

Person Interviewed: Mark Grossen

Interviewed by: Winn Herrschaft and Juliane Schudek

Other people present:

Location of Interview: 23990 NW Grossen Dr. Hillsboro, OR 97214

Date: 4/14/2011

Special Conditions: poor sound quality for first 21 minutes 15 seconds due to difficulties with new microphone. 44:15 video freezes for a few seconds.

General Description: Grossen peaches and family history, Helvetia Band, hobby farming and tourism, coop farming

Tape No. 1 of 3

:50 – 2:00 lived in Helvetia all his live. Grew up on a tomato farm that delivered to grocery stores. Talks about how 1970s oil crisis affected their farming methods and encouraged use of greenhouses.

2:45 – 3:25 Went to Bethany Presbyterian Church. Many old community families went and still attend.

3:50 – 6:50 talks about farming hothouse tomatoes in his childhood. Selling them for 10 cents per bucket to grocery stores and using the money to buy candy. Grown year round. Close knit community that would help each other with farm work.

6:50 – 7:25 talks about the Iwasaka family

8:00 – 10:00 talks about community dances that his parents went to when he was a kid. Went to Hillsboro High School. Talks about knowing and being related to a large number of people in the community and the benefits of this as a child, getting rides etc.

10:30 – 14:45 Talks about Swiss heritage and how his family has kept that alive. Uncles listened to Swiss music, has a cousin who plays accordion and yodels, family band played Swiss music, other cousins into genealogy. Talks about Helvetia band and his family's role as musicians in the band. Family still gets together to make sausage, apple cider and apple sauce, listen to Swiss music. Mentions Helvetia Church and Swiss Independence Day celebration

15:05 – 18:30 Talks more about music and marching band and its director Carl Gutman at Hillsboro High School during the 1960s and 1970s, won Rose Parade 25 years straight. 85 piece band. Talks about watching the band march in parades and how he started playing the trumpet. Played trumpet at Portland State University and University of Portland. Still plays in U. of Portland Pep Band for basketball games and has for 31 years.

18:38 – 21:10 Works for post office. Talks about working in the nursery business with his father for a while. Then he and some family members started a potting machine business, but they didn't sell well at

nursery shows. Turned it into a rental business for a few years. One day his mail carrier asked if he wanted to deliver mail one day per week on Saturdays and Mark accepted. It turned into a full time job. Mark ran the potting machine business on the side for a while after becoming a postal worker.

21:45 – 28:50 Mark talks about Grossen Peaches. His uncle was already growing peaches for a u-pick operation. Talks about pruning peach trees for the purposes of easy picking for the public and the u-pick operation. He and his father ordered 300 peach trees from Mott's. Mott's sent him the wrong trees. They got to keep them, but Mott's sent 300 of the correct Veteran Peach trees, so they ended up with a 600 tree orchard. Mark currently has his own orchard of 300 peach trees and it is all u-pick. Talks about the how living so close to Portland makes his u-pick business successful. Some days they can open for only 2 hours and be picked out. Between Mark and his family they own thousands of peach trees. Have had some people come from farmers markets to pick for markets, but people from the metro area come so often and pick the trees out so quickly that they don't really deal with markets. Some people come pick hundreds of pounds to can and save. Started growing peaches in 1986. Has put in some blueberry bushes to test their success.

29:00 – 33:20 talks about his new gazebo that he converted from an old grain silo. Leads into talking about grain silos. Tells a story about helping neighbors drive grain trucks to North Plains at age 13.

33:30 – 34:45 talks about the difference between his childhood and his kids. Talks about being in 4-H as a kid. His kids are more into golf. He drives them around the country in the summer to play in golf tournaments.

34:50 – 36:40 his peach farm is a hobby farm. Talks about the future of hobby farms as tourist attractions for people who live in metro areas. People want to get out to the country for a day, walk around the farm, have a picnic, pick peaches.

36:50 – 38:25 talks about visitors to his farm. They come from all over Northern Oregon from the coast to Portland and into Washington.

38:50 – 42:45 Talks about current trend in coop and organic farms in Washington County, difficulty of organic farming especially with peaches and other fruits. Many visitors ask if their fruit trees are sprayed with chemicals. Because of sheer difficulty his peach farm is not organic. But they do not spray when fruit is on the peaches unless necessary.

42:50 – 43:45 talks about trees sensitivity to rain. They do not like rain when fruit is on because it causes the fruit to mold.

44:40 – 46:50 talks more about community working together to help each other on the farms. Thought "love thy neighbor" was a strange commandment because in his community everybody loved their neighbor and had a close relationship with their neighbors.

47:10 – 48:55 talks about community and family gatherings and the role of the church in these gatherings, 4th of July picnics, visits to neighbors' homes, Happy Day's parade and making floats for the 4th of July parade

49:00 –58:22 family history. shows and talks about a photo of the Helvetia Band. Visual shots of tuba, trumpet, violin, and piano that belong to his ancestors. Then shows more photos of his ancestors: great-great grandfather, uncles and father working on farms, shows photo and tells story of his ancestor who migrated from Switzerland, old photos of neighbors' farms, threshing crew, photo of first Grossen family members to move to Oregon.

58:22 Tape 1 ends.

Tags

Agriculture, Agriculture—History, Bands (Music), Bethany Presbyterian Church, Communities—Oregon—History, Dances, Education, Families, Family history, Farming—Peaches, Farming—Tomatoes, Firearms, Genealogy, Helvetia—Oregon, Helvetia Band, Hillsboro—Oregon, Hillsboro High School, Immigration, Local history, Logging—Oregon, Music, Nurseries, Oregon-History, Outdoor recreation, Picnics, Portland State University, Portraits, Presbyterianism, Religion, Rose Parade, Swiss-American-History, Trumpet, University of Portland

Tags