

Oral History Number: 105-001
Interviewee: Florence Murray Tubbs
Interviewer: Stephanie Ambrose Tubbs
Date of Interview: October 24, 1982

Stephanie Ambrose Tubbs: —Florence Marie Tubbs, interviewed by Stephanie Ambrose on October 20...

Florence Murray Tubbs: Twenty-third?

SAT: Third. Nineteen—

FMT: Fourth.

SAT: Twenty-fourth, 1982. Okay. How did the family come to Montana?

FMT: My father came from Kansas, and he came out to Montana in a circus (?) train. And he had a brother that had come out ahead of him, and was homesteading Great Falls, Montana, and he worked with him for a while. Then he went into town, into Great Falls. One of his first jobs was working on the Great Falls stack—big refinery stack in Great Falls—and he drove a team of horses that carried bricks up inside of the stack itself. That's how he came.

My mother came with her parents. She was two years old when she came to Great Falls. She'd been born in North Dakota on a homestead in North Dakota, and they had come to Great Falls. They had planned to homestead out of Great Falls, but my grandmother became ill and so they never left Great Falls. She grew up in that area, and then my mother and father were married, and...Well, they were married in Helena, really, but they lived there. My grandmother had been an invalid for all those years. [unintelligible] my mother was, too, so they lived with them, because Mother took care of my grandmother. In 1918, my dad bought the ranch, but they didn't move out there right away. He would go out and work and do some things, but then they just...Mother would go out once in a while. They have one picture of her out there before I was born. But most of the time, she lived in Great Falls, and he did too. He was in a [unintelligible] plant in Great Falls. Then my grandmother died in 1923. After that in about, oh, I suppose 1924 or so they moved to the ranch permanently. So that's how I got there.

SAT: So the land was acquired from a family, kind of?

FMT: Yes, it had been a ranch before—the Blythe Ranch (?). That was on what they call Lower Otter Creek, between Great Falls, and at that time it was a lower highway from Great Falls to Lewistown. Then we lived there. Well, from then on, I went to the first grade at the ranch. In fact, I went all the grade school to the schoolhouse that was on the ranch, a rural school, except when I was in the fourth grade. That year I went to Great Falls to school.

SAT: So the rural school was like a one-room school house?

FMT: Yes. When I started they had...the teacher happened to be an excellent, fine teacher, but she had all eight grades—all in one room. Wasn't too many, I don't remember how many. But anyway, she had one in every grade. She had eight grades to teach. But it really was, I think, a neat experience, because where she got me started off well in doing things, I was absorbing what she was telling other people, too, along the way. So I think it really wasn't that bad a system. If you—

SAT: And everyone knew each other, too.

FMT: Everybody knew each other. They were all local families that ranched around there. But it really was kind of neat because you did pick up all of that.

SAT: Then would you ever teach some of the younger kids for her?

FMT: Well, no, because then next year there was another teacher, and...I suppose maybe some of those older ones did help, but then I was on the bottom of the totem pole at the beginning, and I didn't. We had a lot of fun. We had plays, and we had music, and we had all the things you...more limited subject matter, but they didn't have all the social studies that they have now and all that sort of thing.

SAT: So did you have school clubs and stuff like that, or...

FMT: No, there weren't that many kids in school. We just did everything together. Recesses we all played baseball, or any of the games—kick the can, all that kind of stuff. But everybody played. I suppose the littlest ones were in the way and a bloody nuisance, [laughs] but anyway, we did have a fun. Then we had programs at school, and parents would come. That was kind of fun.

SAT: What about getting to school? Would you just walk with your brothers and sisters?

FMT: Yes. We walked over, and then in the real cold weather, because it was so...I don't know, not quite a half-mile. When it was really cold, Dad took us to school. And—

SAT: In a car?

FMT: In the wagons, usually. Yeah, because he'd be going out feeding cattle, and he'd take the sleigh and we'd ride over. Then he built the fire in the school. We'd go earlier, and he'd build the fire in the school to get it warm before everybody went to school.

SAT: That was nice of him.

FMT: Yes.

SAT: So, was the school...community had built it specifically for ranch kids, or was it just—

FMT: Yes, well it had been—

SAT: —couple of families, or...

FMT: No, it had been built for the school district, and it was...or, in fact it had been moved to where it was, which was on our ranch property. It had been in a different area, but there were no more children left in that. The concentration of children in this other new area, so they moved it in there, and Dad gave them an acre of land and that's where they put the school.

SAT: When you were on the ranch, how was the work divided between you and your brothers and sisters, and what kind of stuff would your mom be doing and your dad?

FMT: Well, it was a comparative small operation, and so there was one boy that lived with us, that helped Dad—for a week would help. We didn't have water in the house. You had to haul water, and so my job was get water, when I was old enough to carry it. My brother's was to bring in the coal. And that's how we split that. Then of course, we had cattle, and we'd milk cows. When we got old enough, then we would go together. That was one thing we did together. Go get the cows in and that sort of thing. Then as we grew older, then we took on more chores. I helped my mother, and then I would help with...oh, like go get the cows in. Then we had sheep at that time, and I'd go out and get the sheep up on the hills. We had a coyote problem, so when I got older then I would just go up and stay with the sheep, keep the coyotes away. My brother helped my dad with the haying and that kind of thing. We had a big garden, and we'd help with that.

SAT: And you'd take care of the little brothers and sisters, too, right?

FMT: Yes, right, yes. We did. I had one brother younger, and my sister. I was ten years older than she was. So I used to help with her. In that period of growing up was the Depression time, and things were so very, very tough and it was also the severe drought. Those years, Dad had to...he would go up into the mountain area where there was some grass and help them for a share of the hay, because we didn't have any. In that period, my mother did all the milking. Then we all took...my brother and I, took a big part in helping with that.

SAT: So your dad could go out—

FMT: Because he was gone. Mother did that, and then as Bill got older, he learned how...helped...I never did learn, but he did. So I would help with the house. We helped Mother keep the house clean, and we helped with the kids.

SAT: How about handmade...would she make a lot of her preserves and stuff, all the—

FMT: Yes. She canned all her vegetables and that from her garden except the root ones. We had a root cellar to put those in, and then lots of fruit we always had canned [unintelligible] and peaches and pears and plums and all that sort of thing she did. We had jellies and apples, which we bought, because we didn't have apples [unintelligible]. We always had plenty of food.

SAT: And then would she ever make your clothes, or would you go to town and buy your clothes?

FMT: No, she made some of our clothes. Some of it we had to buy. She didn't make...We wore overalls—they were called then—and our shoes and all that we would buy in town. But she made a lot of clothes. Then my aunt sewed a lot, so she'd [unintelligible] for us, too. So that was kind of...well, it was very simple living. Everybody was in the same boat. Nobody had any money in those particular times because of the Depression. So everybody lived very simply. We didn't have a whole lot of clothes, but we always had a good pair of shoes to save when we went out—went someplace—and things for school, and that was it. Very practical. Overalls or whatever things [unintelligible].

SAT: How often would you go to town as a family, or just you and your dad or—

FMT: Well, we didn't go too often. We went because our mail went into Raynesford [Montana], which was five miles away, and there was no rural route in the early part. So he probably went about once-a-week or so. Once in a while, we'd go with him. Once in a while my mother would, but not very often, really. I suppose, for going places, we would go to Great Falls, and sometimes we took the train in. We would go because my aunt lived there, and that was my mother's sister and her brother who lived in Great Falls, so we'd go. Then if we would do it, well, then Dad would be at home.

SAT: Somebody always had to stay home and take care of the ranch?

FMT: Pretty much. With animals you had to, and of course in that part of...early part of my life, it was a road, but it was a very primitive type thing. It wasn't even gravel. If the weather was bad, you just didn't go unless it was of dire necessity. You know, you just didn't go.

SAT: So in the winter time, was your farm, or your ranch, pretty much isolated, and you were stuck out there?

FMT: Well, we'd get out, but, like say, we needed groceries or something, they'd take the sleigh and go to Raynesford to get groceries. We always got most of our groceries out there. But we had...we bought things like flour and sugar and coffee and that sort of thing. But it was kind of...the neat way things did...with this small town, and everybody did it, you just charged your groceries all on a slip, all winter long, and then when the crops came, you paid your bills off.

That's the way everybody operated. It was neat and friendly, and everybody knew everybody in the whole territory. So it was kind of a nice background to grow up in. Things have changed since then, but it was neat and easy. Everybody worked hard and everybody was struggling for survival. It was not even big ranches, which there was only one in the immediate area—a big one—but they were just as broke as everybody else. They were just...owed more money than the rest of us. Everybody owed money. [laughs]

SAT: When harvest came around, what was that like? Was it—

FMT: That was kind of fun. It was hard work, but my dad had the threshing machine and the tractor that ran it. Then each neighbor would come in and help wherever they started first, whichever crop was ready. They would do that, and then he would take the machine. When he did his, well, then everybody come down and help. They just went right down the alley.

SAT: So he would use his machine for other people?

FMT: Yes. Then everybody would come down and, each one take their turn when there was a big crew. It took a lot of cooking because you cooked three big meals a day, and Mother just really did work hard on that. Of course they baked everything. She made her own bread and own desserts and everything were all made [unintelligible]. So they were up early, and the crew was on all day. But it was kind of fun. It was kind of a fun time. It was exciting, it was something different [unintelligible].

SAT: So would you kids like haul water out to the field and stuff like that?

FMT: Yes. Yes, they did. I didn't do a whole lot of that, because what I remember most is kind of helping Mother.

SAT: But your brothers were probably out helping your dad.

FMT: Yes. Then some of the other younger kids would come along with their families to help. So it was a community effort, and that was the way it worked all the time.

SAT: How long would the whole process from the first farm to the last farm take?

FMT: Well, I don't suppose I remember exactly, but about a month probably. Not solid, because if we had a rain or it rained out, you had to wait until it dried out. Wherever the machine was, at that time, it stayed there until they finished that job. They used to help out on haying crews, too, in that...They'd get together, not as a big operation, but they would help each other out with the haying.

SAT: So your father was one of the few ranchers with a threshing machine?

FMT: In that area, he was the only one that had one.

SAT: And you mentioned, he also had a car?

FMT: Yes, yes. Most everybody had some kind of a car, but he did have the car and then a truck. Trucks were almost a necessity. And they kept them for years and years and years because they were simple—the original Ford type. Almost anybody could repair them, so they were around a long time. People didn't take long trips much [unintelligible]. But there were lots of fun things I was thinking about. Every year was a big picnic in Belt [Montana], and that was something. Everybody—

SAT: Fourth of July?

FMT: Yes, Fourth of July picnic, and everybody in the whole area around, people came and they played baseball, had a dance in the afternoon. There was a pavilion there. All the kids. Everybody brought their own lunches—picnic lunches. It was just kind of a whole day of everybody getting to see everybody and visit and everything. It was fun.

SAT: And that was every year they'd have that?

FMT: Yes, every year it was the Fourth of July. It was a fun time for everybody. All the kids from two on up were on the dance floor and all that. Everybody did everything.

SAT: What kind of band would it be? Like just banjo, or—

FMT: Violins, I think, some were, and that kind of thing mostly.

SAT: Local talent?

FMT: Local talents, yes. So that was fun.

SAT: What about other holidays, like Christmas and stuff like that.

FMT: We had Christmas. And those were all personal. At the schools, for instance, we always had a Christmas program. People, even if they didn't have children in school, they'd come to that, just like election was always a day off, and everybody came and brought their picnics. Because you had to keep the polls open from early morning. If they'd all voted, they just had to wait anyway. So it was kind of a picnic time, too, and a gathering of the neighbors all around. That was the same with the Christmas programs at the school. Of course the parents all went, but all other people too, without children. So that was a fun time. We always at school, for instance, had a Halloween party, a few things like that. But Christmas...the rest of it was a family sort of thing. The holidays, Easter and Thanksgiving were all family, just in the families.

SAT: The nearest church, if you wanted to go to church on Christmas, would that be a whole day trip?

FMT: Well, we usually went to Great Falls on the train and stayed in Great Falls for Christmas. But my dad didn't get to go, so we always had our Christmas on the ranch, like say, maybe the 23rd of December. Then we'd take that...until the later years, when we were more grown up and the roads were better, they'd come in just for the day. But we'd just come into town, stay. Of course, my mother had grown up there, so she had a lot of friends, and we'd go visit at Christmas.

SAT: How about Easter, would you go and spend [unintelligible]?

FMT: Yes. Because church out in Raynesford was just a satellite church. They only had church once a month. A priest came in.

SAT: A travelling priest came in?

FMT: Travelling priest came in and it was just a...so...Like I say, when my younger brother and sister were grown up, well then the roads were better and they went down to Belt. Of course, we had a [unintelligible], but when I grew up there, there just wasn't [unintelligible].

SAT: Let's see. What would the family do in case somebody got sick or there was medical problems or something?

FMT: Well, that was just...you were on your own. Fortunately, there weren't too many major ones. There was a doctor in Belt. When my brother and I were bucked off of a horse, my dad [unintelligible], my brother broke his arm. Well, then they took him right away, took [unintelligible] to Belt and to the doctor. That's the way most emergencies...if you had an emergency, you went to the nearest spot, but everybody did it on their own. We were lucky. Not too many critical times.

One time my brother got hurt—hurt his head—and he did get an infection, and then they took him in to Great Falls. He was in a hospital there. The Belt one was kind of small, and they could handle some things. But this didn't work so good so they got him in to Great Falls. Then with my aunt and uncle there, there was a place for people to stay. Most of it was handled that way and anything critical like an automobile accident that would happen to just someone in the area, then they usually got them to the first aid in Belt and then on into Great Falls as...because that was the best medical center close by our area.

SAT: If somebody got a stomachache or something, were there any home cures that your mom used to—

FMT: Oh, yeah, I suppose we used to...I can't remember...Medication wasn't as prominent. We had aspirin, I think. I can't remember...Oh, they always had something for cuts.

SAT: Some ointment or something?

FMT: Yeah. Iodine was the worst one because it hurt like the devil if you got a bite or a cut, and we always got it, too. Or because of worrying about blood poisoning, you know. That we had. I was trying to think, they had a lot of old-time remedies. Colds were a big problem in the winter, anyway. I can remember my dad, he had a...it probably was next door to pneumonia, and you had to go out because you had to take care of the animals. He made a poultice with kerosene, put it around his neck, and boy, that thing broke—that fever broke, and the whole thing broke—[laughs] and he was better about 24 hours.

SAT: What did it do, heat him up real?

FMT: It must have. Must have drawn, yeah. But that was an old, old, old rec...you know, idea from someplace that he picked up, and it sure worked. Because we were really worried, Mother was awfully worried that he might be down in bed. Of course, if it was pneumonia, there was no penicillin in those days. So it was a matter of getting better or no. Like I say, we were really pretty lucky, and we had the usual childhood diseases—chickenpox and mumps and that—like you get at any schools. Really when you look back on it, everybody was pretty healthy. You ate good, balanced food and that sort of thing. Whether that had anything to do with it or what, but anyway we did—

SAT: What about vaccines? Were you kids ever vaccinated against polio?

FMT: Yes. Not polio, because they didn't have that. But we had smallpox vaccinations, and I think probably diphtheria, I think, too. That was a shot.

SAT: Now, would you get those from the school, or would your mom or your father take you into town?

FMT: No, the school used...through the school system you would go out for those. I can't remember the...I think they were all given at the school. Because they just travelled from school to school—the nurse from the county. It was a county project. Well, probably every county. You know, I don't remember. But we did have those vaccinations. And then there was the polio.

SAT: What about when your brothers and sisters were born? Would your mother go into Great Falls and stay until due date?

FMT: Great Falls. Yes, yes.

SAT: Just because in case of emergency, or—

FMT: Yes, except nice a younger sister Betty, she wasn't...didn't think she was going to have her that day, but anyway, she did. They made it to Belt. She didn't go any further. She was born in Belt. The rest of us were all born in Great Falls. Of course, when I was born and my older brother were born, we lived there yet in Great Falls. But when my second brother—there was seven years difference between me and my second brother—and then Mother just went into town before. So he was born in Great Falls too.

SAT: So, was there was it a hospital that you would go to, or would it be friends in Great Falls?

FMT: No, no, she stayed with my aunt and uncle and then go into the—

SAT: Oh with her sister.

FMT: Yes, sister and brother, and then going to the hospital. That's pretty much what everybody did.

SAT: Then would she stay laid up for a while, or would she get right back on the ranch and go back to—

FMT: Oh, she'd stay there for a while, maybe. They kept you in the hospital longer in those days. Ten days, I think. Then she'd stay with my aunt and uncle until everything was...they were sure everything was fine, and the baby was going to do fine all that. Then they'd just go home. I don't know, she...I guess just with the help of all of us was how she survived. But everybody did well, and it worked out well.

SAT: Okay. [pauses] I know I had some more questions here. Oh yeah, what kinds of games and stuff would your kids play around the ranch when you had some spare time?

FMT: Okay, then like at school, they played all of the...and baseball. But everybody, like I said, was in on it. We played Fox and Geese in the snow in the winter, and everybody was...and sliding. We didn't have a very good place for ice skating, but there was one creek in one corner that would freeze over and we'd do some of that, but not much because it wasn't a very good spot—didn't last well. Like just at home, we would slide, and made old skis and tried some skiing. We did have a lot of fun. There were places where it would drift, and we'd make snow caves and a lot of that sort of thing. In the summer, I don't know, we swam and hiked. We were busy, too. But we used to have fun.

Then as we got older, some of the neighborhood kids would come up, and we'd play cards and go out swimming together. There was one period—that was that period when things were so tough—and a girl was working, cooking on the one bigger ranch and lived the next ranch to us. She was about [unintelligible]. They'd come up, get a couple of them and get an old car, and they'd run the car with kerosene if we had any, for gas. [laughs] They'd come up and we'd all

play. My mother played with us. Either they'd bring some candy...make some candy and bring it, or we'd make something and have it. We'd have a lot of fun, because it was daylight until late. Of course, everybody got up early, too, and worked hard, so they didn't stay up too late. Well, we had a lot of fun doing that. Played different games. I read a lot.

SAT: Books that you would get from your school, or from—

FMT: From the school. I'd read everything I could get my hands on. From good things to bad things. [laughs] Not bad, but not, not anything...But I just read. Anything I could read I'd read. But I'd get a lot from the school, and then from my aunt would bring me books and I'd read those. But I read a lot all through when I was doing things, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

SAT: Did your family have a newspaper or magazine subscriptions, too?

FMT: Yes, the magazine ones. We didn't get the newspaper because you never get it for a week. Then when my aunt and uncle come out in the summer, well, they'd bring a bunch of magazines and that. But we didn't have many magazines.

[Break in audio]

SAT: Did you have a radio on your ranch?

FMT: Not in those first years at all. We didn't have power at the ranch. In fact, electricity never got into that area until 1950, which was late and it was [unintelligible] government program put it in—REA [Rural Electrification Administration]. But we did have a phonograph. One that you wound up yourself, so we did have some music. Nothing like anybody has now. But it was something. Then when we first got a radio, it was on batteries. So you used it very conservatively to just listen to special programs. Yes, my parents. That was getting up, too, before we had that. Because I went to school at the high school in Great Falls, and it was some time in that period that they got the radio battery. It was just like a big car battery that ran. We were, in a way, kind of isolated on that without having electricity.

SAT: For the wars and stuff, would you more or less hear news from neighbors, or would you—

FMT: Well, no, because we always got...if there was things like that, then we got papers any time we were near a town. Of course, in that period the roads were better, so you did get back and forth more often. Then there were...the children were older, so they could go too. So we had kept up with that pretty well. Well, then the little paper in Belt would have—

SAT: The *Belt Valley*.

FMT: The *Belt Valley Times* and those things. You'd have copies of those if you didn't get a trip into Great Falls. But we kept up on everything, and my father, who had had a limited education,

because he was on his own when he was 14 years old, read everything—all the papers, everything, he kept up on everything. So did my mother, but my mother had had a fairly good education. She went to the academy in Helena at that time, because her mother was ill. She went to school there, a boarding student, and then she went to Dillon [Montana] and had normal training but she never did use it. She could have taught, but she never used it because she was on the ranch after that so she never did work. But they read a lot, and I think probably that's why I did. But like I say, it was...I read far beyond my years. I read Shakespeare when I was 12 and 13. My one perennial book that I read every year and wept through it every year was *Little Women* and *Anne of Green Gables*. Those two I read every year, so that I practically knew them by heart [laughs], but I read them anyway because they were my favorite books. I read magazines and...oh, a lot of the cowboy stories and books that we had and got ahold of. Then, like I say, from the libraries. Had some that I didn't care for that were classics, like *Alice in Wonderland* was never my favorite book, and never did like it. Thought it was weird. [laughs]. A few things like that, so I made up my mind what I liked and what I didn't like early in life, but I did do a lot of reading and enjoyed—

SAT: Would you ever get any letters from the old country, as they say?

FMT: No, not many. My aunt was the only one that corresponded with any of the relatives, because my grandparents had come from Ireland, and she kept in touch with some of those. My mother did not do too much of that. Mother had four children and the ranch to do, so she wasn't that good about keeping up on things. But my aunt did. Then we did hear from my dad's relatives in Kansas. Very rarely, but we would hear from them. Mother had a couple of friends that she had gone to school with that would write occasionally, and she'd write. But we didn't have much contact, and there wasn't any traveling. No one did a lot of traveling in that period of time. So we didn't have that much contact. But I did write...one started, and I never met her until I was...in the 1970s, was the first time I ever met her. But we started writing when we were kids in school, and we wrote every year at Christmas. So I always felt like I knew her. I did get to meet her first time we went back to Kansas, and that was in 1972, I think. It was like meeting somebody that I really knew all about, and she felt the same about me, which was really neat. That was the only...because we didn't have any cousins there. The few cousins I had were in Kansas, and we never did meet them until we were older. So that was a nice experience, but that was the only special correspondence that I kept up with. That I did, thanks to my mother.

SAT: I know a lot of those settlers around Belt were from the Danish countries and from Finland and stuff, so they probably had foreign accents. Would there be any prejudice or anything against?

FMT: No, there really wasn't, because everybody worked together pretty much. There were a lot of from...because of the mines in Belt, brought in a lot of foreign people. People from Austria, Yugoslavia, and the Finnish people. There was one Russian family that lived between us and Raynesford that...We didn't see them that often, but I don't think there was any really

prejudice there. One thing, you didn't see people that much, and everybody helped everybody anyway. If there was trouble in any family, there was always somebody that helped, and so I think they were more...on that, they just lived like a community. If somebody was in dire need, they helped them. I don't think the prejudice thing ever came into being too much. There were people I suppose, one group that you liked better than other groups or something of that kind, but we all got along well. They had good friends that lived in the next ranch that were from Finland, the parents. The one girl that I told about—she was in school and made the candy—and she was their daughter, and we were very good friends and are to this day. There were a lot...some you lost contact.

One thing, it was really just a funny thing, this is when we were in school and I wasn't very old and we had horses. We decided to take the day off—the whole school—so we rode up to this...family's name was Grosskoff (?), and they were German people. I suppose it was about four miles up there, and so we all [unintelligible] on the horses and take up and ride up to see her. Of course, this whole bundle of kids show up, and she didn't have any children in school anymore, hers were all out of school. She looked at us, but immediately, she fed the whole tribe—she made some soup, and it was a regular German soup with little dumplings in it. I'd never had anything like that, and I kind of looked at that. [laughs] It was kind of a fun thing. I don't think my mother really knew we were going to do that. We were going on a picnic from the school, but somehow or other we got carried away with the whole thing and we all went up there. That was one of the different kind of things that happened. It didn't happen very often, but it was fun.

SAT: Well, your friend that her parents were Finnish, is that what you said?

FMT: Yes.

SAT: When she was growing up, was she encouraged to learn English and forget the other language?

FMT: Yes, yes. She didn't have any accent at all. But her mother and father did have...you had to...I did, as a child, have to listen a little more carefully. But they were really nice, and we all enjoyed each other. Because in that particular house, and they moved, and another family moved in and they were really nice. I don't know what nationality they were. But you just sort of...the neighborhood just sort of absorbed into whatever was there, and if they needed help, you'd help them. If you needed help, they'd help you I think maybe that, if you think about it...and then when we had lived in town and there was a black family lived across the street from my grandparents. I think it was one of the things that helped me never to have a prejudice against color or that, because I don't think I ever realized they were different, growing up, because I was small and they were always nice. My mother respected them and thought so much of them that it never occurred to me that they were maybe different. But then, I don't think it ever has with any of them. That you could not like somebody because they were a certain nationality or that kind of thing. I don't think it ever occurred to me [unintelligible].

That's, I think, a great gift that I was given as a child, because I didn't grow up with that feeling at all. Never did bother me.

SAT: It seemed like a lot of those families, when they came here they wanted their children just to speak English and nothing else, so they never taught them. Did you ever hear any foreign language at all? Would they ever speak German—

FMT: Once in a...No, I never heard any German, but the Finnish people, when they moved to Belt, then once in a while I'd go down and visit my friend, like at Christmas or something, because I was going to school. Oh, in their family atmosphere between them, they'd switch into the Finnish even in those days. Her parents were getting older. I'd just look at them [laughs] and wonder what they were talking about. I was dying to know, because I thought, "Oh gee, you could talk something like that, nobody knew what you were talking about." But that's really the only time I would hear that. I think that's probably the only...there were quite a few Slavic people around Raynesford, and when we would go up to...they'd have big dances about once a month, and we went to some of those. Some of the older people who had come from Yugoslavia or Austria would switch into their native languages, because there were several others and they could visit with them. But I didn't, and of course, none of us—my parents either—could understand any of it. So you just dropped out of those conversations. [laughs] You didn't know what was going on. But those dances were kind of fun because babies went, and from whatever you had in the house all went to the parties. They'd have a big potluck dinner—everybody would bring things. We [unintelligible] and a dance.

The one I remember most of all is one time we went, and the teacher at the school lived with us, because there was no teacherage. We went to Raynesford, which was about five miles, and a beautiful cold winter night. We were in the sleigh and all covered up with blankets and robes, and the sky and the stars, which is gorgeous. It was a fun time. We just had a ball. Come trucking home, I suppose, 12:30, 1:00 at night in the sleigh. But that one I remember especially because it was such a beautiful night. We were picking out stars, and didn't know much about stars, but we were picking out the ones that we could find. That was fun. But that was one nice...

SAT: Did you ever have those lunchbox auctions?

FMT: Oh, yes. Forgot about that. They used to have...they had a couple of those, the box lunch, yes. I remember a couple of those, but then I was younger on that, when they had that so I never got into that, no. But they were, and I was taking it all in. I thought that was really neat, but then when I went to town to school, then I didn't ever get in as I would have gotten older. None of that sort of thing.

SAT: Let's see. The last question I'll ask you is kind of a big general one.

FMT: Okay.

SAT: How did the Depression change life on the ranch?

FMT: When I look back on it, I marvel that anyone survived because the drought and that came at the same time until there absolutely was nothing. Everybody was in the same condition. It was so everybody was just desperate. I have thought about it often, and no one ever backed out. They just kept struggling and kept going. In that particular time, there was more charity given...Well, I remember one family that lost their ranch, and they had some cows and they could save those. My dad, who didn't have any pasture at all, kept those cattle on his and shared what he had until they could relocate. Things like that were done for people, but it was. It was a terribly tragic time. Oh, let's see, I was 12 or 13, but I knew how worried my parents were that they were going to go under because this one time this drought was...oh, the drought was terrible. There was no feed for cattle or sheep or anything. Then the Mormon crickets came, and when they came, it was just like you had plowed up every hill—everything. There was no green anyplace. The trees were stripped, the gardens were gone, and it was almost unbelievable. Then we got the dust storms, and it was so bad. It moved through the houses. You slept with a handkerchief over your nose and your mouth. It was that bad even in the house. It was just...

But, I look back at the courage, because I knew that my parents were afraid, but they never talked about it in front of us and they just kept struggling. Of course, then, in came some of the programs from Roosevelt's time where they bought up...because there was no feed for the animals and they came out and they did buy and slaughter the sheep and that sort of thing, because they would have died otherwise. It was enough help for people to survive. Then, at that time, the Depression was still on, but the drought broke and so there was some food and some of that so you could build back again. I look back now and wonder why they didn't just...well, like in Oklahoma and that, you talk about people moving into California, which they did. But I was thinking in that one area, there was no one left. The one family that did have to make and re-change never really left the area. They found a place and resettled at Cascade, which wasn't that far away. They didn't leave. They just somehow survived and it was...

It wasn't really terribly gloomy atmosphere, except you were scared. I was underneath. I don't think it bothered my brother because he was younger than I was. The two little ones, it didn't bother them at all. But because I was the oldest one, I did realize the pressure, but it was nothing ever harped on. So you didn't really know how close to the brink of disaster you were, but it was bad. It was a terrible thing, except I think it...I don't know what gave those people the courage, but they had it. They all survived, they all stayed put, and eventually turned around and did fairly well as things improved. But it was thanks to those programs—that was the only thing that saved them. Because the cattle and sheep would have all died anyway because there was no feed, but then they got enough in there to help them. That included the big wealthy ranches, too. They were in the same...going down. They were just all going down. If it hadn't been for that particular time in history that that program was started, then that's only thing

that baled it out. Then it started to come back. Then, of course, the war came, and that brought everything back. Everybody was working.

It was a tremendous experience. I would hate to have anybody else live through it. I think probably through that and sensing what you did made you able to cope with all the things that were going to come your way as you went on. I was in high school then, and it was kind of a community project, getting me through school, because my aunt and uncle had no children. So they took care of me, and we brought what vegetables we had and help from the ranch in there to help pay the cost. Then I went to the academy and everybody pitched in and paid the tuition which was very minimal, but if you hadn't worked for a year and a half, it was...which my uncle did not. You didn't have much, but everybody, like I say, helped everybody else. I think that it was kind of like what you do with steel. If you're in the fire long enough, the stronger you get. I think that's about what happened to people because they were strong people and good people.

I think even to this day I have a part of that in me that doesn't let me go down and do things too frivolously [laughs] on spending money to this very day. I think that...because that was what was being drilled in that they would...and they were so careful afterwards because they didn't ever want to be a burden on anyone. They were very frugal in savings so they could take care of themselves until they were old. I think there's a lot of that in me yet, and I think it's from that period in time that I am much more careful than I might have been otherwise as things got better. I never did get a big kick out of spending money too much. If I did, I always had a guilty conscience. [laughs]

SAT: Well, thanks a lot.

FMT: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]