

WALLY THOMAS

TAPE 1, Side 1

August 14, 1996

M.O'R.: This is Michael O'Rourke for the Washington County Historical Society beginning an interview with Wally Thomas at his home, and today is August 14th, 1996.

First of all, Wally, let me just ask you when and where you were born?

W.T.: I was born in Portland.

M.O'R.: So have you lived here in this area, then, all your life?

W.T.: Lived in Portland for about 13 years, and then I moved out to Tigard, and I've been in this area for the rest of the time, yeah, for almost 59 years.

M.O'R.: Fifty-nine years here?

W.T.: Well, no, in the southwest. I lived in Tigard. I've been here 35, and the other 20-some, 24 years I lived in Tigard.

M.O'R.: When you were growing up, did you have any interaction with the river, with the Tualatin River?

W.T.: Yeah. When I was about 14, I had moved out to Tigard, and my dad had a small farm out there, my mom and dad.

M.O'R.: Is that what your father did for a living, farming?

W.T.: No, he worked for Richfield, which is ARCO now, but it was Richfield Company. And I snuck into Avalon Park one day, which was a resort on the river, and Johnnie Fredericks caught me.

M.O'R.: And who caught you?

W.T.: He caught me sneaking in, so he asked me who I was and all. So I told him, and he said, "Well," he said, "would you like a job here?" So that's how I got started on the Tualatin River, when I was 14.

M.O'R.: Now, had you swum on the Tualatin or done any other activities there before?

W.T.: No, not really. First time I think the summertime came, I snuck into the park.

M.O'R.: And who did you say it was that confronted you?

W.T.: Johnnie Fredericks owned Avalon Park. He was a baseball player for the Portland Beavers.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah?

W.T.: You wouldn't remember that, but anyway, he played ball for Portland. And he asked me if I wanted a job, and boy, I was tickled to get a job, you know.

M.O'R.: And so what job did he offer you?

W.T.: Well, he gave me a job watching a little pool for the little kids in the river. They had a little pool there. I watched that, and I cleaned out restrooms and did all the gotcha work, you know. And I made a dollar a day, and I worked 30 days a month, and I was tickled to get it at 14. Fourteen or - 15, I guess. I was 14 or 15; I don't know what it was now.

M.O'R.: How long of days did you work there, then?

W.T.: Oh, god, I worked from morning till night. It really wasn't a job. I just loved the work. I had all kinds of fun. I swam when I wanted to and -.

And the next year - I took my lifesaving that year, and the next year I got a job as the head guard.

M.O'R.: At Avalon?

W.T.: At Avalon. So I worked there a couple years as the head guard, and then - I made \$60 a month then. Big money. Then I got a job at Roamer's Rest, just up the river a quarter of a mile, and I made \$300 a month there. I was making good money. I was making more than the shipyard workers were then.

M.O'R.: And what were you doing - same thing at Roamer's?

W.T.: Well, I was lifeguarding. I wasn't cleaning the rest-rooms then. I was just lifeguarding. I had about five years, I guess. When I came back from the service, why, I worked sometimes on weekends when Johnnie had a big crowd out there.

He kind of phased the park out. He didn't like the public. He didn't like the public. They got on his nerves. They were all - well, he didn't like the public, so he finally phased himself out of it.

M.O'R.: Well, back to that very first experience at Avalon, did you know who Johnnie Fredericks was before you snuck into the park?

W.T.: Did I know his wife?

M.O'R.: Did you know who he was?

W.T.: No.

M.O'R.: You didn't know that ...

W.T.: There used to be a place across the street - you could get into Giant's for ten cents and Roamer's for ten cents, and across the street - across the river from Johnnie's was a place called Louie's. You wouldn't remember that, either, but it was five cents. But I thought, well, I'd go down - my uncle owned the ground behind Johnnie's place, and I just went down and went across

the fence and snuck in. That's when he caught me. It was quite obvious. I was the only guy in the park at that time in the morning, I guess; I don't know.

Anyway, I don't remember all the details, but no, I didn't know who he was.

M.O'R.: You didn't know he was a ballplayer for the Beavers or anything like that?

W.T.: No.

M.O'R.: Did you get to know him, then, as you worked for him?

W.T.: Yes, I did. Real well. And in fact he was real trustworthy. He had money to go to the bank, and I was quite a young kid, 15 or 16, and he'd give me the bag of money to take it to the bank and deposit it.

His wife's name was Rose, and they had two kids, young kids, Johnnie and Dorothy. And I've lost contact with him.

No, I got to know Johnnie, and he had a brother named Frank that worked in a meat market downtown. A real nice guy, but he wasn't - he didn't like the public, as a whole.

M.O'R.: Kind of an odd business for him to be in, then.

W.T.: Well, yeah. He was in the wrong business for it, but he didn't - I think his wife did most of the contact. She was - had a nice personality. Well, Johnnie was nice. He treated me good all the way. I have no complaints about Johnnie, or his wife, Rose. But he didn't like - he just didn't like people.

M.O'R.: Did you ever go watch him play, then, afterwards?

W.T.: Oh. No, I never did. He'd be gone out of town for, you know, a couple weeks at a time, traveling.

M.O'R.: And then his wife would just run the place?

W.T.: His wife would run it, yeah. And that's when I think I got the money to take it to the bank all the time. Very trusting.

M.O'R.: What - can you describe this place? What did Avalon look like?

W.T.: Well, it's like everything else; it had its time. It was something like Jantzen Beach; you know what I'm saying? I don't know if you even remember Jantzen Beach.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. Sure.

W.T.: Okay. Jantzen Beach used to have, you know, the ballroom and all that. Well, Avalon had a group of kids that would come out there all the time. It was more of a family park. It was more a family than Roamer's. And Louie's got an awful lot of kids across the street because they were a nickel. But anyway, at ten cents - and at one time I swear I knew every kid in Tigard, Beaverton, Sherwood, Tualatin and half of Portland. They used to come out there, you know, to Avalon and Roamer's.

It was a family - he had a lot of company picnics. A lot of company picnics. And we'd maybe hire a couple extra guards when a couple thousand would come in or something. It was just a family park where people would go out and have their lunch and swim and rent boats, canoes, whatever you wanted to do, you know.

But the park at Roamer's, now, where I worked a couple years later, had the slides. You wouldn't remember that. They had two big slides that went down into the river. You got on a board, and it went on rollers and went out into the water. They had more of a jet set, more of the Broadway gang group. But I had no trouble with any of them.

It was a long time ago, but I had fun. I had an awful lot of fun out there. I learned a lot out there.

M.O'R.: Roamer's, when you say the jet set, you mean it was more ...

W.T.: Yeah - well, the younger - Avalon was more the family. Wife and kids, you know. And Roamer's was more the singles. An awful lot of young kids came out there, an awful lot of young kids.

Of course, I had a ball myself, you know. And my brother, when he got old enough, he worked out there also as a lifeguard. It was something that - when you grow up, it's something that you should do because you'll never get a chance to do it again. Do you know what I'm saying?

I had a chance to go to the coast - I think it was Seaside - and lifeguard, but they weren't paying half as much as Roamer's was paying me. I was making 300 a month, and that was good money back there in - what? - '41 or something.

M.O'R.: Yeah, I was going to ask you when you worked there.

W.T.: Yeah, that was my last - I think I went in in '42, in the service.

M.O'R.: And when did you start lifeguarding out there on the Tualatin? Was that a couple years before that or ...

W.T.: Well, I must have been 14 or 15. Probably about 14 when I started working - and I'm 73 now, so that would be, what, 59 years ago? Fifty-eight years ago? So things have changed.

M.O'R.: So '37, '38, maybe.

W.T.: Yeah, something like that. Roughly, yeah.

M.O'R.: Now, you said that Avalon was more of a family place?

W.T.: Yes, it was.

M.O'R.: I understand it had a bandstand; is that right?

W.T.: A what?

M.O'R.: A bandstand?

W.T.: Yeah, it had a dance floor. Yeah. The family, the dance floor, and it had the canoes and the rowboats, and of course the swimming. It was almost all family, and a lot of big picnics, a lot of companies came out to picnic. It was a quieter park. Roamer's was more lively. It was a lot more lively. A lot of singles. It was just a meeting place; that was all. Like down on Broadway; where they went to Roamer's, you know.

M.O'R.: So young people - young adults, eh?

W.T.: Well, yeah, I guess so. Sixteen, 17 years old.

M.O'R.: Okay. But not kids per se. More dating age?

W.T.: Yeah, that would be right. That's right.

M.O'R.: And so when you were at Avalon that first year, I take it that you had never lifeguarded before that?

W.T.: No. When I first started working there, watching the little pool - they had two wooden indoor pools, you know, in the river. I watched the little one; that was my job. If somebody slipped, I'd jump in and grab them and pull them out, you know.

Then that year I took my - I think you had to be 15 at that time to take your lifeguard test. So the next year, why, then I became head guard, which was - at that time was pretty important to me, you know.

M.O'R.: And so then you watched the bigger pool?

W.T.: Well, then you watched the river, yeah, and somebody else watched the little pool. Kind of a step up, you know.

M.O'R.: And you said it was indoor pool. Is that ...

W.T.: Well, not indoor. They had - in those days they had the river, and then they had the big wooden floats. And in those floats was the little pool, and there was the intermediate pool, which was about three times longer and about three times as deep. And then the little pool was only probably a foot, two foot deep, for little waders. And then the big one I think was from five to three foot, and of course then everybody swam in the river except the ones who couldn't swim too well were generally in these. The water flowed right through them. They were boards coming down - you know, the board bottom sides, board sides.

M.O'R.: Oh, they were sort of enclosed?

W.T.: Oh, yeah. They were like a box. Like a box, but the water would flow through them, you know.

A long time ago.

M.O'R.: This is interesting, though. I mean, I haven't gotten this good a description so far of Roamer's and Avalon as you're able to provide, but you were there every day, I guess.

W.T.: Yeah. I used to work seven days a week.

M.O'R.: And so people would swim in either the little pool, the intermediate pool ...

W.T.: The little kid's little pool, and then some of the adults and younger kids in the other pool. Most of them swam in the river.

M.O'R.: Just outside the pools altogether?

W.T.: Yeah, out in the river.

M.O'R.: And so was there a little beach area there, then, too?

W.T.: There was no beach, no. There was just a bank coming down and then these swimming pools. It was just a big wooden platform, I'd say. One end was boats and canoes, and the other end was the intermediate, the bigger pool, three to five, and then the little pool at the other end of it was probably just one to two feet.

M.O'R.: And it was right at - what were you going to say?

W.T.: Well, I said the little pool was fenced in, and of course the bigger pool wasn't.

M.O'R.: And it was right there where 99W crosses the river?

W.T.: Yeah. Yes, that's right. In fact, my mother's dad got killed on that bridge, when it was the old wooden covered bridge.

M.O'R.: Really?

W.T.: She used to live out there at the - Old Lady Booth's, right across the street. I didn't know her name. All I knew was Old Lady Booth's. Lived right across from Avalon. But yeah, her dad got killed out there on the bridge.

M.O'R.: And then the next year you moved up to head guard ..

W.T.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: ... at Avalon?

W.T.: Head honcho, you know.

M.O'R.: Right. And then the year after that you went to Roamer's?

W.T.: Yeah, the next year I got a - well, I think Johnnie was going to pay me I think a hundred dollars a month or something like that. I don't know what it was. But Roamer's offered me 300. And the beach, I think, was only - I think Roamer's - or Seaside was only I think 175 at that time. It was almost half what I was get-

ting. And I lived right there within probably four or five blocks of Avalon Park. We had about ten acres out there. And so it was close. I walked to work every day, and had a grand time, you know.

M.O'R.: Were you a pretty strong swimmer in those days?

W.T.: Well, strong enough, I guess. Yeah. We didn't swim that much to pull anybody out, but the point is that - yeah, I can swim fairly well, yeah.

M.O'R.: How did you happen to get the offer from Roamer's? Were you kind of looking around?

W.T.: Well, I knew the guards, and I knew the people who owned it. I mean, we - in the morning we'd take the motorboats, and we'd run back and forth, or if things were slack, we'd canoe up and down. And we - I knew the guards real well at Roamer's. One of my best friends was a guard across the street at Louie Walland, old Louie's place.

We just - we all knew each other, and if something happened in one park, they'd go to another park and help out. You know what I'm saying?

M.O'R.: Mm-hmm.

W.T.: We just knew everybody. I knew the owners, and I knew the guards, and the I knew the people that worked in the concession stands, and just kind of - we were all within - well, Louie's was across from Avalon, and right across up over the bridge, like you're going south - or west, now - where that trailer park is, that was Roamer's, see. So we're talking just ...

M.O'R.: Just all real close to one another. And you said you knew the people at Roamer's. Who ran Roamer's?

W.T.: At that time - oh, boy. [Pause] What was her name? She lost her husband. He committed suicide. One Fourth of July one of the guys at Avalon, where I was working at that time, a new kid, ran Johnnie - into his car. I remember this. We had - there was one drowning at Roamer's, and I think we - on that weekend, maybe it was a Fourth of July weekend, I think we pulled out - and I remember, this sticks in my mind real close - I think we pulled out 27 people this one weekend.

There was a drowning at Roamer's.

M.O'R.: But was that when you were guarding there?

W.T.: No, I was at Avalon at the time. I didn't lose anybody. I was very fortunate. Some close calls, but we never - but we did have a drowning up at Roamer's on that Fourth of July.

I remember the kid running the car into his - the truck into the car or the car into the truck, or whatever. And we had to - we had pulled out at Avalon 27 people. Well, some of the younger kids were drinking, you know. And then there was just a lot of people. When you have that many people, you're going to have trouble, you know, especially if there's any drinking at all.

A lot of these picnics had - a lot of these big picnics had a lot of a beer, you know.

M.O'R.: Sounds like company picnics?

W.T.: Yeah. One of the big ones was, I think, ESCO - Electric Steel Company or something. They rented the whole park. They just closed the park down. They were the only ones there, and of course we - as the guards, we got to eat. We couldn't drink, but we could eat.

But they had tremendous picnics. A lot of these picnics were like that. This was at Avalon. Roamer's didn't have any of these. They just didn't cater to this kind type stuff, where Johnnie did. But they were just big family or company picnics, you know. When I say big, I think they had a couple thousand at that ESCO. They just rented the whole park - everything, lock, stock and barrel.

M.O'R.: Were there concessions or carnival-like things out there at all?

W.T.: No. Just - they had a concession stand: ice cream, pop, you know, and rental of the boats and canoes.

In fact, Johnnie had - he got - I want to say the World's Fair. He got what he called the Swan, a kind of a paddle boat. I think they got something similar to that right now at the Tualatin Lake. Do you know where the Tualatin Lake is?

M.O'R.: No.

W.T.: Do you know where Tualatin is?

M.O'R.: Yeah.

W.T.: All right. They built an artificial lake.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. In the middle of town there.

M.O'R.: An artificial lake. I think they call it the Tualatin Lake. The Tualatin Pond. I didn't know where it was, either, till someone told me about it. We eat out that way once in a while. And they have a paddle boat.

But Johnnie got it from the World's Fair, and they were - two people would sit in them, and they had two paddle deals, you know.

M.O'R.: Right.

W.T.: And we had trouble with those because young kids would get on the back and tip them over. He had those for a long time.

And then he had one canoe that was a - who in the hell makes the good canoe now? Not Coleman - well, the main canoe maker. I can't give you his name now. He had a canoe that was all wood, all solid wood. I priced those - Old Town. Old Town. I priced those here a couple years ago. God, they're as much as a car, almost. You get the canvas with the ribs, you know, which most of them were. We used to patch them up with some goop and an iron, a regular old iron, you know. Patch them up because people ran into log snags, and we'd patch those up.

But the wooden ones, we didn't let those out to every Tom, Dick and Harry. Those were - you had to know what you were doing because they were - I imagine at that time they were expensive, but now I went to a show here at the - by the Rose Garden, and they had some of the Old Town, and just the canvas ones were a couple thousand dollars. And I've forgot the wood - I think it was around 6,000 or something for a wooden one, which you wouldn't let everyone play with.

But Johnnie had the old paddle boats. It was a swan; there was a swan's neck in the front, and a seat and you'd paddle. And of course kids climbed on them and tried to tip them over, you know, like kids will.

M.O'R.: And so you had to watch the boaters, too?

W.T.: Well, yeah.

M.O'R.: Can you tell me - you gave me a good description of how the docks and the pools were there at Avalon, but can you tell me what Roamer's was like in terms of their ...

W.T.: Roamer's was the same thing.

M.O'R.: Same thing?

W.T.: Same thing. They had the little pool ...

[Interruption]

M.O'R.: ... what Roamer's was like, and you said that it was pretty similar.

W.T.: Okay. Roamer's was the same thing. It had two pools, the small for the small kids and then the larger one. They were just big long rectangles with two cutouts, but they were all boarded like the other one.

And then they had the two slides.

M.O'R.: Yeah, that's right. You mentioned the slides.

W.T.: Two slides.

M.O'R.: And that went into the kids' pool, then?

W.T.: No, no, no, no. These were big. You had to climb up and bring your big board up. And it had rollers on the slide going down, and these boards were fairly heavy. They went in the river. That's how they had that drowning that day. The guy couldn't swim and went up and -. Well, then you'd swim with your board over to the bank, and they had steps coming up.

This was a hell of an attraction for the young people, you know.

M.O'R.: So they'd ride - you'd get on sort of a - you'd sit on the board ...

W.T.: Well, you'd sit for a way, yeah. Maybe two or three people would get on them, and you'd go out half way across the river.

M.O'R.: By the time you got to the bottom of the big slide, huh?

W.T.: Oh, you were going like gangbusters. They were fun. I guess what happened is they tore one down - I guess the insurance got heavy on them, from what I understand. Insurance got heavy.

M.O'R.: Too dangerous?

W.T.: Because some people got hurt. They'd go down maybe sitting up, and maybe one leg would go out and catch that water at a high speed, it would pull their leg back and hurt their groin, or whatever. I think the insurance got heavy on them, from what I understand.

But it was a young crowd. It was a lot more active crowd. All the young kids. I think that's where I met the - there used to be a gang called the Broadway Gang, and they were a bunch of mean Josés. And they came out, and one little kid got smart with me, and I thought, "Well, I'll just fix him." And before I could fix him, he had nailed me about six times and laid me on the ground. He'd been a boxer. He was a lightweight boxer. He just killed me, I mean, just knocked me through the floor. Completely killed me. I made a complete ass of myself.

M.O'R.: So he was hassling you and you just ...

W.T.: But after that - their head guy was a mean José, a mean, ugly José, a big guy.

M.O'R.: We're talking about the Broadway Gang, still?

W.T.: Well, he was the Broadway Gang, and I'd been Indian wrestling, you know, arm wrestling with somebody, and he - well, there was a little trick to it. Anyway, he wanted to do it, and I pinned him three out of three. And from that day on, including the guy that beat the hell out of me, they were my buddies.

M.O'R.: Really?

W.T.: My absolute buddies. They were my buddies, and anybody - and of course, someone was always giving somebody a bad time, you know, and I wasn't that big at the time, but "If you need any help, you let us know."

And just looking at them would scare the hell out of you. I mean, they were - this one guy was big, and he had been a fighter, too - but also because his nose was all over his face. But I acquired about six, seven buddies there that I was thanking God they were on my side. They were good guys; it's just that they were in a gang of - not the gang like you have today, but it was just a group of boxers. And there used to be a place down there on Broadway called - kind of an ice cream parlor where all the kids hung out on Broadway. It's not there anymore. I can't think of the name of it now.

M.O'R.: That was the place where they sort of hung out, then?

W.T.: Mm-hmm. I didn't hang out down on Broadway. I was working most of the time. It happens that I worked - and I went to school in the winter, you know. And this made it ideal for me to get out of school and go to work in the summer, and close to home, no transportation. No clothes; I lived in bathing suits continually. God, I must have had a dozen bathing suits, you know. That's all I lived in was a bathing suit. And close to home. My folks brought me my food. Had the world by the tail. Happy at the job, making money, having fun.

M.O'R.: Now, I forget if you told me already who the people were that ran Roamer's?

W.T.: Louie Walland was Louie's across the street. Johnnie Fredericks. And I want to say Jordan, but it's not that. He

committed suicide the day I was telling you about, the drowning, and the 27 pulled out and the car smashing. He committed suicide. And she remarried.

M.O'R.: On that day?

W.T.: On that day. All this happened on one weekend, the Fourth of July weekend. I know their name, but I can't think of it now. But anyway, she remarried, and the fellow she remarried was named Ralph. Real nice guy, real nice.

They had the beer hall up above at Roamer's. They had the dance hall, then they had the beer hall up above. In fact, I think the old beer hall is still there at Roamer's Rest. It's an RV park down below, but I think up above there's still -. It was a few years ago. We stopped there one time. We were running the river with some friends.

I can't think of the Roamer's Rest [people's] name. But anyway, she married Ralph. I remember Ralph. He was a real nice guy.

M.O'R.: And there was a dance hall at Roamer's, too?

W.T.: There was a dance hall up on the side of the hill. I can remember the kids used to swing out the windows all the time. It was a rowdy place, but it was a fun place. Between Roamer's and Avalon, it was just about like this. You know, this was rowdy, having a good time ...

M.O'R.: At Roamer's?

W.T.: ... chase girls, and this was family. You know what I'm talking about? This was family, and this was have a gay time over here. And Louie's was just a day park. There was nothing there, just a day park.

M.O'R.: Did Roamer's and Avalon, then, ran after - in the evening, too?

W.T.: Evening, oh yeah. Yes.

[Interruption]

W.T.: Like I said, Avalon generally cleared out early, because it was family. Bring the kids out and swim and have a picnic. Roamer's had the dancing and had the beer hall up on the hill.

M.O'R.: But there were dances at Avalon, too?

W.T.: There was dances, but there was no beer in the park. There was no beer sold in the park, and Roamer's had beer a hundred feet up, so that's where the kids went.

M.O'R.: And so if you did beer at Avalon, you had to bring it yourself?

W.T.: Well, that, or the picnics had their kegs. The picnics had their kegs.

M.O'R.: Right.

W.T.: I mean, the company picnics.

M.O'R.: Right.

W.T.: No, there was no beer sold. Johnnie didn't - he didn't appreciate drinking beer.

This was a guy that smoked three to four packs of cigarettes a day. He chain smoked. At that time it was the Pall Malls, the long ones, the real long ones. He'd chain smoke one after the other. And finally the doctor told him he had to quit. He quit, from three to four packs a day.

But no, Roamer's was a young group, and when the sun went down, Roamer's came alive. I mean, people would come in there just to swim and then dance and drink, you know.

M.O'R.: And so they'd swim even after dark?

W.T.: Oh, yeah. After dark, yeah. Where Avalon would close up, see. It closed up early.

M.O'R.: Did they have lights there, then, in the swimming area?

W.T.: Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah. They were all lit up, yeah. They just drew a different group of people. Roamer's drew the young, and Avalon drew the families.

M.O'R.: Right. And now Louie's across the river you said was just a day place?

W.T.: Well, there was no dancing. There was a little concession stand there. And old Louie had a - he had a rig up on his bank that swang out into a big area, an old rig. And I think he [indiscernible] with a lifeguard half the time till he finally got hold of Dick Frost. God, I can remember his name. Dick Frost was the lifeguard over there, and his sister ran the concession stand. And he lived across - he lived just a little ways from it, too. But it was just a day park. In other words, at six o'clock or seven o'clock it closed up. Avalon did the same thing except when there was a big picnic, you know. But most of them closed up early.

Roamer's just started rolling at seven o'clock at night, see? I think the dock closed at - swimming closed, I think, at nine or ten o'clock. I think the docks closed up. Something like that.

I don't remember the time, but it was a lot later than Avalon or Louie's.

[end of side one]

FRED THURNHEER

TAPE 1, Side 2

August 26, 1996

M.O'R.: Okay. So you liked to dance, you said?

F.T.: Oh, yeah. I loved to dance. I still dance, and I'm 89 years old now.

M.O'R.: And where ...

F.T.: We still go to dances over at Laurel - McMinnville, I should say. Laurel is where I first started dancing. And then we go over to McMinnville to the Grange dances. Still dance.

M.O'R.: And when you first started dancing it was at Laurel?

F.T.: Yes.

M.O'R.: At the Grange Hall?

F.T.: Yeah, the Grange Hall in Laurel.

M.O'R.: Was it a live band usually, live music?

F.T.: Yeah, live music. This lady by the name of Mrs. Malloy used to play the piano. And they had usually a violin and a drum.

M.O'R.: And what kind of tunes would you dance to?

F.T.: Well, we had like waltzes and two steps and foxtrots. So that was my recreation. I love to dance.

M.O'R.: What do you remember about the river from those days, the Tualatin River?

F.T.: Well, there was a big flood in 1933. We had an irrigation pump down there, and it came clear over the box where the electricity - where the meter is. Came clear over the top of that in 1933. So - and then of course the flood we had this spring, up here you couldn't even go to Hillsboro. There was water over the

top of the road. And down here, going towards Twin Oaks, there was water over the road there. So if we wanted to go to town, we had to go this way and take Jackson Road in order to go to Hillsboro.

M.O'R.: So River Road was blocked in the two places.

D.T.: We practically didn't go anyplace because ...

F.T.: No.

D.T.: ... we didn't need to.

M.O'R.: So was the flood of '96 even worse than the one in the 30's then?

F.T.: Well, of course there's more population now, so it affected the people more than the flood did then because there wasn't so much - there's more housing around now. Well, naturally they're coming in from Beaverton and from Hillsboro, so we're only about - oh - two miles from the - well, it isn't the Beaverton area, but it's the housing area, you might say, and three miles from Hillsboro here - to the city limits, I should say.

D.T.: Doesn't this flood about every 30 years?

F.T.: Yeah.

D.T.: That's about the third one you've seen?

F.T.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: That's right. There was one in the 60's, too. I remember it.

D.T.: It's the third time. And I think this one was ...

F.T.: Well, '62 we had a wind storm.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. The Columbus Day storm.

F.T.: The Columbus Day storm was in '62, and we lost some walnut trees. They blew over right across the porch and knocked

that thing down in front there, that little porch deal, and some walnut trees blew over right over here.

D.T.: Your machine shed blew ...

F.T.: Yeah, the machine shed blew clear halfway down the riverbank. The Columbus Day storm. And so we had to rebuild that, too. So had plenty of misfortunes in our lifetime, too.

M.O'R.: A lot of battles with the forces of nature, eh?

F.T.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: Did you ever swim on the Tualatin?

F.T.: No. That's one thing, I never learned to swim. No, I never did swim in my life.

M.O'R.: Did you go on the river in a boat?

F.T.: No. I went fishing once in a while, but that was my extent.

M.O'R.: Just one time?

F.T.: Well, I went fishing several times, but I never did learn to swim.

M.O'R.: I'm wondering what the river was like back then in terms of its water quality and just the amount of water in the river. Can you tell me?

F.T.: Well, you see, when they put that Scoggins Dam in, that helped hold a lot of the water back. But now this last storm we had this spring, in May, they had to let some of the water loose, and that helped flood the road up here, I think, because if they hadn't have turned that water loose, they might have lost their dam. And the dam is right by Stimson's Mill; you probably know that. And that would have probably washed that mill off of there.

M.O'R.: Right. So that's why they had to let the water go?

F.T.: Yeah. They had to let the water go, so I think that probably caused some of this area to flood more, then.

M.O'R.: And back when you first came to this place, I imagine the river would get pretty low in the summertime?

F.T.: Yes, in fact it's pretty low right now. Of course, we had all that hot weather, you know, and that made the water go down. We use water out of the river for irrigation. They're watering the corn out here now. We rent the ground to [indiscernible], and he raises corn on the place. He'll raise corn two years, and then the next year he'll raise wheat, and they plow the stalks under for fertilizer.

This is very productive land, and that's why I don't like to see it go into housing, because we had wheat that went 100 bushels to the acre, and the corn goes ten tons to the acre of corn we get. So I don't like to see good farmland go into housing, and you can see the reason why.

M.O'R.: Sure. And a lot of development's been taking place out here lately. A lot of farmland has gone into housing.

M.O'R.: Yeah. If we wanted to sell the house for a development, we could probably get a big price for it. I don't want to see that myself because it's too good of farmland for that.

M.O'R.: Now, let's see. When - I guess by the time the war broke out, you were already in your 30's?

F.T.: Yes. I was 35, yes.

M.O'R.: So did you ...

F.T.: No, I didn't serve in the Army.

M.O'R.: So you sort of watched the war go by from here on the farm?

F.T.: Yeah. Of course, we had all the cows to milk, and so they didn't force you to enlist when you were dairying like that, or had a farm operation of any kind. They didn't force you to. They didn't draft you, in other words.

M.O'R.: Were there any inconveniences here on the farm during the war? Any shortages or anything like that?

F.T.: Well, there was shortages in a way. Oh, I don't know just how to explain it, but there were some kinds of shortages, all right.

M.O'R.: How did you feel about - how did you and your father both, I guess, feel about the war, since ...

F.T.: Well, you know, Switzerland is a country where - they have military training there, but they don't believe in wars.

M.O'R.: Right.

F.T.: In fact, at one time the Kaiser said, "If we came over here to Switzerland and wanted to take the country over, we've got twice as much population as you have." And the general said, "Well, we'd just shoot twice."

Well, they was always noted to be crack shots, so that was his answer.

M.O'R.: The Swiss army, you mean?

F.T.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: Were there concerns about relatives back home or anything like that during the war, or did you have relatives still in Switzerland at that time?

F.T.: Yeah, all my relatives were over there because we was the only part of the family that come over here. Of course, I was only six years old, so I didn't know too much about the relatives

over there. I know my mother had - she had three sisters, and she had a brother, and he was in the army, and I don't know - they had some kind of a maneuver up in the mountains, and he got pneumonia and died at the age of 25. And he was the only boy in the family.

And Dad had two brothers and a sister, and Dad was the youngest one in the family. Mother was the youngest one on her side of the family.

And my sister, she went to school four years over there, so she would write to the relatives over there.

M.O'R.: When you were dairy farming here in the early days, where did you sell your milk?

F.T.: It went to a coop in Portland.

M.O'R.: Did they come in and get it, or did you have to bring it into town?

F.T.: No, they picked it up. They first started, then they used to pick it up in ten-gallon cans, and then afterwards they put tanks in, and they picked it up with the tanker.

M.O'R.: Did you often make the trip into Portland back in those days?

F.T.: Well, not too often. We didn't like to drive in the traffic.

M.O'R.: Was traffic bad even then?

F.T.: Well, it wasn't bad then, but Dad never drove, and I was the one that had to do the driving. So we done most of our shopping in Hillsboro and Beaverton, so we didn't go to Portland too often.

M.O'R.: But you had a car, the family had a car?

F.T.: Yeah. We had a car. We bought the first new car when we lived in Scofield, a Chevrolet touring car, for \$695, brand new Chevrolet touring car. And we took a trip up to Sandpoint and up into Canada with that car. And I drove it.

M.O'R.: And you drove it, huh?

F.T.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: That must have been sort of exciting.

F.T.: Yes, it was. Of course we had friends in Sandpoint that we stopped to see on the way up to Canada.

And I - we sold the cows in 1970, and then we done a lot of traveling since. Before that time I couldn't travel because of being tied down with the cows, you know. So I've been to Europe three different times. Been up and down the East Coast, and I've been up and down the West Coast. Been up to Canada and down to Mexico, and all along the coast. Been back to New York and down the coast there as far as the Carolinas. And so I've done a lot of traveling since I retired from milking cows, because I couldn't do any of that when we had the cows. So I've been around.

M.O'R.: Well, that's good. I'm glad you got a chance to do that.

F.T.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: Now, do you remember - there was, I think right around 1950, the Army Corps of Engineers came in and they were going to do some work on the Tualatin? I believe they were going to straighten it out in some places and ...

F.T.: No, what they did was remove the debris that went into the river. And they got as far as our place, and they ran out of money, and they never did anything anymore after that.

D.T.: You ought to see it now. It's so full of trees and stuff.

M.O'R.: I'll bet. Especially after the flood this year. When you say they got as far as your place, were they working up from the mouth or were they ...

F.T.: No, they was coming from Hillsboro out this way.

M.O'R.: Okay. I see.

F.T.: Yeah. And they run out of money when - well, I think they got down as far as the bridge, and then they run out of money. The bridge that goes across Farmington Road.

D.T.: Tell him about the time that you could go down there and step across the river.

F.T.: Yeah.

D.T.: It was so dry.

F.T.: Yeah, that was - gosh, I can't remember.

D.T.: Before they put the dam in.

F.T.: Yeah. The river - oh, I remember now. It was in the 70's. The river was so low that you could step across it. And of course everybody - not everybody, but a lot of people were irrigating, and that took - they had to cut some of that down.

M.O'R.: Now, you said you have irrigated with Tualatin water, too?

F.T.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: Did you have water rights with this place?

F.T.: We got a water right sometime back in the 30's some-time, and so we've been watering ever since. And now the renters, they've got the sprinklers going out in the corn there now.

M.O'R.: And that's river water?

F.T.: That's river water, yeah.

M.O'R.: Now, when Scoggins went in they started charging farmers for river water, I understand. Did they come and talk to you about that?

F.T.: The only ones they charged is they put a pipeline out towards the north of town, and they have to pay for the water there in order to pay for that pipeline.

M.O'R.: I see.

F.T.: I don't know just how much they charge, but naturally they had to have money to help pay for that pipeline. That goes out to Hillsboro.

M.O'R.: And then what about - you still don't pay for irrigation here?

F.T.: No. No, we don't pay for any water.

M.O'R.: So you - because I understood also that the farmers were paying partly because - to finance the Scoggins Dam, also.

F.T.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: And I thought maybe that you might have had to pay, too, because you were taking water from the river after the dam was built?

F.T.: No.

M.O'R.: Okay. Did you - were you involved at all in any of the meetings or planning that went into building the dam?

F.T.: No, not exactly.

M.O'R.: I guess there were some farmers here that were somewhat active in that, Oscar Hagg and ...

F.T.: Yes. Well, Henry Hagg. The dam was named after him, after Henry Hagg. And shortly after that time he passed away. But

Oscar Hagg, he had cancer. They was running a dairy, him and Henry Hagg were running a dairy on that road - what's the name of that road that goes by their place?

D.T.: You mean the one that comes out at Reedville.

F.T.: Yeah.

D.T.: Isn't that 209? I don't know. I know where it goes.

F.T.: Yeah, I guess it would be 209. Yeah, that would be 209, that's right.

M.O'R.: Well, did Henry Hagg ever talk to you about the dam, or did you have any ...

F.T.: Well, they had meetings about it, yeah. Used to attend some of the meetings over at the Laurel Community Hall. And Oscar, he - I think he lived to be up in his 90's.

M.O'R.: Yeah. He just died a couple years ago, right?

F.T.: Yeah. He had to wear one of them bags, you know. But he outlived Henry.

M.O'R.: I talked to Oscar Hagg's wife, Lucille, here about two months ago. So she told me a little bit about that story of how Henry, and then later Oscar, sort of - you know, organized the effort to get Scoggins Dam built.

F.T.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: Did you go to the opening ceremony for Scoggins Dam, by any chance?

D.T.: Didn't you and Fritz Morris go up there when they dedicated it or broke ground for it or something?

F.T.: No, I don't think so.

D.T.: Yes, you did.

F.T.: Well, after all, after you get my age your memory isn't so good anymore.

M.O'R.: It seems to be in pretty good shape.

F.T.: I think so, for my age.

M.O'R.: Another thing that happened around the same time as Scoggins Dam was that there was a building moratorium here in 1970 or '71 in Washington County where they wouldn't allow people to build anymore.

F.T.: Yeah, that's right.

M.O'R.: And I guess that didn't last too long, but it forced all of these little sewer districts to get together and form the big Unified Sewerage Agency that's out here now.

F.T.: Yeah. I know we have some friends that live out ...

D.T.: Yeah, but that has nothing to do with that.

F.T.: No. But anyhow, they live right along the road there by where the park used to be.

D.T.: No, they live out in Gales Creek.

F.T.: Out in Gales Creek, yeah. And they wanted \$10,000 just for a hookup.

D.T.: For water, not sewage.

F.T.: Yeah. For water. Just to connect for water coming from the Gaston area, wasn't it?

D.T.: I don't know.

M.O'R.: Well, one of the reasons I guess that they put the building ban on was because they were concerned about the water quality in the Tualatin, and they ...

F.T.: Well, I don't think the quality of the water ever was too good, as far as that is concerned. Not for drinking water, you know what I mean.

M.O'R.: So have you seen much difference in the quality over the years, do you think, or has it always been about the same?

F.T.: No, it's about the same.

D.T.: Well, people used to swim in it, which they don't anymore. Because when I was a kid I used to swim in it down by Scholls.

F.T.: Yeah, they used to swim down there where we have the pump setting.

M.O'R.: People would just come and ask you if they could swim here?

F.T.: They didn't ask.

M.O'R.: And then when they - well, are you on a septic tank system here, or have you hooked up to the sewers?

F.T.: No. We've just got our own septic system.

M.O'R.: Still, huh?

F.T.: Yeah. It's up the road here not very far, but we still have our own septic system. It hasn't come out this far.

D.T.: It probably will.

M.O'R.: But you were never forced to hook up to the sewer, then?

D.T.: There's no place to hook up to it because it hasn't come out here.

M.O'R.: Then I guess it was in the 1980's there were some lawsuits about the water quality in the Tualatin and the sewer

district out here got into some trouble, and they wound up in court.

F.T.: Oh?

M.O'R.: And there were some other events, too. Did you remember any of that when it was going on?

F.T.: No, I don't.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. And you've raised - besides dairy cows you've also raised some crops for your cattle here?

F.T.: Yeah. We always raised - well, we raised alfalfa for quite a while, and then we raised corn to put in the silo for silage. And then we used alfalfa for silage at one time. And of course we had alfalfa down on the place where she used to live.

D.T.: You had most of your place in pasture for your cows.

F.T.: Yeah, we had most of our place in pasture and let the cows graze on there. And then after we sold the cows, the Jackson brothers, they rented our ground for potatoes, and we got 20 tons of potatoes to the acre. And then the next year they put it into wheat, and there happened to be a shortage of wheat that year, and we got \$5 a bushel for the wheat. So we got \$10,000 for our third. So that was pretty good.

M.O'R.: That sounds pretty good.

F.T.: Clear back then, during that time. Of course, now the wheat price is up there, but everything is higher now, so that meant a lot more then than it does now.

M.O'R.: Right. Yeah, a dollar was more valuable then.

F.T.: Yeah. A dollar went a lot farther than it does today.

M.O'R.: That's right. Were there any other stories that you can recall about farming here or about the river that we haven't already talked about?

F.T.: Well, only the high water, of course.

D.T.: Well, one time - years ago they logged, and the logs went down the river.

F.T.: Well, I sold some timber off of the place here, just last year.

D.T.: No. I was talking about other times when the river down here, they logged someplace - and that was before you came here - and the logs went ...

F.T.: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that was before we came on the place. That was when Zimmermann was living here yet.

D.T.: Well, that's something about the river.

M.O'R.: I have a note here that your family bought it from Joe Zimmermann.

F.T.: That's right.

M.O'R.: That was the original owner's name?

F.T.: Yeah. He had lost his wife - I don't know - a year or two before. And then he passed away about six months after we bought the place.

M.O'R.: And what was the story about logs on the river, then?

F.T.: Well, I guess they used to raft logs down the river at one time, from what I understand.

M.O'R.: And when did your parents pass on?

[end of tape]