

THIS is Larry Sprunk and the following is an interview that I had with Mr. John Baird at his home in Brampton, North Dakota, April 4, 1974, at approximately 2:00 in the afternoon. Mr. Baird and I talked for quite some time; the remainder of our interview is on the succeeding cassette.

LARRY: Well, John, how did the Bairds end up in North Dakota?

JOHN: How did they end up? Well, my grandad was in the Civil War. He was on the S.S. Joliette. He was in the navy travellin' up and down the Mississippi River and haulin' supplies south. And how he come to this country? After the war a bunch of 'em was sent and they built up Old System, South Dakota--the old fort down on Four Mile Lake. Then later on they built the one out of stone that's there now about seven or eight miles from the old site. Fort System is still in existence, you know, down there. You probably know about that. And they used to take and haul freight down here to Fort Ransom and he decided that the prairie chickens there was so great that when he got out of the army, he would someday live in what is Sargent County now. That was before this was a state before 1889! Well, he went back to Wisconsin. He got out in '67; the war was over in '65. He was there a few years and come out here and got married, raised a family--partly--and left there in 1886 and came to what is known as the Blackstone up here four or five miles north on the work train from Andover with two immigrant cars and that was as far as the rails was laid then. Cogswell wasn't there, the Soo Railroad wasn't there and it was the first two immigrant cars--so the record shows--that come up on this Milwaukee! The one was loaded with lumber and the other one was loaded with household goods and a pair of oxen and the family to Blackstone. There ain't a board there now either--Blackstone! Well, he filed on a homestead. He homesteaded two quarters of land; he homesteaded a Tree Claim in what is now Sargent Township. No, Forman Township! It's just across the road from Sargent Township and the lumber that come that time is still in that barn and the barn is still standing.

LARRY: Oh, is that right?

JOHN: That's right! Right up here four ^{or} five miles. And then two or three years later the Great Northern come in and Brooks had the land on the south side of the railroad and Baird had it on the north side and they had scraps over what the town would be named. Brooks won by giving the railroad ~~forty~~ acres of land and they called it Brooksland. It ain't Brooklyn like Brooklyn, New York, but it's Brook~~land~~--Brook~~land~~, see? There ain't a building there now--just a foundation or two. It was quite a town once! A hardware store and a lumberyard and there was a section^{house} and a good elevator and stockyards and depot and three or four ^{or five} guys in town livin' and a couple o' grocery stores. had a grocery store; I can remember that yet. And that was in my time. I was born in 1900 and I can remember Gredisus Grocery Store. We used to trade there, you see. We just lived about a half a mile from the town, see. The town would be just straight south of us.

LARRY: What was your grandfather's name, John?

JOHN: John.

LARRY: Oh, he was John too, huh?

JOHN: Ya, John A.--John Alexandria. My name is John Morris. I was named after Grandpa Baird and Grandpa Murphy. His first name was--they called him John, but his real name was Morris Murphy and that's how I got that name.

LARRY: That was your mother's father?

JOHN: Mother's father, ya. He come to this country in an early time. He run a sawmill in Black River, Arkansas, at Mobile, Arkansas. That's in the northeast corner of Arkansas. My dad bought a threshing machine in 1901 and Ellis used to come out from Arkansas and run the engine. And he made three, four ^{, five} trips and he liked North Dakota so much better than Arkansas and they paid so much better wages, he reasoned, that he talked the family to come. So then Grandpa Baird--see, my Uncle Ellis married one of Grandpa's sisters, Mary, and then they come to Dakota and they both died here over here on a farm.

LARRY: So your grandfather on your mother's side was a Southerner?

JOHN: Ya, right--an ~~Arkansaser~~ ^{Arkansaser}

LARRY: Right and your grandfather on your father's side was a Yankee, then?

JOHN: Ya, and they fought the Civil War over a good many times! Grandpa Baird was in the navy and Grandpa Murphy was what they call a bushwhacker. I've heard a lot of history about that! These guys that was cuttin' wood--they'd have what they'd call a wood station along the river to load these steamboats, you know? And the government would have a bunch of log or woodchoppers and they'd cart it up along the river and then they'd load it. Their deal was to snipe off these woodchoppers, you know. Raise up out of the bush and get one of 'em and they were called bushwhackers, you see, because they were hiding in the brush and things like that, see. And, of course, they didn't agree. Grandpa ~~Baird~~ ^{Murphy} thought that Lincoln was a bastard and Granpa Baird thought that there never was anybody in the world like him, you know. Well, you know how it would be?

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: And, of course, Richmond was the Capitol of the South.

LARRY: You mean that your Grandpa Murphy thought that Lincoln was a bastard?

JOHN: Ya, that's what I mean; ya, that's what I mean, ya! And then this propaganda--that's the first time I ever ^{seen how it worked} heard of it! Grandpa Murphy had the idea that if you had a bunch of slaves, why, you know--a good buck nigger would sell for ²⁵⁰⁰ ~~2500~~ bucks and a female would sell for maybe 1500 depending on age and condition. And Granpa Baird had the idea when you got up in the mornin' to show 'em who was boss, why, you'd shoot two, three of 'em to show the other ones that you meant business! But Grandpa Murphy said, "Who in the hell would shoot a \$2500 ~~2500~~ nigger, a couple of 'em, just to show 'em who was boss?" He said, "You Yankees got that kind o' stuff fed to you in ~~newspapers~~ Yankee newspapers!" See? And that's the way they'd argue, you know.

And, of course, it was true--course Grandpa never ~~meant~~^{meanted} it--that the first two or three years, you know, the South fought pretty much over the North didn't they?

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: They got within just a few miles of Washington before the turning point, you know, the Battle of--oh, what was the name of that battle just before the....

LARRY: Gettysburg?

JOHN: Ya, Gettysburg. That was the turning point of the war, you see, and then they started losing out, see. Up until then, why, they darned near got to the capitol--t'aint very far.

LARRY: No. Murphy's an Irishman; what was Baird--English?

JOHN: Irish.

LARRY: Irish too, huh?

JOHN: Ya.

LARRY: So you're full-blooded Irish?

JOHN: Ya, ya.

LARRY: Well, now your dad was born in. ~~Wisconsin~~

JOHN: Wisconsin.

LARRY: Wisconsin.

JOHN: He was 14 years old when he came here. Let's see--wait a minute. He was born the 30th of March of '71 and come in 1896 or '86 I mean. That would be what? Nine and six--that's fifteen years wouldn't it?

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: He was fifteen years old; he was the oldest one in the family. I could show you the picture of the house. Now a lot of the reading on the back of it.... That was taken--they got here in June--in the fall. And that's my dad--no, that's my dad right there! Now that was--what was it--Charley, George, Jim, Roy and Aunt Grace, see, and these here is friends--John A. Baird and family 1884, see.

LARRY: Now this was John [REDACTED] here?

JOHN: Ya, with my granddad and that was my grandmother. Now technically they had money! Most people, you know, lived in a sod house.

LARRY: Right.

JOHN: I was born in a sod house in Morton County at Shields the 13th day of May, 1900. I got those glass plates. I don't know whether I can find them or not. My granddad was a photographer along with--he drilled over 90 percent of the artesian wells in this basin in the early day.

LARRY: Oh?

JOHN: He had two rigs running; he built 'em himself. Down a 1,000 feet, you know. Most all these wells around here--some of them are played out, but John Baird build 'em. He had one rig and then he built another one. That was later years, see, along about 1900 back in there, see. And I can remember grandpa [REDACTED] ^{drilled} wells back in 1906, '07, '08. I used to be with him. Hell, they drilled day and night, you know--two shifts. They'd come on at 6:00 in the morning and leave and the other guys come on at 6 and go 'til 6 in the morning. 12 hour shifts and they'd drill a well in about 3 days.

LARRY: How did those drills work, John?

JOHN: Well, it was the walking beam type. It had two gears that was off of center. They were called the wobble gears and they'd pull the--this was the drum here and the rope would go up over the tower and down to the [REDACTED] jethead. And as that pulled it down it would raise--well, say, 500 feet of drill rod that was terrible heavy thick wall, you know. It would be that big around with a hole in it about the size of your thumb and there was water forced down through that, [REDACTED] see, and that would raise it and then drop it quick, you know, [REDACTED] and then it would raise it and drop it quick, see. These gears would go--the long gears on this side on the short side of this one would make it slow and the opposite would make it come up in a hurry, see, [REDACTED] and let it drop.

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Well, you didn't let it drop solid like that! That would ruin or raise hell with the threads so you did it with the spring of the rope. Just before the strike it would bounce--an awful shock blow, see. Ya, I've been with him a lot o' times. When the railroad built through--the Soo Railroad come up ^{from} ██████████ Haakinson and up to Napoleon. This railroad then had built up to what was known as Harlem. There ain't a board there either--some foundations is all. When they crossed the railroad--the Soo Railroad crossed the Milwaukee up here at Cogswell. The track now is tore up from Cogswell to Brampton, you know--back in the '30's. Well, Blackstone decided it would be nicer to be on two railroads so they moved north and when they did, why, Harlem moved south and NicholSEN, which was west ^{four, five or six miles,} decided that they had better move east. And ██████████ ^{Tiwanda} (?) which was three or four miles east, moved to the junction and that made Cogswell. Now this county--I guess you know that anyway. Sargent Cogswell was a Sargent in the Civil War and so was old Captain Forman. That town was named after ██████████--Cap. Forman. That's the county seat of this county now. Cogswell was at one time for a year or two. And then they called the town there Cogswell and named the County Sargent after him--Sargent, you see, Sargent Cogswell. And the township that Cogswell is in is named Sargent--Sargent Township. There are 24 townships in this county and Forman is dead center of the county. It's 18 miles and 18 miles, 12 and 12, you see, and 4 times 6 is 24.

LARRY: Now when your grandfather moved to where he homesteaded those two quarters, who was in ~~the~~ family? Your dad was the oldest?

JOHN: Ya, right there!

LARRY: So there was Charles....

JOHN: Charles, Frank, Jim, Roy and Grace.

LARRY: Did anymore come after that?

JOHN: Oh, ya! There was Della and Hattie.

LARRY: And your grandfather stayed there then?

JOHN: Well, he retired and went to Cogswell, but he still owned the farm. He built a house in Cogswell; he built that house in 1909. The reason ~~why I know~~ I went to school in Cogswell and the school was kinda--oh, the way they were placed it was a long way for a kid to go so they'd take me up and I would live with grandpa and go to school--1906. In 1906 I went to school at the old schoolhouse in Cogswell. Part of it's still standing! 1908 they built the new schoolhouse that's still standing, ^{but} they're not using it. It's a brick building, you know--1906. 1907 and '08--let's see. 1908 I messed a lot around with my teacher. I was in the third grade--no, Miss Heine was my teacher in the third grade, but then the fourth grade was in the same room. First and second, third and fourth, fifth and sixth, seventh and eighth in four big rooms, you see--two to the room. I went to school there 'til 1910 or '11--'11 I think. And then we moved and then I finished school in the country school. I worked pretty fast. I learned a lot o' things since, but--oh, I had methods of.... My dad was awful good in figures and he had what they call a short method. He used a constant and all that, you know--multiplied by eight and cut off the right-hand figure and multiply it by seven times seven times seven for 343 and for a ton o' hay and all that, you know. And I used to do this too which was contrary to 'em. 4 and 6 is ten; I'd just put a dot. 3 and 7 is 10--another dot--and come on down. 3 dots would be 30 and 3 would be 33. And I would add faster! Although the teacher would mark it wrong, but I had the right number. I had a little arithmetic mixed up in that and a little of the metric system too, I guess, by 10's. Dad came down there one time and he said, "They can't understand this." "Well, he gets the right answers, but he don't do it the way we're supposed to do it." "Well," the old man said, "as long as you're gettin' the right answers it's suitin' me." That's the way it went. ~~_____~~

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Like measure and stuff, why, a common ordinary wagon^{2nd}box would be: 3 times 3 is 9 and 9 times 10 is ninety, multiplied by 8 is 720 and we cut off the right-hand figure is 72 bushel. I could do that right--well, I could do that in that....

LARRY: As fast as you just did it.

JOHN: Ya, as fast as I just did it.

LARRY: You say you finished school out in the country?

JOHN: Ya, Scrubville.

LARRY: Why did you.... You mean your dad....

JOHN: The eighth grade is as far as I ever went.

LARRY: Your dad moved or your grandpa moved?

JOHN: Ya, my dad moved. My dad.... My mother was staying--went through.... I never did know exactly, but it was something like this. A Catholic orphanage placed her with a family by the name of Magee, Amos Magee and Bridgette, when she was about 16, 17, 18 years old. Well, dad was workin' there and that was right up this road here where Blackstone used to set about four or five miles up the road here. Well, when they opened up this land on the Soo Reservation out here in Morton County--I think it was before the turn of the century, -^bbut anyway there was some land out there that was up for homestead and he hadn't used his rights yet although my granddad had, see. So he went out and he homesteaded a quarter o' land and planted a few trees on it--now the one that built a sod house and married my mother, see. Magee and my dad with a covered wagon and the family, Magee's family, and my mother--they had no kids of their own--went out there and drove the cattle out to.... Well, there was a ferry there right across from Fort Yates....

LARRY: Gate's Ferry wasn't it?

JOHN: Ya, something like that. And they went across the river and they homesteaded on the Cannonball River. There's a little town by the name of Shields. It's southeast--no, it's northeast of town.

The river runs on a slant, you know--about three and a quarter miles. And they built a sod house. This is funny dimensions--18 by 60! It had four rooms in it. And although he had a little money he put two by four's in the inside and lapped and plastered it so they couldn't see the sod. On some glass plates here--I don't know where exactly to find them, but they're upstairs in a bunch of stuff. I've got pictures of the inside of that house and one thing and another, the outside and Rattlesnake Butte that was then kind of that shape and a burning coal mine out there that's now out in that part o' the country. It wasn't out here three, four years ago. I've got a picture of that too. Went into the cattle business and one thing and another and Magee built a house. Well, then the Black Leg took dad's cattle. He'd been out there '95, '96, '97, '98, '99, '100 and I was born in 1900. Well, then he got discouraged and decided that he'd sell out. So he was down diggin' some lignite coal out of the bottom of the crik and a fella come along by the name of Rist and he said, "You know I'd sell out." "Well," Rist said, "what do you mean sell out?" "Well," he said, "I'll sell the remaining cattle, the two quarters of land and the house and everything like that for 500 bucks." So he got 500 gold dollars and he kept a team and covered wagon, a wagon that was covered, and a saddle horse and some household furniture and moved back to Cogswell in 1901. Moved back here and landed on the Nelson place. Now I know that by hearsay, see? I know we lived there. Well, then....

LARRY: That was the year you were born?

JOHN: No, I was born in 1900! See I was 14, 15 months when they come back, see, on this Nelson's place. Well, they later called it Slim Nelson's place. Course grandpa still was here and everything like that and that's how we got back here. Well, then here about three years ago I went back out there. I had never been out there before, see, as far as I can remember! Rattlesnake Butte and all has got the peak wore off of it--over 65 years.

Shields--I could never remember what that looked like, but it's all broken down, you know. Rotted down. There was just one little store there and a place where they sold beaver. The railroad had been taken up and all that. I've got a picture--you know they've damned that river up further down and it's all water now. Fort Yates--see that time Morton County was all one County. Now it's three! There's Sioux and Morton and Grant. Well, you see, Shields would [redacted] be in Grant. It would be just across--the Cannonball River is the line between Sioux and Grant you know. I seen a pickup come into town. A fella got out of it looked about 50 years old and I walked ^{up} [redacted] to him and I said, "I was born here--1900." I said, "I know nothing about it, but," I said, "how long you been here?" "Well," he said, "I've been here since 1925. That's my spread over there." A ^{pretty} nice lookin' ranch. I said, "You wouldn't happen to know where there is a sod house?" And, I said, "I'll give you a pretty good description." I said, "When it was built--there was no surveyed land, this here, at that time--it was 16 by 60 with a porch to the east." And I said, "After they had lived in it about six months here come a couple o' guys lookin' through a glass and who was it but High Soles and Joe Sunday from Cogswell, ^{was} [redacted] a surveying team that dad knew, and the section line cut the porch off!" He said, "I know all about it. I own the land." "Well," I said, "could I go to it?" He said, "You come home to dinner with me and then," he said, "we'll get in my jeep and we'll go over there." So I went over. Well, this long bank of--and some decayed wood is there. And, sure enough, the section line was right tight up agin the mound! They had it kind o' bent out a little bit--kind of a trail. And that was true. Well, then the abstract--he had the abstract of it. Charley Baird had filed on this land [redacted] and sold it for \$1 [redacted] and other considerations. You know how they used to know that, you know. It was 500 gold dollars to a man by the name of Rist.

Then that house was a schoolhouse-- think of it--in that township until 1925. Then later years a fella by the name of Murphy, no relation to me, had a store in it during the depression--a grocery store! So this fella told me.

LARRY: In the house you were born in?

JOHN: In the house I was born in! That was a schoolhouse. It was so nice inside, I 'spose, as sod houses go that it become a schoolhouse. That's a fact.

LARRY: What did your dad do ~~██████~~ after he got back to Cogswell?

JOHN: Here's the house that Grandpa Baird built in Cogswell and there's their car--a twin cylinder 1906 Ford. That was grandpa's car. He's standin' there, but Uncle George was takin' that bell down to the depot and I 'spose that's about as far as it would run which is seven, eight blocks from Cogswell. But he built--he was a kind of a carpenter. He was a jack-of-all-trades. He built that house in Cogswell when he retired and drilled wells from there for years. And my dad traded the old rig in and bought that one in 1908. It says somethin' on the other side of it I think.

LARRY: Ya, 1907 it says.

JOHN: Ya, 1907. Now the Baird brothers--now this is on the Walter Lewis Farm, Sargent County, Sargent Township. You know how a partnership goes! It's a damn poor ship to sail in so dad bought them out after the second or third year and then he had it goin'.

LARRY: Your dad didn't have a crew or a rig before that did he?

JOHN: Ya, from 1902 'til he traded it in on this rig. I got a picture of that one too, around here. It was a smaller rig with a 20 horse engine and a smaller seperator. This was a big outfit here.

LARRY: Looks like it, ya.

JOHN: See the bundle teams. See that was a 40 by 63 inch seperator and a 32 ~~██████~~ double cylinder Reeves Engine.

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I think there's 12 bundle teams here--I don't know-- one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, ya.

LARRY: [REDACTED] 13, ya. So after he got back from Shields he started right away?

JOHN: Right away.

LARRY: And he had a threshing rig besides farming?

JOHN: Ya.

LARRY: Did he take over your grandfather's farm?

JOHN: Well, he did for awhile and then grandpa sold it. Dad was kind of funny. He kind of bought the place for so much money and he paid some--not much. But anyway he farmed that and grandpa had [REDACTED] [REDACTED] it.... Just before World War I, you know, land went up to \$110 an acre. A fella come along and offered him 60--no, \$80. A fella by the name of John Stout. Well, the old man had bought it for a quarter of that way back. And the old man said to grandpa, "I'll just forget it and you take the \$80 an acre--and you take that." The old man could have made that profit, but he thought grandpa--you know. So that's the way he did it. Then we built a brand new place 80 miles....

LARRY: But until he sold your grandfather's farm to this guy for \$80 he farmed it?

JOHN: Ya, for 80 an acre along with other land. For several years we done all our plowing with this engine. 1912, '13, '14, '15, '16 we done all our plowing and plowed out besides--plowed for the neighbors.

Another thing we done with it! If you had some pasture to breakup or somethin', why, he would breakup.... You'd come to him and you want this broke; he'd do it for a quarter of the crop. No flax; no money! He didn't get skunked. He'd break it and seed it. He'd just....

LARRY: One-fourth of whatever....

JOHN: Ya.

LARRY: Well, how many [REDACTED] brothers and sisters did you have then, John?

JOHN: Well, let's see I had.... I got one brother and we're 20 years apart and a month. I'm 74 and he's 54. He was born in April and I was born in May and--let's see--I got one, two, three, four, five, six, seven sisters. There's Margaret, Cora, Nelly, June, Martha, Momee, Ruby. Five, six, seven, huh?

LARRY: Right. You were the first born though?

JOHN: Ya, ~~Charles~~ Charles and myself.

LARRY: So you were born in 1900 and there were seven sisters and then your brother.

JOHN: Ya, he was born in 1920. See I follow the years--in April.

LARRY: And you lived with your grandfather in Cogswell until you got to....

JOHN: Well, stayed there or I'd be home.

LARRY: Oh, just during the summer?

JOHN: We-1-1....

LARRY: Weekends?

JOHN: Ya, ^{hell, ya!} the way they done that dad would take him up a bunch o' pototoes and he had a cow and he'd furnish the hay and bring him up a load o' oats and butcher a hog--why, give him half of it--or butcher a beef--give him a quarter. He had more meat to eat and stuff like that you could shake a stick at and the other brothers did the same thing. He could ^{o!} started a butcher shop! I don't think there ever was any money exchanged hands, but everytime Ma would come, why, she'd have everything in the book and give it to grandpa, you know. We lived pretty good, you know, off of the farm eggs and cream and butter--everything--you know. It wasn't always supermarkets them times! And you make your own dairy butter and everything like that, see.

LARRY: What would you do during the summer then, John, as you were growing up--travel with your grandfather digging wells?

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JOHN: No, no, I'd be with him[^] different times. When I could, I'd be workin'--when I got big enough to do anything on the place, well, then, ^{done} of course, summers you had to, you know, milk cows. I and Nellie ~~████~~ a lot o' milking. She was the third sister I think. She'd rather be out the barn than she would in the house and there were a lot o' girls anyway to help ma. And we run a big outfit there in Straudville! We had seven quarters of land and....

LARRY: So that's why your dad was still farming your grandfathers, but he was renting besides?

JOHN: Right. Down there we'd have grandpa's half section and we'd have the Schwastock place, ^{no one} there was ~~████~~, and then Lewis--this is Walter Lewis here--W.W. Lewis. That was Wal Lewis. He owned 19 quarters in an 80--all around us, you know. He was related to us anyway and we'd rent all the damn land we wanted. And he liked to rent it to us because we had this big steam power and we'd get that all done in the fall. Course it was a sin to ^{let} ~~████~~ any of this stubble stand over the winter in them days, you know. Everything had to be plowed in the fall, you know. Well, we had 14 bottoms on here. When I was 12, 13 years old, I'd haul water for this. And everything was artesian wells; you'd just drive up and throw the hose in, you know, monkey around and fill it and then go back to the engine and siphon off, you know. If we went onto a quarter **M**onday mornin', **W**ednesday night we'd pull off of it. 160 acres turned black! And with a team, you see, that'd be 5 acres a day--twenty miles. It'd take you quite a while to do that, see. But we had one team with a hired man on it. When the stubble got so narrow that you couldn't go another--with 12 bottoms, you know?

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: Why then we'd just move over and strike out another land and he'd plow it out.

LARRY: How many hour day would you put in?

JOHN: Daylight 'til dark. That moved about three mile an hour; that was plowing. And most of those engines moved about two and a quarter, but a Reeves **B**low **E**ngine run--they would travel including the slippage--about three miles an hour. The mole boards was made that way, slow--you know. ^{Nowadays} ~~they're~~ they're a slow turn so you can go ten miles an hour and don't throw the dirt; but them used to twist like that, you know.

LARRY: Curve over more.

JOHN: Ya, more, see, for a slow.... A team would walk--well, if you could get 20 miles with a team on a gangplow in 10 hours, that'd be 2 miles an hour, you was doin' pretty fair. That'd be exactly 5 ~~acres~~ acres with a 14 inch gang and this would be 3. A team couldn't follow it, see. Well, God, 14 bottoms, you know--geez! Ya, m-a-an.

LARRY: So you'd probably go from six in the morning 'til ten at night?

JOHN: Well, not like that, no. Daylight 'til dark in the fall would be a little different. Hitch the team up--oh, you'd be out there before the sun was up and then try to make another around maybe after the sun went down. It'd still be twilight or something, you know, and then they'd bank the fire, throw in seven, eight shovelfuls of coal, shut all the dampers and everything and you'd have hot water in the morning, you know. You'd probably have steam up! Then you'd ^{break up} ~~break up~~ your bed and turn on the blower and you was off again.

LARRY: You mean you could bank the fire in the firebox at night and close down the dampers and it would stay hot all night, huh?

JOHN: Right.

LARRY: And you could fire it up in the morning in half the time, huh?

JOHN: Quarter of the time! Just break the fire up. When you could turn the blower on, you could almost see the hands move and, of course, coal engine you can't do that, you know; but you'd break that crust up, shake your grates down, clean out your--well, before you touched it you'd clean your flues, o' course, with a flue cleaner and then you'd

When the pipe wrench tried to get through, you see, why, you know, pulled them big studs right off the boiler, but they were in castings ~~they wasn't into~~ the boiler proper so there was no blow or nothin', see. We was broke down. That was in 1912. Patterson had just bought a acetylene torch, the first one we had ever seen in the country, a blacksmith in Cogswell, in Minneapolis. He bought it at a fair down there and then he didn't take delivery on it so then he went to the Dunwoody School down there and learned how to operate it. And it was a damned good thing he did because he built them teeth up with that acetylene torch, a fella by the name of Elmer Patterson in Cogswell. They were broke out and he drilled four, five, ~~eight~~ eight holes, screwed in studs, you know--cut off good and tight--built a brack hearth out of brick, preheated it, had this open so ~~he~~ he could move asbestos paper around and he built those teeth in there and then took it on a thin wheel, had a chain from the ceiling--had it this way, you see, so he could handle it through the hub--and he'd grind those teeth ^{out} ~~smooth~~, smooth 'em up. I can remember that too. I don't know what the cost was, but Lee Borden straightened the shaft. He was a machinist--come out and drilled the studs out. They were an inch and a quarter I remember. I was with him half the night and ~~he had~~ he had a press drill--no electric drill--and then two by four and turnin' that thing, you know, and ~~he'd~~ he'd sharpen the ~~bit~~ bit a little bit. O-o-oh, that was a mean job! I don't know what the cost was, but we didn't do anymore. We was almost done breaking there anyway.

LARRY: How long did it take then to fix it up again?

JOHN: Oh, four, five days. Oh, it took more than it. It took 72 hours for that big casting to cool. Well, that's what they told him at Dunwoody, you see. Otherwise the expansion and contraction ~~of~~ of it would crack it 'cause it was a cast iron. It was a circle. If it ain't a circle, well, that's alright--you know the stress on it and everything.

So when he got done, why, he just opened that and filled it full all around there where the main heat was with slack lime to keep the chill off of it, you see.

LARRY: To slow it down.

JOHN: Ya, ya--72 hours to cool.

LARRY: Was that rig hard to steer?

JOHN: No, you keep the chains good and tight so there was no slack, why, no. You couldn't move it when it wasn't moving, of course, but when it was moving, why--the wheel was that big and heavy.

LARRY: How big of a turning radius would it have, John?

JOHN: Well, oh, I don't know what the circle would be.

LARRY: Would you have to leave a lot of head land at the end?

JOHN: Well, no, not too much. ~~They'd~~ They'd be about down and back and down with a 14 bottom plow. That would be--let's see--14.... It'd be about 20 feet--wouldn't it--60 feet. And you'd come alongⁱⁿ here square--come in--and then when they ~~plowed~~ plowed out the head land, see.

LARRY: And you could plow out the head land with the Reeves, huh?

JOHN: Ya, oh, ya.

LARRY: I thought maybe you'd have to do that with a horse?

JOHN: No. Oh, there might be a corner or a little patch--you know

~~.....~~
JOHN: Right--where you come around like this.

LARRY: Make it squared out a little bit, huh?

JOHN: Make it squared out a little bit. Of course you could do that with a gang, you know.

LARRY: Was that a three man operation then?

JOHN: That was a three, ya--tankman, engineer and the man that steered it. Dad would step onto the plows--each gang had a lever. Seven levers and they were set like this; two, two, two, two. Well, naturally you'd take out this one first and then by the time the other one got there--they were, you know, staggered and be squared by the end. ~~.....~~

And that's the way you'd put ~~them~~ in too.

LARRY: Drop the first one first and then....

JOHN: And, you know, you'd have a line along there where you drop it and the old man was an expert at that. He was awful particular about--he said he didn't give a damn about ^{how} the center field ^{looked} ~~work~~, but he wanted the edges perfect, you know. He was great for that! Well, they all ^{were} ~~good~~--good horses and everything them days.

LARRY: Could your dad pull it out and set it back in again as fast at three miles an hour?

JOHN: Well, no, he used to throttle it down.

LARRY: Gear it or slow it down, ya.

Start
JOHN: ~~Yes, just crack the throttle a little bit.~~ A double engine is so ^{nice} to handle because it will start from nothing and it will just barely creep. I remember one time we was fencin' a half section of ground and we cemented the post--the corner post. ^{And then} Every 80 rods we cemented ~~another~~ ^{another} one, a square post--a good one. A mile of fence--well, you could have stretched it in 20 rod lengths, you know, with ^a ~~(ab)~~ lever business. ^{But} we took the old Reeves down there ^[laughs] and hooked her up and ^{he} just cracked the throttle a little bit and ^{held} go ~~along~~ along and ^{raise it up} ~~lettin'~~ ^{you'd} ~~like~~ like that and wave your hat and he'd crack her just a little and ~~move~~ ^{to} move her up another foot. ^{boy, go!} Why, I tell you that was the best fence tightener ^{to} ever ^{to} come down the ~~line~~ ^{pike}. ^f When we lived over there on Grandpa Baird's place--you can't do them things now--the schoolhouse, the ^{Brooklyn} ~~Brooklyn~~ Schoolhouse, that'd be district #4 in Forman Township, was down here in a slough, just on the edge of a slough. Well, Frank Baird never had any children, Allan never had any children, Fred Donalds didn't have any children. All the kids was up in that corner! So my dad went over to see the what-do-you-call-it, the school board, why they couldn't move that school up ~~where~~ where the kids was. "Oh, no!"

So he went up to Cogswell and he got them two big timbers from ~~the~~ King, ^{Wade} jacked that schoolhouse up ~~and~~ we called it the ~~College~~ ^{Brooklyn} College Box ~~and~~ and took that steam engine and moved it to ~~the~~ ^{Brooklyn} ~~place~~ ^{Laughly} Oh, they were gonna ~~sue~~ sue the old man and one thing and another! He said, "You just go right ahead." He said, "Don't tell me what you're ~~gonna~~ ^{gonna} do! I know what I am. I moved the schoolhouse ~~to~~ ^{where} the kids, ^{was}" he says, "and you can go and sue if you want to!" But they never done it. But that was sense wasn't it?

LARRY: Sure was, ^{yeah} ~~so~~. ~~stop~~

^{here} JOHN: That there was a stone ~~pile~~ ^{stop} over there where the old foundation is now--I can remember that. And then another time dad was gonna build a house. I had that telegram that burned up in dad's house years ago. Across the road was a fella by the name of Stanton; they owned a quarter of land. And his attorney that was lookin' after it in Osh Kosh, Wisconsin, his name was W.W. Waterhouse. So this house sat vacant and, of course, there was no vandalism then even though business was good and everything like that so mother said one day to him, "Why don't you try to buy that house?" "O-o-h," he says like that. "Well," mother said, "it's just settin' there." So dad he wired him from Brookland. He'd give him \$50 for the house as is and the telegram come back: Send the money and take the house--W.W. Waterhouse. Two days later we had it moved. Here we see the telegrams were comin' and he changes his mind, but he'd accept the money and he took the house so.... But that was pretty comical wasn't it?

~~John~~ LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: Send the money. Take the house. 50 bucks! See?

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: And take the house--W.W. Waterhouse. Ya, he sold it.

LARRY: You used that Reeves for everything, huh?

JOHN: Ya, we used that for a lot o' things. Why that was the best power there ever was, you know. And here's ^{another thing} ~~so~~ too.

JOHN: Old Man Olsted had a fuel and seed outfit of Harmony, Minnesota. He later bought a lot o' land up here. One of his boys moved up Ole; he's dead now. He had three quarters of land in section 30 in Forman Township right straight south of where we moved the school. The school was across the road from his place, but there were no buildings there, see, when we moved it. They built a brand new set of buildings; Ole lived there. Julius is still living and he's 90 some years old over here. He goes to Texas every year. He's down there now; he'll be back in a few days, Julius Olstead, and he's this fella here on this picture.

LARRY: Oh, ya, ya.

JOHN: Haulin' grain, see? He'd come up and sell coal. The boxcars them times was seven foot wide and thirty-two foot long. You'd get 30 ton in a car. We could lay it into Brookland for \$115 freight and all, - think of it. Well, then our run would be about 40 days threshing and our plow run would probably be 15 days or so. Well, then about 20 days after that one arrived, we'd have another one come, you see--two carloads. That was pretty cheap fuel when you burned a ton a day!

LARRY: Ya, that's right. Was that lignite then?

JOHN: No, that wasn't.

LARRY: Hard coal?

JOHN: No, that was bituminous coal. It come from Indiana--an Illinois coal.

LARRY: Did any of the farmers around here that had those big steam tractors use straw?

JOHN: Ya, most--a lot of 'em did. We never could see it. After all-- you had to pay the man to fire all the time, you had to have another guy with a buckin' pole to bring it around to him and you'd pay him--what-- \$2 a day, \$1.75 or somethin' like that and monkey around with the hazard of fire when a ton o' coal would be a little more than \$3. It would be 3 30's is 90. It would be about \$3.50 a ton and the engineer would do his own firing!

And, of course, that big old wheel, three and half foot wide, you know. Well, that engine weighed 40,000 pounds. It would be 20 ton, why, just mashed that, you know. Well, I was monkeying with this and Grandpa Baird said, "Where did you get that?" "Well," I said, "cow's head down there fell out of the skull." "Where's the skull?" Well, I told him what I'd done with it. It had already been turned under and, you know.... But I suppose when the Indians--whoever it was that shot that buffalo went and lodged the brain, I 'spose, and then when it fell, it broke the stick off. It had about that much stick and the lace leather was still on it where it was tied, you know. It was split and then tied and that was still on there. Granpa had that for years in his ~~trunk~~ ^{trunk} or in different places.

LARRY: Did those plows scour good?

JOHN: Oh, ya! Course we didn't have much trouble. There's lots of places where it don't scour like the Red River Valley, you know, and Montana, but we never had that trouble here. This railroad here is the dividing point between two different kinds of ground as near as you could draw the line. Anything west of this railroad is sandy.

LARRY: Milwaukee Railroad?

JOHN: Ya, thank you. Anything on this side is the opposite, but it's not so sticky as the gumbo in the Red River Valley by no means. It's nice land to work, but this is corn country. They raise as high as 115, '20 bushels an acre, out there, you know, with that new deal now settin' the rows closer together and fertilizing and that, you know. I can remember old John Miller had the first corn I ever saw. A bunch o' neighbors went one Sunday to look at it. It got about that high; it had nubits ^(?) about that long north of Brookland about three miles. He put in 15, 20 acres o' corn; he got some seed. And we all went up and looked at it. And now under this new technique and ~~one thing~~ one thing and another, why, they're raisin'--well, 80 bushel is common and it went on up to 100, '15, '20, you know.

LARRY: Did your dad have any trouble, John, keeping the farm going and still doing all that custom work?

JOHN: No.

LARRY: What--would you thresh yours first and then....

JOHN: No, ma used to give him the dickens for that. Wal Lewis would be first; there'd be about 13 quarters. He was the first job. Then the others would be.... Well, there would be Huwitts, Lambs, Schwarzrock, Jim Baird, Frank Baird, Fred Donalds, George Allan, Charley Lewis, ^a ~~brother~~ ^{omit comma} to Wal. We never could thresh with the Brooks. Brooks and the Bairds were born pretty close together in Osh Kosh, Wisconsin. They come out here in the early day about the same time. Well, Brooks come out later, but we never could thresh for them because they were German or Dutch, Steins and the Brooks, and the others was full-blooded Irish. And down there, why, the Bairds all lived on the Dickey Road and the Brooks lived on Wooden Sioux Alley--they called it.

LARRY: Is that what they called it?

JOHN: Ya, so they didn't get along very good, you know, and we never could thresh for them, but we threshed for everybody around ~~them~~ ^{em}. And then Woolsteads got a rig, a steam rig; and, o' course, they didn't cut into our business because they ^{come} ~~came~~ this way, you know. We threshed for Butkees. We threshed for.... Oh, we had a good run every year. You know the same guys would come year after year. A lot of 'em from Oklahoma and Kansas especially.

TAPE B -- SIDE 1

THIS is Larry Sprunk. The following is a continuation of the interview that I had with Mr. John Baird of Brampton, North Dakota. The interview was held April 4, 1974, and began at 2:00 in the afternoon.

The remainder of the interview is held on the other side of this cassette.

JOHN:air volume and blow all the chaff away from it and out of it and everything like that. And then turn back the blower and we'd let this thing down here. You could let that tip down like this, ~~away here~~ ^{would} and the wing feeders, they ~~come~~ ^{would} come off, and then they'd pull that into the

shed. They use to swing around along side the machine this way, you know, and put it in the shed and shut the big door. We'd take a cable and go on ~~to~~ to the shed and pull it in, see.

LARRY: The feeder you mean?

JOHN: Ya, the whole seperator, ya, and then shut the big doors and then run the engine around and run it into this side into the south and drain it and see

~~that~~ that everything was drained properly, clean out the firebox and clean the flues out. You see in ^(?) there's a sulpher content that upsets iron if you don't--you know. They used to claim.... Well, it's a fact. We'd clean out everything and put her to bed.

LARRY: How long would a rig like that that.... What kind of a seperator was it?

JOHN: Reeves.

LARRY: Oh, it was a Reeves separator and a Reeves engine?

JOHN: Right, a Reeves outfit.

LARRY: How long did your dad run that? He bought it new?

JOHN: He bought it new and we sold it in 1916 in June or July.

LARRY: And he got it in 19--?

JOHN: '07. In the fall of ~~07~~ ^{but} ~~we~~ we had one before that, see--a littler one that he traded in on this one. He traded that in to a machine dealer in Cogswell by the name of Prentiss and White, L.H. White and George Prentiss, ^{omit Commo} and traded that ^{small} one off and got this bigger one. It was shipped out of Fargo, a Reeves outfit, from there on Front Street. Well, I never knew of gettin' any repairs for it. Outside of that break down that time I never knew of ^{ever} gettin.... I can't remember of ever buyin' a piece for that separator or that engine. We never rerun it or nothin' and we done a lot o' plowin' with it. We done a lot o' threshing with it; we done moving with it and everything else and tightened fences with it. No, I never knew of any outside of that break ^{down} and that was no fault of the engine.

You lay a big pipe wrench up there, you know, that long in a big gear and you know what would happen--terrible.

LARRY: Did that weld job hold?

JOHN: Oh, ya! The pipe wrench looked like this!

LARRY: Ya, I'll bet it did, ya.

JOHN: Ya, that was somethin'. Oh, man, that was terrible. That was a big break down.

LARRY: I'll bet that hired man felt pretty sheepish?

Now

JOHN: Ya. You know Will Richard.... We wrote him. ~~he~~ he used to live in this country. Cap. Richard was a Captain in the Civil War, owned a place over here and then Willy.... We called him Willy. He was older than I went to Wichita, Kansas, and was workin' around there. I don't know doin' what, but anyway we knew him and knew that he was ^{pretty} handy and he grew up in this country. And dad wrote and asked him to come and work on the threshing rig. Well, he had a 1912 Buick and this was 1912. This was a twin cylinder Buick. It was on the wrong side of the road and there was a lever on the side. You put it forward and you was in low and--let's see--in the center was neutral and you pushed it down part way and you was in low and then on down you was in high and if you ^{pulled it} ~~clear~~ clear back, you was in reverse. And the gasoline tank was under the hood and the engine was under the seat and that was the first car that I learnt to drive. He had a thing built on it; he was ahead of his time. He had a nice cabin built on it, made out of Waynes Coating and posts up and a nice roof and canvass curtains. He could roll 'em up and it said on the side of it "The Gospel Car". And he kind o', you know, quoted the Bible and little stuff like that and he was selling something--that was the way and his expenses comin' up--called Japilac. I don't know exactly what ~~it~~ it was. It come in a tube anyway for colds--kind of a medicine. Well, in different places, you know, where they'd come through they'd have a big write-up, you know; The Gospel Car Was In Town. That was a ~~big~~ curiosity and all ^{this} and that, you know.

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He'd cut this out o' the papers or they'd send 'em to him, you know. He'd give 'em the address. Anyway he come up there. Well, he started to work for us. He had one kid and he was kind o', little bit--you know. So they took that off and set it on two, three railroad ties and they lived in that while they worked for us. And then ~~we~~ took a wagon^{box}, cut a hole here for the brake thing, put a spring seat on it, the steering wheel here--that would be on the right-hand side--and made a kind of a pickup out of it, you know. Well, Willy learnt me how to drive it. Well, it had a box here, what they call a Madison Temp Boiler, you know. It'd drip, drip and drip, drip, drip onto different bearings, you know, and you had to pour a quart of oil in there once in awhile. There was a sewing machine belt or something come out down here and it had a round little pulley and as you went along you'd have to hold your steering wheel like that while you got out this can with ground rosin puttin' on there so it wouldn't slip--that'd be a pepper can. And old Mrs. Lamb.... She was always on the phone talkin' to Mrs. Brooks, you know. And when I got to drivin' it, why, Fred⁹⁰⁰⁰Donalds passed me with a¹ team and I had it wide open^{and} he waved at me. And Mrs. Brooks--and, of course, mother would be rubbing. "That speed demon, John, just went by our place in a cloud o' dust and if he was makin' a mile, he was at least goin' 15 mile an hour!" Well, then ma would give me the devil when I got back for speed and said that not to let me drive it anymore, see. Can you imagine? That's a fact! "Speeding? Well, where did you hear that?" "Well, Mrs. [REDACTED] Lamb said you went by there and you were just acuttin' her!" Well, Donalds went by me one time with a team and got to Cogswell before I did! And here's another thing. I'd pull up in front of Whites Hardware Store in Cogswell and buy 5 gallons of gas and the tank was² pyramid--that is oval like. It was about that big around and sloped^{up} like this, you know, and that was under the hood. He'd take a 5 gallon can and he'd go clear out through the store and I would go with him. He'd look both ways to see if anybody was comin' because that gasoline was dangerous.

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: Nobody in sight. ^{He'd} ~~open~~ the padlock, put the can there, filled it, screw the top on, take this funnel with a chamois in it, come back-- wouldn't walk through the store(that danger)--between the two(Mrs. Wahler), put the funnel and then dump that in there. - 60 cents!

LARRY: For 5 gallons?

JOHN: For 5 gallons. 12 cents a gallon and that tank, I think, held about 10 probably. It was just about that shape, you know. And the running board on the right-hand side you done ~~like~~ like this....

LARRY: Flipped it up, huh?

JOHN: And then you cranked it and then you'd let it down like that. That had seven, eight batteries--dry cells. You know what they are?

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: And a little switch. A little buzz coil on the dash. You'd turn the switch on or off.

LARRY: Ya, did that ever retard an advance spark then too?

JOHN: Oh, ya, it had two things on the steering wheel here, you know, and you throttled it with that thing on the steering wheel, you know. The long one was the throttle and the inside one was the spark. You wanted to be sure that was up so you wouldn't break your arm.

LARRY: Well, how long did you work with a threshing rig then after....

JOHN: Well, I stayed home 'til I was 19 'til I was 21. I decided that, oh, dad was gettin' older and he was gettin' to the part where he wanted to retire and one thing and another so I went to Minneapolis and....

Well, dad bought me a hop automobile on my 21st birthday. I had a \$90 ^{this was in May,} Ford that I bought from Lamb and Cogswell. One day dad come home, and he said, "A fella by the name of George Tuttle wants to see you and your car." Well, I knew he was the dealer in Oakes. He sold the Hullier 8 and the Hup and other machinery. Well, I wondered what he wanted to see me for--kind of deaf, you know. The only time he wasn't deaf is when you said somethin' about him. He could hear a pin drop; but if you wanted to talk about ~~the~~ Oaje(?) or anything, why, he couldn't hear you at all. E-eh?

Well, then I went up there then. I said to George, "You wanna see my car? It's just a Ford." Well," he said, "you can park it out there." Well, I'm ~~gonna~~ gonna park my car out there, ya, so I did. I didn't know what the score was. Then he ~~me~~ ^{told} me that Hup's yours. Dad had traded my car in on it, see. Well, that fall....

LARRY: First new car, huh?

JOHN: Ya ^{Omit} That fall I went to Edmore, North Dakota. ~~Down~~ Down here in this country ~~was~~ there wasn't much so I started out north to Edmore. You know where that is?

LARRY: ~~Yeah~~ Yeah.

JOHN: There was no crop here to speak of much and dad had got hailed out-- bad hail storm. And there was a guy ^{up there} with a binder and I stopped and talked ~~to~~ ^{to} him a few minutes and I asked him if they were lookin' for a man. They got a good crop up there. "Well," he said, "I'm just the hired man." I'm just breakin' these fields loose," he said. "Ed Erickson is the owner and he lives on that big place right over there." He said, "You go and see him." Well, I went down and seen him and, ^{Ya} "Ya," he'd hire me. So, "Well," I said, "I gotta go to Edmore and get a pair o' gloves and some stockins and that." "Fine and dandy! Start ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the mornin'," he said. I shocked for him 191/2 days and he had three, four other guys there. He ^{run} ~~a~~ a pretty big outfit. And then he had it so timed that we got done at noon and we was threshin' after dinner and at dinner ~~time~~ he said to me, "You wanna fire that engine with straw?" And I said, "I can. I know how it's done." "Well," I said, "I won't guarantee nothin' but," I said, "I'll try it." So we started and I could just keep her right on the pin. You just push enough in there to make a roarin' fire; you don't smother it. Then you're in trouble--like a mosquito smudge. Just make a.... You know it's a chute. You know maybe what they are and you just keep ashovellin' in there.

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Advance (?)

Well, ~~it~~, it was a 22 horse ~~engine~~ on a 36 inch separator--nothin' to it. ~~It was a 22 horse engine on a 36 inch separator--nothin' to it.~~ ~~And Sanderlin was the engineer and then pretty soon he'd have to leave at 10:00 and I'd have to run the engine 'til noon and then he'd get around and then we'd move and we'd get her lined up and get to goin' and probably he'd have to leave at 2:00 and go downtown and play pool with his brother-in-law, see, and he'd come back about five or six. So I actually run the engine. Well, then we got a bad rain. Radios was a new thing. They had one--a homemade one. Somebody ~~made~~ ^{in Edmore had} made one and I went down to the Craig Hotel to hear a certain thing. I forget what it was now and it didn't interest me much, but when we stepped out--we didn't know it was snowin'--^w when we stepped out, we stepped out into four inches of new snow. It was snowin', see? This was in the fall, ^{late,} ~~so~~ so the straw got so poor and one thing and another. He went to fir^{ing} ~~ing~~ with coal and then they put me on. A lot of the guys quit, you know, on ^{account} ~~of~~ of the snow. ^{and} they went South. ^{then} And ~~they~~ they put me on the tank wagon and I hauled from what they call, "the coulee", with a six-speed Rheo speedwagon--hauled 14 miles. 14 to and 14 back--water--to the coulee. Had a gasoline engine on there that'd run the pump and everything--nice job. But in the meantime we had quite a little rain that strung us out and I and another fella was the only ones that would work when they wasn't workin'. He'd come out to the bunkhouse and say.... Well, the first time he said ~~it~~ ~~that~~, "I got two tractors--they were Sampsons, two plow tractors--we would like to plow." "Well, ya, sure." And this other guy did too--my pal. He wasn't with me; he was from the East. But ~~was~~ plowed when we couldn't thresh so we was, you know, makin' a little money. This kid that I kind of fell for--I and he was about the same age. I was 21 years old and he was the same. He had a Dodge car, a 1920, and he had it so he could lay the seat down and make a bed and everything like that. In the evening, why, somebody would say, "Gall, I wished I had a package of cigarettes!" He'd have a package of cigarettes.~~

He was always sellin' somethin'--candy, cigarettes, everything! And I remember when they paid us off, the boss said, "Now I'm goin' to pay you off, but," he said, "it's too late for the bank. Tomorrow is Sunday and you can't get 'em cashed 'til Monday and I'm ~~tryin' to do~~ ^{buyin'} it because I want you to have a big dinner for you boys." And when somebody suggested if they could cash their check, they'd have a little poker game and.... Well, they considered ~~how big is it. "Oh, '75 on '80. Well~~ ^{how big is it. "Oh, '75 on '80. Well} ~~it.~~ ^{Well} He cashed it. "Well, can you cash mine?" "Ya, how big?" Well, he charged 'em a \$1 for cashin' the checks and he cashed almost all of 'em ^[laughs] a regular banker! And he wanted me to go West with him. He said he'd worked his way from the East Coast that far in a year and he was gonna go out to Seattle and I had the car sold and everything. ~~Well, he was gonna go to Seattle and I had the car sold and everything.~~ Well, there was a guy willing to buy it, see, and I'd go with him, but there were two other ^{fellas} ~~fellas~~ ^{me} wanted ^{me} to go to Minneapolis. So when we got ready to go that Sunday, why, I said, "Well, I'm gonna flip this dollar. If it's heads I'm goin' to Minneapolis; if it's tails I'm goin' to the West Coast with this fella." ^{wrong one} And I flipped it and it fell on the ~~tail~~ and I went to Minneapolis.

LARRY: What did you do in Minneapolis then, John?

JOHN: Well, I worked for--~~'21~~ was pretty hard to get a job, you know.

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: They told us that. When we come down through the.... These two guys rode with me then--this George Wright and this other fella.

LARRY: You had your car then?

JOHN: Ya, we went down to Bemidji and down through the Brainerd country and on down, you know. And every place we'd stop for gas.... They give me \$15 a piece to drive to Minneapolis with. Every place we'd stop for gas, why, "Where you goin'?" "Minneapolis." "Oh, you can't get a job down there." One hobo was askin' ^{the other one} ~~the other one~~ for a cup of coffee and all this in Hobo Park and they'd tell us that.

I went down there and got down there on a Friday and the St Paul Daily News was.... It's out now, but it was goin' then and I bought that and-- oh, three jobs. Well, one was Holmes and Olsons Nursery. I went down there and they told me all about it and I said, "Oh, I don't know." Well, then I went to Seventh and Wabashaw. It was supposed to be the longest bar this side of the Mississippi River or somethin' like that. An old Irishman run it--and rackin' pool balls and sweepin' floors and one thing and another and board and room and a little money. Well, I didn't.... I left the door open. I said, "Well, I'll see." "Well, we'll see you Monday morning then." And then I went to the other one and that was Murphys Transfer. They just ^{transferred} [redacted] in the city and the vicinity that time. Now you see the trucks all [redacted] over, Murphy, and I worked for them. I got \$27 a week. No, I got \$25 a week and I was a trucker's helper. Well, then about the second week this guy was tellin' me about goin' up north and huntin' deer. The season would be open, you know. Well, he went. Then I drove the truck. Then I was a.... I had a helper and he didn't come back so ^{then} I was a truckdriver. That raised my pay a little--\$27. And I rented a flat on the corner on Pleasant ^{Avenue} [redacted], Marion and--what did I say it was. I worked on Prior Avenue--Summit. There was a ^{Marion} Mississippi streetcar right there. I had a corner flat, everything furnished for \$10 a month. Can you imagine ^{that at that time?} I had [redacted] cookin' privileges, bedroom and everything like that ^{right there} [redacted] on the corner and on the bottom floor. There was less upstairs.

LARRY: So you were makin' pretty good money then?

JOHN: Ya, right. Well, then I went 'til March and then come back and helped dad put the crop in, see.

LARRY: That was in '23, '22?

JOHN: '22, ya, in March of '22.

LARRY: Then what did you do, John?

JOHN: Well, then I did a lot o' hoppin' around. There ain't much history to that though.

LARRY: Well, I don't know! Ya, it is.

JOHN: Well, one time ^I and another fella ^{we} got on a train at Oakes and we went to Jamestown and we grabbed the Northern Pacific and we went to Spokane. That was 1924 and then we come back on the Great Northern through Kalispell and Whitefish and Skobie, Montana, and Minot and on down the ladder. And went into Crookston and got off; caught the next freight out and I don't know why I'm here; but this guy was an expert at it and I was gettin' pretty good, but I wasn't as good as he. He could just reach down and grab. He said, "Never ~~grab the back end of a car~~ because it will throw you inbetween. Always grab the front and it will throw you up agin' the car and you can grab a chance, you know." So I learnt that and everything. We had to run to beat the band to catch this train and they was probably makin' 10 mile an hour and you had to run along side of it to grab it and, of course, when I stepped on, he left 4 or 5^{,6} boxcars go by before he stepped on, see, to be sure that I made it, you know. Then we started to walk towards each other and I said, "Well, we might as well sit down." And we sat down on that catwalk and I don't think it was over 80 rods 'til we went through a bridge and the stringers ^{was} ~~only~~ only about 2 feet above our heads.

LARRY: O-o-o-o.

JOHN: I've thought about that a lot o' times if we'd of still been standin' up--pitch dark. Couldn't see a thing. M-a-an!

LARRY: ~~Sm-a-ash!~~

JOHN: Ya, we walked ^{toward} each other. "Ah," I said, "we might as well sit down." We did and zip, zip, zip, zip right over the top of our heads. Another thing I think a lot about. When I was a little guy, I used to open this firebox, put some straw in and then go in the firebox, you know. It was quite a room, you know. It was 4 feet wide, 7, 8 feet long; ^I ~~could~~ could stand up in it, you know? And I often wondered.... The folks didn't know that I was playin' out there and if that box would have ever closed....

It locks itself on the outside, you know.

LARRY: It would have been the end.

JOHN: They would have looked all over the country for me and they probably.... They might o' looked there, but you'd o' had a steel case--I'll tell ya--around ya. You wouldn't of suffocated because the grates and the flues and everything, you know, but that box.... It's made to close, you know, and you just touch it and it....

LARRY: Slings shut?

JOHN: Ya, it's balanced that way, you know, and it would latch on that notch, you see.

LARRY: Well, John, tell me ^{this. Do} [REDACTED] you remember from growing up around Cogswell and Brampton and Straubville meeting people that stand out in your mind as being good farmers or local characters?

JOHN: Ya, all the Nepsteads. They had lost o' land over there and I worked for 'em years ago. Steinback was another. They're dead now; even Kenny is dead. He was younger than I a little. Old Steinback, I worked for him pickin' corn, Walt Butke, I worked for them; he's dead. We sold the corn ^{we} [REDACTED] picked [REDACTED] to Jimmy Prince by Crete; he's dead. Fred Chessley,--I worked quite a long time for Fred Chessley--a machinery maintenance [REDACTED]. He's dead; his wife is dead. Like old Jake Muffle says, "I don't think I got an enemy in the world that outlived 'em all." That's what he used to say, you know. But then there was outstanding old Lew Perry.

LARRY: He ran a dance hall.

JOHN: Ya, he run the dance hall. I used to run his electric light plant in the dance hall. It wasn't electrically patrolled that time. As the lights come on you had to ^{keep} turn up the rheostat yourself, you know, and as the lights went off you had to start settin' it back yourself, you know, and keep the hand right on 30 amps all the time. A double cylinder Kushman Engine run a 110 volt generator. That was my job. I got my supper free and dance ticket free and so on.

I seen a lot o' fights there. I seen some o' the guys.... Nobody could lick Lew Perry, you know. He run a nice place. He didn't want any rowdy business, but there was always somebody wanted to start something like Turner brothers over there at Oakes, you know. They'd slip in and they put up a sign one time, "If you want to find out who's boss in this outfit, why, start something,"--or something like that. And, oh, Otto Guther and Jakie Muffle. I went to school a little bit there--~~spend~~ a couple o' winters in the Straubville School. I didn't have to go. I knew everything that was in the book, but I'd just go and sit down anyway between chores back in the '20's.

LARRY: John, what would you do ~~at~~ at Perrys Dance Hall--go down every once in awhile and check the platt?

JOHN: Well, ya, I'd put them on and then there'd be the cookshack and everything, you know, and then the lights was on and then you wouldn't have to watch it. You wouldn't have to look at it for several hours all the time these lights was on and then in the morning when they started killin' 'em. The toilet--when they ~~cut~~ ^{off--} them ~~why~~, you know. Course you had ~~leeway~~ there. One wouldn't do it; but, you know, the voltage would run up if you cut off too many. You'd burn it up, see? There was nothing automatic about it.

LARRY: You had to do it by hand.

JOHN: Ya, you had to set her back. That's what I was ~~for~~ for, see. I never burned out any bulbs that I knew of either. I was always on the tricker.

LARRY: John, tell me a little bit about the differences between the towns around here when you were younger, say, 15, 20, what they were like.

JOHN: Well, Cogswell was our best town. It had farmin' beat ^{or anything} then--then or in the early days. I think there was 60 some odd business places in Cogswell, but the other towns didn't amount to much. There was Straubville. Well, it had four or five families and a grocery store, a combination hardware store plus a lumberyard and two grain elevators and it had a

machinery dealer there, George Scholle, and there was the elevator man. We had six, seven quarters ~~of~~ of land there. ^{Joe} ~~of~~ Straube had land there years ago. That's how they got the name Straubville. Well, then Crete never amounted to much; Crescent Hill never amounted to much; Nicholson had a store and a couple elevators.

LARRY: Nicholson is....

JOHN: Next to Cogswell.

LARRY: Right, right.

JOHN: Well, there wasn't much. Burly Carpenter had a store there. There's a shotgun in the Capitol Building ^{of} North Dakota, that killed Blackie--no, that Blackie shot Bill Scholle--a sawed off Winchester shotgun. I was in that deal.

LARRY: Ya, tell me about that.

JOHN: It happened on a Saturday. It was in the spring of the year.

LARRY: 19--?

JOHN: Well, 19--? '20? Back in there someplace. I was in the store and Gordon Stewart was workin' for Nepstead and he said to me, "You ain't doin' nothing. Why don't you take me home?" Just a half a mile north and about 80 rods west through the store. "Oh," I said, "come on. Let's go." So we come around and we turned and we were facin' the store right out there on the hill ^{there} by the house and we visited awhile. And I don't know what made me say it, but I seen a car comin' and I knew this family Welitzgo. A fella ^{had} that worked for us had took his girlfriend, Esther Muffle, to Cogswell to the show. It was about showtime. It was out, see, and I seen a car come from the north and I decided that that was Stanley and her comin, see. Well, I said to Gordon, "I'd better go. I'll throw some dust in their face or somethin' like that." So when I got down to where the road was, they slowed up. Well, I couldn't figure that out. So I went slo-ow. Well, then I stepped on her and crossed the track and drove the car in the granary on our place there just south of the store. Come back to the porch and was takin' off my shoes when they drove into Straubville in front of the gas pump.

The store now closed, see. Well, I thought to myself, "Tomorrow's Sunday and I'd better go and get another package o' cigarettes or something." And I went over to get one. So pretty soon the light come on so I laced my shoe back up and was just about ready to go over there when, "bang, bang, bang!" Just like that--three shots. One was spaced a little differant than two. That was from an automatic shotgun, see. That was fast. Bing, bing! Just like that but this other one.... Well, this guy run out o' the store and the car was in front of the store running. It was a Dodge automobile and they got in it and away they went. Well, I went over there and I seen the condition. Bill's feet was bleeding. Well, I went and got the car, my car, then and come around and Blackie--now this is a God's fact. Blackie--now that's they way we measured it. It's 75 feet across that store. There's the store plus a post office and a cream station. Well, he was here as soon as he saw somebody was here. George was here, see. Somebody knocked on the door, see, and they said that they was tourists passin' through and they needed gas. Well, George put on his shoes and went over and, why, when he got there they said, "It ain't gas we want. We want Johnnie." Well, Bill didn't hear him say that, but anyway Bill got to thinking that there was something wrong. So he come over here and looked in the store window in the southwest corner of the store and seen this guy with a gun on George and George openin' the safe. He stepped back and got the automatic shotgun, come back and run into this Blackie and Blackie pulled up and shot into the ground. And this is a fact--Bill just pulled that shotgun up like that and pulled the trigger twice. These clothes here was ^{blowed} clear through and the bottom side of his heart was gone. I know what I'm talkin' about because I seen the man! He run across that store steps and about 30 feet beyond facin' south like he was here and fell with his head to the north. I almost run over him when I come around there with the car. Bill didn't know he'd hit anybody, see, and a hole blown through there. This arm was almost cut off and the death grip on the gun he'd repeated it and the shell....

They didn't pull the empty out and the new shell wouldn't go in. That's all that saved Bill's life. It didn't pull it, you see. You know what I mean?

LARRY: Ya.

Well, there he lay.

JOHN: It jammed. Well, this car went north and when they got up there to Nepstead's corner, they went north towards Straubville and they blinked the lights two longs and a short. Then when they got down to the railroad where the road crosses the crossing, that's only ^{about} 15 rods west of the store, they'd blow the horn two longs and a short. Then when they got south down here a half a mile, they'd turn and face the car this way and they would blink the lights again two and a half times, see. Then they went north and I went and got dad's Winchester shotgun and went over here and laid in the ditch, but they didn't come back. So when I got back ^{up} to what-do-you-call-it, there where these guys was, the sheriff was already there and the coroner pronouncing him dead of course. And then the sheriff, Phlatbe and Inger.... Phlatiss and Inger were the Deputy and Sheriff. They deputized me and put a thing on here, give me a revolver, went out to see Lew Perry. Well, they wouldn't go in; they just stopped at his gate. So I went up to Lew's.... I threw the gun in the back seat, went up there to Lew and knocked on the door and Lew come to the door holdin' up his pants with his belt here--like that. And I said to Lew, "Hello, Lew. Bill Scholle was shot." "By the Gods," he said, "that's pretty bad." "Was there a car went by here in the last 30 minutes?" We knew they had. "By the gods," he hadn't heard a thing. Course I expected that--hadn't heard a thing. Well, he told me a year later he said, "That car and them two guys sittin' in it was in that barn when you was talkin' to me." Now I don't know if that was true or not. Lew told me that; but I don't think so because we didn't see the tracks where it come in through the gate, see, and the gate was up so I think he lied about it, but anyway that's what happened. And that gun is up there to Bismarck. You probably seen it?

LARRY: Ya, and they ~~never~~ got the two guys that....

JOHN: Well, they got one of 'em didn't they? They got.... Blackie was killed!

LARRY: Ya, o.k.

JOHN: Ya, but they couldn't pin anything on him. It was like this. Two guys come along, see, to ^{Hecla} [REDACTED] and they hired a car and the kid was a livery.... You know he was driving it and he didn't know anything about it. They wanted to go out in the country. You know what I mean?

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: Well, that was all that amounted to; but the other guy, I guess, they never did get--Kansas City somethin'--but Blackie was killed there at Straubville you know.

LARRY: That must have been the scandal or the crime of the year for [REDACTED] a few....

JOHN: Ya, there's another thing happened just like that too. This is a fact too! I know you're recordin' it and I can prove it. I was workin' for a fella by the name of Tom Butler.

LARRY: Where was this?

JOHN: Straubville. John Pool was a Township Representative there or whatever you call them. Board of....

LARRY: District.

JOHN: Ya. I and Leo was gonna go to Cogswell and on the way back we was supposed to stop in to Pools and see something about a culvert that he wanted put in, see--township supervisor. Got to John Pools and here was a little crowd. John Pool's sister had come from Denver and left her man. I was cookin' for John Pool. This fella had followed her out there, shot her, the bullet went right through this nipple--dead--and she fell [REDACTED] onto a red hot cookstove and that's the way John found her when her little kid run out and told Uncle John. He was cultivatin' corn then John put the gun in his own mouth--it was a Luger--and blowed the stuff right up agin' [REDACTED] the ceiling. And that's a fact! I seen that before they were cold. I knew 'em both. Now that was a coincidence wasn't it? I and Leo Butler--yes, sir--went there to see John Pool and there was four or five cars there already,

Montgomery Ward. He was the owner of old Dan Patch. He was a ~~national~~ stock food man and he built the Dan Patch Railroad from Minneapolis to....
 I rode on there a lot ~~times~~ ^{o' times} when I worked there for old Murphy out to Frigley and out through that country--White Bear Lake. And then he put up this cataloge house and he sent there and got a motor. Well, when dad paid him off, we hauled that boat.... He had it quarter decked in front. He done a nice job and a decked back and the side in places, you know, in, had a nice little roof on it, a bed in there and everything, it was 18 feet long. We hauled that over to the Jim River Bridge west of Straubville there, put it in the water, he had a little capped ~~stove~~ ^{stove} about yea big around that pumped up gasoline, took groceries along and he run that boat from there to Tallahassee, Florida.

LARRY: Is that right?

JOHN: Right up in the throat. You know Florida where it comes down like that. ~~It's~~ ^{It's} right in the corner--Tallahassee. That's where he was from and he sent us a letter ^{every} once in awhile. Gall, he got to Yankton and.... Mother ~~sa~~ said to him, "When you hit the Missouri River--across--and when you get into St Louis (she'd been there a lot o' times) you'll cross ~~the~~ ^{Eaje (?)} Bridge and when you cross it, you write me a letter." She says, "I've crossed that bridge when I was a kid many times with my dad on the railroad." Eaje Bridge and that's still standing--the old Eaje Bridge. It goes from St Louis, Missouri, over to Illinois, east St Louis, you know. By gall, when he got there, he wrote her a letter and told her that he went under Eaje Bridge. She said she used to stand on that bridge and see the old muddy Missouri come into that Mississippi and it would be muddy from there on for a ways until it settled, you know. The Mississippi is pretty lazy there--just barely moves. I don't know how many days it took him, but he drove.... Of course the further south he got the nicer weather ^{it} got, you know.

LARRY: How did he.... He took the Jim River....

JOHN: To Yankton.

LARRY: And then he got on....

JOHN: The Missouri.

LARRY: Took the Missouri down to St Louis and down the Mississippi.

JOHN: The Gulf of Mexico and then it's just around the corner probably 200, 300 miles. I don't know just what it is from the Isthmus or from the delta. It ain't very far. There's Louisiana and, you see....

LARRY: The neck of Florida.

JOHN: Ya, well, that comes like the Panhandle, you know. It goes....

LARRY: Right, right.

JOHN: It's got [redacted] coastline there, you know, besides the....

LARRY: It must of been quite a trip.

JOHN: Ya, but he did.

LARRY: That's the same boat that you used to sail out here on this lake.

JOHN: Ya, but then he had a gasoline engine on it now, see--an outboard motor. Ya, we ^{hailed} [redacted] that on a wagon over there. Ya, he camped along, let the canvass down and he'd sleep. There was no danger of anybody hijacking you them days, you know. Now you couldn't probably make it.

LARRY: Dams and everything.

JOHN: Ya, dams. That's right.

LARRY: Well, I'll be.

JOHN: Yes, sir.

LARRY: What were these people like that came up from the South in the depression years or in the earlier years?

JOHN: Ya, in the earlier years. They didn't come up in the depression much. They were a good bunch of [redacted] "joes"--I'll tell ya. I got ^{pretty} smart listenin' to 'em. Now they wouldn't sit around and tell dirty stories and stuff like that. They'd tell things that happened, you know, to them, see. There was awful good singers in the bunch and there was a lot of 'em.... This is a fact. Earl Howe, Byron Smith, Emil Sabell and others after they got done threshin' and they liked this country dad would put 'em in business. [redacted]

They'd rent a quarter o' land. He sold Byron Smith five horses one time and never beat him out of a nickel--put in a quarter.

We threshed it for him. He'd work on our rig with the bundle team--paid us. Done the same thing with Earl Howe. He married a girl here. He married a Hanson girl and over here we was threshin' for Hanson when he got acquainted with her. Well, we was pullin' in on a run one time and I can remember it. We was down here on the corner and we seen a team acomin'. Here it was old Pete
 [redacted] Hanson and he wanted dad to pull over there three, four miles west and thresh. He just kicked Yongkee off of the place with the threshing machine. He was throwin' it all in the strawpile. And dad said, "Well, my gall, it's freezin' up!" "Oh, it's all in the stack," he said. "Well," dad said, "I'm gonna pay the guys off," he said, "and I'll see if I can get some of [redacted] em to stay." Well, some of [redacted] em would stay. Duncan Butterfield I remember stayed, and ^{this} Earl Howe, of course, stayed and Emil Sabell and different ones. He'd been here two, three times--come up--and a fella by the name of Derby. He had a Derby hat. So we pulled over there and threshed. The next day was Thanksgivin' and they had a big turkey dinner, you know, and we threshed over there, ^{threshed} [redacted] these stacks up and then we left the machine over there-- couldn't get it back, see. We went across the Woolsted Slough. The ground ^(?) was froze, ^{so it held the engine} otherwise we couldn't have gotten across that bridge, see. See it was that cold in November.

LARRY: What would you drain it every night?

JOHN: Well, you'd bank the fire, you know. You'd drain different things, you know. You'd shut the steam dome off and you'd drain the cylinders and you'd shut the waterglass off and you'd drain the water/glass--any outstanding thing that might freeze--but the ^(?) itself wouldn't. You'd just throw in some coal. Maybe if it was.... Well, it never got to zero, of course; but, you know, 20 above or something like that. Maybe the engineer would get up in the middle of the night and see how things was comin' and go and throw in another shovelful o' coal and maybe crack the ^{draft} [redacted] a little bit to keep it from freezin', but I remember the ^{bull wheels} [redacted] froze in. You know the valve on your injector will leak a little water around by the wheel, you know, and it would freeze. I remember that. ^(?)

Then we let old Daze out and had her facin' south and he drewed her head up there lookin' at each other and then he put Bairds Pioneer Farm in the nicest letters you ever saw and done it in white on a red barn. And that was there for years and years ██████████ and I think you can still see it yet. But that guy did that.

LARRY: Just a hired man, huh?

JOHN: Oh, some of them guys was gilt.

LARRY: Where was the jungle? Was that a hobo camp?

JOHN: Ya, up here on the Milwaukee. I've hired quite a ^{lot} ██████████ of guys from up there. Dad would send me to town and pick up a couple o' guys and bring 'em out ██████████, you know, and ^{they'd} make their mulligans and one thing and another. They'd come in on the railroad, you see, and then hit the jungle down there. That was just this side of Cogswell on the west side of them trees. There's nothin' to 'em there hardly now. There almost dead, but that was the McGraw Tree Claim. The north end of it was.... Cogswell was pretty good. They'd go down the north end there on their ^(?) and give 'em some pototoes out of the store and somebody else would give 'em somethin' else. Old Jack McGraw would have some meat and they'd make a stew. And one time dad told me, "You stop there at the jungle and pick up a couple o' men." They were gonna thresh, you know. And these two guys--kinda young fellas. Well, they asked me about the machine and one thing and another. Oh, gall, I was tellin' 'em all about it, Reeves Engine and a seperator and all this and that and had 12, 10 bundle teams. "Oh," the one guy ^(?) says, "you bring it into town and we'll look it over and we might go out with you,"--I remember. So they didn't go ██████████ anyway. Then Grandpa Baird used to furnish the men too. He had this old car. He had a Metz car and that one there. He'd come down with a man ^{now and then} ██████████--any time he wanted one if one would happen to quit. We got it mixed up in that IWW--remember that--Independant Workers of the World, But we fed pretty good and paid pretty good wages. We never had any trouble, but there were some people around here that did. ^(?) George Wallis over here had a big threshing outfit.

They loaded a bunch o' bundles and horseshoes and rock and piled up some grain down here around Ledgerwood and set fire because they went in and the old farmer wouldn't hire all three of 'em. He just wanted one. Well, then to make him pay for that they went down there and piled a bunch of.... He killed one of 'em! He jumped on a horse and overtook 'em. They got away, but he wounded one of [REDACTED] and he died--shotgun, ya.

LARRY: You say you never had any trouble?

JOHN: Well, we never had.... You know a lot of 'em.... Well, a lot of people.... We run a cookcar; but some people, you know--anything was good enough for a threshing crew. You know how it was.

LARRY: Ya, feed 'em anything!

JOHN: Ya, but we didn't. The old man thought that.... We used to have a family over there. There name was ^{Huwitts} [REDACTED]. They're all dead now. Charley got killed in ^{a car} [REDACTED] and his boy. There's one boy left--young Charley. I think he works in the stockyards in Fargo. If I'm not mistaken, he's been there for years. ^{They'd} [REDACTED] hire some men and if you was.... They was from Boston. If you was a very light eater, they'd keep you, but a guy that sit down and eat a full square they wouldn't keep him. He cost too much. They had a couple of men.... Dad was startin' to thresh ^{one time} and he come down there. Mrs. ^{Huwitt} [REDACTED] come down there and she had that Eastern talk, you know, and she said, "Oh, Mr. Baird, you should hire them two men. They're very light eaters." And the old man said, "I don't think I can do it anyway." Very light eaters.

LARRY: And they were farmers, huh?

JOHN: Ya, they were farmers.

LARRY: From Boston?

JOHN: Ya, from Boston. Well, they wasn't too good of farmers, but--I'll tell ya--he bought a lot o' horses. He searched the country here for big teams, for New York ^{Dray} Teams--Dray horses. If he found a good pair o' [REDACTED] Percherons or ^{Clydesdale} [REDACTED] or somethin' like that, why, gall, he'd pay 5, or better \$600 for them [REDACTED] for them and ship 'em.

He shipped a lot o' horses out o' here, you know.

LARRY: To the East?

JOHN: Ya, shipped 'em East. And that was the first Cadillac car I ever saw. He shipped it from the East here.

LARRY: Oh?

JOHN: He bought it in New York City and shipped it out here in a boxcar.

LARRY: I was gonna ask you, John. How did they move these seperators and these big Reeves Engines. Were they a flatcar or would....

JOHN: Ya. J.K. Johnson bought a 110 horse Case. He was plowin' over here in the spring of the year with a 2575. He broke an axle and he went to Fargo to get it. He had a Case automobile and I and dad went along with him and, gall, it took us.... We started early in the morning and we got there in the afternoon, poor roads, car weighed 145 pounds, went up through Casselton and around. Got in there and they had this axle they said; but when they went down to get it, they didn't have it and they sold him a 110 horse Case at a pretty reduced price because they had it on their hands and nobody would buy an engine that big and that was shipped to Brookland on a flatcar. Two engines come into Cogswell one time. I've got that picture. I was lookin' for it; I can't find it. His boy is still living. A fella by the name of Herman Smith and his wife came from Harmony, Minnesota, here and bought the north half of section four in Taylor Township over here. Well, while they were building they lived in our place and they bought an engine. There was two engines come in on a flatcar. I can't find that picture; I don't know what happened to it. It's in a frame like this and I was gonna give it to ^{that} boy, see. When they lived here, they had one kid named Harry about a year older than I and this was 1908--1907 when they come. Well, Harry and I used to be pretty good friends. Well, this kid, Harry's kid now, is a grown man and family and he wants this picture or would like to see it. I told him I had it and I can't find it. I don't know what I done with it. It's ⁱⁿ a frame. But anyway there's two engines come to Cogswlll. Well, he bought one of 'em.

Well, he didn't know anything about.... These was gas engines--Mogall International Harvester. Well, he was gonna go home with it Saturday. Well, with me goin' to school in Cogswell, why, I was there on the platform 4:00 in the morning waitin' for him 'cause I wasn't gonna miss this trip. We worked all day and I never saw a man crank so hard in his life. He'd sweat and he'd crank and we'd go maybe 40 feet and it would stop and go that much further and stop and he'd wipe his brow, fill his pipe and then he'd crank again. We got a little over a mile the first day out of Cogswell. We lived six miles from Cogswell so you see we weren't.... So then we walked back to Cogswell. Well, then the next day we was out [redacted] there again and we got about two miles from there so then it was a little bit closer to Cogswell than it was to Cogswell so we went down to my place. Well, then old man had to take me back in the morning, Monday, you know. Sunday--we spent them two days.... But it was fun for me. Well, I heard him say to dad he said, "I've got a half brother. His name is Otto Witt. I'm gonna wire him. We'll go down to the depot and wire him and he'll come and he'll make that engine run." Well, a week he was here. Otto Witz stayed here, was in business in Cogswell, had the Standard Oil Company in Cogswell for years, run our steam engine, worked for us a lot and I can remember he took the key out of a thing, pulled the spring [redacted] like that, [redacted] put it back in, cranked that up and you couldn't hardly stop it. That was all that was wrong with it. That intake valve was so soft it couldn't suck any gas out of the carburetor so it would die, see. It was one of them suck valves, you know, and the exhaust worked with the power, you know.

LARRY: And that's all it took.
anything

JOHN: He didn't know [redacted] about it. He was pretty.... Oh, we looked up a guy that knew that, you know--was outstanding.

LARRY: What kind o' territory was this for politics, John? Was this Nonpartisan League country or was this....

JOHN: Ya, [redacted] pretty much--old Townley. We [redacted] ^{was at a} meeting one time and there was a NPL--well, then the Nonpartisan League--IVA, Independant Voters

Association, you know, Buchmiller's Laundromat^{over} here--just a few--went down and heard Townley talk one time down here. They call it Skunk Lake in this country. It's Lake ^(?) is the name. Course anything that ~~was~~ was funny I always branded on my mind and could remember it. He said, that the guy, "Don't believe a thing that's in the Grand Fakes Herald or The Fargo Forum!" The Grand Fakes Herald! I never forgot that; I forgot everything else he^{ever} said!

LARRY: Was Townley well liked around here or not as well as Langer?

JOHN: That's right. Langer was known as a genius and I'll tell you what I saw. I was stayin' with a couple o' batches after their mother^{and father} died named Andersons over here west of Straubville. Old man Tweet was their uncle. Mrs. Tweet died and she was in the hospital for quite awhile, but here's the way they were. They were man and wife. She owned the west quarter. He owned the east one. She had the house and everything on her~~quarter~~ quarter. He owned everything over here and that's the ^{way} they was even though they were man and wife. Well, he wanted to build a barn.

SIDE TWO

JOHN: Well, someway or another the hospital got o' hold of this mortgage. Langer was in power. So the sheriff of Dickey County and somebody at the hospital went out and they wanted their money. Well, Tweet says, "I can't pay it ~~til~~ this fall. I got a couple o' carload o' cattle to go." Well, ^(?) they wanted their money now. So he didn't know what to do. So Mrs. Hamberger said, "Why don't you write Langer a letter?" "Well, when are they gonna be back?" "In about a week." And this is a fact. There was a State Militia car pulled up there that mornin'. We was only 30 rods from the gate. We lived here and Mike ~~Tweet~~ lived there. Two soldiers got out with rifles and an officer and when they come, they stopped 'em at the gate and that's a fact. A fella.... Whether that Holiday....

LARRY: Farmers Holiday?

JOHN: Ya. I don't know exactly what the conversation was, but this sheriff read the paper and this fella here read him somethin' and they got in their

car and beat it. Pretty soon they packed up their gear and went and they went West. ^{Tweet} [redacted] didn't lose his farm. He paid it that fall, but he would o' lost.... You know he didn't have the money and they'd o' took it, see.

LARRY: You mean Langer came ~~down~~?

JOHN: No, he sent them an ~~officer~~ from the State Militia.

LARRY: Oh, I see! I see and they stopped the sheriff?

JOHN: They stopped the sheriff, ya. See there was some.... I don't know exactly what that law was. It was to give the farmer a chance if he couldn't pay, not to kick off of the farm or take the machinery away from him although it didn't cancel out the debt or anything.

LARRY: It'd give him more time.

JOHN: I read one time where Langer got that idea. You know we give England a moratorium on a big war debt. ^{He} [redacted] decided that if this government could do that, he could give the farmers of North Dakota ^{when they were down and out} a little moratorium. [redacted]

[redacted] And I'll tell ya he was ^{pretty} well liked wasn't he?

LARRY: I think so, ya. People that I've talked to.... Well, I'll tell you something, John. You either get a reaction one way or you get a reaction the other way. People will either tell you that he was either the only friend that the poor farmer of North Dakota had and they tell you that he was the biggest crook that the state ever knew--one way or the other.

JOHN: Well, didn't he buck up ^{agin when} [redacted] they was swingin' these seed loans and Roosevelt wanted him to do away with that moratorium.... I read that. I'm a pretty good reader. And Langer looked him right square in the face and he said, "You can keep your seed loans, Mr. Franklin! We'll bound the state and buy our own seed." Well, the State Mill & Elevator was pretty well appreciated wasn't it? around here?

JOHN: Ya, right. You know that was a thorn in the side. I worked ^{one time} for a milling outfit for about 18 months, you know. I was second miller on the floor. That was one thing that they hated the worst, you know, was that.... Well, we heard about it many times. Well, I know about it. It's in Grand Forks, you know. I've seen the mill. I've never been ⁱⁿ it, but I've been by

it a half a dozen times. I was workin' for a Battle Lake flour mill, you know, Battle Lake, Minnesota, and, oh, man, they had a cut.... Well, they called us communists, ^{we} [REDACTED] had our own bank, had our own flour mill and then they'd pick out municipalities where different cities had their own power plants like Valley City and Jamestown one time had their own. Well, I said, "What's wrong with that? When the Eastern guy gets pushin' you down the street, why, we've got to...." I said, "I couldn't understand why a fella had to send wheat to Boston to get it ground and then ship it back when the back door was full o' wheat."

LARRY: That's right.

JOHN: Well, the taxpayers wasn't supposed to be in business! "Well," I'd say, "as far as I know it ain't taxpayers' money. It's a self-supporting thing. They take profit from it."

LARRY: Right.

JOHN: Well, they wasn't supposed to be in.... Oh, I and my boss would have quite a argument over that, you know. I was from this state and I backed it up under exempt. When I was in California workin' for the SP, I'd tell 'em.... I wouldn't encourage them guys to come out here 'cause anything that you hear of it that's kind o' funny [REDACTED] is in California. That's where it originates, you know. I said, "Oh, you fellas never want to come up to North Dakota." I said, "It gets 40 below zero there on a hot day." "Why, on a day like that," I said, "that's when we haul hay, but when it gets down around 90, why, then we kind o' set in the house." And, oh, they didn't want any o' that. Well, that's what I used to tell 'em because I didn't want 'em to come out here in the first place--a lot of them guys I knew.

LARRY: When did you work out there, John?

JOHN: Well, I went out there in.... I got out there by accident in 1938 and worked on the Southern Pacific and I could do anything. And then I worked out there from '51 to '58. I'm retired now and on a railroad pension and Social Security. I got it tied together. Then I saved some money when

I was out there. You know I couldn't understand it. I was the only guy in the building that could save any money. I got a wizard in there; I'd give her the paycheck. She was layin' away the money. I didn't believe in rent. I bought a house, \$2700 equity, for 32 \$50 bills. I could see at a glance that the fella when he hogged dollars and cents was pretty wise so I'd buy 'em this, see, and he wanted \$2000 to start with for a \$2700 equity and a \$5000 house. Well, I said to him I couldn't talk dollars and cents. ^{He could understand that} so I said it this way. I said, "It's almost three o'clock and I got t' be at work." I said, "I'll give you 32 \$50 bills." "How much is that?" he said to his wife. She couldn't figure it out and the only thing they could say was, "Make it another one," you know--33. 32 would be 1600 bucks, right? "Can you make it another one?" I said, "No." Well, I started for the car and she took it! "Well," I said, "You meet you down at the bank and," I says, "I'll have it." I had the money, see. So I peeled out 32 crisp \$50 bills at that **Title Office, -Home Title**, and everything was signed over to me and then I paid off a \$2500 mortgage and got a house worth 5000 bucks, see, and that's the way that was done. But anyway they couldn't make it. I loaned money to them guys! They paid it back. Like one guy his brother sold him a car. He was a Mexican. I liked them fellas pretty good so ^{they} sold him a car. He didn't have it paid for. Here come the guy; take it away from him--from Portland. "Well," I said, "how much is agin' the car?" We was sittin' there talkin'. "Well, we ain't goin' let 'em take that car!" ~~_____~~ "I went to three, four friends of mine and, oh, I could get a \$5 bill from 'em." "Well," I said, "you'll get more than that from me." So I went down and bought the car and he paid that off in two checks. I've done that several times in my time.

LARRY: John, were you in Sargent County in the '30's?

JOHN: Early '30's, ya.

LARRY: What was it like around here?

JOHN: I forget the year. I think it was '33 or somethin' like that. I was the last man, I guess, in the county to get on relief. This is a fact.

I went over to Forman and that courthouse in the basement was full and they were cussin' the weather and cussin' the government and ^{cussin'} everything else and I set there and I heard that griping and this is a fact. I got up and I said.... My dad wasn't dead, but then I said it this way. I jumped up and I said, "When my dad left me," I said, "he left me a fortune and I'm not goin' ~~to~~ sit here and listen to this stuff." Now this is all a fact. "What the hell you got?" "Well," I said, "I got United States and Canada to make a livin' in." I went down to Battle Lake and started to work for a guy right off the bat--moved down there, 140 miles east of here and went to work Monday mornin'. I worked all during the depression. I never lost a day. That's a fact!

LARRY: Were all the people around here like that--wringing their hands and discouraged?

JOHN: They ~~were~~. ^(?) There were Sears here. They never put out a binder, you know. It was terrible. People were workin' on what they call PWA and then there was WPA. There were two differant types of it. My brother-in-law over here kept me off of the PWA by telling that I had a lot o' money stored up. I didn't have. I tried to farm, bought a bunch o' machinery, give it away and knew enough to quit. ~~████████████████████~~ Seed loans--I'd got a Seed Loan and paid it back in Fresno, California--every dime of it! I don't owe this government one penny and when I got this seed loan, I was led to believe like other people were that Uncle Sam would furnish you this money for fuel and seed. You furnish the work, ^{the land} and if you didn't make it, you didn't owe nothin'. That's the way they led us to believe, but we found out that wasn't true. A government mortgage never outlaws and you always owed it. A lot o' people didn't know that, see. Well, I paid mine. A few around here didn't, but I don't know whether they paid it off in these good times or not. We've had 30 years now of pretty good times or 25 or 30, you know, but I paid mine off in California. A fella.... Why, no matter where you went it would follo' ya, you know. Pretty soon they'd have it, you know. So one day I was called up and I said, "Well, I think I can take care

of it now. I won't tell ya.... I owed 'em \$600 and the interest was for--I don't know--five or six, seven or eight years--somethin' like that and the fella said....

JOHN: "Well," I said, "I can't pay it all." "What can ya pay?" "Well," I said, "I don't know." I said, "I've worked and I just got here. I've been here only about six months. ██████████" "And," I said, "I've got a good job, ya, but," I said, "how can we pay it?" They wanted it in cash. They were closing it out. Well, here's what the old fella done. He said to the stenographer, "You go and get me those papers,"--so and so, you know. I guess that's the way he got her out o' the room, you know, and she went and he said, "Why don't you offer him 50 percent?" So when she come back in, I studied awhile and I said, "Would you take half of it--cash?" And, "Well," he said, "no, I don't know whether they'll accept that or not, but," he said, "I'll take this money." "Well, Scott," I said, "it's cash." "Well," he said, "I won't take cash." So he sent me down to the bank and I got a cashier's certified check and he pinned this to the stuff and about 30 days I gets everything marked paid in full and they accepted it and everything like that, see. It was almost the amount I borrowed but not the interest-- just about.

LARRY: Did a lot of the people leave ██████████ in the '20's? this country

JOHN: Ya, all the young folks did. Let's see. Young Bishop stayed; the Gilridges all left. There ain't any young fellas ██████████ here anymore.

LARRY: No.

JOHN: And, I'll tell ya, we're in a serious thing here--I think. There was a guy over here, a young fella, born in 1915, '16, he got himself a \$20,000 back home and went into the plumbing business. You know everybody ██████████ has got pipe under the ground here and pressure, wells and everything. We're under city water here. Well, if we ^{dig} ██████████ a ditch or lay a pipe in it, somethin', he was right here. He dropped dead the other day, a young fella, took a load o' glass to Valley City, got in his car and I don't know what happened. He died right at the switch. The car was running when they found him. Everything was running. Well, that's Vi's husband over here.

Well, now if anything like that happens here now.... There's only a couple
 of guys around here that does it and there always ~~is~~ ^{workin' in Gwinner, Gwinner}
~~is~~ growin' by leaps and bounds, you know, with that big factory, them big
 buildings and houses goin' in like mad, fastest growin' thing in this
 state and millions of dollars spent there, you know. You've heard about it?

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: Clark and Melroe and them and there's Graymack and there's Clark and
^{There's} Melroe. There's a lot of stuff in that town while they're workin' over
 there all the time. You can't get them to dig a ditch or a thing electric.
 Now I'm kind o'.... Well, I monkey around and do quite a lot electrical
 work. I wired a lot o' buildings here and one thing and another. I worked
 with an outfit one time when I was workin' for another fella because he
 didn't have any work for me. What was his name--Milling--and I was working
 for the ^{Electric} East Side boys on my days off and I learned it pretty fast and I
 done a lot o' wiring here, but I'm the only guy around here that knows how
 to put in a receptacle ~~or~~ wire ⁱⁿ a 220 stove or dryer or anything like that.
 You go over here to the electric outfit ~~here~~ here in Oakes, ~~Well~~ Well, they
 might be there three weeks from next Saturday or somethin' like that or they
 don't come at all. I tried to get a guy to dig a ditch here and I started
 in June, but it froze up--still didn't dig it. I was out o' water ^{practically} ~~practically~~ (?)
~~practically~~. I had one in the ground about six or eight inches deep
 Pearson ~~got~~ got that new ^{backhoe} ~~backhoe~~ and he was over the next morning and
 dug it for me, see, but now he's gone. I don't know.

LARRY: John, there's so many farms around this county that are abandoned.

JOHN: Right!

LARRY: It's the worst county I've been in so far.

JOHN: Right. There's two octupuses--Garret for one. He's got somethin'
 like 300 and some quarters o' land.

LARRY: Where does he farm?

JOHN: I think there's 58 or '9 this side of the state line. I think he
 owns every quarter in Dayton Township but one section and it runs clear to
 Briton and almost to Hecla. His big ranch ^{is} down ~~here~~ here--this vacant town of ^{Newark} Newark (?)

You go right through the main street of ^{Newark} [redacted], which is a ghost town, and go out about two miles and a half and that's the main ranch on the west side of the road. He sold several million dollars worth of stuff this year in grain, soybeans, flax, sod flour seed, thousands and thousands of acres of corn that made 80 to 90 bushels to the acre. He's got cattle out of this world--15, 20,000 sheep. He ships.... He's just a fella that.... In 1925 his father couldn't pay the thresh bill that we threshed--old Lew Perry. Couldn't pay the thresh bill. But this land got down to a \$1 an acre during the depression and he started grabbin' it which was alright, but that's the big thing. You see anything he buys he just lets the buildings drop and that's what you find--most o' these here. When you find them buildings like that, you'll find out that some big guys got 'em. The banker over here, Christad, he got 38 quarters in one block over here. He bought the Chadee place. That brought him down. He bought Ketchum's place. He bought--well, I can't think of 'em--the Ed Reese's place, Butke's place, the Christenson place, the Gilridge place, the Power's place. Then they just rotted down now. He's got just the Parson place. That's the big ranch now. There's 40, 50 granaries there, there's a barn 200 and some feet long, a great big brick house. He got that section land for little or nothin' with improvements on it. Course he built the granary since and that's what's the trouble. That's the trouble. The little farmer can't rent any land. There's no land [redacted] to buy. Well, then there's quite an establishment up here. There's 14 quarters and 7 is 21 quarters. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26--the Bill Russ. He's got 26 quarters right outside o' town here, but there's only one place they let fall down. Their boy lives on.... Well, let's see there's three places that they let rot down. The Steven's place, one of 'em lives there, and the Straubville, one of 3 'em lives there, and then, of course, the home place, the Stout place. That's the main.... And I remember him. I don't like that big farming like that and squeezing the other fella out, but I can remember when Bill Rust couldn't buy a package o' cigarettes. The [redacted] first cornpicker I ever seen pulled with horses with a bull wheel drive. They come over and picked 150 acres of corn from my dad and that was Bill

Rust. He was just a young fella and his uncle picked our corn for ^{so} much an acre. Well, then when my uncle died, he left him a little money and then he went to buyin' land. Of course. ~~he~~ he hit these good times and he just multiplied it--big stock raiser, you know. I'll tell ya although Sargent County is a good county, ^{and} it grazes a lot o' stuff, but like you said it's owned by a half a dozen. There's Garret, Rust, Cliffstad and this other big guy from Briton that owns all ~~of~~ of Southwest Township and everything like that. What's his name? I can't think of it now. His dad was a millionaire to start with ^{oil business} in Texas and the boy just went from there--Rampart. In Southwest Township I think there's 11 votes.

LARRY: Ya, that's what I mean. How can the towns in this county keep going?

JOHN: They ain't! Brampton is dead; Straubville is dead; Crescent Hill is dead, Straubville is dead; Brooklyn is dead, Belplain is dead, Tiwanda is dead, Nicholson is dead; Crete is dead.

LARRY: Cogswell is diein'.

JOHN: Cogswell is diein; Sterum is diein'--Forman, Gwinner.

LARRY: Two towns.

JOHN: Oakes is in the other county and what's ^{bracin'} ~~that~~ that up is that here addition. No, I'll tell ya, I've had to be out of the blacksmith business. I'm pretty handy; I got a pretty good shop, but they just run you to death. There ain't a blacksmith in Havana, none in Rutland, none in Cogswell and you can't take it to a big shop like Melroe or **Raymack**. It ^{would} cost them \$25 to do a \$2 job! Ya, ~~they~~ they got everything set up for a certain thing. They got that idea, you know, that they could go in there and stop it. Why, they can't take a man that's given \$3.50, \$4.00 an hour off ~~of~~ of a welding machine to go over here and fix somethin'--you know. So they'll keep me just as nortin' here and I don't dare charge 'em much of anything although I do it for little or nothing, you know--help 'em out.

LARRY: What do you think the average size farm was around here, John, in about 1920?

JOHN: Oh, a half a section, a section, three quarters. We was looked at as

as the big guy with seven quarters--Baird.

LARRY: Are there any farmers around ~~■~~ this ^{part of Sargent} County that are still making it with a section o' land or a section and a half?

JOHN: Ya, I'll name one, ya. There's a fella out west o' town here. No-body can understand it. His name is Milo Nathsinger. He was workin.... He had leakage of the heart--not well. He was workin' here for \$15 a week. He bought a cow that wasn't too good. It was kind o' sick; he got it cheap. He cut hay along the railroad in my backyard when I lived here before and stuff like that. Today he bought a half section o' ground. He's got two pretty good tractors. He's got a nice little Dodge automobile and ^{darn} nice Ford pickup. He raises hogs, cattle. He put up a \$5000 pole ~~barn~~. He spent 5 or \$6,000 ~~■~~ on his house that wasn't worth \$25 to begin with, raised it, put in new sills, put the inside, put the outside, insulated it, everything like that and put up some hog barns. And he's got probably \$25,000 ~~■~~ ^{on} CD's. I _I know it's that much. He don't tell you exactly, but he.... Well, ~~■~~ and ~~■~~ are great friends. He's a bachlor and he's done it in the last 15, 20 years.

LARRY: With how much land?

JOHN: A half section.

LARRY: Is that right?

JOHN: Ya, he bought that half section o' land from two old widow women in Wisconsin and that was funny. They were two old widows; they thought they wanted to get rid of it because the renters they had was beatin' them out. They didn't get enough out of it to pay the interest--I mean to pay the taxes--and then that time the grasshoppers got it or something. They ^{---he's dead now---} couldn't come out here and look, you know. And then they had a guy here that spent most of the rent if it was paid for beer and they decided they'd sell it. Well, this guy ^{was} ~~■~~ livin' on the ~~■~~ ^{place.} He just moved in and they wrote him a letter and they said, "Come on down. We want o' see ya." So he drove down to Wisconsin and they sold him that land for about ~~■~~ 9,000 bucks--that half section. It would sell for 150, you know, now and Garrett would give him 150 ~~fourth~~ and ~~second~~ because he owns the half right agin' it just south of 'em, you see, and he couldn't understand why them old ladies

didn't sell it to him. Well, Garrett is this way and that's a fact. If land is worth \$150, he was the one to offer you 180. Money don't seem to mean anything different to him when he wants the land, [REDACTED] see. And like he's always told he don't want all the land. He just wants that joins him. Well, it's always adjoining him.

LARRY: Ya, sure.

JOHN: He don't want it all. He just wants that, ^{that} [REDACTED] joins him.

LARRY: When did electricity come in around here, John?

JOHN: REA? Well, sir, I should know. I don't know exactly--back in the '30's.

LARRY: Oh, REA came in the '30's around here you think? Before that there were Delco plants and....

JOHN: Oh, ya, ya, Jenaco and Delco and Fairbanks and Morris and all kinds of 'em. Let's see. Oh, later than that. Let's see. I went out West in '38. I wired a lot o' buildings around here. '45, '46, '47--I left here again in '50. I just can't tell you about.... It must o' been back in the early [REDACTED] '40's. There was some had lights and some didn't and there was scrapin' about easements to set the poles, you know, and some of these guys didn't know how to.... "Set 'em on there!" and this and that and ^{the other} [REDACTED] so that delayed different branches of it, you know, but it come in over the Forman country first--where it come from--from the big transformers over there and got down in this country later. It's all wired now, but there was so many buildings that was wired that now it is..... Seems to me there are. Their transformer hangs up there on the wall. Somebody stole ^{all the} [REDACTED] copper wire--like that.

LARRY: Were there a lot of standby plants before the....

JOHN: [REDACTED] Ya, a lot o' people had 'em, the Elbows, the Chesleys and the Buchmillers and the Ealics and, oh, lots o' guys had 'em. They were kind of a nuisance. They had 'em down in the basement. Some of 'em was \$2's and some was 110. John--well, I can't think of names. Bartnicks had a light plant. Two or three of the ^{Bartnicks} [REDACTED] had light plants. Betke had one with a [REDACTED] windmill, big tower and....

windpower. That was a 32, a wheel 12, 14 feet acrossed it. In 1907 my Uncle George decided that Cogswell should have some lights--before it was gas--and he built the light plant there. He built the light plant in Cogswell, North Dakota. He put in a big double cylinder Diesel, Fairbanks and Morris upright engine, run a big generator and a exciter. Now this was a DC plant--not alternating. Put in the switchboard and everything like that in a big brick building and then started to wire the town. He owned it. Well, then he put in another one that layed down, cylinder type, Fairbanks and Morris on another generator. That's the new ones now, but he run that from then--from 1917. He put down an artesian well. Grandpa did right behind the what-do-you-call-it to cool these engines, you know, and the well is still flowing and put up the brick building. I can remember it. I was there when they opened it and when they started it the first time, had a barrel o' beer, tin cups and turned on the electricity. Well, the business places had it first, you know, on Main Street and then the rest of the district started, one bulb in a room and open wiring, you know, run down here on spools and that's what kept him in business. The businessmen would pay, but these other guys you'd never catch 'em to home, you know. Well, the meters was inside. They wasn't waterproof them times and they'd be under the stairway or in the cellar way or someplace, you know. You'd have to get in to--you know. I'd go around with him and read these meters sometimes when I--oh, here--was going with him, but they never was to home and the dog would bite ya. Well, anyway in 1914 in June he sold out, sold his residence to the Lutheran Church up there for a parsonage and sold the light plant to the city of Cogswell in June, got him a Chalmers automobile--him and Aunt Anna and Florence. That was their only child. They had three. There was Florence and Aunt Evelyn and young George and went to California. When you went down a hill, you had to tie a tree on behind to hold you back or the brakes would burn out--ya--and he made it in about 15, 20 days. You can make it now in three, four days, you know. I drove it two, three times. Got out there and got into the

(continued next page)

garage business and made a fortune. My dad was born the 30th of March in '71 and he was born about 18 months later and he just died. He was almost 100 years old when he died here awhile back--just not long ago. This is '74. Just startin' on it, you see, and in the last 25^{or 30} years he just retired, you see. He bought some property that went up sky high in real estate value, you know. God, he^{had} a corner that I don't know what the Standard Oil give him with a filling station on it. Oh, it was outrageous! And he had this big garage. He had this stuff paid for, bought it for little or nothing, at what they call Riverside, California. You've heard of it.

LARRY: Yes.

JOHN: It's east of LA out there about 60, 70 miles. You go over the Tehachapi Mountains and then the Mohabi Desert. And he had a skatin' rink in Cogswell. He was always in somethin' like that! Board fence and he'd flood this and charge 'em two bits for the evening and had a couple hundred pair o' skates. He was always doin' somethin' like that--motorcycles--but, he made a fortune doin' it. But puttin' in that light plant-- that's one thing we can say. I used to say--well, if it hadn't been for the Bairds, they wouldn't o' had any water to drink or no lights to see, but they thought Cogswell was alright and they were all progressive.

LARRY: Is that the way^{these} plants were started up in towns?

JOHN: Ya, that's the way. Ya, well, sometimes the town would do it. Sometimes the businessmen would chip in. Now Brampton had a Municipal Light Plant, 110 volts, settin' in the garage there. The garagemen took care of it and they paid there.... Well, then Cogswell run that plant fer--oh, I don't know--'til down in.... When did Otter Tail^{Power} come in here? Along in the late '20's or someplace along in there. I think Happy Nubsson was the last man that run it. Then Cogswell took it over and then Otter Tail Power Company^{they} come in and they could buy their juice from them. And then Oakes had a Municipal Power Plant. That was a big steam plant, you know, and Hecla. You name it! They had it--all of 'em--municipally owned or privately owned. In this case it was private. George put that in there. He was always a mechanic makin' things.

LARRY: When did the phone start then?

JOHN: Well, the telephones... The first telephone we ever had was on Grandpa Baird's place and a fella started that by the name of John Powers at Havana and that was the Exchange. I told you about the phone and John just went by in a cloud o' dust. Old Johnnie Powers--there was a young Johnnie. He's dead too. The old man was an older fella, come around with a team and these poles wouldn't be very high and he'd reach up there with a hook and bring down the wire or do somethin' on the insulator. I can remember puttin' new batteries in your phone. You'd open--there's a box. You'd open that box and put in new batteries and you'd give ^{him} 35 cents and nobody dared touch that wire 'cause, oh, that would shock ya--kill ya. So he'd come along about every three months and....

LARRY: Those were dry cells weren't they?

JOHN: Dry cell, ya, and you had to crank it up, you know. Ole Garr come to this country from Norway and after he was here for quite awhile anytime you wanted a hired man ^{he'd} send over there ^{and get a} guy. Well, he knew guys, you know, from over there like I would know if I went from here to Norway, you know. I knew guys here. Well, we got one fella. We called him the Green Fella just because he couldn't talk, but he had an accordian--the biggest thing and comin' over on the boat he had more money than Ole did when he got ~~over~~ ^{over} playin' for dances on the deck in the hat, you know, and, oh, could that fella play. We used to make a long ring on the telephone, take the receivers down and put something that would reflect the sound, lay two lead pencils across the tin plate or somethin' and set the receiver on it and, God, everybody in the country would be listenin' to this guy play the accordian and then a lot of ~~em~~ ^{em} would come over to our place. We had quite a big house, 24 foot square and 2 stories high, and he used to come in there and play that accordian, Norwegian Wedding Waltz and all that. Oh, man! Maybe he wasn't as good as Floren, but then I thought so and he made us kids records and Byran Smith used to too.

We had an old phonograph, cylinder type, and you'd take the end out of the box. There was a fuzz cloth in there to protect the record. You'd coat that with gasoline and just put the record through^{it} a couple o' times like that and that would make a blank out of it.

LARRY: Oh, is that right?

JOHN: Oh, ya, and then we'd whip the reproducer on. That cost \$5 and then you'd sing in this horn, you know, and that would reproduce it. Byran Smith was from Joplin, Missouri, and he hauled bundles for us three, four years in a row. God, he was a good singer from the South and he played the mouth harp and he made us kids quite a few records. My dad put Byran in business, you know, farming on the old Sam Brooks place and sold him horses and one thing and another and he married a schoolteacher, but anyway he blanked these records off. He was the only man we thought could do it, you know. He blanked them off and then this accordian player would make records and all that stuff. Ya, I know all them tunes too like Leather Britches and Frog, He Went Acourtin'. I learned them by heart. A Southerner could sing pretty good, you know, and he was from Joplin, Missouri. He had a friend come out here that was leaded. If he got a drink o' whiskey, he'd go kind of funny, you know. He had that lead poisoning from the big.... There's terrible big lead mines, you know, around Joplin and ^{Neongwah} and around that country in Missouri. He was out here one season; but he went back and we never heard from him again, but Byran stayed here. He worked in the lead mines there too--Byran Smith. Now there's another incident! Byran Smith left this country and went to Lake Park. No--is there a Lake Park, North Dakota?

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: That don't seem right. Anyway when I was up in Edmore, I found out he was in this town pretty close to Edmore and I drove in. I drove over there one time--one Sunday. We didn't thresh on Sundays, see, and I went in and I seen Byran. He was aclippin' the hair and one thing and another and I knew him and, o' course, I got a newspaper and I got it up like this, you know, and I'd peek around there. He didn't notice me when I come

in. Pretty soon I got to bellyachin' about the service we was gettin' and finally he spotted me and, boy, I'll tell ya. When he retired.... I read it in the paper. He was killed on the Merced Street Crossing in Fresno, California--him and his wife. In 1951 I started to work there and I happened.... They sent me down there, see, on the railroad for a powerhouse operator and I thought about it. I went into the--what do you call it--office and I read everything and seen the picture. You know they have to put down everything precise when they have a wreck like that. The engine was one of those big yellow-bellied engines, a big passenger engine, hit him on Merced Avenue. I knew the street and everything like that. I'd been there several.... Well, I lived there seven years, see. Byron Smith And His Wife killed Instantly with this high speed passenger goin' there, Number 60, goin' south--even's south and ^{uneven's} north. There I was workin' and been on that street a lot o' times where a friend o' mine that my dad had hired out o' the jungles here--think of it--and put him in business here, had a sale here, married a teacher out o' Cogswell, went to Park River, had a barber shop up there for a long time, retired and was goin' out to see some friends in California and was killed on Merced Street in the town I was working in.

LARRY: Ya.

JOHN: Well, that was the record and the picture and everything in case there would be a lawsuit or anything like that. Ain't that funny how things will happen? And that's all the God's truth--every bit of it!

LARRY: Ya. Well, thanks a lot, John. I think we've covered about everything.

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