?

LM: ... Or a teacher's training was on the third floor of what is now the Union Place. And so then we would go over to the ... see they added on ... We had some of our classes I remember coming down here when I had to go to night school, which is now the District Office. We would come down there for some of our classes, you know for teachers that had to go, if you had to go to night school or something like that.

KB: When did you permanently move to Black River?

LM: What was that?

KB: When did you permanently move to Black River?

LM: In 1958. I was married in 1949 and we lived away from here and then we came back in 1958 and we lived here ever since then.

KB: What is your husband's name?

LM: Rollie

KB: Did you have any children'?

LM: We have two boys, Scott that lives, he and his wife live with me and my youngest son Greg lives in Madison, he and his wife have one child and that's my only grandchild.

KB: You live here in town?

LM: Yes.

PSR: How long have you lived in the house that you live in?

LM: 1962.

PSR: She lives in a house on Roosevelt Road, which is kind of interesting. You know for the name.

LM: Yes and the ...

PSR: And talking about the Depression.

LM: And the house has many stories, probably the only house in town that had an indoor fire escape, burglar alarm system, that wasn't connected with the police station but when you opened up the door why the sound would frighten you away, you know! And ...

PSR: Who had built the house?

LM: The Gebhardts

PSR: I didn't know that.

LM: Yes.

PSR: Interesting.

LM: Emma Gebhardt was the last to live in that house.

PSR: Really? Did you say Elma or?

LM: Emma. (rep.)

PSR: Emma. Was this a sister of Alma?

LM: No I ... (Rep.) really don't know the relationship.

PSR: Ok.

LM: I'm sorry I don't, I could have looked that up ...

PSR: Did you know Elma Gebhardt?

LM: No I didn't.

PSR: You didn't. Cuz she's the one ... She and her husband were the ones that gave the money for the Gebhardt School, correct?

LM: Right.

PSR: I have another question and I'm ... Kristen had to put up with me with Ozzie with this too. But since I was growing up in Black River in the sixties I have some things I can throw in here. Can you tell me anything about the Oday sisters?

LM: Yes they lived next door to us.

PSR: Ok I remember them as a little boy and I remember them being, always really decked out.

LM: Yes and they had very small feet. Did you know that? Because at that time why the salesman that would come to sell shoes. They had these Camel shoes and the Oday girls would go there and that's what the shoes that they would buy. And of course they were very small and one sister owned a car and one sister learned how to drive it. And if I think about it now, well they'd never get out of their driveway. Because they didn't have any way, they would have to back out. And the one sister that drove the car she was, she was getting shorter all the time and we don't know yet how she was able to see over the steering wheel. And my youngest son Greg when they would go out and hang up clothes, especially Ella, the youngest one, he would love to go out and grab her around the legs. And I'd say Greg you can't do that you're going to tip her over, you know. But she was ... they were really nice neighbors. I really enjoyed having them next door.

PSR: See they were ... I always saw them when they were with Silva and Avie Anderson. And we lived next door to them. And these were old sisters when I knew them that had lived in Black River their whole life and had stories about growing up in the grove.

LM: Right.

PSR: But the Oday girls would show up and it was kind of a show.

LM: Yes it was.

PSR: Cuz they wore big hats with feathers on them and all kinds of things!

LM: I think if I'm, I wonder if I'm correct if they, if some of them didn't have a Millinery shop.

PSR: I think they did.

LM: You know?

PSR: I think they did.

LM: And of course where the parking lot is now, when we moved there why it was a great, big feed mill. Waughtal's Feed-mill, it isn't there anymore.

PSR: Right. Going back to Black River, you said the first time you came to Black River was in the Thirties and now you've lived here. What ... What's the biggest change that you would tell somebody about Black River from that time to now?

LM: Well how it has grown! And never thought that there would come a time when there would be stop and go lights in Black River Falls. Even when we moved into that house! You know, because we had Highway Twelve and that was ... and people thought we were off I think because we were gonna live right close to the highway.

PSR: Sure.

LM: But you got used to it but we never thought that then even that there would be stop and go lights and how it has spread and the different stores that they have and, and the beautiful parks. And the foundation trail and we have so many more things than we had when we first came here to town.

PSR: Do you remember when the downtown was quote-un-quote more thriving?

LM: Oh yes!

PSR: And when would that be approximately?

LM: Well I suppose it was be in the early, early sixties ...

PSR: Still?

LM: When we came back because, I remember, you know, going down on a Saturday night and the streets were both lined with cars and people walking around and shopping.

PSR: Ozzie Moe told us the other day that at one time there were five grocery stores downtown. You know I just, that, that surprised me, but he, you know, was telling us about all the businesses that were there at one time, but I think he was talking about the 40's and 50's primarily but ...

LM: Yeah.

PSR: Can you recall the changes that occurred here when the interstate came? Did that noticeably change the community in your mind, or not so much?

LM: You know, I don't... not that I can recall.

PSR: Not as far as traffic in town or ...?

LM: Oh yeah the traffic, yes. Because some days I sit for quite some time before I can get out onto the highway, especially if it's after work, when the buses go and things like that. Because we did ... At first ... When we first moved here we had to back out onto the Main Street and after my husband was in an accident out there and I was in an accident backing out, why then he said we're gonna give up some of the yard and so black top it so we can turn around and go out.

PSR: Sure.

LM: The way we're supposed to go out instead of backing out.

KB: What ... Do you remember what year it was when Black River got stop and go lights?

LM: No I don't.

PSR: I can't tell you either.

LM: I don't know.

PSR: Back ... I'm gonna just ask you some more questions about teaching. Were there other teachers that you went to training with that you ended up teaching with? Or were you ...?

LM: Yes, Norma ... well her name is Norma Iverson. She came into Black River Falls. And taught the art classes here. And ... I...

PSR: Did you teach with Ms. Webb?

LM: She was our County Superintendent.

PSR: Ok so you didn't. Am I getting it right, that she was a teacher here first?

LM: I don't know, she might have been, but I don't know. Because she was our County Superintendent and she would come out to the schools ... The rural schools.

PSR: [To] Check up on you?

LM: [To] Check up on you ... [you] never know if ... when they were going to come.

KB: Oh yeah. They just knock on the door and came in?

LM: And walk in. You know. I don't know whether you want me to tell this, whether you want this story on there or not.

PSR: Oh yes.

LM: When I was teaching at Levis, why I had been in Osseo and had gone shopping with my sister and I had found a very pretty dress, which I thought was pretty. And so this one day, it was a real nice day so I thought well today I'm gonna dress up special for the children. So I thought I really looked sharp with my new dress and I always wore high heels until my sister made me quit doing that and I had to get a pair of low heeled shoes, but anyway. Ms. Webb came to call on that day and I was real happy to see her because I thought I couldn't have been dressed any nicer than that. So she stayed around until the children had left and she said to me you know you have a very pretty dress on, but she said please don't wear it to school again.

KB: Why?

LM: Because it didn't have any sleeves. It had a sailor collar, but no sleeves.

KB: It wasn't appropriate.

LM: It was not appropriate. And so she said before you wear it again she said maybe you should have a little jacket or something. So I went home broken-hearted and I told my mother about it and my older sister did some sewing so we went to town and took the dress along to see if, because it had stripes in it with different colors and so we found a color that would match all the other colors in the dress and she made me this little Blarou (?) they called it, with sleeves. And ... But you know, I never really liked that dress after that. You know.

KB: It changed things.

LM: Yeah and so we never wore slacks, or jeans we always, you know, we had snow pants. When I'd walk to school when I was teaching at Levis a mile and a fourth from home why in the winter time why our snow pants we took those off.

KB: How long were your dresses? Were they like ankle length or?

LM: No not quite. But they were long not short like they are now days and ...

PSR: What happened when you had to close school, you know for snow and stuff, did they, how did they ... ?

LM: Well you called around and then if ... The teacher would have to see when it got made up and lots of times we would make it up on Saturday.

PSR: Now ...

LM: But not very ... Excuse me.

PSR: No go ahead.

LM: But not very often did they close school because the teacher that was there was usually staying at a place where she could get there. And then if it was real cold and snowing, in our community whether it was a fam1er who would be happy to hitch up his horses to a sleigh and have blankets and, and ropes and stuff like that and he would pick up the children along the way and take them to Levis and he'd come back and pick us up at night.

KB: That was nice.

LM: But very seldom did we close the school because of cold weather.

PSR: Did you ... now did you have telephones?

LM: Yes we had a telephone on the wall that you rang.

PSR: Ok. In the school?

LM: No not in the school.

PSR: Not in the school?

LM: But we had a telephone if we needed a parent to come and get one of their children, why they had the telephone in the Levis store, which was 1ight across the road ... So you could go over there and call.

KB: And were all of the schools exactly the same? Were they the same design and size?

LM: Well some of the schools had a platform up in front for a stage because of the ... and the teacher would sit up there on this platform. And the first school that I taught that had indoor toilets was down at Pleasant Valley. I think I forgot to mention that and I thought that was really something that was on the way to Melrose.

KB: Oh, what year was that then, that you taught at that school?

LM: That was sometime in the forties, but I don't remember the exact year.

PSR: What would cause you to move from one school to the next?

LM: If they ... if you got a better increase in salary.

KB: I'd move onto a different school too. How long did you teach for, how many years?

LM: I taught for thirty-four. I took time off when my boys were little. And then we were away from here for a while. I did teach when we were in up in a little town out of ... A little town called Elcho which is no1ih of Antigo, in a place called Enterprise and at that one that school had been first grade through Sophomore year. So it was a big school, it had a big library it had a beautiful gym and when I was teaching there I had the first four grades and the other lady had the upper grades.

KB: Did you ever teach at any other schools where they went up to the Senior year?

LM: No.

KB: No. So that was the school that had the highest grade, the Sophomore year?

PSR: Can you ... I've got two other ones I want to ask, just on a personal note.

LM: Ok.

PSR: Can you ... Do you remember Rally Day?

LM: Oh that was a great day!

PSR: Yeah and what was that exactly?

LM: Ok. All of the schools in Jackson County came and we went to the fairgrounds and some of the ... and all of the children came and the parents would come and they would put on ... Some of the schools would be invited to put on different parts of a program and so there would be, you know, games for the children to play on.

PSR: Was it one ... was it a set day each year?

LM: Yes.

PSR: Same ...

LM: Sometime in May. Because I remember sometimes Emma Olson would have ... from the Indian Mission where ... she had what do you call it? May (rep.) Poles. And some of these schools, you know, would get up and sing songs, or we would have ... And then of course I remember one year when ... I can't remember the name of the instructor when we had our music over the radio. He came into Black River when the rural schools came into town in one big chorus.

PSR: This is from Wisconsin Public Radio?

LM: Right.

PSR: Norman Clayton or something like that?

LM: I wish I could remember his name.

PSR: Yeah I think the program was called Let's Sing.

LM: That's right.

PSR: If I remember right. Cuz I remember in Elementary school. One other one was Ms. Herd.

LM: I...

PSR: Did you (repeat) know her?

LM: I knew her, but I never had much acquaintance with her.

PSR: Ok cuz that, that's a name you hear often in Black River.

LM: Yes.

PSR: As somebody that was kind of legendary.

LM: Right.

PSR: For many of the people here. Are there many of your former student still around?

LM: Yes!

PSR: And do they talk to you quite often?

LM: Yes they do and they call me by name and I don't know them!

PSR: Ok.

LM: You know, because they change.

PSR: Oh sure.

LM: Like the other day at the Post Office a fellow called me by name and I said you know I don't even recognize you. Because he had a beard you know. And everything, it changes.

PSR: Have you ever had a student talk to you that you had in your real early years?

LM: Oh yes!

PSR: Ok. They (rep.) would be fairly elderly now.

LM: Yes they would.

PSR: Yeah.

LM: I was over to a visitation in Alma Center the other night and this one gal came and I was so surprised to see her. And I had ... she had been my student when I was teaching, in Tindahl, which was in the town of Cleveland.

PSR: Long time ago.

LM: Long time ago.

PSR: And did you recognize her?

LM: Yes I did!

PSR: Oh ok. So sometimes you do and ...

LM: Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't.

PSR: I understand that. Interesting. (Aside) Kristen did you have any other questions about the ...?

KB: I was just wondering did you have a teacher that had a major impact ... that made you want (rep.) to teach?

LM: No I think it was because of my dad. You know and my older sister and, you know. That's why I decided that I wanted to be a teacher because my dad had been a teacher.

KB: If you hadn't have taught, would you have done something else?

LM: I have no idea what I would have done.

KB: No?

LM: Nope. Maybe housework ...

KB: Teaching's better than housework though.

LM: What's that?

KB: Teaching's better than housework.

LM: That's right and so when I... When we first came back here and I hadn't been teaching, why it was Ms. Webb that got me back into the system because she had called me and asked if I would be willing to, because I had taught under her, you know as a superintendent.

PSR: Sure.

LM: And she called me and asked if I would be willing to go to up to the Indian Mission and teach because Emma Olson who was teaching up there had hurt her leg and so then I went out there and substituted.

KB: What year was that, do you know?

LM: And that ... it was in the early, in the fifties when ... fifty-eight or fifty-nine when we first came back here.

PSR: Do you remember, Lillian, when the Indian children first came into the public school?

LM: No I don't.

PSR: That (rep.)I know that happened in the sixties. But ...

LM: I was probably in the ... one of the ... in the rural schools at that time. So you see I probably didn't ... Know the impact.

PSR: Sure. Ok. (Aside) anything else?

KB: No.

PSR: Well we thank you very much.

LM: Well you're entirely welcome!

PSR: This is a great interview and we'll make sure we get you a copy of this.

LM: Ok.

PSR: And we'll show you a couple of things here when we leave.

LM: Ok.

PSR: And maybe I'll take that just for a moment here and put it on camera. So I can get a little better view of it there.

LM: Sure.

PSR: And this annual, this is interesting.

LM: Who else are you going to interview?

KB: We have George Brudos and Bob Pratt. Bob is coming in Thursday during school and I'm not sure about George yet.

LM: That should be interesting, George's should be very interesting.

PSR: Yeah.

KB: He's been around for a while.

PSR: Start by giving us your name and ...

GB: My name is George Irvin Brudos and I was born in Crawford County about twelve miles east of Farryville. And I was born in a log cabin. But that was pretty soon changed to a good enough house. My dad was a good carpenter. His grandfather's family came from Norway as church builders so that they were real good carpenters and they made their own instruments, or tools I meant to say. Some of them are on display in a museum in Viroqua right now. Like a planter and so and ... But we didn't stay there very long, it wasn't too much of a farm. There's hills, a bluff I mean on both sides of the valley and crick running down through. But it was real good tobacco country.

PSR: Oh?

GB: Over the aeons it had flooded and flattened areas alongside the crick that was pretty good for real ... real rich for the tobacco and dad, or the folks sold that. Or no they didn't sell it, they bought a farm then up closer to Retreat. You've heard of Retreat you know. And (inaudible). That's up between Viroqua and De Soto and they bought a farm there. A good size farm that had more modem ... But they kept the farm in the valley and my dad, [and] a carpenter from De Soto built a big eight room house, square, all oak and I can remember that stairway where the footing or where they stopped and then ... And there were seven of us children so then they needed a big house. And there we had modem conveniences for the first time. Drilled a well ... It had ... And so that they had a bathroom and so on, but he kept, he had kept the farm in the valley and he had ... we'd been there three or four years by that time, by the time he built the house. And he sold it, and he put all his young stock down in the valley where there was good pasture you know. And he sold enough young stock to pay for that house. It would have cost him a little less than a thousand dollars.

KB: Wow!

GB: Carpenter and all.

PSR: Wow!

GB: He's told me about that several times. And it was beautiful, the living room. We always closed that off. That had sliding doors and drapes you know, and when the doors were opened there would be drapes and the only time we ever used that was when company came of course! But, it did look like I say, it was a real beautiful home. But like I say there was seven of us, I was the second oldest and then my older brother when he got through with that common school we called it, country school, he took off for La Crosse to get a job, and so the folks were faced with getting a high school education for the rest of us, but we were halfway between De Soto and Viroqua with high schools, and of course traffic, or transportation being what it was then, mostly team and a wagon or a buggy, we'd have to stay there all week long, which would be pretty expensive. So the folks ... My brother grew up in La Crosse ... And I suppose it didn't take much to talk dad into sell and to move to La Crosse, which we did in 1917. I had just graduated from country school, and so we were all able to go to high school in La Crosse ...

PSR: What school did you go to?

GB: Pardon?

PSR: What school did you go?

GB: There was only one high school in La Crosse then. About fourteen, fifteen pupils, and I never was very big I only weighed a hundred and twenty- five pounds, when I got married even! So I didn't play football or basketball, as a result I don't care too much about either one of them. But I went out for track and did fairly well and I played baseball and ... But it was a, it was a real good school. It had an addition to it that had all the mechanical and we had a, we had a garage for overhauling Model T's. And they had a ... what do you call it? We molded metal.

PSR: Oh?

KB: Welding? Welding?

GB: No, not welding, they didn't have welding then. A big ... a monstrous big thing that would boil, that would heat ... liquid that we would use to molds.

PSR: Oh ok.

GB: I wish I could think of the name of that.

PSR: Yeah. Now I want to go back, just out of curiosity. (Aside) Feel free to jump in. What did you do in ... what did you do in Track?

GB: I did fairly well because we lived three miles from high school and I literally ran back and forth. And mostly on my toes. So that to this day my arches are good. But ... Oh what did I do in Track? I did all the things. I went out for practically everything. I did best in the short runs, not the long runs.

PSR: The track ... What ...

GB: Should have been alright.

PSR: Where was the track?

GB: Pardon?

PSR: Where was the track that you ran on? Where was the track located?

GB: We had big grounds there. And as I was gonna say ... that ... there was a building, an extra building beside the high school that had been donated by a wealthy family ... back sometime before that and they had all that kind of grades in that building. Separate from the regular curriculum at high school so that we were able to take advantage of that. We would make molds and we had a machine shop and turning blades and all that sort of stuff. And one part was a garage for, like I said for overhauling Model T's. And I enjoyed that.

PSR: Yeah. That's great.

KB: What classes did you take in high school? Like what subjects did you learn?

GB: Well as I remember my most interesting one was English. But I took ... We didn't have Geometry, I don't think. We didn't call it that. I don't remember.

KB: What kind of science classes did you have?

GB: Pardon?

KB: Science classes. Like earth science and ...

GB: I must not have liked it, I don't remember!

KB: Yeah.

GB: I never was too good on remembering formulas. That bothered me.

KB: Did you have a favorite teacher in high school?

GB: Yes Ms ... Mrs. Johnson an English teacher, she was my favorite. But that's the only one I remember in high school. And then when I got out of high school I took an agricultural short course in Onalaska. They had a good (repeat) building there that carried all the other subjects too. But I was interested in partly because my brother had already done that and he had a job as a cow tester. Which probably don't mean too much to you. A cow tester would test the milk and weed out the poor cows. Butterfat was the important thing in those days. And after that short course of about four (rep.) months I think, I did get a job. The county agent had sort of backed me all the time and he found a job for me around Mindoro. I had twenty- eight farms that I visited each month, so I didn't have much time off. But I lived it up! Every (rep.) day the lady of the farm would have a chicken dinner you know. Or the equivalent thereof because the cow tester was coming. I'd come on the farm about two in the afternoon and get everything ready and check on the cows and ask questions. My job was to figure out good rations ... For those days they had everything, you know. They had horses, and sheep, and pigs, and chickens and, and hogs I was trying to say. And it was my job to figure out good rations. And I would, pardon. I worked as soon as I got there doing some [of] those things or else getting ready for the evening checking saddles. But after the samples were taken then I'd relax and we'd visit and then in the morning I would take samples again and I would (repeat) test the butterfat. I was equipped with a machine that had these ... I don't know if you ever saw any butterfat bottles. They had a big bottom and then a long tube about like so. A (s) graduated tube, (rep.) and the machine had cups dangling ... It was a round circular machine about like that. And the cups, metal cups hanging down. We set the, (repeat) test tubes in those cups and then I'd close, (repeat) it and I cranked it by hand and the tubes they would go out like that you see, then ... And after a certain amount and I don't remember how long, then I'd stop it and you see the butterfat would be up in the tubes. And you could drink. You could tell how much butterfat in that by the way the tube ... or by the ... yes, by that container had a graduated amount of milk and each one was numbered and we could tell then what cows are really yielding butterfat. Besides that I was asked to help the 4-H people, children to get their animals or whatever ready for the fair. Each little town had a fair at that time. Mindoro, and Melrose, and so that was quite (rep.) a deal. And so that was a part of my job. And then I was always a ham! So we put on plays in the schools and there were many small schools and you know I think there were three that were very local and we put on plays for entertainment for the people. Didn't have much to ... No t. v., no shows, no radio, no nothing you know! And we just packed those little schools! I remember one of them was ... Oh I always remembered it. And of course I was the star! And I did pretty well on that you know.

PSR: What year would that have been about?

GB: That would be between 1922 and 1925. About three years. I graduated in 1922. And I really enjoyed it. But ...

PSR: Can we ask you a couple of...Can we go back a little bit from there?

GB: Yeah.

PSR: Go ahead (aside).

KB: Do you have any special memories from your childhood?

GB: Oh yes!

KB: Like what sort of things did you do as a child?

GB: I remember one time that ... See this farm in the valley, it was a two-story farm and my dad rented the land below. There was a tract that they broke up ... his ... He bought that from his father, and his father broke up a lot of land. So it was good farmland ... Or I took lunch out to my dad at noon one day. I suppose it was more than once. This time I remember so well. Of course I was going barefooted and everything and instead of there being paths or anything I just came down the side of the bluff and I stepped on a coiled rattle snake.

PSR: Oh man!

GB: And I'll never forget it either!

PSR: Wow!

GB: Course he struck but he missed me.

KB: Did you take off running?

GB: Pardon?

KB: Did you take off running after that?

GB: I had been running! (Repeat). See that's what saved me! I was running down through the woods and my feet were tough you know and decided that ... Before that my dad had built a wagon box to set on some sleds, or on a sled, (repeat), a box sled. And it was, you've seen a wagon box I expect. And anyway, that was ... before that ... I must have been a pretty young man and my sister next to me and I were playing in that wagon box ... I don't know how old we were ... whatever. And a rattlesnake climbed over into the wagon box and ... course ... and was coming towards us and I let out a beller and I guess my mother came with a broom and chased him. They were quite (rep.) good. And I remember coming home from school with my brother the first ... just starting school. We had to go up on, Nash Ridge it's called. It's the highway between Viroqua and Ferryville. We were in the valley and we had to go up through the woods. Goodness it must have been three miles at least, to go to school. It was the closest school by the highway closest to us. And the road, sometimes it would be too hard if you come down through the woods ... We heard wolves and of course we never saw them and ... So that's some things that I remember and I remember, later on, on this upper farm I almost lost my right arm. My dad made sorghum. Used to be a lot of that in those days. My grandpa made it and my dad made it ... and I was dragging or crushing the (rep.) stalks. It was these (rep.) big rollers that they were to here and one up here so that stalk went down through, up, and out. And at the end they were geared by cogwheels out on the end, outside. It was a (repeat) machine that wasn't covered at all for protect ... no protection. And I was ... It was cold in the fall. We always made sorghum in the fall. And I had a ragged jacket on and there was a piece of cane stalk that got where it shouldn't be and the flicking made me wonder what it was and I reached over to get it and got caught between those three big, those big wheels, about like that with cods and started to take, draw me in you know. It could have (repeat) my arm, but there again my voice saved

me and my dad come running up and (rep.) he stopped the gas engine. Before the gas engine we just, a horse, one horse I think did it. A great big sweep ... a big pole as long as this room is wide and it would be ... a pole about like that. That was on top of these gears and out on the end was where the horse would go all around and giving it power here you see. But dad finally got a gas engine and those are some of the things I remember.

PSR: George ... (Aside) if I can add? When was your dad born?

GB: Where?

PSR: When?

GB: When? Well let's see he died ... That I can't exactly remember. It was ... He died at a hundred and one in 1980.

PSR: Oh man!

GB: So you figure it out.

KB: And what year were you born again'?

GB: '04

KB: 1904.

GB: Yep.

KB: How old were you when you started school, in the country school?

GB: Well I suppose ... able to (repeat) walk, six (rep.) years old I suppose, or something like that. I don't remember that.

KB: What ... How old were you when you graduated from the country school? Were you in eighth grade?

GB: From the country school, I was thirteen.

KB: So you were in eighth grade ...?

GB: Yeah.

KB: When you moved to La Crosse.

PSR: What's the first president that you can remember?

GB: Pardon?

PSR: What's the first president that you can remember?

GB: I thought you'd ask me that!

PSR: I'm just curious ...

GB: Well really the only one I remember seriously is Hoover. And that's not very good.

PSR: Well ... But that's ...

GB: For my age.

PSR: That ... I'm just curious.

GB: But I do remember Hoover. I had been working for awhile in Milwaukee mostly and I met Ruth down there. We both ... she (rep.) graduated from the high school in La Crosse too only she started in the fall, I graduated in the spring. That's how much difference the age. But she being restless like me I guess, went down to Milwaukee and got a job. And I was working in a packinghouse there and ... That was a good job too. I had sort of a straw boss thing ... I wore a long white gown you know and going around tying and catching, catching and tying and kind of overlooking, and anyway! My sister was a couple years younger than I am. She was a good friend of Ruth's. She wrote to me and said, Ruth is working down there why don't you look her up, so I did and three months later we were married. So we came back to La Crosse then and started our family there. My ... I got a job that took me right through the Depression. I worked for the Dolly Madison Dairy and there again I did all right, but those were days that ... For the first, I worked there for fourteen years, within the first ten, twelve I got a hundred dollars a month. I never knew when I would get any off, but I got two days off a month. And you know that give me an idea of ... It's all relative of course. That hundred dollars a month in the last couple of years I got ... they raised it thirty-five dollars a week. And we payed rent, twenty- five dollars rent, and it cost us about twenty-five dollars a month for milk and ice cream and stuff like that, and you know at the end of the fourteen years we ... oh wait! I had been renting that house, that last house ... By the way when we first got married we just tied down a little half of house just big enough for us two, you know ... Well the more children we got ... we had five children eventually. Well the more children we got, the bigger the house we had to rent and we had been renting this house on twenty first for oh probably six, seven years, twenty-five dollars a month. And the banks you see had taken a lot of homes. You know and bankrupted people like had to give up their homes and I got to know this banker pretty well ... I paid my rent on it. One evening he come to our house and he said George, why don't you buy this house? I said buy it, what would I buy it with? Well he says you're paying twenty-five dollars a month now, if you'll pay thirty dollars a month you might get an equity (rep.) eventually. Which we did, when we sold out we had ... I'm telling you this because youngsters don't hardly believe it. We sold out, we had eleven hundred and forty dollars, cash and that was the equity that we had.

PSR: Wow!

GB: Ok for about three years, or two years I had been after the (rep.) farmer's organization, the county agent and his group of farmers ... you don't have it now. I was after them to see if they could ... You see the government was putting (rep.) people on farms if they had experience and that was the Farm Security Administration. And they would buy a farm and put you on there. But you would have to do certain things and eventually pay for it. Well they finally found one near Mindoro, hundred and (repeat) eight acres and about sixty acres under plow, it was just fine. And so we moved on there after fourteen years of living in La Crosse. My wife grew up in La Crosse, her folks ... her dad was a postman, he worked in a post office through the Depression and they never suffered at all. She had no experience except to visit and she took to it like a duck to water and loved it. But we did well, she (rep.) would can upwards of five, six hundred quarts canning every year. And we'd, we had, we'd have five-hundred day -old chicks every spring ... there was a good chicken coop there. And we had about three or four sows, brood sows and then about thirty sheep and about twenty-five cows, eventually I mean ... I'm talking about ... And so we kept pretty busy, and we (rep.) made money, and we had ... We ... Having

lived in La Crosse, had friends. They'd come up or call us or whatever and then they would ... And next time you come to La Crosse, will you bring some eggs and something like that? I don't ... Egg route ... I had about a hundred and ten customers eventually and we'd go down every Friday. On Thursday Ruth and I would ... We'd get all the eggs that we could and we'd buy from the neighbors if necessary and we'd sell all those eggs. And then they'd say to me, don't you have a chicken I can buy from you? Sure! You weren't allowed to sell any meat you know in La Crosse, you couldn't solicit, but. So I'd sell chickens and butcher, butchered. Why I sold beef, pork, and mutton. And I tell you, we worked hard! We'd go down on Friday with all that stuff and come back with cash, you know and (rep.) so of course we bought and sold. Bought and paid for the farm and we would (repeat) have stayed there except for Ruth. She just couldn't keep her fingers out of the chores. I'd come in from the fields and there she would have the lawn done and she wasn't built very husky, she wasn't frail, but then she couldn't take it and she got pneumonia. And we'd been there, been about eleven years or so I guess. Mind you the doctor that we had in La Crosse when we lived there came out to visit us if we needed him, twenty-five miles.

PSR: Oh wow!

KB: Wow!

GB: And he was real good, and he told me that last time. He says, you want to save Ruth? Well you better get off the farm. Well it so happened that Bob and Virginia, the two oldest had gotten married by that time. And they were married in 1948 I think and I was getting kind of short of help anyways so ... And so I told three farmers, neighbors that I knew had boys. I said next Monday I'm gonna have a price on this farm and I'll let you know what I want. But on Sunday one of them came in there, the closest neighbor and (inaudible). I sold out. But meanwhile on the Thursday ... See I had worked for the Dolly Madison Dairies all that time. The (rep.) superintendent called on Thursday or Friday, Thursday I guess it was. Say he says, would any of your boys be interested in (rep.) dairy, or dairy agency. No I said, I'm sure they wouldn't, but I will! I would! Because I had just decided to sell this farm. How everything blended together I ... I have been the most fortunate man that you could think of. Anyway, it was a dealership in Westby. That ... They had lost a dealer there or was gonna lose it. And so it was in the wintertime and so we went and took that and everything and took the roller and I know Sunday then after all this why I had sold the farm to the neighbors and winded up. So

KB: What year was that, that you sold the farm?

GB: Let's see ...

KB: Was it after the depression?

GB: It was ... No we weren't on the farm in '42. So that was kind of ... Things were getting better, we managed to get a tractor in about 1946 or seven. Otherwise I didn't have much more than horses and incidentally when we moved on the place we bought all... I should have said, we bought all the farm machinery we needed with that thirteen hundred and some dollars! I'm not kidding!

KB: Oh wow!

GB: A team of horses, cultivator, grain binder, com binder, a mower, you name it, we'd gotten it at auctions. And (rep.) so we didn't have any cows, but we ... I don't know why, but the man in charge of this government agency gave me five cows.

KB: To start out with?

GB: To start with. (Inaudible) that I developed, but anyway I plowed that first fall. We moved on in November. It was a November like we just had. I plowed with a walking plow and a team of horses for about, all I needed to I guess. But we ... All we had for heat was kitchen range, two-story house with two bedrooms upstairs, one for the boys, and one for the girls. And an open register up over the ...

KB: The top of the stove?

GB: The dining room and over the dining room, not over the kitchen. But we left an open stairway. And that's all the heat we had was from the kitchen range and you know how big they are and Ruth had never had, never worked on a kitchen range and we had some chimney fires and lot of excitement, but anyway. In the (repeat) ... at Christmas time, see I had farmed there, I had worked around there for, way back in the twenties, you know and the fam1ers knew me and come to visit us and one of that I (inaudible) came and said is that all the heat you got? And I said yep why he says I know a couple up in the valley, up in the (repeat) way up in the valley. They're brothers and they bought a (rep.) stove with a jacket, a pot-bellied stove with a jacket for heat. For their (repeat) house and they don't like it because when they come down in the morning they striked [struck] it when they want something and they want a warm stove see. That darn jacket, they don't like it, they want to sell it. How much? Well they sold it to me for thirty-five dollars and we put it under the living room, right under those vents, you know. And then you fed it from the top, big chunks and it'd hold fire all night if you were careful and that's the heat we had.

KB: Going back to the (rep.) election year of 1932 do you remember President Franklin ...

GB: Pardon?

KB: The election ...

GB: That was too fast.

KB: The election year of 1932? Do you remember when Franklin Roosevelt was running?

GB: 1932?

KB: Do you remember the election?

GB: That was when president Hoover got beat. Well we all liked Hoover, but he made us Hooverize. He made us cut down. See the twenties were real good, they called them the roaring twenties. You could get a job anywhere and big money and (rep.) that's all relative and there was plenty and we had real (rep.) good times. And Hoover, I think was very fair but couldn't handle the ... couldn't last so he was ... As I remember it, he was (repeat) advocating to skip ... to cut down on luxuries and so on because this can't last and he got beat on that, I think mostly on that. People didn't want to cut down and of course Roosevelt took over and you know what happened then.

PSR: But what's your ... what was your opinion of Roosevelt?

GB: At first not good. But you sure had to (repeat) hand it to him. That man was a hard worker, and paralyzed as he was and he (repeat) was smart! He was a very smart man. And like Hoover he could see what was gonna happen and so that... He saw what (rep.) he thought would be the cure and it did. No I (rep.) respect... I finally respected Roosevelt.

PSR: Were you raised to be ... Were you kind of Republican in your family and so Roosevelt would have been kind of ...?

GB: My family was pretty much Republican. In those days you did what your dad did.

PSR: Sure.

GB: You know, and I've been more or less a Republican, but I jumped the fence when I thought it was better.

PSR: I'm gonna ... Do you want to ask him about the radio, the fireside chats?

KB: Yeah, yeah. How old were you when your family got their first radio?

GB: Pardon?

KB: How old were you when your family got their first radio?

GB: Oh I made one!

KB: You made one?

GB: One they call a crystal set.

PSR: Sure.

GB: Yes. I'm not a mechanic or ... but how I ever did it why ... but I made a crystal set. And noisy as it was, we'd get something once in awhile, especially Chicago.

PSR: Interesting.

KB: Do you remember listening to Roosevelt's fireside chats?

GB: Oh yes, very much. Yes, we'd all shut down for that.

PSR: Where did you (repeat) have the radio in your house? Was it in the living room ... was it like ... ?

GB: I suppose because the kids wanted to fool with it all the time, you know. And we'd close off the living room. Go in there and listen. Otherwise we wouldn't get any work done.

KB: Do you remember when he closed the banks?

GB: Very well.

KB: Do you ...?

GB: When? Let me see, oh dear ... We had saved some money, believe it or not. About three, four hundred dollars, in spite of being married, in spite of having children and of course you could a get a doctor for child birth for twenty-five dollars. The whole bit! You know.

PSR: That's kind of amazing.

GB: That's it! And then ... so then we were able to save ... and we had about four hundred dollars. We had our own bank and of course we started to get nervous with the banks you know. So we thought we'd put it in the bank, the Batavian bank it was called on (rep.) Jay Street or Pearl Street, I forget which ... in La Crosse. Or was it on Main? I forget ... no. But so we put in there, and the other one did close, and don't suppose the Batavian did too. So we (rep.) lost the bulk of it, but we'd get, eventually we started getting a dollar once in awhile or two dollars. Yeah.

KB: Wow!

GB: Awful! How much would we ... We planned I have no idea because I ... By that time we were farming and weren't worried too much.

KB: What was the most important thing you learned about the ...?

GB: Pardon?

KB: What was the most important thing you learned from the Depression?

GB: Well we didn't suffer any Kristen. We would, as married couples we'd visit each other and play cards. Once in awhile we'd buy a picnic up here. A picnic, did you ever hear of one? About that high. And about that big around. And cost a quarter. And if we weren't beer drinkers a lot, you couldn't afford it, but you'd have a night out. And see your question again?

KB: It was ... Oh I'm sorry I just forgot what it was.

PSR: Just, I think she ... She (rep.) was asking what's something important you learned from the Depression?

GB: Oh!

PSR: Like how do you think it has affected you as a person?

GB: I've never forgotten it. We ... are ... we ... I keep saying we ... have been thrifty ever since. Well I retired from the Soil Conservation Service as a Civil Engineer in 1965 with a salary of (rep.) almost eight thousand dollars a year, which was good money in '65. And I've never worked a day's pay, for a day's pay since! But we were fortunate in that Ed needed help and so we lived there thirty, about thirty years. And it didn't cost us anything, no rent, except for what we spent with our own. So that today we have saved enough so that I can afford to live here like in a hotel for instance, for example or whatever. And they raised it three dollars a day for this month now, January. Sixty-three dollars a day, which is quite a bit of money.

PSR: Yes.

GB: But we had invested in (rep.) the (repeat) stock, not stock, but CD's, and so on, wisely. Like I said we were thrifty we. You know, Sis ... I want to say Sissy, what is your first name again?

KB: Kristen.

GB: Kristen, yes. You know the help here, the young help, they go to that wash ... Everybody has to wash a lot you know. They go to that paper dispenser, that towel dispenser one, two, three, four to dry their hands, except them older people like Carol and some of those ... Sonja who belongs to our church I talked to on Sunday about that. Sure she says, I noticed that too!

We take two, two towels, that's plenty to dry your hands you know! But no, the younger ones, they rip it off and throw it away and it's little things like that. I remember you asked me what I've learned from it and I've been, we've been thrifty ever since, and it hasn't hurt us a bit! Far as that goes and so every day ...

PSR: Can you remember when R.E.A. came in'?

GB: R.E.A.?

PSR: Yeah. Do you remember that changing your life on the farm or did you have electrical power before that'?

GB: We had it before that. It was there. Because I remember so well that I saw a black cloud in the west, I knew that Jackson Electric would fail up here.

PSR: Oh Ok.

GB: And we'd have to milk by hand towards last, but at first we did milk, but we (rep.) milked by hand ... At first.

PSR: Sure.

KB: Why did you move to Black River Falls'?

GB: Because Ed and Dori bought this farm. We (rep.) had retired to Cashton where our oldest daughter was farming and her husband and so he we bought a twenty-five ... twenty-acre farm there just to have to retire to, and near Cashton. And he wanted to buy this farm up here on Allen Creek. He called one day and was, wanted to know if I'd come up and decide if it was worth the bucks. And I did and he bought it and so, can you help me? Fifty- five miles away, how am I gonna do that? So I talked to Ruth and we decided ... We sold out down there. That didn't amount to a heck of a lot. We bought that farm, twenty acres, within a mile of Cashton for nine thousand dollars, I think it was something like that and we did, we'd been living there for four or five years and we sold it. Course I fixed it up a lot and we made some money there. So we came up here and eventually bought a mobile home and put it on his farm and of course we could stay there free. I guess we paid the electricity, but that's about all.

PSR: Can you remember the first time you ever saw Black River Falls'? Do you remember seeing it as a kid or as a young man'?

GB: No. I came up here because an old friend of mine that I worked with in Milwaukee ... And he lived ... he grew up in Mindoro. He and his wife had bought that motel out on Highway 12. And so we came up to visit them one time. That was the first time I had been up here. And that was when we lived in Cashton, I think.

PSR: Ok. Do you have any other questions you want to ask, in particular'?

KB: No.

PSR: Ok. We've got about four minutes left. So I'm gonna throw a couple of quick questions at you. Do you remember your grandfather'?

GB: Oh yes, very much!

PSR: Did ... Do remember him ever talking about, for example the Civil War.

GB: No. I didn't know enough to ask him. Probably should have knew.

PSR: Was he from ... Did (rep.) he immigrate to America'?

GB: He came as a youngster with his father. So my great-grandfather and his family came.

PSR: And where did they come from?

GB: Soudan (?).

PSR: In Norway?

GB: Soudan Fjord (?). On the west-side of Norway.

PSR: Ok. That's interesting. So you would have known ... He would have been born probably in the ... oh 1820 or something like that or ... I'm thinking about the age of your ... Well no he would have been ... it would have been later than that. I'm just trying to think ... kinda trying to put it in perspective of when he would have been born. Suppose you'd have to look that up.

GB: I'm a little hazy about when my great-grandfather came.

PSR: Yeah.

GB: I thought it was, around '48.

PSR: Ok, well it makes sense so ... How about... I got another one for you. How about your first car? Can you remember your first car that you?

GB: Oh yes! I had to have a Model T. For my job as a Cow tester. I also had a cutter.

PSR: Oh! Boy that ...

GB: And ... one horse

PSR: That goes back. Yeah.

GB: In the wintertime I'd (rep.) use the horse and cutter, in the summertime I'd use a Model T.

PSR: Wow!

GB: Oh boy I'll never forget it! It was wonderful.

PSR: I'll bet. Did you ski (repeat) around this area?

GB: Pardon?

PSR: Did you ski while you were growing up? Did you snow ski?

GB: I don't ...

PSR: Did you get out, did you use skiis to get around at all during the winter?

GB: Oh yes! Oh yes! The snow would pile up.

PSR: Yeah.

GB: And you'd have a bunch ...

PSR: Yeah.

GB: Of snow. And sometimes you'd hurt ... and that fall... things giving so ... and you'd tip over because there would be soft spots. Coming from De Soto one time, my dad and a team and sleigh and a wagon box and us two boys up on the (repeat) spring seat, up in front you know. And we were up, got up on the ridge from De Soto and the team was going pretty good you know and he hit a low spot. Oh! He bought a barrel of salt and it got shook loose and as we hit a low spot the barrel rolled and the wagon, the sleigh and the wagon box and everything down in the ditch. It was more than a ditch. It was ...

KB: More of a ravine?

GB: Yeah, we were ... it was sloping away anyway. And that barrel rolled away in the deep snow, oh! We were going home and of course, how were we going to do that? Oh my gosh! Us boys weren't all that big yet, my dad was pretty strong but It wasn't more than just a few minutes, a team come along and behind and a big guy got out, but he only had one arm. I'll always remember his name, but now I can't remember it now.

PSR: That's interesting.

GB: And they got that barrel back up into that wagon box.

PSR: Ok. Wow! Well George we want to thank you very much.

GB: Oh you 're welcome!

PSR: And we're gonna make sure you get a copy of this tape.

GB: Ok.

PSR: Ok. Thank you much.