

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #351 - Sides A & B

Subject: Esther Dickenson - With Video

Place: Dickenson Home - Burns, Oregon

Date: December 6, 1993

Interviewers: Dorothea Purdy & Barbara Lofgren

Release Form: No

DOROTHEA PURDY: This is Dorothea Purdy, along with Barbara Lofgren, and today we're talking with Esther Dickenson at her home in Burns, Oregon. The date is December the 6th, 1993, and following this interview, we'll do a short video, and this will all be stored in the library, in the Harney County Library at Burns. Esther, let's start by asking you your name, so can you tell us your full name, including your maiden name?

ESTHER DICKENSON: Oh, Esther Weil, Esther Louise Weil Dickenson.

DOROTHEA: And where were you born?

ESTHER: Right up here where Dalton's Distributing Plant is now.

DOROTHEA: In a hospital, or just in town?

ESTHER: No, in a house, just a house.

DOROTHEA: Who were your parents?

ESTHER: Paul and Annie Weil.

DOROTHEA: And do you have any brothers and sisters?

ESTHER: Yes, I had, my sisters aren't living. But I had two sisters and then Buck my brother.

DOROTHEA: And what's your brother's name?

ESTHER: Ralph Paul Weil, and he goes by Buck all the time.

DOROTHEA: Okay. What did your parents do for a living?

ESTHER: A little bit of everything. Dad tried to ranch a little bit, and farm a little bit out on Five

Mile Ranch; that's why I went to school out there the first year. And then he sawmilled, worked for Edward Hines some. Ran his own sawmill some.

DOROTHEA: And where was this sawmill at?

ESTHER: Dad's sawmill?

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

ESTHER: Well, two locations that I remember, one was up on Bridge Creek in the Silvies Valley.

DOROTHEA: Silvies Valley.

ESTHER: Yeah. And the other was back of the old Crow Flat Ranger Station, remember where it was, turned off?

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

ESTHER: The other one was back in there about two miles.

DOROTHEA: Okay, it's up there then about approximately where the Temple place is now then?

ESTHER: Uh huh, just this side of it.

DOROTHEA: Oh, uh huh, okay.

BARBARA LOFGREN: Did you live in town during the time that your dad ran the mill, or did you live up in the timber, too?

ESTHER: Well, we lived in town most of the time. We'd go up there for a summer sometimes, but we lived, had a home here in town, where Doris Robinson's place over there is where I grew up. And we went up one year and stayed over, that was my junior year of high school, and I wasn't very pleased about it. Stayed over the year and I had to just do what I could do with the grade school teacher, you know. But it wasn't even supposed to be having to teach me. So I didn't get anywhere that year at all.

DOROTHEA: So what grade was that?

ESTHER: Junior year.

DOROTHEA: And that was --- of high school?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: What did you do then, make it up, or did you ---

ESTHER: No, I got married.

DOROTHEA: Oh, you got married instead, okay. Well, let's go back and talk about your childhood. What did you kids do for fun?

ESTHER: You know; we didn't have a lot of things to play with; we just did things. One thing we did a lot was play gypsy. (Cough) I'm sorry, I got this throat problem. We had a package of little dishes that mother had got us, and we'd pack them all up and go to another --- we had that four and a half acres along the willows, and we'd camp, you know. Then we'd get all that junk out, and then we'd make a stop at Mama's gooseberry patch, and she wouldn't have enough left for a pie.

(Laughter) Just things like that. We skated in the winter; Buck and I liked to skate real well.

BARBARA: Did you skate on the river did you, or ponds?

ESTHER: Oh, on the river, yeah. We fell in a few times, but ---

BARBARA: Ever have any really close calls?

ESTHER: I don't think so.

DOROTHEA: What did you do in the summertime, did you have to help cook, or did you take care of your younger brothers? Where did you ---

ESTHER: That's what I did. Mama was always around, so I was second in command if, you know, just if she had to go somewhere, or went somewhere then I was head of the family until she got back, with no authority whatsoever. (Laughter) But ---

DOROTHEA: When you were living out where, you said you lived out in the, oh, Five ---

ESTHER: Rye Grass area.

DOROTHEA: Yeah. Well, that was also known as the Falk Place later, wasn't it?

ESTHER: I don't know.

DOROTHEA: It's right across where the airport is now.

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

ESTHER: I think that Inez Ausmus and them has the property right in there somewhere. But I don't remember when or how this old Five Mile Ranch was destroyed. But it belonged to J. S.

Cook and he was a, what was he a Judge I think in the county for a long time.

DOROTHEA: And how did you, were you just renting from him then?

ESTHER: Dad was renting his ranch, yeah.

DOROTHEA: Well, what was some of the things that you remember that your mother used to do to keep her busy? Did she do a lot of sewing or gardening?

ESTHER: Oh, yes, she did. She did practically all our clothes. Well, just like all mothers, we always had a cow she milked twice a day. Just things like that, raised a little garden and took care of us kids. And she didn't have the modern convenience we do. When she washed, she washed on the board and hung them out and dried them, the best she could, and then brought them in and ironed them. It was quite a job.

DOROTHEA: It was quite a job, but they really smelled good, didn't they?

ESTHER: Yes, they did.

BARBARA: You didn't change clothes every day like the kids do now?

ESTHER: You sure didn't.

BARBARA: You wore an outfit for the week, usually, probably.

ESTHER: Uh huh. Well, I don't think my mom didn't do that. When I was in the first grade and went to school out to Rye Grass, why the teacher told me one morning, she said, "Esther, there is no use you coming to school in a brand new, not new, but fresh outfit every morning," she said, "that makes it too hard on your mom." And I went home and told Mama what she said. And Mama said, "Well, when she gets to ironing, and doing your ironing, well then she can do it." But it didn't please Mama. But I rode horseback, you know, four and a half miles to school, so I probably did have my outfit all messed up.

BARBARA: Did you wear dresses to school?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

BARBARA: Did you wear pants?

ESTHER: Oh, I thought so many times how wonderful a good snowsuit would have been in the winter when I was riding my horse to school. Of course, I didn't ride it all winter, but then I rode it

in some cold weather.

DOROTHEA: That's what I was going to ask, what did you do when the winter came, and the high snows, how did you get to school then?

ESTHER: Well, after it got too cold for me to ride my horse, why Dad went down and talked to Mrs. Gilbert, she was the teacher, and they agreed that I would drive the horses that far, it was half a mile, and then she'd take me and we'd go on to school. And the trouble was, she'd be, we'd be sometimes kind of late getting home, and the horses had been standing in the barn all day. And they'd want to get home and they'd just run, I couldn't hold them. And one time, they pulled me off of the seat, I was holding on the line so hard they pulled me off of the seat down into the little place in front of the wagon, and we just come down the road lickety-split. And when we got to the turn in, it was right angle, they turned in short, of course, and the old sled just went around and almost hit the gatepost, down they went.

DOROTHEA: Oh.

ESTHER: So they quit that. I had to walk up there from then on and ride with her in her car.

DOROTHEA: That was about a half a mile, you said?

ESTHER: Yeah

DOROTHEA: Well, that's not too bad, although you know I bet kids wouldn't do it today.

ESTHER: Oh no. Well, the snow got deep and we'd be after dark lots of time of getting home. It was kind of a long trip for a little kid.

DOROTHEA: Although I understood that the buses won't pick up the children anymore if they live less than a mile away from the school.

ESTHER: Oh, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: So, they do have a new regulation, I guess on that. So, there are some kids that are walking to school, or parents are taking them.

ESTHER: Still, yeah, yeah.

DOROTHEA: That reminds me, Walt drove bus for a while. Was he an activity bus driver, or---?

ESTHER: Oh yeah, he drove buses for --- he had a route part of the time. And he drove their, all

their activity, well, all he could, sometimes two or three outfits would be out at a time. But he liked to take the ball teams, liked that.

DOROTHEA: I kind of jumped out of sequence here. That kind of jumped in with, not supposed to be where it is. But Walt, of course, is your husband.

ESTHER: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Let's go back to --- tell us what a school day was like when you went to the country school, and kind of describe the classroom.

ESTHER: Well, it was just a little one-room building, not too large at that.

BARBARA: Was this at Rye Grass School?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

BARBARA: Okay.

ESTHER: And I rode down there, I don't remember, I got there probably at 8:30 or something like that. I've got Parkinson's disease, and I can't help this shaking.

DOROTHEA: That's okay.

ESTHER: One teacher did everything, so the, oh, you don't remember Victoria Cozad, I don't suppose.

DOROTHEA: No, I've heard about her, Daddy talked about her, but I don't remember.

ESTHER: Uh huh. Well, she was in fourth grade, and I was the only first grader, and there wasn't a second or third, so she'd hear me read lots of times. She'd get after me for licking my lips (Laughter) and everything like that. And then just, you studied all by yourself, you know, when they weren't, teacher wasn't with you. But we got a lot done, it seemed to me like.

DOROTHEA: Did you seem like you learned faster, because you heard her teaching the other classes?

ESTHER: I think so; I think you picked a lot up that way, yeah.

DOROTHEA: That probably helped a lot of you get along better, too.

ESTHER: Oh yeah. You know, you see that with your own kids in the home.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

BARBARA: The little ones always want to do what the bigger ones are doing, so they seem to pick up things sooner than the first child.

ESTHER: Oh yes. Yeah, it makes them look real smart when they start speling off some of the stuff they've heard.

BARBARA: Sometimes they say things that they shouldn't; they don't know what they're talking about.

ESTHER: Yes, they do, yeah.

BARBARA: Can you tell us about maybe some of the programs that you had in school, what kind of activities in that respect that you had?

ESTHER: Well, I don't think there was, only at Christmas time. We had a Christmas tree for Christmas. But I think mostly by the time she got around to all the kids, we had recesses, and that's just about all, seemed like it was all work to me, you know.

BARBARA: Did you play ball, or marbles, or dolls at recess?

ESTHER: Well, I don't know what the other --- we rode our horses some. I don't remember what the other kids did, you know, but I didn't. I don't remember any of us having any game that was such, you know, that we all took part in or anything, like baseball or anything like that.

BARBARA: Just went outside and got a little fresh air?

ESTHER: Yeah. Well, when we were riding our horses, there was no water there at the schoolhouse, and so our watering troughs --- so we rode our horses over to Cozad's place and watered them and come on back and put them in the barn again.

DOROTHEA: Now you're talking about riding your horses. Did you have a special horse, or---?

ESTHER: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: A little horse, or a big horse, or ---

ESTHER: Oh, it was just a little, regular-sized.

DOROTHEA: Regular-sized horse.

ESTHER: Bay horse.

DOROTHEA: Because it seems like when you're little like that, if you're only five, and six, and

seven years old, you're pretty small. Who did your saddling?

ESTHER: My mom.

DOROTHEA: Did your mom do it?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And then the horse, left the saddle on all day?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: You didn't take the saddle off?

ESTHER: No, never took it off ever. I took a little package of grain and there was some, Mama sent that with me, and there was a big boy there, and the boys would take my sack of grain after I had put it on my horse's head, and then they'd feed it to their horses. Oh, that worried me. I'd tell the teacher, and she didn't seem to think there was anything wrong with that. But I thought my horse would die before I got home for something to eat, you know. But then Leslie Denstedt, you probably knew him, I did notice that he was staying out there in the barn until I got done with my horse, and my horse got oats without any problem. He didn't say anything to anybody; he was just there, you know.

DOROTHEA: He just protected the horse, huh?

ESTHER: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Maybe he felt sorry for the horse, too.

ESTHER: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: I understood that on your way to the school you got a passenger. Can you tell us who this was?

ESTHER: A passenger on the way to school?

DOROTHEA: Uh huh, Pat Culp.

ESTHER: Oh yeah, I think that must have been the year, the short time I was there for the second grade, because I believe he was a year behind me in school. But anyhow, I'd ride up along the fence, and he'd come out and get up on the fence, and get on behind me and we'd go to school.

BARBARA: So, how many years did you attend Rye Grass School?

ESTHER: Just my first year, and then until November of the second grade.

BARBARA: Uh huh. And then your family moved into Burns and you attended the Burns Schools, did you?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

BARBARA: And was that kind of scary for you to change schools like that?

ESTHER: No.

BARBARA: Or were you excited about meeting new kids?

ESTHER: Oh, I don't know. I don't know if I was excited about it or not, or just one of those things, you know. But I don't think I was frightened by it. Not like my little sister was when she, I'd go home and tell her all the horrible things Mr. Sutton did, and this had her scared half to death. And so, when she went to her first grade, why she happened to have been assigned a seat right by the door, the door come here, and she was sitting right here. Mr. Sutton came in, and she just jumped up and scooted clear around --- (Laughter) Well, he made her come back and sit down. She was just scared to death.

DOROTHEA: Well, he was kind of a strict instructor, I understood.

ESTHER: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Do you remember some of the tricks that he pulled?

ESTHER: Oh, he pulled a lot of them. But he was, he was strict, but you know, he had a side that if you showed him, kind of a little witty side, he liked it. Like one boy that he was talking, let's see, I think he was giving us a talk in the auditorium. We were all up there, and this kid was a fooling around with his paper, and one thing and another, so Sutton just threw his keys down and they lit on his desk, you know, right in front of him. And he jumped up like that and just picked them up and just threw them right back. (Laughter) Just right away his, he wasn't needed any longer in the schoolroom; he got to go to the office and wait there.

DOROTHEA: If you need to get a glass of water or something, we can stop for a little bit.

ESTHER: Okay. I don't, no, it's just the nerves.

DOROTHEA: Okay.

ESTHER: I'll get one.

DOROTHEA: Here, I'll unhook you (microphone). What was your sister's names?

ESTHER: The one next to me was Kate; she went by the name of Kate. And she was Florence Bernice Weil, and she married Stanley Gibson. And then, the little one was Ethel Annie Weil, and she was Chalkie, probably a lot of you remember her. And then there was Buck.

DOROTHEA: And where did you come in the family, were you the oldest?

ESTHER: I was the oldest.

DOROTHEA: And Buck is second?

ESTHER: No, he was the third.

DOROTHEA: He was third, okay. But he was the only boy.

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: What were some of your schoolmate's names?

ESTHER: Well, out at Rye Grass there was Victoria Cozad, and Leslie Denstedt. I can't remember much, but there was some girls by the name of --- oh, what was their names? Cora was one of them, can't remember what their last name was. But I don't think they were there at the school very long. They rode their horses and came from off over across the field, and in a way, I don't know where they lived really.

DOROTHEA: During some of your Christmas programs, and the one out at Rye Grass, can you remember anything special about that Christmas program?

ESTHER: Well, rather because I think that was the first Christmas tree I had ever seen. I went to school that morning, I went with the teacher like I usually did, and then my folks were coming later in the day. And when I got there and they opened the door and that tree was there, and oh, I thought that was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. We just had a wonderful time. We spoke pieces, and that's what we used to always do at our little gatherings, whether they were in the home or somebody else's home or something, you always had a piece to speak, or sing, or something. And we, right after noon, the parents began to arrive for the afternoon, and then I went home with my parents that night. But I thought that was the most wonderful thing. We all got a package of candy,

a sack or something of candy, and an apple or orange or something. Oh, I thought that was wonderful.

DOROTHEA: You hadn't had a Christmas tree at home?

ESTHER: Not that I can remember. Now they may have had sometime, but I don't remember it if they did.

DOROTHEA: I remember sometimes around ours, we didn't always have a Christmas tree, but we had sagebrush that was decorated sometimes.

ESTHER: Yeah. We had a willow one time. Mom went out and cut a willow, and we decorated it. Of course, it was bare of leaves, no leaves on it, but it was a Christmas tree.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. But we had candy canes and things like that. My mom always made a lot of candy and things, and there was candy canes hanging on it. And we didn't have lights, because we didn't have electricity.

ESTHER: Uh huh, yes. Yeah, we was all that way.

DOROTHEA: She was afraid to use the candles, because she was afraid of fires.

ESTHER: Yes.

DOROTHEA: But, no, they must --- those are some of the Christmas' that I can remember, but they must not have thought that a Christmas tree was that important.

ESTHER: They probably didn't, I don't know.

DOROTHEA: Did you have a tree after that at home, or did you, do you remember?

ESTHER: Oh, we did a few times, I expect. My folks didn't make much of Christmas. That wasn't Mama's fault, it was Dad's, he didn't think there was a bit of use --- just a grown-up big dinner, and grown-ups get together and play cards or do whatever, that was all that needed to be done. He was kind of funny that way.

BARBARA: So you didn't exchange gifts, or you didn't have presents?

ESTHER: Yeah, we usually had something. Again, this is something Mother did.

BARBARA: Something that she made or something?

ESTHER: Yeah. Lots of times --- we always went to Sunday School and were in the Christmas

plays, and so we always had a new dress, and it was supposed to be something just a little special. I remember one year she made mine, and it was a red surge, a dark red surge, and she had me try it on, of course she was making it and we had to try them on several times. And she said well mine was done I could go hang it up there where I put my clothes. So I went and hung my coat up, or my dress up, and when I went to get it to put it on, it had white fur around the collar and on the sleeves. Oh, I thought, I was really something else.

BARBARA: Oh.

DOROTHEA: Oh, I bet that was gorgeous. I bet you thought, wow!

ESTHER: All the kids at school thought it was something, too. I must have been about in the fourth grade,, probably then.

BARBARA: That's nice. So when you moved into town, was that the time that your father stopped ranching and went into the sawmill business?

ESTHER: Uh huh. Yeah he, we moved in in November, and he had bought a house down in Crane, they were selling some of those older houses, and he brought it down and put it on that piece of property over there, it was Homer Mace's. They had bought it from Homer Mace. And ---

BARBARA: Do you remember seeing the house being moved in?

ESTHER: No.

BARBARA: I understand that it was quite common in the early days to move houses from one place to another.

ESTHER: Yes it was. Of course, houses were little things then too, you know.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

ESTHER: This little house was, had a small front room, and a small kitchen, and three bedrooms. No, it had two bedrooms, and so it was real little. But Dad brought it in with the horses somehow.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: When we were little we had bedrooms that we all slept together. Is that what you did?

ESTHER: Yes, we did. We had, well Kate and I usually slept together, and Buck on the cot that

Mom had in the front room. And then Dad and Mom's bed was on the other side of the bedroom there. But I don't know, we ---

After my folks' house burned, much later, Dad built a new house; he built a little tiny house. I was married at the time, but there was three of the kids at home, and Buck had to go upstairs, climb a ladder, and sleep up in the attic. And you know this country isn't too good for that.

DOROTHEA: No.

ESTHER: But that was the way Dad did.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

BARBARA: Economical.

ESTHER: Yeah. Try to get rid of them as quick as you can.

BARBARA: So you moved up to, towards, out in the, what area was it during your junior year you said?

ESTHER: Well, it was right up back of the Crow Flat Ranger Station.

BARBARA: Okay. So, you basically went through your sophomore year, and then did a little bit of work your junior year in with the grade school up there.

ESTHER: I went all my sophomore year at town. And then I went up; Dad and I went up early in the spring, high school used to get out two weeks ahead of the grade school kids.

BARBARA: I see.

ESTHER: And so I went up with Dad, and we were carrying sluice boxes; he had a mining claim. And we'd carry these old big heavy sluice boxes and put them in, got in them where he wanted them so the water run down from one to another, you know, fix that. We did that the two weeks before the rest of the family come. And then we stayed there that year; we didn't go back.

Mom --- when Dad first told me, he told me while we were up there before Mama come up. She was staying with the other kids in town, and he said that we were going to school up there. And oh, I was just heartbroken because I had had my year all planned, it was mostly commercial studies. I just loved those things. And Mom said, "Well, just wait, and I'll talk to Dad because you ought to be able to go your junior year here in town." She talked to Dad, and we found out I

couldn't. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: He kind of ruled the roost.

ESTHER: He kind of did.

BARBARA: Well, I understand that a lot of kids, ranch kids, came and boarded at people's homes in town to go to high school, and things like that.

ESTHER: Uh huh, yeah.

BARBARA: But he just didn't think it was important for you to do that?

ESTHER: No, he thought, he always said, he had the funny philosophy about those things. He said a kid could, you could do anything you wanted to if you just went ahead and did it. You didn't have to do like everybody else did. We didn't.

BARBARA: Did he have a high school education, or eighth grade?

ESTHER: I don't know just how much school he had. I doubt if he had a high school education; he may have had a part of one. And he had been to a barber college, he was a barber.

DOROTHEA: Did he ever work as a barber?

ESTHER: Not since I knew him, you know. He did back in Nebraska before we came out this way.

DOROTHEA: Well, you said right after your junior year, you got married. You must have met your husband sometime during the time when you were milling, or doing some lumber, or ---

ESTHER: Yeah, we lived in, he had two brothers that lived right close there, and he was up there a lot. But I have a picture of each of us that his sisters took. And they had for a hobby, they had a little dark house or whatever they called them, and they did pictures. And they're still pretty clear; you can tell who they are. And they took that, I was four and he was six when they took those pictures.

DOROTHEA: Oh, so you knew Walt ---

ESTHER: Oh, I mean, I was four and he was ten, he was six years older than me.

DOROTHEA: Then you knew Walt when you were young, also?

ESTHER: Yes, yeah. But it was a few years in there, while we were going to school, that I didn't, I

wasn't aware of him being around. And our folks, like my folks, went up for a load of lumber, his dad's lumber mill. When we were there, we saw one another, and things like that, you know.

DOROTHEA: Did you go to dances or something and see each other there?

ESTHER: Oh yes, yeah, we did. And a lot of these kids that are grown up now like the Gardner girls, and some girls like that, we'd just be so glad to see each other in the winter, because the only time we'd see each other was when somebody gave a dance, and we'd all be there. We just really enjoyed it.

BARBARA: At each other's homes?

ESTHER: Yeah, at the home.

BARBARA: Or at granges?

ESTHER: Well, it was at a home, or somebody would build a new barn, they'd have a dance in there. But it was usually at somebody's home. I don't remember how many attend them; it seemed quite a little few.

DOROTHEA: Well, we had better get your husband's name in here. Can you tell us who you married?

ESTHER: Walter Henry Dickenson.

DOROTHEA: And when did you get married?

ESTHER: 1933, August the 29th, 1933. And we just missed our 60th wedding anniversary from April to August.

DOROTHEA: And so he passed away in '90---

ESTHER: '93.

DOROTHEA: '93. How many children did you have?

ESTHER: Two.

DOROTHEA: Well, what kind of work did you do?

ESTHER: Oh, a lot of the time I worked --- that I did for other people, you mean? Well, I cooked at a sheep camp for Joe Abasola, that was after Walt and I was married. I never did much like that, just help Mom, and do things like that. We worked for ladies around the neighborhood that needed

some --- I remember her working for Mrs. Frank Munson when she moved, and things like that, you know.

DOROTHEA: Now Mrs. Frank Munson, what was her first name? I can't remember either. But she was bedfast, wasn't she?

ESTHER: Yeah, she was later; she wasn't when I was working for her.

DOROTHEA: Not then. What happened to her, that she just got ill?

ESTHER: I guess, I don't know. My grandmother come out, and my mom's mom stayed and took care of her one winter. But I don't know what was wrong with her; I think she just sort of gave up on life, that's what some of them said.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, because my grandmother took care of her for, oh several years, four or five years, I know.

ESTHER: Did she? Yeah.

DOROTHEA: And she was bedfast then.

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: What are your children's names?

ESTHER: Walter Dee, and Ralph Lee.

DOROTHEA: And where were they born?

ESTHER: Right here in Burns.

DOROTHEA: Right here in Burns. What did you and your husband do? Did you do much together, did you fish, did you hunt, did you camp?

ESTHER: Oh yes, we spent a lot of time together. All of our vacation time, or whatever you would call it, any spare time we had we fished and hunted, and just camped and picnicked like everybody else did. Went someplace we could take our kids usually.

DOROTHEA: You say you worked at different places and cooked at a sheep camp. Tell us kind of what that's like.

ESTHER: Oh, it was something else. When we went there, Walt was working, he was camp tender, and we went there and I was to do the cooking. And if that wasn't the darndest mess I ever

saw. We had, I was cooking for a bunch of Bascos, and my future brother-in-law was there, so he wasn't a Basco, and his brother was there. But they were so different, you know. We had a tent with a dirt floor. And this one guy, every morning he'd take an egg, I don't know whether he took one or two, and break it open and ---

BARBARA: Oh dear, swallow it raw.

DOROTHEA: Swallow it raw.

ESTHER: That's where my breakfast ended up.

BARBARA: Oh dear.

ESTHER: But they were just so different, you know. Then I took, I had to prepare lunch for them because they went out at dawn, daylight, with the sheep. And I'd prepare lunch and put it in Dutch ovens. And the way they wanted it fixed was I'd cook meat and have potatoes or whatever, and corn, and maybe put peaches right on top of it. But open a can of peaches and put it right on top of that. Oh, it was the most disgusting thing you ever saw. (Laughter) But they, that's what they wanted.

And Walt would go out and take it to them. And so I had, oh they probably was six or seven Dutch ovens that I would get ready and send out. And then Walt would set them off for them, go around where they were, find them, and set them off for them. And then he'd go back around and gather up the Dutch ovens because I had to have them for supper. But that was something else.

DOROTHEA: How did you learn how to fix these things? Did they come in and say now this is the way it's done?

ESTHER: No, my brother-in-law helped me a lot, Stanley Gibson. Because he had worked around places like that, you know. If I had any questions, why I'd ask him, and he'd tell me how to do it.

DOROTHEA: What is cooking in a Dutch oven like? Is it an experience, or did you like it?

ESTHER: No, I didn't like it. Because everything went into one big Dutch oven, you know, and then you --- well it just all simmered there together. The food you were cooking had been raw was done, why you took it out and then you put in your other things. Like you'd have a can of corn, or a can of tomatoes, and a can of peaches, it was something else.

DOROTHEA: So it's kind of like what we would call, let's see, what are those called? Barbara, help me! My brain is ---

BARBARA: Mulligan stew, slumgullion?

DOROTHEA: Well, I'm trying to think of a hot, crock-pot.

BARBARA: Oh, crock-pot.

ESTHER: Oh, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And you put in your meat and then you layer that with onions or beans, and then you layer it with potatoes, and then you layer it with something else.

ESTHER: Yeah, yeah.

DOROTHEA: It's kind of, would be like a crock-pot meal.

ESTHER: Yeah, that would be kind of like how it was. And then for dessert, you put the peaches on top, that's what got me. I could stand the rest of it, but ---

DOROTHEA: Did you cook peaches, or just put them on cold?

ESTHER: No, they were canned, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: But it did kind of flavor everything, didn't it?

ESTHER: Well, I expect it did. I don't know that I ever tasted it that much. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: And what did you eat while you were there? Did you fix your own meals then? Or how did you eat?

ESTHER: Well, I just ate while I was cooking. And when I got through, if I was still hungry, why I cooked, ate something, whatever I wanted, some of the meat and potatoes, or whatever. But we didn't have a separate meal, you know. Walt ate with the men, with the others. There was a few of them that came into camp for their dinner, their lunch. Some of them, he'd take it to them out on the, where they had the stock. But ---

DOROTHEA: Did you eat a lot of lamb then?

ESTHER: I don't remember having any lamb at all.

DOROTHEA: Oh, you didn't?

ESTHER: We probably did, but I don't remember it.

BARBARA: Did you have ham and beef mostly?

ESTHER: We had ham and bacon, uh huh. Cooked with the beans.

DOROTHEA: How did you get your groceries? Did you come to town and get them?

ETHER: As I remember right, why Joe Abasola brought out what we, brought it out and put it there and I cooked it.

DOROTHEA: Is he the only sheep man that you cooked for?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

BARBARA: Where was this located? Where was your camp?

ETHER: Out beyond Wagontire, out in that area somewhere. About the, the road takes off just before you get to Hampton, and back in there a long ways.

DOROTHEA: I wondered where that road went.

ESTHER: Yeah.

BARBARA: Was this when you were first married, before you had children?

ETHER: Yes.

BARBARA: So living in a tent was ---

ESTHER: Just fun.

BARBARA: We might back up just a little bit first. You say that you got married to Walt, was this after your junior year? Did you meet when you were high school students? Was he, he was already out of high school when you were a sophomore, so did you meet at dances then?

ESTHER: Yeah.

BARBARA: And then you decided, he was working already, and you decided to get married then. Was it that year that you were, your junior year, that year that you decided to get married?

ESTHER: Yeah. I would have started in my senior year at high school in September, and we were married in August.

BARBARA: I see. So you didn't go to school then after you were married?

ESTHER: No. Walt wanted me to go, but there was a few, very few married girls going to school then. And I just didn't think I wanted to go to school, be a married girl, so I didn't go.

BARBARA: So, when did you start going together then?

ESTHER: Well ---

BARBARA: Was it during that year, I mean ---

ESTHER: Yeah, it was, about February, I remember us going to Fred Black's birthday party together. And that was about the first time we went out. Of course, Walt had fixed the truck that he hauled lumber to town on, and built a bed on it and the top over it, and they put hay in it and all the grownups rode back there, except me and Arminta (Black). Do you remember Arminta?

DOROTHEA: Uh huh, Hibbard.

ESTHER: Do you?

DOROTHEA: Hibbard, she was Hibbard later.

ESTHER: Yeah. So ---

BARBARA: So from about September until you got married in August you dated just during that time then?

ESTHER: Yeah.

BARBARA: And it was because your families were kind of thrown together up there that you really got acquainted then later on.

ESTHER: Well yes, Orie (Ora E.) and his wife lived over, their sawmill, his dad's sawmill, and then actually they were just across the field from us. And we, well we'd visit each other all the time, you know. They'd all come over and we'd play cards, or music or something, and just picnic when the weather was right.

DOROTHEA: You say his dad's sawmill, and I know that that was the Dickenson Sawmill.

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And that was in the hills. About how long did that operate, do you know?

ESTHER: Well, if I am right about this, when Orie went to the war in 1918 it was, they were operating the mill, had been. And the rest of them operated it, what they could until he come back. And then he and his father went into the business together. So it would have been, probably been, he was probably gone three or four years. I don't remember what he was, how long he was gone.

DOROTHEA: Why didn't Walt stay with the sawmill? Didn't he like it as well, or just wasn't enough?

ESTHER: It was, it was getting to the --- by the time we got married, it was getting to the time where those little mills were just having a dickens of a time making it. They couldn't hardly hire men because --- those kind of traveling men, they just wouldn't stay at a job. They'd just work until they got a little money ahead, and on they'd go. And my father was doing the same thing, trying to keep --- lots of time they'd have to come down two or three days at a time and get a different man, when the man was through, he was through, and he just quit. Jobs weren't that hard to find, so they didn't have to be ---

BARBARA: It was too hard a work and they didn't want to do it very long, probably.

ESTHER: That's right. That's all they ever had done, just get enough to put them on to the next town.

DOROTHEA: That's about twenty around about miles from Burns. Why did they build out in such a remote area?

ESTHER: It was in the center of the timber; they didn't have to log so far.

DOROTHEA: And so how did they take care of the logs? Did they saw them up there?

ESTHER: Yeah, they had a regular sawmill. Dad had a planer, I guess, or Orie had a planer at his mill, too. But they were much smaller operations, you know, just ---

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. So did people come up there to get the lumber and order it from them?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: What did you do with the lumber?

ESTHER: Well, lots of times they came and got what they wanted, you know, like especially in the summertime they'd be at, buck teeth, or their bucks, you know.

DOROTHEA: Oh, oh, yeah.

ESTHER: And things like that. And then Dad's folks never had them; Dad had a mill. They each had a little tiny dinky lumberyard at home. And the women tended to that more than anything else. There hardly ever was a man that stayed there all the time. If Dad had some planing that had to be

done there, why he'd come down with a man or two and they'd do it. And that's the way it was with Orie, too.

BARBARA: So then, after you and Walt were married, your first jobs, or one of your first jobs was working with the Basque, the sheep, and cooking. And then what did you do after that?

ESTHER: Well, he was working for his folks when we were married. And then, they were working through the winter part of the year, and this was about April or maybe a little later, March maybe, a little earlier, I mean, that we went out there and worked for a month, I think, is all we were there. And then he was a lookout on the Sugarloaf and West Myrtle. We worked at that. And in the meantime, before he would be going to cut a big bunch of lumber for somebody, an order out, why Walt would go up, and we'd go up and live there while he did that.

And then he went to work at the sawmill, and then we were pretty well --- he went to work at Hines, for Hines and worked for them awhile. After he worked there for a while, why he went up and built the mill for them at Seneca, that mill at Seneca, he built.

DOROTHEA: Oh, he worked on that one?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: Did he work up there also, or just help build it?

ESTHER: No, he worked, he worked until they shut it down.

DOROTHEA: And then, well, did you ever live in Seneca then?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: What, did you own your own home up there?

ESTHER: We did after a while. When we first went up, about two years I think, we'd work, he'd work through the summer up there, and then we'd go home in the winter. And then we went up there one time and they said they wanted him to saw the year around, so we bought a little place and lived there. And I think we lived there about a year and a half or something like that, two years maybe. And then we moved to town, and he went back to the mill, but he didn't like it at the mill; he never did like the mill.

And so he, see what in the heck did he do, he worked for Ellis Bennett at the garage in the parts,

and fixed cars and things like that, did that. And then he worked for Harney County Roads a while.

And then we had a store, had a motor parts supply for a while.

DOROTHEA: How did he decide he wanted to become a motor parts supplier, or auto ---

ESTHER: Well, he understood cars and trucks and the things that made them go. He, a lot of people would come to him for help with their vehicles, and so it was kind of a natural for him.

BARBARA: Mechanically inclined then?

ESTHER: Uh huh, yeah he was. And then he'd always; he'd always lived in that atmosphere.

BARBARA: Around machinery.

ESTHER: Yes. And his folks let him fool around with things like that.

BARBARA: And so when he took over, or bought the parts, or took over the parts, did you work with him in that at all? Or did you remain at home and raise children?

ESTHER: I kept the books some. I worked, as long as I worked was six years in a stretch. But I'd go back, like one morning he called me and I had my washing out, all scattered around over the kitchen like you used to, you know, when you had a conventional washer. And he called me, he said well his girl had got, had run away and got married, and there was nobody to keep the books. So I pushed my clothes back to the side and went up there, and I worked quite a little while that time. But then he worked for Harney County Roads for a while, and then he went to the school.

DOROTHEA: And that's where he started as a custodian?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And ended up driving the activities bus.

ESTHER: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Did he ever drive school bus, or just the activities?

ESTHER: No, he drove school bus. He had more funny stories to tell about his experiences with --  
- He went out and picked up the little Indian kids, and they were the orneriest little varmints to try to keep --- He was telling about this one little Indian kid he had trouble with him, and he wouldn't quit whatever he was doing. And Walt said, "Now, you're not going to ride tomorrow, you be prepared to walk, because you're walking tomorrow." And he said, "My dad will be down here in

the morning," he said. Walt said, "Good, he ain't going to ride either." (Laughter)

BARBARA: Oh dear. Well, you said you did a little bookkeeping. This was something that you really had wanted to do in school was take the commercial courses, so ---

ESTHER: Yes, yeah, I always liked that kind of work.

BARBARA: Did you enjoy working down at the store then?

ESTHER: Yes, I did, yes. Our kids were getting big enough then that I could be gone through the day, you know.

BARBARA: After you had your children, you didn't work outside of the home when they were growing up, did you?

ESTHER: Oh, a little, not very much. They were about, oh, when I was going up, like fill in for a week, or fill in for a day, or fill in for somebody's vacation, well then, Grandma Dee (Dickenson) lived right on the property there where we did. And she always kind of kept an eye on them, you know.

BARBARA: But not for extended times when they were small?

ESTHER: No, no.

DOROTHEA: I had better check out this battery. What, tell us something about what it was like to work in the home, and also work in the business. Did you have a lot of spare time, or did it make your work harder?

ESTHER: Well, of course, where I was working for Walt, it was a different situation; he understood the problems, they were our problems. Whatever I needed, if I needed a day at home, I took a day at home. And if one of the kids was sick, I stayed home with them and caught up on my work later, or whatever, you know. It's a big advantage that the kids belong to both of you.

DOROTHEA: Do you think it was a little different, though, than it is today, where both parents work and the kids are left home alone a lot?

ESTHER: Well, I think it probably is. Everything is so much pressure nowadays; it wasn't then. We probably thought we were being pressured but you know, it wasn't like it is now. If you had a job, you got to compete with other people for it, and I didn't have that to face. And then Grandma

was right there, and she'd keep an eye on the kids if I had to be gone. But I didn't have it that rough, really.

BARBARA: Did you like working with people, and visiting with people coming in, and that sort of thing?

ESTHER: Uh huh, yeah. The place I enjoyed that the most was when I was the bus, the Pacific Trailways Bus depot agent for two years.

BARBARA: Oh, is that right?

ESTHER: And I had Western Union at the same time. And I enjoyed that there, because there was a lot of my time that I couldn't, I wasn't busy, you know.

BARBARA: And where was this depot located?

ESTHER: Right where that one burned. Do you know where the one burned? Right where, let's see, it was in the same block, the same street as the U.S. National Bank, and back one block.

BARBARA: Oh, where that little Hoyt office is now, okay.

ESTHER: Yeah, uh huh.

BARBARA: Yes, I know what you mean, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: That was quite a business at one time.

ESTHER: Yes.

DOROTHEA: It had the Chinese Restaurant there, didn't it, for a while? Or was there a restaurant there?

ESTHER: Yes, there was a restaurant, but Jerry Sutton ---

DOROTHEA: Oh, is that who it was?

ESTHER: Yeah, and Dorothy Sutton worked, yeah. I took the bus over from them, the business. And I don't know who, I don't remember who, now I think at one time Louise and Bob Clay were running it, and I can't remember who else. But Dorothy and Jerry had it when I took it, and I worked there two years. It just wasn't satisfactory at all because I'd go up town, even just on an ordinary Sunday, I'd go to work to take care of the bus depot, as the buses came in, and I was just on the way up and on the way back all the time. We couldn't hardly get out of town. I remember when

I finally turned my time in and we quit, and I quit, why we went up to, by Idlewild or up in there somewhere and I took a little lunch and we had a picnic, and it just felt like the world had dropped it's load off my shoulders. But everything had to be so right on time, you know.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, yeah.

BARBARA: Pretty demanding then, wasn't it?

DOROTHEA: You always had to be there when the bus came in.

ESTHER: Yeah, oh yes, you had to be there.

DOROTHEA: Did the bus come in during the night also, and you had to go up there then?

ESTHER: No, didn't have to meet them. The drivers had a key and they just put the mail, or baggage, or whatever they had to go there.

DOROTHEA: Inside.

ESTHER: People shipped by bus a lot then. If they wanted parts for somewhere, or some little thing, why they'd have it put on the bus.

BARBARA: And could people buy tickets ahead of time, or did they buy them from the driver if they wanted to?

ESTHER: Well, they could, I guess, if they --- if they didn't have them already. But I sold tickets.

BARBARA: They preferred that you, they bought their tickets ahead of time and have them ready.

ESTHER: Yeah, or come in and got them as they got on the bus. They never were so crowded, only at Christmas time that they thought there would be any problem.

DOROTHEA: Well, let's pause for a moment and turn this tape over.

## SIDE B

BARBARA: How did you come about getting this job of running the bus depot?

ESTHER: Well, it just, I was out of a job at the time, and it was ---

BARBARA: Was it after you had the parts store, or before?

ESTHER: Yeah, it was afterwards.

BARBARA: After, okay. So about what year was it that you ---

ESTHER: 1959, I think. And I think I went to work in November, about half way through. I remember it was such a pain to me, because they had the, the bus was here, or the Army boys were here, you know, up on the hill, and they come in and they was wanting to go to the ungodliest places you ever heard of. (Laughter)

BARBARA: You were always looking up places, huh?

ESTHER: Oh boy. Sometimes I'd have to tell them, well, I'll work on this in my spare time and you come back and I'll have it for you, because I was working with people at the same time. But it was something, because little old towns like down in Arkansas, and heaven knows where, you know.

BARBARA: You really had geography lessons then didn't you?

ESTHER: Oh I sure did, I had to learn a lot. In the meantime ---

BARBARA: But I suppose it was kind of interesting to talk to different people coming and going to all different places, and different reasons.

ESTHER: It was interesting, yeah. Yeah, you met all kinds of people.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

ESTHER: One time a guy drove up in a big pink Cadillac and parked right out on the sidewalk, practically, in front of where --- I thought I'd watch him, because I thought I was going to have to go out and tell him to get off of the bus ramp, you know. But he was off far enough, so --- Anyhow, he came in and he said, "I'm so and so, and I have a money order here for so much money, I want to pick it up." I said, "I don't have a money order for you." He said, "Well, yeah, it will be here." And I said, "Well, no, it isn't." He said, "When will somebody come, be, know what they're doing?" I said, "Well, you're out of luck, I'm the only one there is." (Laughter) And so he said, "Well, get on the phone there and find out." And I said, "Well, you go get on the phone and find out." And so he went, he started to grab my phone, and I said, "No, you can't use this, you use the one over there." And so he come back, I could hear him because it was just right in the same building, right in the same area. And he said, "Well, that's alright, Joe, I just didn't know that, that's alright, oh no, no problem." He hadn't had any money a coming. If I'd have give him my money, the money, you see

what would have happened to me.

BARBARA: Oh ---

DOROTHEA: Oh yeah, you would have been --- that was just one time you were lucky.

ESTHER: Yes, I sure was.

DOROTHEA: Now, I remember a beauty shop being in that same building, was that there when you were running the bus?

ESTHER: Uh huh. No, not when I was running it. But later, let's see when was that in there? I don't think it was in there until after I went to work at the school, because I used to get my hair fixed there every week.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh.

ESTHER: And that Phyllis, oh I can't think of what her last name was, she was a big heavy gal.

DOROTHEA: Anderson?

ESTHER: I believe it was, I believe it was. No, it was June Anderson.

DOROTHEA: June Anderson, right.

ESTHER: And she worked in the other one, she worked over ---

DOROTHEA: Across where the TV place is.

BARBARA: TV place was.

ESTHER: But this one was Phyllis. I just don't remember what her last name was. But she was there for I don't know, a few years, three or four, or something like that, I guess. And I think she was the only one that was ever in there.

BARBARA: So you were at the bus depot from '59 to '61 or '62, somewhere around there?

ESTHER: Yeah, I think '60 --- I think it would have been in '62 that I was there.

BARBARA: Uh huh. And so then what did you do after you decided that was too hectic for you?

ESTHER: Well, it wasn't that, Walt was a fussing at me because we never could go anywhere.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

ESTHER: And I'd go up, like the family would be coming for dinner, I'd get their Christmas dinner all ready, and by that time I had to hike back up to work for an hour. And it was in the winter, and

the buses would run slow lots of times, would be two-thirty or three o'clock when I'd get back home. And then at five-thirty or something, I'd have to go back for the next bus. But --- and Walt wanted me to come to work down at the school because we'd just have our time, and feel better. And I liked that, I felt a little guilty for having that job because I thought it was such a nice job for a mother with children, because I was out all summer. But I liked it.

DOROTHEA: Did you? What did you do at the school? I know you were a cook, but ---

ESTHER: I cooked, yeah I cooked.

DOROTHEA: How did you get your supplies there? Did you order them, or were certain foods brought in?

ESTHER: Uh huh. There was, well, we got our government food, I had nothing to do with how much or how little we got of that. But everything that I had to buy, why either there were salesmen that came in from Ontario like that, and then I bought at Tiller's all the time. And just whatever I needed, you know.

BARBARA: Did you get to decide what your, plan your meals or did that come down from the school?

ESTHER: No, they didn't want any part of that. (Laughter)

BARBARA: So you got to, what the kids liked is what you fixed for them, or ---

ESTHER: As near as I could. I had to have a basic school lunch, you know.

BARBARA: With the subsidies, use recipes that would use those type of things?

ESTHER: Uh huh, yeah.

BARBARA: I suppose you got cheese and ---

ESTHER: Yes, meat, milk, powdered milk.

BARBARA: Meat, things like that. Uh huh.

ESTHER: Some fruit.

BARBARA: So basically, what kind of meals did you serve the kids?

ESTHER: Just as near like at home as I could. We'd have chili beans, and baked tons of bread and cinnamon rolls.

DOROTHEA: Did you make your own, or did you have machines that did this?

ESTHER: Oh yeah. No, we had a big mixer, it was about this far across, and about that deep, and that's what I mixed the bread up in. But I used fresh yeast, and I just went from there. And the kids loved the cinnamon rolls.

BARBARA: Un huh, I can imagine.

ESTHER: When I come down, moved, and we bought this place that we have here --- why there is a kid that was out of school, he was in school when I was out there, and Murlene (Thomsen) come over and I baked her a pan, I was making bread that day so I baked her a pan of cinnamon rolls. She took them and went by, and he was out in the yard with her husband, and he said, "Oh, I haven't had any of those cinnamon rolls since I got out of high school."

BARBARA: Oh, how wonderful. So what were the years that you cooked there at the school then?

ESTHER: Well, I was there for fifteen years, so we quit in '76.

BARBARA: '76. That would have been the year that my son started high school.

ESTHER: Oh, was it? My nephew, or my little grandson, had just gotten in school a year or two, I had almost missed him.

BARBARA: He graduated from junior high in '76, so it would have been the next fall then.

ESTHER: Yeah, yeah.

BARBARA: I think a lady by the name of Smith was working at the cafeteria up there.

ESTHER: Yeah, that would have been Marie.

BARBARA: Marie was it, uh huh.

ESTHER: And her mother had worked with me.

BARBARA: Oh, is that right?

ESTHER: Yeah, Virginia.

BARBARA: So how many helpers did you have?

ESTHER: Just two besides myself, uh huh.

BARBARA: Just two.

ESTHER: And little funny things happened. One time, we were making tacos, going to make

tacos for that day. And that was a pretty busy day by the time we got those shells all filled, and everything else ready that needed to go with it. And the principal come down, the superintendent, whatever they called him, and he said, "Could you feed thirty extra kids?" I said, "Well, this is sure a bad day for that because we've got tacos." Of course, I knew it would be a huge day, tacos were. And I said, "Well, I'll sure try." And so I fed our kids first, and they come back for more tacos, "Why can't we have a second helping of tacos?" I said, "Well, there is a bunch of kids coming in from Prairie City and we got to be ready to feed them." "Well, they didn't need tacos." (Laughter) And so ---

BARBARA: Open up a can of soup for them, huh?

ESTHER: So they were pretty put out. They had had their full lunch.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

ESTHER: And so then these other kids came in, and they come up with their teacher, he came in ahead of them, and they came up, there must have been, oh, I can't remember how many of them. But they finally got there, and I started to serve them and they said, "Well look at this, look at this," one kid said, "tacos, we never get tacos. They're going to hear from me when I get home." Well, I said, "Well, there goes our last friend."

BARBARA: You set a bad precedent, huh?

ESTHER: Those things always made it fun.

BARBARA: Did you have dessert every day, too, for the kids?

ESTHER: Yeah, fresh or canned, or something, yeah, cake.

DOROTHEA: What time did you have to start these meals?

ESTHER: Oh, I went to work about six-thirty or seven, depending on what we had to do. Because we always did whatever we could the day before, before we left. Like beans were all looked over and put to soak, and things like this.

BARBARA: Did you have to set your bread and things that morning?

ESTHER: That morning, yeah.

DOROTHEA: What time then did you leave in the afternoon?

ESTHER: Oh, three or four, whenever we got through. We usually ---

BARBARA: So it was a long day, really.

ESTHER: Yeah, yeah.

DOROTHEA: So it was quite a long day, yeah.

ESTHER: We usually were through by three.

DOROTHEA: Did most of the kids eat their lunches there?

ESTHER: They did until they opened those Dairy Queens and things so close by. And then they'd go there and have a Coke or whatever they wanted to have. But ---

DOROTHEA: Most of the time, though, while you were ---

ESTHER: Yeah, it was closed campus. And the kids didn't, a lot of them ate there. On a day like that, we had tacos, there would be three hundred and twenty kids or something like that to eat.

Some days, why, one day was a miserable mess, we got the kids' lunch all ready and got it out. And you had a feeling that something was different that day; I don't know whether it was glances the kids gave you or what that tipped you off. But when the bell rang and we opened our curtains up, no kids. There was a few little dribble, but they had voted to, they were boycotting us that day, you know.

BARBARA: Why was that?

ESTHER: Oh, I don't remember what they wanted, whether they wanted more ---

BARBARA: More hamburgers or something.

ESTHER: Lunch, yeah, I don't remember what they wanted. One time when they did that well, they were wanting tablecloths, they wanted card tables instead of those big lunch tables. And card tables with cloths on them, so they could be like they were dining out, you know. Mr. Baldwin come down and talked to me about it, and I said, "We're not going to try that at all, we're not going to do it."

BARBARA: Oh no.

ESTHER: But those urchins, they were kind of running the school about that time.

BARBARA: Oh, is that right?

DOROTHEA: Yeah, yeah.

BARBARA: They were trying to make their wishes known, huh?

ESTHER: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: I can remember those days.

ESTHER: You were on the other side of the counter.

DOROTHEA: I think that was the hard days when mothers were having a hard time raising their children.

ESTHER: Yes. And the ladies came in, Ethel Fecht was head cook at that time, and some ladies come in, they told her that their kids had been complaining terribly about the lunches and they wanted, did she care if they came in and ate lunch. And she said, "No, she didn't care at all, for them to come right ahead." So they said, "We'll come in after the kids are out of the way so we won't cause you any trouble, any problems, you know." So here they came, oh about ten or twelve women, and they sat down and ate and one or two come up to the counter and they said, "We're going to tell our kids to eat that lunch and not be a belly-aching about it, because there is nothing wrong with your lunches." Mrs. Fecht felt real good about it.

BARBARA: I was sorry to see the hot lunch program go by the wayside. Because I think it was, oh my son's junior or senior year they quit having hot lunch, and they came home for lunch. And that was a big pain for me to have ---

ESTHER: You bet, be ready.

BARBARA: --- for twenty minutes, or what, be ready right on time so they could eat and get back in time. Because they didn't have an hour, it was like twenty-five minutes is all you had for lunch, and it was a real rush.

ESTHER: Yeah. That's right, yeah. Those darn short order places along made it bad for ---

BARBARA: But I understand that they are doing better, the kids are going back to the hot lunch program.

ESTHER: I think that's good.

BARBARA: I do too. Because they get a much better meal, much better for them, and kids need

that little boost of energy to get through a school day instead of a bunch of junk food, sugar, or whatever.

ESTHER: Yeah, sure they do. One boy came up to the counter, it was the first day that we served lunch, starting a new year, or I mean starting in the fall, and he come in and he said, "Boy, am I glad to see that," he said, "you know I've been having to fix my own lunch all summer?" (Laughter)  
Over on this other side, yeah, that's fine (Dorothea gets glass).

BARBARA: You can't please every kid, every day.

ESTHER: Oh no.

BARBARA: But as a general rule, when you have to feed a big group of people, I think the lunch programs do a wonderful job.

ESTHER: Yeah, I think they do, too. I worked in Molalla for a year after we went down to Canby, and they was the biggest at that time they was the biggest grade school in Oregon. We had 720 kids.

BARBARA: Oh boy.

ESTHER: Like that.

DOROTHEA: When did you decide to move out of Harney County, and why?

ESTHER: You mean in later years?

BARBARA: After you retired from the school.

DOROTHEA: After you retired.

ESTHER: Well, Walt's brother passed away in Canby, and we had a claim on the ranch, so we bought the other ---

DOROTHEA: Oh, there was a ranch over there?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: You went over there to do that? Oh, I see.

ESTHER: Walt loved that, it was something he could just be busy at, different things all the time, you know. We completely redid the house, and fixed the yard up, and picked apples; always had gobs of fruit. It seemed so different from over here.

BARBARA: So he retired being a custodian, the time that you retired being a cook, the same year?

ESTHER: Yeah, uh-huh, in '76. We cooked; we worked until Thanksgiving Day. The Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day was our last day at school.

BARBARA: Uh huh. And then did you move right away over to there, have Christmas over there?

ESTHER: Yeah. We'd been, well, no, we came back here for Christmas. But we had been having things, taking things over all summer.

BARBARA: I see.

ESTHER: And it was a busy summer.

BARBARA: So you had planned on retiring at this time, and then you knew that you would be moving over there after Thanksgiving, then?

ESTHER: Uh huh, yeah.

BARBARA: I see.

DOROTHEA: And then you went to work in the Molalla School, then, and you cooked also?

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And you did that for what, two years?

ESTHER: No, I think it was just --- you see, there in Molalla at that time why the school went the year round. And so we had two weeks off in August just before --- give the janitors and people time to clean up, or paint, or whatever they wanted to do, and then we were back, that was all we had off. And ---

DOROTHEA: Well, now, when they have a school all year long, someone told me one time that a bunch of kids go to school for so long, and then they're off for two or three weeks, and then in that two or three weeks another bunch comes in. Is this how that works?

ESTHER: Yeah, that's how it was. They'd start, and then they'd go nine weeks was a school, they went without a break, you know, except their weekends. And then they'd take off; I think they got a week and a half or something like that off. And then new kids come in and filled that, and they was just coming and going all the time.

DOROTHEA: I don't understand yet how that works, but I guess it works.

ESTHER: A lot of people, I said, "I wouldn't like that a bit." I was talking with the other cooks

about it. I said, "I wouldn't like that a bit, because I like the time that you have your family, and gives you kind of a, you have one kid in school and one somewhere else, you can't do the summer things you like to do lots of times." One, some of them said that's the way they thought, too. And others said, "Well, you know it's just kind of nice, and that one child is at home all by himself, and you can just devote your time to him that day. And then they go back to school, and the next one has his time off." But I wouldn't like it scattered around that way.

DOROTHEA: Well, that means you'd have to be home all the time. I mean, you wouldn't have any free time either. So ---

ESTHER: Only that two weeks, to close the school year. But it was interesting.

BARBARA: So you were over there for how long?

ESTHER: Thirteen years.

BARBARA: And then you decided to return to Burns, did you?

ESTHER: Well, I had a sick spell and I was quite ill, and the kids come over, of course, and they were there. Juanita stayed with me two weeks. And then they begin to talk to us about coming home. And so we decided to come, we came that fall, we came in July, and I was in the hospital in April.

DOROTHEA: Well, now did you sell the ranch then, or did one of the other ---

ESTHER: No, we sold it, it was ours completely, and we sold it.

DOROTHEA: Well, now, did Walt do some of the carpentry work himself? I know when my parents first remodeled their kitchen they had a Dickenson do their kitchen for them, and I can't remember his name.

ESTHER: I bet it was Raymond. No, not Raymond, yes Raymond. A slender blonde-headed fellow? Ray did, this is their, there was two Rays, well, there is a half a dozen Ray Dickenson's around here. But this was Ashley's grandson, and he did that kind of work around here for a while.

DOROTHEA: Did Ashley do carpenter work?

ESTHER: No, no, he didn't. He worked at the sawmill. Before that, I guess he tried to ranch a little bit.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. No, I was young.

ESTHER: Yes.

DOROTHEA: I was probably only ten, eleven years old or maybe even younger. And my mom didn't have any cabinets and she wanted to build some cabinets.

ESTHER: Now, what year, about what year would that have been?

DOROTHEA: Oh, probably around '45, or somewhere around in there, '42, '43.

ESTHER: Yeah, it wasn't little Raymond then, it must have been, might have been old Ray. I don't know who it would have been.

DOROTHEA: It seemed like he was a bald man.

ESTHER: Yeah, well, that sounds like Ray, who would have been Walt's uncle.

DOROTHEA: And real nice, kind of heavyset man.

ESTHER: Yes, that's, I'm sure that's who it would have been.

DOROTHEA: Okay, okay. But he was, oh he built the best cabinets. And my mom was a little short so these cabinets are only like thirty-two inches off of the ground, or off of the floor.

ESTHER: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: And everybody, nobody could understand why she had such short cabinets.

ESTHER: Yeah, she didn't want to make her biscuits like this.

DOROTHEA: Right, right. (Laughter)

BARBARA: After you returned in '89 was it you said, what are some of the things that you and Walt did here in town after you returned? What did you get involved with?

ESTHER: Well we didn't, you see we were both retired, past retirement age, and so we bought this house and moved here when we came down. And then, oh Walt went around where the boys were and helped them with things, and whatever like that, worked on the yard, whatever.

BARBARA: Just kind of puttsied around the place, busy work.

ESTHER: Uh huh, he didn't have a real --- yeah, he didn't have a regular job that he had to go to.

BARBARA: I understand that, but I was wondering if he had hobbies that kept him busy.

ESTHER: He always was busy; he always was busy. He and Millard Thomsen here had a lot of

things going. They'd be, if one of them was doing a building job, the other one was right here to help them; they really enjoyed each other.

BARBARA: And so what did, what have you been doing since that time?

ESTHER: Nothing. Oh, just the usual things.

BARBARA: Cooking and keep house, keep you busy, don't they anymore?

ESTHER: Yeah, they do, yeah.

DOROTHEA: Well, we never did mention how many grandchildren you have, your two boys have each married and ---

ESTHER: I have seven grandchildren and thirteen great-grandchildren.

DOROTHEA: And do any of them live around close to where you get to see them much?

ESTHER: Well, no, Ralph lives here, and that's the ones I see most. And their kids come; now, two of the grandsons are Ralph's boys, who were here last Thanksgiving Day. And one of them has two little girls, and they brought them. It's these little girls here (pictures). And ---

DOROTHEA: Now, which grandson is this?

ESTHER: This is, this is, well, this is Ralph, my boy. And here is some more of the kids up there. I've just got them stuck up there.

DOROTHEA: Well, what are Ralph's kids' names?

ESTHER: Well, let's see, there is Elizabeth, and Stephen, and R. D. and Dustin.

DOROTHEA: Okay, and then Dee's kids are?

ESTHER: Terry and Myndee Jo, and Shandl. They all have kids now.

BARBARA: And who did Ralph marry?

ESTHER: He married, he had a marriage that didn't work out first, and then he married --- I don't know what her last name was, Zuelsdorf, I can never think of her last name. Juanita, she works at the Hines Post Office now. And then they had a little boy right away, and then she raised the kids, they all just adore her. They don't adore some of the things she did, but kids never do.

DOROTHEA: No, no, kids don't.

BARBARA: Was she a local girl, Juanita, was she?

ESTHER: No, she came here, she had an aunt that lived here, and the aunt's husband worked on the base up there someway, I don't know just what he did.

BARBARA: I see.

ESTHER: But she come over to visit that aunt, and stayed with that aunt awhile, and she worked at the drive-in there, Fenley's Drive-In, or who did they have, call that? You remember it was right across, about where the parts store is now, right along in there.

DOROTHEA: Was that Tiller's at that time? Hobert Tiller had that?

ESTHER: I believe that Fenley had it.

DOROTHEA: Did Fenley have it then?

ESTHER: I think so.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, because I know he had it for a while, too.

BARBARA: And who did your other son marry?

ESTHER: He married Ruth Hannan's daughter, Jan. Ruth and Bill Hannan (corrected to Bradeen), did you know them?

BARBARA: No.

ESTHER: Well, she was Ruth Bradeen later, Bradeen. They have lived here a long time, and he married her second girl.

BARBARA: I see.

DOROTHEA: And they, now, are their girls, they have all girls?

ESTHER: No, they have Terry.

DOROTHEA: Terry.

ESTHER: Uh-huh, the boy, and then Myndee Jo and Shandl. And then the four, Ralph has the four, one girl and three boys.

DOROTHEA: Do Dee's kids all live over in the Ontario area?

ESTHER: Right around Ontario there, they're all right there.

DOROTHEA: And I understand Jan is a hairdresser?

ESTHER: Yes, she is.

DOROTHEA: Do they come over often, or do you get to see them much? Or do you go over there?

ESTHER: Not too, no, I haven't been over there for a long time. But they come pretty regularly. But they're both working, it's hard to get away, you know. But they'll come, and sometimes they stay all night, and sometimes they have to go back.

DOROTHEA: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Walt was a Pioneer President one year; I can't remember the year exactly.

ESTHER: Two years ago I think.

DOROTHEA: About '90 or '91.

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: I understood that Dee was the master of ceremonies for that.

ESTHER: Well, there was two of them, they both did.

DOROTHEA: Oh, Ralph and Dee?

ESTHER: Uh huh, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: Some of Ralph's hobbies are, he carpenters a little bit, but some of his hobbies are studying history.

ESTHER: Yes.

DOROTHEA: I understood he has done some history studying on Fort Harney.

ESTHER: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: Does he still do that kind of thing?

ESTHER: Well, he does as much as he has time to do. Well now, like probably from oh Christmas on, he'll get to work at that some, because there isn't such a demand. But this last summer there was a lot of demand for the kind of work he was doing, roofs and, you know, the year was real hard on -  
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BARBARA: Yeah, a lot of people had to re-roof their homes.

ESTHER: Yeah, oh boy, they sure did.

BARBARA: Us included.

ESTHER: Oh, did you?

DOROTHEA: Well, us included, but our carpenter never did show up, so Clint ended up doing it himself.

ESTHER: Oh, do it yourself.

DOROTHEA: This roofing that we've had on, we had on about, oh, maybe possibly eight years ago, it's blown off every year.

ESTHER: Well ---

DOROTHEA: So you can tell what kind of a job the carpenter did.

ESTHER: Yes indeed.

DOROTHEA: And Clinton really gets disgusted when the wind starts blowing.

ESTHER: Shingles start flying.

DOROTHEA: He says, "I suppose there goes the roof again." So --- Well, what do you keep yourself busy doing now, just ---

ESTHER: Oh, I haven't been able to do much now for quite a little while. And I can't hardly plan anything ahead because I never know when I'm going to get up --- I've been better the last month or so than I have for a long time. I had surgery in October last year, and had to get over that. And then I just, I just really haven't been well since we came home this time. But ---

BARBARA: So, before you had your problems, what were some of your hobbies, what did you like to do?

ESTHER: Oh, I made quilts, and sewed, and raised a garden, or not a garden, but flowers. I always had lots of flowers. And just things like that, you know. And we went camping a lot when we could. We had a trailer house and we'd take it out and go. One thing that we had that we enjoyed was our saddle horses. We had

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DOROTHEA: I know you always had saddle horses around your place down there.

ESTHER: Yeah, yeah.

DOROTHEA: You used to live on what they call Foley Drive?

ESTHER: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: And you had horses there at that time.

ESTHER: Yeah, we did. We sure had a lot of fun with them.

DOROTHEA: Did you go out camping with them, and do a lot of riding in the hills?

ESTHER: Uh huh. Yes, that's what we did. When I'd get off of work and get home, which was around three, then I'd fill the water tank on the trailer house and go catch the horses and saddle them and tie them to the clothes line there somewhere, and then when Ralph (corrected to Walt) got his bus run completed and come home, well he'd back the old truck up there and load the horses, they loaded in the back of the truck, hook on the trailer, and away we went. We did that every chance we got.

DOROTHEA: Well, we've enjoyed this afternoon, and I've run out of questions, unless there is things that you can think of that you'd like to share with us.

ESTHER: I don't know what it would be.

DOROTHEA: You've done quite a lot. But we do want to do a video, so we don't want to tire you out too much. And --- but we've really covered a lot this afternoon. So, unless you can think of something else, and Barbara, do you have anything else? Let's stop for now, and we'll do our video, and get a good picture of you.

ESTHER: I hope I never take a good picture.

DOROTHEA: Oh, everybody says that.

ESTHER: I know, I really don't.

BARBARA: Well, we really appreciate you visiting with us this afternoon. We thank you.

ESTHER: It's been a pleasure, it really has.

(END OF TAPE)

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