

HARNEY COUNTRY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #249 - Sides A & B

Subject: Raymond Weeks - With Video

Place: Weeks Office, Burns, Oregon

Date: August 2, 1989

Interviewers: Barbara Lofgren & Dorothea Purdy

DOROTHEA PURDY: This is Dorothea Purdy, and I'm with Barbara Lofgren, and we're at the office of the Bulk Chevron Station. We're visiting with Ray Weeks, who is the owner of the Bulk Plant, in his office in Burns, Oregon, August 2, 1989. Barbara Lofgren will be doing the interviewing.

BARBARA LOFGREN: Okay today we're talking with Jerry Weeks, I'm sorry, I knew Jerry, --- Ray Weeks. Can you tell us your full name and where you were born?

RAYMOND WEEKS: My name is Raymond H. Weeks. And I was born July the 10th, 1910, in Lebanon, Oregon. And I went to high school, went to grade school in Lebanon, and also high school. And graduated from high school in 1928. After graduation from high school, I went to Portland and went to Business College, North-western School of Commerce for thirteen months. From there I came to Burns and went to work for the Burns Garage as a bookkeeper.

BARBARA: Can I interrupt just a minute? After you graduated from college, you said you brought a car over to Burns. Did you come over with the understanding that you would have a job at the Burns Garage?

RAYMOND: That's right.

BARBARA: And how did it happen that you got a job in Burns, coming from the

Willamette Valley?

RAYMOND: The young fellow that I brought his car over was working for Edward Hines Lumber Company at the sawmill. And one evening Mr. and Mrs. McGowan had him down to their house for dinner, in as much as their son was also working in the office at Hines. And at that time, Burns Garage and Mr. McGowan was looking for someone to keep the books. So he asked this gentleman, Walter Gustafson his name was, and if they knew of somebody in Portland that could keep books, and would like to come to Burns. And he said, "Yes, I'm sure Ray Weeks would come." And so they sent me a telegram, and those days Western Union was heavy in Burns. And more so, used it more than the telephone.

And I got the wire in Portland on Friday evening, and I was right here ready to go to work on Monday morning.

BARBARA: You didn't hesitate at all then.

RAYMOND: You know depression had really hit the Portland area at that time. And I went out on several interviews for jobs, but they paid thirty or forty dollars a month. I came to Burns; I went to work for a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month.

BARBARA: Oh my.

RAYMOND: And of course at that time Burns was a boomtown, because they were building the mill.

BARBARA: The mill, uh huh.

RAYMOND: Building all the houses out in Hines. And ---

BARBARA: Seemed a little rosier picture than the depression days in Portland.

RAYMOND: That's right. So Burns was good for a couple of years.

BARBARA: Uh huh. Well I'll ask you too, what your parent's names were.

RAYMOND: My dad's name was Riley W. Weeks. And my mother's name was Minnie Weeks.

BARBARA: And did you have brothers and sisters?

RAYMOND: I had two brothers, and two sisters. And one sister and one brother older than me, and one brother and one sister younger than I was. I have --- both my brothers have passed away, as well as my parents.

BARBARA: And what did your parents do for a living?

RAYMOND: My father came from Kansas to Lebanon, and worked in the paper mill for Crown Zellerbach. And he was, at the time of his retirement he was a foreman of the finishing department. And ---

BARBARA: Okay, so then you arrived, you got a job. And you arrived in Burns and you worked for how many years then before you started --- Mr. McGowan put you out on the floor? You say you worked ---

RAYMOND: Seven years.

BARBARA: Seven years as a bookkeeper then.

RAYMOND: And in the parts department. Also I was selling cars. It was seven years from the time I went to work for the garage, until I took active management.

BARBARA: Uh huh. And what was the price of an automobile when you first arrived there?

RAYMOND: Around five hundred dollars.

BARBARA: Five hundred.

RAYMOND: I sold, in 1937, several cars for six hundred and ninety-five dollars. That was what they called the sixty Ford, sixty horsepower Ford. And in fact, just the other day down here at the Bulk Plant, Alfred Gunkel came in and he had bought one of those cars

from me, and for six hundred and ninety-five dollars. Although he told me I was mistaken, it was six hundred and ninety-three dollars. (Laughter)

BARBARA: Quibble over two dollars, huh? And did you have trouble finding mechanics and people to work in the --- that were trained? Or did you train the people kind of as you went along?

RAYMOND: Well ---

BARBARA: The help in the garage.

RAYMOND: They, people didn't move around much in those days. They stayed put, and had a good job. And we had a lot of mechanics that had been with us for over thirty years, forty years.

BARBARA: Oh. Did their children then train and become mechanics too, some of them?

RAYMOND: No, I don't recall any of the children ---

BARBARA: Anything.

RAYMOND: --- following in their profession. But, of course cars in those days weren't so complicated either. And easier to work on. And --- but we, Ford Motor Company always had training pro-grams, and schools that you could send your employees to. And I think it still goes on to this day all right. But I'd say that the cars weren't near as hard to work on, and to accomplish repairs a lot easier.

DOROTHEA: Can you give us the names of some of the mechanics that were with you for the thirty years?

RAYMOND: Yeah, John Daniel I think was over forty years. John, yeah John Daniel. And he still lives in Burns. Retired about eight years ago, after I sold the garage. And Harold Ruff who has now since passed away, but he was with me for twenty-five years.

BARBARA: So you had pretty loyal help in those days. You started in, you took care of

your people, and they stayed with you.

RAYMOND: Right.

BARBARA: What were some of the other businesses on Main Street when you first came to town, do you recall?

RAYMOND: Well they had Dillard Chevrolet, and that was Ali Dillard. And they were located where Baird's Hardware are, where Nyleen's are today. And then later on Bennett's had the, Bennett Motor Company had the Willy Jeep, or Willys and the Jeep. And they were located where --- that little store up there ---

DOROTHEA: Is that Fulton's?

RAYMOND: Yeah, Fulton Athletic Supply.

BARBARA: Oh, uh huh.

RAYMOND: And Bennett sold, eventually took over the Chevrolet Agency. And they kept that until they were sold out to Ganger and Grover.

DOROTHEA: Now that's Cecil Bennett?

RAYMOND: Yeah, Cecil. Cecil, and three brothers in there. Cecil, and Ellis, Frank.

BARBARA: So there were several car dealerships in town to start out with?

RAYMOND: Yes, that's right.

BARBARA: But you were pretty much the leader in sales at that time?

RAYMOND: Well, I'm not sure right at the time that I came to Burns. But as years went by, why of course for twenty-two years where we had the records, we did have leadership.

BARBARA: Uh huh. And about how many cars would you sell a year?

RAYMOND: Two hundred, around two hundred new cars every ---

BARBARA: Two hundred. Uh huh.

RAYMOND: And about three hundred used.

BARBARA: Uh huh. So two hundred cars a year would pretty much keep a business going really good?

RAYMOND: Oh, yes.

BARBARA: Uh huh. And what would it take at the time that you retired, how many cars would it take to sell a year?

RAYMOND: Well, we sold about that many practically every year, for the last --- Oh, now you see I've been out of the business thirteen years. But prior to that, say twenty years prior to that time why we were selling around two hundred cars a year, new cars, and trucks. New cars and trucks each year.

BARBARA: And did you have certain ranchers that would buy a new truck every year, or every two years, or something that you could sort of depend on to be repeat customers?

RAYMOND: Oh yes. I might tell you about the Vickers family. When I came to Burns, Lenny --- no not Lenny, Lenny was a --- Tom Vickers, and then his son was Jess Vickers, and his grandson was Lyle Vickers, and great-grandson was Eston Vickers. They all bought Fords. And that's four generations. Right today, why Lyle Vickers is a big user of Ford products. I don't know how many cars we did sell to the Vickers family over the years, but it was a goodly sum.

BARBARA: A good number, uh huh. And so you started buying shares into the business as you went along then over the years?

RAYMOND: Yes.

BARBARA: You started out with how many?

RAYMOND: Well it would have been one-eighth of the business.

BARBARA: One-eighth.

RAYMOND: And that would have been, I've forgotten now how many actual shares that

was. But it was twelve and a half percent of the total. And I purchased that in 1936, from Mr. J. E. Loggan, and took me a good many years to pay for that too.

BARBARA: How many other people were involved, or were partners in the Burns Ford Garage?

RAYMOND: When I came there, there was about twelve stockholders.

BARBARA: Were they all local people?

RAYMOND: No, no, as I remember there was one gentleman named of S. W. Laythe, and his son was Willard Laythe who was working at the garage when I came here. But he had some stock in the corporation, and he didn't live in Burns. But practically all, everybody else, the stockholders were in the Burns area. And gradually they sold their stock, or business bought it back.

BARBARA: So it really didn't expand, it was just bought up by the other members that were in the partnership at that time?

RAYMOND: No, I was the one that bought it.

BARBARA: You were the one that ---

RAYMOND: Yeah, I was the one that bought it.

BARBARA: You could see that that was what you wanted to do down the line, so you kept picking up ---

RAYMOND: Sure. That was my life's ambition. I know months and months would go by, that you had to make those payments on that stock, and your wife was after --- do without a new refrigerator, or something else. But that doesn't happen much nowadays. (Laughter) In other words, people don't sacrifice.

BARBARA: Right.

RAYMOND: Like I did. To own that business, and to own that stock, we sacrificed a lot.

And for several years we didn't even have a car of our own. I walked to work.

BARBARA: Well, you had a dream and you saw it fulfilled then.

RAYMOND: Yeah, that's right, that's right.

DOROTHEA: You mentioned your wife. When and where did you meet your wife?

RAYMOND: Well I was married in 1930, to Mabel Richter, R I C H T E R. She came from Minnesota with her parents to work in, their parents came to work in the sawmill, her father did. And he had worked for Edward Hines back in Minnesota. And she came just about the same time I did. And a year later, why we were married. She passed away in 1961. And we had one boy, Jerry.

And in 1962, I married again, Mildred Chambers who was a teacher over in Bend. And she was born and raised in Kansas. And her parents moved from Kansas to Bend, and then I stole her away from them.

BARBARA: How did you happen to meet her?

RAYMOND: Well she was friends of my first wife and I. Exactly how we met, I've forgotten. But she used to come through Burns, going back and forth to Kansas, and she would stay at our house. BARBARA: So you had known her for a number of years, prior.

Uh huh. And did she teach school then when she moved to Bend --- Burns when you were married?

RAYMOND: No, no. She gave up her certificate when we got married. BARBARA: She took over running your household for you.

RAYMOND: That's right, that's right.

BARBARA: That's nice. And Jerry --- how many children did Jerry have?

RAYMOND: Jerry had four children. Three boys and a girl.

DOROTHEA: What is their names?



RAYMOND: The oldest boy is named Dale Raymond, and the next boy is Ricky, and the girl is Cathy, and the youngest boy is Kelly. Kelly just graduated from high school this year.

BARBARA: Well Cathy is over here now with ---

RAYMOND: With Cliff.

BARBARA: Cliff.

RAYMOND: Cliff, Clifford Cowan is working at the garage, at the plant, bulk plant. He's been here about ten months now.

BARBARA: They went to school with my son, so I happen to know them. I saw them down with their baby the other day. She is pretty.

Can you tell us maybe about some of the changes that took place in your business over the years? Some of the major things that --- I mean how you started out, and how they sort of changed, as our times have changed?

RAYMOND: Well, the automobile business has changed a lot. The old days, it took a long time to sell a car. And people would, wouldn't just buy on the spur of the moment like they do now. The way of doing business began to change before Archie McGowan died. And he kept complaining to me that he couldn't keep up with things, that we went too fast. And he couldn't keep up with the books, but that was a trend. People now days, they buy an automobile, and they buy it in a hurry. Usually walk in, and an hour later they drive a new car out. In the old days, things wasn't done that way. But whether it is good or bad, that's the trend of the automobile business of this day.

BARBARA: Well I think maybe, perhaps people discuss and check things out and do a lot of research before they actually go to the dealer to decide on a car. Since it costs that much money, you have to do a little more planning before you actually go and talk to the

business people.

RAYMOND: Yes, it really is. The purchase of a new car, oh thirty or forty years ago, maybe it was fifteen hundred dollars. Depends on what you bought of course. Now you're looking at fifteen thousand dollars.

BARBARA: Yes. So you're, probably your used car business was very important too. Because a lot of people couldn't afford the new car, would have to go to upgrading maybe a few more years.

RAYMOND: That's right. Yes, yes, and we retailed most of our cars, used cars. The trend is now, they take them to the auctions, get rid of them. But we used to fix them up, and recondition them, and sell them right here.

BARBARA: So you pretty much knew whether the car was good or not, if you were going to put it back on the lot for sale.

RAYMOND: That's right.

BARBARA: Uh huh. And since you retired from the Ford Garage, you have worked here at your bulk station. What are you doing now, what does the bulk business consist of?

RAYMOND: Well we wholesale gasoline, and fuel oils, and motor oils, greases, and it's really built up to a big business. Last year we done four million gallons of gas and diesel.

BARBARA: Oh my, that's a lot.

RAYMOND: Yeah.

BARBARA: You sell to the contractors and people that are working on roads in the surrounding areas?

RAYMOND: Oh, yes. Now I have five contractors here in Burns right today.

BARBARA: And to ranchers and things like that?

RAYMOND: Yes. Yeah, we go from Burns to the South End of the country, and Denio.

And we have lots of business on both sides of the mountains, Steens Mountain. Take a trip twice a week down to the South End.

DOROTHEA: That brings up a question in mind also. Can you tell us the price changes on gasoline from the time that you drove the Ford here, to today?

RAYMOND: Well I remember at the garage, you know, we had the curb pumps when I came to Burns, and they are still there at the same spot. And as I remember, the gasoline, there was two grades, supreme and regular. And it was about twenty-seven cents a gallon for regular, and thirty cents a gallon for supreme. Today, they get about a dollar and a quarter.

DOROTHEA: That's for regular. I paid a dollar and forty cents the other day for my supreme. So it's gone up quite considerably.

RAYMOND: That's right. Well, twenty-seven cents of that is taxes, state and federal. Sixteen cents for state tax, and nine cents for federal. So you take the taxes out of there, it brings it down. Of course right today, gasoline in Burns is pretty high. Since the spillage of that oil up in Alaska, seems like from that day on gasoline prices have increased. In fact they are about twenty cents, or twenty-five cents a gallon more than they were before the Valdez spill. I really don't believe that was the cause of the price increase, but ---

BARBARA: Sometimes it's a good excuse to do it.

RAYMOND: Yeah, that's right.

BARBARA: So since you've sold your Ford --- the dealership then, you've just worked here at your bulk plant?

RAYMOND: Yes.

BARBARA: And you pretty much come every day, do you?

RAYMOND: Oh yes, yes. Sometimes seven days a week.

BARBARA: It's a full-time job.

RAYMOND: Full-time job, yes it is.

BARBARA: And how many people do you have working for you here?

RAYMOND: Nine.

BARBARA: Nine. Oh, that's a good business.

RAYMOND: Yes, it is.

BARBARA: And what are some of the other things that you do that keep you busy? I know you're involved with the Shriners, and Lions, and things like that. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

RAYMOND: Yes, I'm a charter member of the Burns Lions Club. And I'm fairly active, I don't go as much as I probably should, but I enjoy it.

BARBARA: They do good works.

RAYMOND: They do lots of fine things --- the eye clinic. And the Burns Lions Club is one of the most active clubs in the state of Oregon.

Also I'm --- I joined the Masonic Lodge in 1940 --- no '35, yeah '35. And I was master in 1942. And I've been very active in the Masonic Lodge.

And then on to the Shrine. My main objective in the Shrine is to help these children in Harney County. Those that have bone defects, anything that the Shrine can help with. In fact we put one little boy that was burned over seventy-five percent of his body in the hospital down in Galveston, Texas. And that little boy is just as normal now as ever.

BARBARA: Isn't that great.

RAYMOND: And really, we'd thought we'd lose him before we got him to Galveston. But

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BARBARA: How many Shrine Hospitals are there in the United States?

RAYMOND: Twenty-one.

BARBARA: Twenty-one.

RAYMOND: And then there is two burn hospitals. One in Galveston, Texas, and one in New York.

BARBARA: But Portland is a very big hospital, helps a lot of children.

RAYMOND: Yes, yes, and you know, it seems like in Burns we need to get a child in there, it don't take very long. And they, I person-ally have put fifty-one children. I have been the hospital representative for our local Shrine Club for a good many years. And for that reason, I'm pretty close to these children that go in. And ---

BARBARA: You wouldn't think that our small community would have that many children that needed help. That's really amazing. Of course you cover all of Harney County, do you?

RAYMOND: Yes, all of Harney County.

BARBARA: I think --- you talk about Lion and Shriners and that, the people doing the work. I think in smaller communities the people take a bigger part in doing things maybe, than some of the cities. They get involved with their own thing and don't give of their time as people in small communities do.

RAYMOND: Right. And then I've been a charter member of the Elks Club. And I haven't been too active in the Elks. But then I give it some time and attention.

BARBARA: Do you have any hobbies that you do? With your work and your civic duties, I don't know that you have time.

RAYMOND: I used to play golf; I belonged to the Golf Club. In fact was a charter member of the Golf Club. But I had two heart attacks, a good many years ago, and after

the heart attacks I give up the golf, and really any strenuous exercise is all.

But my business it seems like has always been my hobby. And of course, helping Jerry educate his children. I put the second boy through body and fender school back in Wyoming. And he is one of the top body and fender men in the western Oregon.

BARBARA: That's great. That's really nice.

DOROTHEA: And where does he work at?

RAYMOND: He works in McMinnville for the Ford dealer --- Chuck Colvin Ford in McMinnville. He is really a craftsman.

BARBARA: Have you had a chance to do much traveling since you retired?

RAYMOND: Yes, yes. Well, Millie and I have been to Bermuda, we've been to Puerto Rico, we've been to Australia, and Switzerland, Germany ---

BARBARA: My goodness.

RAYMOND: --- and part of Italy. We really, we've been to Mexico and Alaska.

BARBARA: So you really enjoy traveling?

RAYMOND: Yeah, we really like to travel.

BARBARA: That's great. And do you have plans of retiring from your bulk station?

RAYMOND: Well, as soon as Cliff feels that he can run this bulk plant, I'll probably sell it to him.

BARBARA: So maybe semi-retire, and then just ease out of it?

RAYMOND: Well, we hope all right.

BARBARA: We want to pause just a minute here ---

SIDE B

BARBARA: Do you have any stories that you might like to tell us that happened either at

your garage or with your Shriners work that you might like to share?

RAYMOND: Well, sit down and think, probably there is lots of stories happened in the garage, and also the bulk plant here. But to pinpoint them right this minute, it would be just a little hard to do.

BARBARA: A little hard to do.

DOROTHEA: How many people, you said there was about nine to twelve employees in the Ford Garage when you first came to work. How many were employed by you when you sold the business?

RAYMOND: Well I did have it up to twenty-one employees. And when I left --- there is a little plaque over on the wall there, it's got all their names on there. It was when I left, sold the garage.

BARBARA: That's nice.

DOROTHEA: You said you got a hundred and twenty-five dollars when you first came, a month. What was the monthly wage that you were paying when you sold the business, to your employees?

RAYMOND: Well, of course they all varied. The salaries all varied. But my own personal salary was a hundred and twenty-five to start, keeping books there in the garage. And of course as the years went on, why I was increased in salary. And then when in 1936, I took active management, I was making five hundred dollars a month. A lot of money in those days.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. Compared to today it makes a lot of difference in our wages.

BARBARA: Well, I think with the other information that we'll get from the other tape, I think we'll have a good little history of your life in Harney County.

RAYMOND: Right, right.

BARBARA: It's been very interesting talking with you, and visiting with you today, and we appreciate your time.

RAYMOND: Thank you.

BARBARA: Thank you very much.

RAYMOND: You bet.

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RAYMOND: ... And I met all three of Edsel's sons personally. I got to shake hands with them.

BARBARA: Isn't that nice.

RAYMOND: Yeah, that's nice.

BARBARA: And you have your picture and a letter there on the wall from Henry Ford II.

RAYMOND: Yes.

BARBARA: And what year was that? 1971, is that right?

RAYMOND: Well, I've forgotten. Yeah, November '71.

BARBARA: And over the years, how many trips did you make back there?

RAYMOND: We drove twice to Detroit.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

RAYMOND: This was given to me in San Francisco.

BARBARA: Oh, I see.

RAYMOND: Might be other things you think about, why you know you can always call me down here, something that you overlooked.

BARBARA: Well that's the trouble with doing interviews, you always think of something that you wished you had asked when you leave.

RAYMOND: Yes.



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(END OF TAPE I)

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KIWANIS RADIO DAYS

Subject: Raymond Weeks

Date: June 6, 1989

Place: KZZR Radio Station, Burns, Oregon

Interviewers: Larry Asmussen & Denny Presley

LARRY ASMUSSEN: ... and that was back in 1951, but the experience of Raymond Weeks go back much further. And we had an interest in knowing some of the details about the family of Ray, and also when he first came to town here. So this morning Ray, I'm very pleased to be able to introduce you to our Kiwanis Radio Days, and to be able to have you interviewed here live. Sometimes we tape the interviews, and sometimes we can do them live. We enjoy doing them live. Since this is the centennial year also here in Harney County, and it's much more personal it seems like.

... (Commercial)

LARRY: We're going to begin with Ray now. We're going to start off this morning --- I, Ray was telling us the other evening when we stopped by to visit a bit, that he came to Burns in September, on September 15th, 1929. Ray, could you tell us some of the events that took place, that was happening about the time you moved here? How old you were, and who you came to work with, and so forth?

RAYMOND: Thank you. I was born in Lebanon, Oregon, in July the 10th, 19 and 10. Graduated from high school in Lebanon, and immediately after graduation I went to Portland and started, and enlisted in Business College. I went to Business College for thirteen months, and then I came to Burns.

I was acquainted with a young fellow that lived in Portland, and we both went to Business College. And he came to Burns about a month or two before I did, to work for Edward Hines Lumber Company, who was just building the mill. He had a little Model-T Ford, and he asked me to bring the little Model-T Ford to Burns for him.

I started out on a Saturday morning from Lebanon, and got to Bend and started across the desert. The roads were not very good. In other words, trails through the sagebrush most of it, and I had seventeen flat tires. (Laughter) And it came; I left Bend at

noon, and arrived in Burns about midnight. Finally out by Riley I ran out of patching, and patience. And two old gentlemen stopped and helped me fix two tires, and I come on into Burns without any further trouble.

I stopped at The Central Hotel, and of course it was brand new. And Blackie Osa was cleaning up downstairs, and I rapped on the door and he let me in. And I asked him if I could get a room. He looked at me, and he thought I was a runaway boy. So anyway, he gave me a room, and I asked him where the Ford Garage was. He said, "Right across the street."

So the next morning I woke up and finally got cleaned up, and went over and started to work. Archie McGowan owned the Burns Garage when I came here. And he being a Scotsman --- and father named the town of Burns. I couldn't have probably found anybody better to work for. He taught me lots of lessons, and lots of business fundamentals.

LARRY: We might --- what are you thinking of when you talk about business fundamentals that you carried out then through the days that you worked, and ran the garage?

RAYMOND: One of his theories was treat everybody, as you would want to be treated. Also, if you made a promise to anybody, keep it regardless of what it cost you. And you took in a car in trade, found something pretty seriously wrong with it, why that was your fault. You should have checked that out before you made the trade. But he was -- - he taught me that if you told somebody some-thing, if you're going to give them an extra tire or something, do it, and do it fast. Those lessons that he taught me carried through all my life. And I've never forgot Archie McGowan.

LARRY: I think many of us here remember Archie, and we agree. He's not an easy man

to forget. Well when you first came here Ray, what did you do when you stepped into that office over there for the first year? And when did you eventually work into the business?

RAYMOND: Well when I first came to Burns, I was hired as a bookkeeper. And I had good knowledge, because the machines that they used at the Burns Garage were the ones I had learned on in Business College. Also I took shorthand, and Archie had just completed being the representative from --- to the legislature. So he had lots of correspondence, and we would do that in the evenings. Write his letters, and type them up. And I was single, and of course nothing particular to do in the evenings. So I got a lot of experience because he was a real good speller, and he taught me how to spell lots of words that I thought --- I had about everything that you could want in Business College. But anyway, that was real, real good experience.

I had some training in bookkeeping machines, and --- but I only kept books about a year, and he decided that I was too valuable to keep books, I should be out selling. And so I was advanced to the parts department. And then I sold tires, and begin to sell cars.

And 19 and 36, Mr. J. E. Loggan, who was the vice president of the corporation, wife was quite ill and they recommended that she be moved to a lower altitude. So I bought his stock in the Burns Garage. He owned one-eighth. And all on the installment plan. And --- but it gave me my start in owning that Burns Garage.

Mr. McGowan had lots of stories to tell me about the early history of the Burns Garage. Namely the --- when he started selling cars, banks, they wouldn't finance an automobile at all under no circumstances. So he had to go out in the country and sell these cars and get the money for them, and then order them. Sometimes he'd spend a week with a family selling that car, and collected the money. And then when the cars came, they were barged down to The Dalles, and then driven in from The Dalles to Burns.

And then of course in those days, nobody knew how to drive. So when he delivered the car to them, he had to spend several days teaching them how to drive.

DENNY PRESLEY: He must have spent several days fixing the car back up didn't he, back in town here?

RAYMOND: But that was, even when I came to Burns in '29, the Model-T's --- we sold lots of used Model-T's. But the Model-A had just come out, and it was really a fine little car.

... (Commercial)

DENNY: Ray, I remember you were talking about, we were interviewing you the other night, that you wasn't just handed your schooling, you worked for a lot of that, didn't you?

RAYMOND: Yes. When I --- it was the 7th grade in Lebanon, I went to work for a man name of George Petersen, who had a large barbershop. And I was the shoeshine operator. And I kept that job too within ten days before I went to Business College. Also I had the city of Lebanon Oregonian business. And I delivered Oregonians early in the morning. And then go down to the barbershop, and my job of course was to keep the barbershop clean. And --- but I had built up a fine shoeshine business there. And some days the barbers told me I made more money than they did.

I saved my money pretty good, and when I went to Business College I paid a whole years tuition in advance. And --- but I see the money going out pretty fast, and so I decided I would have to have a job in Portland in order to complete business college. Because you know, you've got to have clothes, and in the city you --- in those days you dressed up when you went to school.

Anyhow I got a job washing dishes nights from seven until eleven at the Union Oyster House on 3rd and Washington Street in Portland. I got four dollars a week, and

my board. And the four dollars a week paid for my room. (Laughter) I kept that job the night before I came to Burns. And the people that owned the restaurant were very, very kind to me. I have never forgotten them. And they are all dead now, but I kept in touch until they had passed away.

DENNY: When you first came to Burns, you said one of the things about the Ford Garage was they didn't even have a key to the front door.

RAYMOND: Yeah, they --- the Burns Garage kept a night man. And he came on at nine o'clock at night and stayed until six-thirty or seven o'clock in the morning. And he done the cleaning. And Archie was always afraid of fire in the building, because he had lost one building with fire. And so that was a must that you had to have a night man there. The night man was sick, and nobody else was available, why somebody out of the organization would stay all night. And one time we had an occasion to lock the place up in the daytime for a little while for a funeral or something. And we couldn't find the key. And I guess it was several hours before we found, actually found the key to the front door.

People would come in from the country and --- evenings were spent around the fireplace and visiting, and visiting. And one thing that reminds me is Frank Kueny who had the Kueny Ranch at the South End of the county would come to town and --- he didn't like hotels, and he liked to put his bedroll down in the back of the garage, we called the annex. And --- but we were so afraid, you know, so much gas in the garage, especially there is lots of cars around that might cause some problems. But he would take his chances on that. He liked to stay back there. And eventually Frank Kueny and his wife gave the Kueny Ranch to the Shrine Hospital, which was quite a donation.

LARRY: What are we talking about in the days that that was given? What are we talking

about in dollars probably?

RAYMOND: Well I imagine that ranch, when he gave it to the Shriners, was worth a half a million dollars. Now of course it would be probably two or three million. It was just sold recently again, and I would be anxious to know what the selling price was. The Shrine Hospital sold the ranch to Fred Gill and Sons from California. And at that time why, if they would have hung onto the ranch, it probably would have been worth a lot more money. But --- of course the Shrine Hospital is not able to operate ranches.

And while we're talking about that, this is quite a ways on down the line. But two years ago, Rex Clemens from Diamond gave ... to the Shrine Hospital in Portland, through me. And that was one of the biggest events of my life. He has perpetuated the hospital in Portland forever. All they use is the interest from that money. And at ... the interest rates today would be a considerable amount of money every year.

LARRY: That's probably one of the largest gifts that was ever given to the Shrine Hospital.

RAYMOND: Yes, it is the largest gift.

DENNY: You were real instrumental in him donating that money, weren't you?

RAYMOND: Yes. About ten years ago, twelve years ago I visited with Rex Clemens and asked him to give a beef to the Shrine Hospital at the 4-H sale. Buy one and donate it. And he said, "Well is that tax deductible?" "And oh yes Rex," I said, "very much so." "And do you give a beef?" And I said, "Yes, most every year I buy a beef myself." So he said, "Well if you can do it, I can too." So that got him started. And then he would come into my place of business and visit a little more about the Shriners, what they did. And the thing that he liked so much was the fact that every dollar that he gave went to the Shrine

Hospital. There was no middleman. Even the freight company would haul the meat to Portland to the hospital at no charge. And that really impressed him.

So this was on about a Tuesday morning, I had gone to the bank, and he called my place of business and wanted to talk to me real badly, right fast. So Jerry ran up to the bank and told me that I had an important phone call. So I came back and Rex said, "Ray, I want to donate ... to the Shrine Hospital right away.

DENNY: Did they have to throw some water on you to wake you up?

RAYMOND: I said, "Yes Rex we can handle it." (Laughter)

LARRY: I should think I could handle that too.

RAYMOND: We got a hold of some of the main people in the Shrine Hospital, and the Board of Directors, and it was handled in a very short while. Just --- he only had a couple three things that definitely he wanted, and that was he'd like to know what the administrative cost was. And it was less than one-quarter of one percent. And also he requested that the money will be used in Oregon, in the Portland Hospital, not to be sent to other hospitals. And that request was granted. Otherwise there was no, no other restrictions on this donation. And it was all in cash. Now ---

... (Commercial)

DENNY: Ray, you were talking about Rex Clemens, and some of the money he donated, and the Shriners' Hospital.

RAYMOND: Now Mr. and Mrs. Clemens did not want any publicity about this donation. And I visited with Mrs. Clemens one day --- and they were having a Shrine ceremonial in Portland, and about five hundred Shriners and their wives. So I asked her if it would be agreeable with her if I told the Shriners about this donation, and a little bit about it. And she agreed that it would be satisfactory. Otherwise we kept it out of the media. And the



Oregonian people were there, but they did not print anything, which was very satisfactory to Mrs. Clemens. A donation of that size of course can bring some adverse results, people bothering Mrs. Clemens about different other donations. So we thought it was handled really very, very well.

Now I got ahead of myself a little bit, and to get back to Burns Garage. I might mention last year the radio --- T.V. Station Six, Mr. Summers ---

DENNY: Ray Summers At Large, huh?

RAYMOND: --- came to Burns, and interviewed me at the plant, the Chevron Bulk Plant. But primarily he wanted me to go to the Burns Garage with him. And he was very impressed with the fireplace, and also some of the fixtures in the Burns Garage. The fixtures and the safes came from the First National Bank. The First National Bank went broke in 1933, and so we purchased the safes and the office enclosure there from the bank.

And by the way, that was the only year that the Burns Garage lost money. And due to the fact that Mr. McGowan was a director in the bank, and we couldn't get our money out. And we had to leave it there. And so --- but that was the only year that the Burns Garage lost money. This was --- this interview with Mr. Summers of course was put on T.V. in Portland. And I had letters and phone calls from all over the state and country, adjoining states about that interview, and how happy they were to see Ray Weeks on the T.V. One particular lady that I went to school with in the first grade, through high school, and she is crippled now and in a wheel chair, but she wrote me the nicest letter in reference to the interview.

Now back to the Burns Garage and --- we left off in about 1936, when I bought Mr. John Loggan's interest in the business. Also I took active management of the garage

after 1936, and ---LARRY: Then when you took the active management in '36 then, when did you become the owner of the station, Ray?

RAYMOND: Well Archie McGowan kept the controlling interest of the stock in Burns Garage until he passed away in 1958. We had entered into agreement many years before that, that I would have the opportunity to buy his interest, the first opportunity. So after he passed away, the stock was appraised, and I purchased his interest. And that was in 1958, and I kept the business then until 1978, when it was sold to Mr. Marshall.

LARRY: You were telling us when we visited with you Ray, something about Archie. And we don't want to leave Archie without getting this in here. But you indicated that he was a strong one for employee meetings. And he had certain ways of starting out his conversations.

RAYMOND: I say, I say, I say. And some of the employees enjoyed the meetings, and some of them didn't. (Laughter) Personally, I was never too sold on the meetings. And after he passed away, why that stopped.

But Burns Garage also owned Raymond Weeks Oil Company. And he would never let us pull that business out of the --- the Raymond Weeks Oil Company out of the Burns Garage. So after he passed away, I formed another corporation and gave the stockholders in the Burns Garage the same amount of stock, proportionately in the Raymond Weeks Oil Company. And that was done for several reasons. Chevron, the Standard Oil Company, didn't want the Burns Garage to be a retailer and a wholesaler. And we had the gas pumps there out in front on the curb, they're still there, and have been there since 19 and 10. So they were pleased when we did form another corporation. And that was in 1958.

LARRY: Now you've retained the Raymond Weeks Oil Company distribution ever since,

haven't you?

RAYMOND: Yes. And it's --- after, before --- really prior to 1958, we had people running the station, I mean the plant. But never really active management, but --- from myself.

... (Commercial)

DENNY: And Ray, I'd like to get back to the facts about the Ford dealership here. In Burns, started in 1910, there weren't many Ford dealerships in the northwest in 1910 were there?

RAYMOND: No, this was the oldest Ford dealership in Oregon, and there is one dealer that was older than Archie, with a franchise, and he was W. L. Hughson in San Francisco. And he has now passed away, and his business is still operating though. Archie was very, very proud to be one of the oldest dealers. And we would go to meetings, and as Archie got older, he would say, "Ray, you know all these people know me, but I don't know them. I can't call their names. You stick right close to me, because I'm embarrassed." But that also happens to me now, the fact that sometimes people will walk in the Raymond Weeks Oil Company Plant, and I can't call their name. And I'm really embarrassed. But I think everybody, they live long enough they're going to go through that.

To get back to the Burns Garage, Archie in --- after I had purchased my stock initially I also bought his mother-in-law's stock, and some of Archie's. But when it got to the point I was getting close to what he had, why then it was stopped. Because he was going to have the controlling interest until he passed away. Of course he wasn't very active in the business in the last few years. But he tried to keep up with everything. But as things change, especially in the automobile business --- you couldn't spend a week anymore at somebody's house selling them a car. You sold them a car in an hour or two,

or you didn't sell it at all. They went to your competition.

But we were very successful in --- the Ford Motor Company watched real close the registrations. And they were, they wanted to make sure that they had leadership in the county over Chevrolet. That was the way they operated. So for twenty-two years we had leadership over Chevrolet, which was quite a success. And we were commended a lot when I sold the business and took Mr. Marshall down to San Jose to make the transition. They told Mr. Marshall a lot of times that the leadership that we had --- wanted him to retain it.

Archie too, when we made a dollar, he made sure we kept some of it. And we put it in a trust account and --- to buy one of the other ones out if something happened --- when either one passed away. And I don't mind saying that the trust account built up to over a hundred thousand dollars. So it was pretty easy for me to obtain that Burns Garage after he passed away, by using all that money that was saved over the years. I still owed them eighty-four thousand dollars, his estate. And he gave me ten years to pay that, at eighty-four hundred dollars a year, plus the interest, which wasn't an easy task.

I miss the Burns Garage, and I miss the people more than anything. And I have a fine business at the Raymond Weeks Oil Company. But it don't compare with the Burns Garage and the automobile business.

LARRY: How long did you operate then the Burns Garage, and the total number of years that you put in down there?

RAYMOND: Forty-eight years is the total. I came in 19 and 29, and I sold in 1978. It was forty-eight years, and twenty years that I owned it myself.

LARRY: And you sold then to the present owner?

RAYMOND: Yes, to Ted Marshall.

LARRY: Ted Marshall.

DENNY: No idea how many cars you sold down there, Ray?

RAYMOND: No, we have all the records, I kept them all. Archie was a great record keeper. He has the motor numbers, and who he sold every car in 19 and 10. And really I've kept all those old records. And you know, if you want to know when a certain man bought a car in 1910, and the motor number, I have it.

... (Commercial)

LARRY: We have touched on many aspects of Raymond Weeks' life, and the business in the Burns Garage. We've asked him for a few highlights, and he's already touched on several of those. But I think we ought to touch on some more. And we'll probably ask some questions here, Ray. And if it's appropriate, you can help us out a little. 1942, was a very special year I know for you. And you were thirty-two years of age, and it had to do with the Masonic Lodge. I thought you would like to tell the folks about that.

RAYMOND: In 1942, I was elected Master of Burns Masonic Lodge. And there is not many men at thirty-two years of age to be elected to Master. I joined the Masonic Lodge when I was pretty young, and went right through the chairs, and enjoyed it. And it was really a highlight of my life. I was one of the first Masters to put on the work at the Malheur Cave, and it gave me confidence in speaking to people. And had lots of help from many old timers like U. S. Hackney, Charlie Loggan who was the secretary for many, many years. And Maurice Schwartz, Doug Mullarky, they gave me lots of advice, and lots of help.

And then I went on to the Shrine, and been very, very active in the Shrine. I've been hospital representative for many, many years, and had the opportunity to put fifty-one young children from Harney County into the hospital. Being the hospital

representative I had the first, usually the first contact.

We have a small Shrine Club, but we are very, very active. Each year the Harney County Shrine Club sells raffle tickets, and we take the money and buy 4-H beef at the County Fair, and send that meat down to the Shrine Hospital. This will be coming up soon again, and I've been very active in that project.

... (Commercial)

DENNY: Yeah, I'd like to ask, we were down there interviewing Ray the other night, and there is a plaque up on the wall that's got Henry Ford and Ray both in that. I understand you knew them.

RAYMOND: I've met them all. And in fact Henry Senior, Edsel Ford, and then the three boys. Over the years I was back to Detroit twice, and that's when I had the opportunity to shake hands with Henry Ford and Edsel Ford. In San Francisco the, Henry Jr. or Henry II came out and brought his two brothers, Benson, and I can't recall the other Ford at the present time. But I got to shake hands and visit with each one of those. So it was quite an event in my life.

And I also am a charter member of Burns Lions Club. And I haven't been as active in the last ten years as I should be, or my fellow Lion Frank Hirsch was also a charter member. And we're the only two left. And Frank is more active than I, but I still attend occasionally, and bring a new member in quite often, which I've enjoyed all these years.

DENNY: And you're also a charter member of the Elks Lodge.

RAYMOND: Yes.

DENNY: And you brought a new member in here just a while back there too.

RAYMOND: Well Jerry, my son, was quite active in the Elks. And he was also very active in the Raymond Weeks Oil Company. Unfortunately I lost him last August, and

now his son-in-law is working with me down there, and trying hard to take Jerry's place.

I was married in 1930 to Mabel Richter. She is the mother of Jerry. She passed away in 1961.

LARRY: We were, while we visited with you Ray in your office, we were pleased to learn about a memorial that left for Jerry. Maybe you would like to tell something you're working on to our public here.

RAYMOND: Yes, the high school needed a new football scoreboard. And we have it ordered, and it should be here sometime in the month of June. It's twenty-four by eight, real large one will be directed up on the football field where everybody can see it. And I did that for the reason that Jerry was very, very active in sports at the high school. And he broadcasted the football games, the basketball games for many years. I'm sure this will be a memorial that all the people in Harney County can enjoy. And I, we expect to have it erected this summer, and be dedicated in September at one of the first football games.

LARRY: Jerry was involved in announcing the games. He was a very enthusiastic about the sports programs lately, you know. And because of this, I know that is an appropriate memorial for Jerry. Denny, you have another question you wanted to propose?

DENNY: Yes, something we kind of skipped over, I thought we would come back to. We were talking about the campground that used to be behind the garage. I thought maybe you might tell everybody what the campground was.

RAYMOND: In the early days, when I came to Burns, that was the three-quarter block behind the Burns Garage. It was called the campground because, it was fixed up so people coming through Burns in those days --- there was no motels or anything like that, they could stay with their families in the campground. Well, it of course after I came kind of give out, and there weren't so many people camping in there.

But we used that then for a wrecking yard. And Roe Davis run that wrecking yard for quite a few years until he moved up on, where the library is now.

But Denny asked me about, weren't there boxing matches held over on the campground? That is true. They would set up a ring in the middle of the campground. And they brought fighters in from Portland, and different areas. And yet we had some real, real good local fighters. They asked me who they were the other day, and I couldn't answer right quick. But I do know now, Bob McConnell and Buzz Gibson. They were both about the same size, and weight, and they fought several, several times. And hardly, never could come out a winner. They was always a draw. (Laughter)

DENNY: I thought that was interesting. You sold quite a few different cars to different people. I asked you about the first Mercury car that ever come into the country. You sold it.

RAYMOND: Yes, I sold that to W. W. --- no, J. L. Bradeen who at that time was running the Frenchglen Store. I took the Mercury down and --- he purchased it that afternoon. And Bill, his son, drove that Mercury several years. Went through college with it, and that was really a good car.

DENNY: And you sold the first Lincoln too, to ---

RAYMOND: To Leon Sunderlin. And he was a ---

(END OF TAPE)

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