

1983

Oral history interview with Minnie Wittenbach

Minnie Wittenbach

Elaine Laines

Follow this and additional works at: <http://dc.ewu.edu/wsct>

Recommended Citation

Oral history interview with Minnie Wittenbach, 1983. Women of a Small College Town Oral Histories (EWU 984-0094), Eastern Washington University Libraries, Archives & Special Collections, Cheney, WA. <http://dc.ewu.edu/wsct/23>.

This Oral History is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives & Special Collections at EWU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Women of a Small College Town Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of EWU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jotto@ewu.edu.

**MINNIE WITTENBACH
INTERVIEWED BY ELAINE LAINES
EWU Women's Oral History Project
EWU 984-0094 # 98
SEPTEMBER 28, 1983**

E. LAINES: Today is . . .

M. WITTENBACH: No, the 28th isn't it?

E. LAINES: Let's see, today is . . .

M. WITTENBACH: Wednesday.

E. LAINES: Wednesday the...?

M. WITTENBACH: 28th.

E. LAINES: Okay, and we're talking with Minnie Wittenbach. Minnie, when did you first come to Cheney?

M. WITTENBACH: In '39, in August of '39.

E. LAINES: How did you arrive in Cheney?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, let's see, I was out on the farm and my brother had a fatal accident on the farm. Then we were just mother and I, and I would have stayed on the farm a year, not that I would have farmed, but just lived there you know? Mother didn't want to so she just taken off, so she wanted to come to either Cheney or Spangle. We had many good friends in Spangle too, but there was no bank, and there was no doctor in Spangle, so Cheney has always been my address. So we moved to Cheney and that's . . . I've lived here ever since.

E. LAINES: Cheney was always your address, even when you lived on the farm?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes.

E. LAINES: Where was your farm located?

M. WITTENBACH: Between here and Spangle about 9 miles out of Cheney.

E. LAINES: When did you first get to your farm? Were you raised there? Were you born on the farm?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes. I was born on a farm not far from there and it's a rented farm. My folks came from Switzerland, and they had no money even to buy things. So my father rented this farm. My father came, they were engaged, but my father came to the United States first and then mother came and she came right to Cheney and then they were married and lived out there all those years.

E. LAINES: What year did your mother come to Cheney?

M. WITTENBACH: 18. Now let me think, I was born in 1888, and my mother came two years before that.

E. LAINES: So in 1886?

M. WITTENBACH: I think so.

E. LAINES: Your mother came to Cheney? What are your earliest memories of the farm?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh my, I can't tell you that. But I have so many.

E. LAINES: Can you tell, did you have a horse of your own?

M. WITTENBACH: No. I didn't have a horse of my own, but I could ride every horse we had on the farm. Of course we didn't have too many, but we had a white horse we called Lucy. She wasn't used too much in later years anyway and the other horses, and we had a cart, you know, and we drove her and in the cart and I rode her.

E. LAINES: How was the cart big enough to hold two or three people?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, anyway two.

E. LAINES: Did you drive the horses?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, not then of course, I didn't but I did afterwards of course.

E. LAINES: How many children were there in the family?

M. WITTENBACH: Just three. My brother was about 3 years older than I and, my sister, 7 years younger than I.

E. LAINES: What were your brother's and sister's parents' and your mother's name?

M. WITTENBACH: My father's name was Jacob and my mother's name was Rosetta.

E. LAINES: Rosetta. That's good.

M. WITTENBACH: My brother was William or Will or Bill as we called him, and my sister, Hilda. My father died in '24 and my sister in '36 and my brother in '39. So I was left alone with mother. Then we moved to Cheney and she passed away in '50, 1950. So I've been alone ever since.

E. LAINES: What kind of things did you do on the farm to help when you were young?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, milk cows, mother said I was the best little milker when I was about 6. My father would go and work on the roads, you know, he had a team for two dollars a day in Cheney and then my mother would help with the chores, you know, with milking and I milked when I was young. I milked until I became a teen.

E. LAINES: Did you have a dairy farm?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no no, just enough for our own use. Of course we made our own cheese so we had to have milk, and I remember that morning before my brother had his accident, he said he wanted to go to, we had a neighbor boy in the hospital and he said, "I'll go up and see Emmitt and then I'm going to go see about a new car." He said that and then he went off to and I had said before to my brother, "I don't think I'm going to make cheese." You know it's quite a chore to make cheese, and he said, "Well, what am I milking these cows for?", and he didn't milk them all together, but anyway he did some of it too. So I had started to make some and I made six before he was taken, so we had cheese for a long time that's for sure. When the people would come out to our home from Cheney, they would just love that cheese.

E. LAINES: How did you, what kind of cheese was it?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, it was just like you buy.

E. LAINES: Cottage cheese?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no no no, the other kind.

E. LAINES: Hard cheese?

M. WITTENBACH: Yeah, it never, our cheese wasn't yellow. I said to mother one time and she said of course she had made cheese and then she taught me how. She said, you can put coloring in if you want to but I never did.

E. LAINES: How did you make the cheese?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, of course we didn't milk quite that many cows. We had to have quite a bit of milk and I had a wash boiler that's the only thing that it was ever used

for was to make cheese, and in the evening we would separate our milk. So in the morning I would have to heat the cream, you know, a little bit more you know so it dissolved better and then in the morning I used the whole milk. It was really made with all the whole milk. Then I heated it, I don't remember the temperature and then we had a little tablet fall in it of some kind and we'd dissolve that and put that in and let that sit, you know, and it didn't curdle but it kind of got, you know, so I could cut it better. My father had made a wooden knife and then we do that and then I'd have to put it back on the stove and heat it to a certain temperature, I don't remember what. Then I would leave it on there and then took it off and stir it for a while to get the whey out of it, you know, and then pour it off, and then I took it down in the basement; we had a press. My father had made a press and you know, about like this, square and you'd put a flour sack. We opened a flour sack and put it in there, and put this cheese in that and then the folks had post in the basement and my father had taken a piece from an old header put over across and along that there was a bucket of rocks then for the weight. So then we'd put that over the cheese and the whey would come off of it you see.

E. LAINES: Drip out?

M. WITTENBACH: Of course, we'd have to go down four or five times a day and put on a dry cloth and then in the morning we'd take it out and rub a little salt on it and so we would have to do that every day, turn it and rub on some salt. Now there's a lady who was a home-ec and she came down and she said put your salt in the cheese, you know. I did it in one, but we didn't like it at all. But then after a while sometimes if we thought it wouldn't keep too well, we put it in clear wax, you know. But we always had lots of good cheese.

E. LAINES: Was that a recipe that your father had brought over from S...?

M. WITTENBACH: No, my mother.

E. LAINES: She brought it from Switzerland?

M. WITTENBACH: Yeah.

E. LAINES: Was it Swiss cheese?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, it didn't have the holes in it like the Swiss cheese but anyway, it was made like, but I don't know, it how they make the holes in it, but ours didn't. Of course, some of ours had little holes but not big holes, you know.

E. LAINES: Maybe they were air bubbles or something.

M. WITTENBACH: So that's one thing. We didn't have many did out there.

E. LAINES: How many years did you make that for a long time?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, of course mother made it and then she decided, hey, mother liked to take care of her chickens and her garden so the cooking was kind of put over on me then. So then she taught me how and then, so that's the way a lot of things you know.

E. LAINES: Did you cook for a big crew during harvest time?

M. WITTENBACH: No. We, my brother would have 3 or 4 hired men.

E. LAINES: Did you do all the cooking?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, sure, that is of course when my sister was home, she'd help too, you know. We took turns about. Of course, we went to Business College. She went to high school and Business College, which I didn't do, and so when she came, she decided she wanted to come back to farm. So one week, she'd do the milking and the

things outside, and I would do the cooking. Of course if you needed to help one another, we all could because of course that was understood. Then next week, I did that.

E. LAINES: Where did you go to school, Minnie?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, we had a school out there, they called it Wright School. I had to walk two and a half miles to school up through the fields. The schoolhouse is gone.

E. LAINES: What road was that schoolhouse on?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, if you came, if you went out of Cheney now, you'd go, you know, as you come out of Cheney a little ways to go to Spangle you'd go on Moldon Road. There used to be a pioneer home across, an old building across the road, and the schoolhouse was on this side, but it's been gone a long time.

E. LAINES: Oh, I see. Do you remember anything about your school?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes, I have pictures of it of course, and of course I, it was, you know we had fun in school too. Of course there was about thirty of us first and we had all the grades from first through eighth and sometimes we'd have a school for four months in the fall, spring, not during the hard winters.

E. LAINES: Where did the teacher come from?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, many places.

E. LAINES: Did he live right there at the school?

M. WITTENBACH: I don't know where Mr. Tipton... that was my first teacher; I don't know where he came from but he was right in the neighborhood. He was very friendly, I do not know. My mother of course boarded one of the two teachers.

E. LAINES: That must have been fun.

M. WITTENBACH: Yes it was, and some of the other neighbors boarded some of the teachers you know.

E. LAINES: What did you do in the wintertime? Did they just close the school?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, we didn't do that in the later years, you know. They did that when I had just started the school. But then, after that why of course the older ones didn't come there.

E. LAINES: Where did your sister go to high school?

M. WITTENBACH: At Cheney.

E. LAINES: Where was that in Cheney?

M. WITTENBACH: I don't know where the old high school was.

E. LAINES: But it was in town?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes. She stayed with Tilly Miller one year. Of course she had to stay in Cheney because it was too far, one or two years they and then she stayed I think a couple of years, well 1 year with Mrs. Hendricks, and her son was a doctor in Spokane. Of course, I could have come to Cheney high school too, but you know, in them years you were, you didn't get around very good and I just didn't think I would have lasted very long if I'd stayed in town like that. I think there's a hanger down below there.

E. LAINES: Can you tell us about your neighborhood, Minnie?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, we had a wonderful neighborhood. There was a, when my brother passed away there wasn't a neighbor who hadn't come and said, "we will help you", and they really did, but some mother didn't think we should stay there.

E. LAINES: That was in 1939?

M. WITTENBACH: 1939. It was the first of May when my brother passed away.

E. LAINES: Okay. Where did you live in Cheney when you came to town?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, we lived over there on 7th. I wanted to build a house, but mother didn't want to. She thought that would be too much for us to build a house. So we bought a little house just across from where the clinic, Dr.'s clinic, is on about this time, and we lived there on the edge of town. Mother could have, She wanted to bring them to Cheney and she couldn't because we were at the edge of Cheney and I lived there until '52. Had a house built.

E. LAINES: Oh, I see. So you finally got your house built? Where is your house?

M. WITTENBACH: It was just above the Methodist church up on G Street. But of course I sold it and came over here.

E. LAINES: Who built your house, Minnie?

M. WITTENBACH: The Bomermisi boys.

E. LAINES: The what?

M. WITTENBACH: Bomermisi. The Bomermisi brothers. Pete and Tony Bomermisi.

E. LAINES: How long did it . . . what year? 1952? What was Main Street like when you and your mother first came to Cheney?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh there wasn't much of a main street.

E. LAINES: That was in 1939.

M. WITTENBACH: Yes, August 1939.

E. LAINES: Do you remember any of the stores that were in Cheney?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes. I wish we had some of those now. I think it's a shame that we don't have any nice stores downtown.

E. LAINES: Can you tell us about, do you remember any of the names of the stores in Cheney?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes. We had a Mr. O long before that, but Mr. Hughes had a nice store.

E. LAINES: What kind of store was it?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, a grocery store. My mother would bring her eggs and if we had any butter and things like that to the store and then Jack Gibson took that over and he was there when mother and I moved to Cheney then, of course.

E. LAINES: Where was that store located?

M. WITTENBACH: On Main Street. I don't know what's there now. I don't get downtown.

E. LAINES: Was it by the bank?

M. WITTENBACH: It was down .more where we came in on the other side of the . . .

E. LAINES: Okay.

M. WITTENBACH: Then Mrs. Behr had a store and I traded with her. She was just across from the where Sears & Roebuck is.

E. LAINES: Okay.

M. WITTENBACH: Just right there.

E. LAINES: What kind of a store did Mrs. Behr have?

M. WITTENBACH: Well that was a grocery store. A lovely store, and there were others, but not . . . it was a grocery store. There weren't too many, you know, privately owned, and of course the bank was here, and the attorney.

E. LAINES: Who was the attorney? Do you remember?

M. WITTENBACH: Al Walker.

E. LAINES: Okay.

M. WITTENBACH: Of course we had many doctors but of course Doctor Whisp was the last doctor we had. You know, they're from anyway; my mother was with me so I don't know.

E. LAINES: Do you remember when the first automobiles started coming down through Cheney?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes. We lived in that little place over there then and . . . this one came by. I don't remember who it was that drove it. I can't even remember when my father got the first automobile.

E. LAINES: Do you remember what the car looked like?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes it was a Studebaker. That's the only kind of car that my father and my brother bought, and my first car I bought was a Studebaker too. My brother had planned to go buy a new car and I thought well, that car would be plenty good enough for me but the neighbors said, "Well, your brother wanted you to do it," now you do it. So I had a Studebaker first. Of course I drove many horses and buggies and the roads were terrible then, you know, just terribly rocky from my place to Cheney.

E. LAINES: What road was that?

M. WITTENBACH: The same as it is now, same place, practically, anyway. [Cheney-Spangle Road]

E. LAINES: Do you remember when they first put the gravel on the roads?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, I remember when they finally paved it by the time that we moved out. I remember that the winters from when we still lived on the farm; we were snowed in. They didn't keep the highways open. We had a highway, but they didn't keep them open they didn't have the machinery to do it with, and we had a little hill to go over to get to the highway. But, if the road came open my brother was out there, then you go back there just until you get on. It was harder for me to move from the farm to Cheney than it was for me to leave my home, move here and bring my whole family here. I knew I couldn't be there alone, and it's hard to get help.

E. LAINES: Did you like to work in the garden?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, my mother always had such a big garden for everybody. Some of the neighbors didn't raise gardens and some of our friends would come out from town and everybody would share here. I thought we thought that was just a little bit too much. We liked the smaller garden, but she loved to garden.

E. LAINES: How did she garden? Did she garden with a horse and a plow?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no, no, no. My brother plowed it, but she would rake it and get it in shape, you know. Of course we would help her. Then she would, you know, do the seeding and things like that, put the seeds in the ground. It was, but a neighbor and I, after we moved to town, we didn't have any garden. Well even when I was in my home over here. Oh, I had a small garden, I.

E. LAINES: What kind of, do you remember like any of the people that were important in the church, women or were you a member of a church?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes. We were, of course we didn't attend the church as much from the country we attended a congregational church.

E. LAINES: What was, where was a congregation church when you first ...?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, it's still here.

E. LAINES: The same spot?

M. WITTENBACH: But this is but it's not used as a church.

E. LAINES: That's right.

M. WITTENBACH: I think it must be down on 4th street. I can't tell you exactly.

E. LAINES: Do you remember, did you have church socials and things like that?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, not after I came to Cheney. We used to have socials out in the country out at our basket socials.

E. LAINES: What were those like?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, well we'd make a basket, real fancy and then make . . . get some good food to put in and they auctioned them off.

E. LAINES: Did you get to eat with the ...?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, whoever bought it?

E. LAINES: Was that out, did you have a church out of town?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no, not.

E. LAINES: Where did you have the socials?

M. WITTENBACH: Well at school you know and then there was a Pioneer Hall just across from where our school was and it was a, you know, they would have dances there and also those socials. .

E. LAINES: Was it kind of like the Grange Hall?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, it wasn't a grange hall but it was something on that order. I always belonged to east Cheney Grange; you know that's come into town.

E. LAINES: What, were there any women that, friends of yours that you remember in particular that were kind of organizers?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, I don't know. I would have to say. . .

E. LAINES: They probably all were hard workers.

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, I should say they were. That's for sure. I still have one schoolmate. Adiena William Hick, she lives in Spokane. She was 92. I think that's the only schoolmate I have left.

E. LAINES: She went to school . . .

M. WITTENBACH: Yeah, out there.

E. LAINES: Where does she live in Spokane, do you know?

M. WITTENBACH: She lives on east Grace.

E. LAINES: Is she still at home?

M. WITTENBACH: Mhmm. Her husband died, but as far as I know she's still at home.

E. LAINES: Okay, what was your, what was the thing that you liked most about living on the farm, Minnie?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, I can't really tell you. I really hated to leave the farm. It was much harder for me to leave the farm than it was for me to leave my home here in Cheney.

E. LAINES: Well, did you like being out of doors and liking the open country?

M. WITTENBACH: Yes, of course I helped out of doors a lot but I really liked housework too and I loved to cook.

E. LAINES: Well, did you have some specialties that you liked to cook?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no no. It was just plain good food.

E. LAINES: I see.

M. WITTENBACH: Some good pies.

E. LAINES: Did you grow your own fruit for the pies?

M. WITTENBACH: Yes, we had an orchard.

E. LAINES: What kind of an orchard did you have?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, we had, in this old place where when I—we moved there when I was four, we had a lovely royal cherries . . . oh, so many trees and a black republican tree in the middle of the orchard and there were, I think, two sour cherry trees not so large that we had for pies and things like that.

E. LAINES: What did you do about the insects and the pests?

M. WITTENBACH: We didn't have to fuss with that like we do now.

E. LAINES: I was going to say because there's so many things that people have to . . .

M. WITTENBACH: No, we didn't have to fuss with that. We didn't have to spray or do anything like that.

E. LAINES: So it just, the bugs just weren't there.

M. WITTENBACH: They just weren't there.

E. LAINES: The birds; there were a lot of birds though.

M. WITTENBACH: Yes, we had lots of birds.

E. LAINES: So maybe the birds took care of the . . .

M. WITTENBACH: Maybe so, but we never of course had potato bugs or anything like that till in later years.

E. LAINES: Was the ground pretty virgin soil when you were young, or had they been cultivating it for many years?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no it wasn't cultivated; it was just starting to be cultivated when we moved there.

E. LAINES: I see.

M. WITTENBACH: Well, just at this old place, of course when we moved over there, you know, that was in 1910, I think we moved to that place.

E. LAINES: Now, where was that place?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, between Cheney and Spangle.

E. LAINES: Oh, I see. Where was the other place?

M. WITTENBACH: Well it was out farther, it was down a little bit towards Chapman. I was able to see a little bit toward Chapman Lake but not close to Chapman Lake.

E. LAINES: Just on that road?

M. WITTENBACH: Yeah.

E. LAINES: Okay.

M. WITTENBACH: About thirty went to the school, all grades in one little room, and we had a school in fall a few months and then in the spring. We never had school in the wintertime. When I was starting to school and it was altogether different, of course, to what it is now.

E. LAINES: Did you have a male, a man teacher or. . .

M. WITTENBACH: Yeah.

E. LAINES: Was he? Did he teach? He taught all the grades?

M. WITTENBACH: He taught all the grades.

E. LAINES: Did you have a library?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no.

E. LAINES: Where did you get your books?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, we brought our own books.

E. LAINES: I see, and did they, did they have to, where did they, did they have to order them from Spokane or did they ...?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, I don't know, we hadn't any books.

E. LAINES: I see. Did your parents encourage you to, did they help you with your homework at home?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, some but not because we didn't have so much time.

E. LAINES: There was a lot. It took up a lot of time just getting. . .

M. WITTENBACH: Yeah, it was a long way back and forth. We walked about 2 and a half miles to school, through the fields. Then there were chores to be done and different things. Of course we did study some at night but . . .

E. LAINES: What kind of a heat system did you have in your house?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, just wood stove.

E. LAINES: Did you have like a "cooking wood" stove and then you did everything on the ...

M. WITTENBACH: Yes, yes. We had a range stove, you called, and then we had a hoo ...

>>>>>>End of Side 1<<<<<<<<

>>>>>Beginning of Side 2<<<<<<

E. LAINES: Wood... did you cut down for firewood?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, it was pine trees. We'd just saw 'em up and chop 'em off.

E. LAINES: Did the girls have to do anything like, any chores like that?

M. WITTENBACH: No, no.

E. LAINES: What kind of chores did the girls do?

M. WITTENBACH: Well we could give a big hand and help with the milking and things like that.

E. LAINES: Did you name your cows?

M. WITTENBACH: Yeah. Most of them, yeah.

E. LAINES: How did you make, did you make your own butter or cream?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, sure. We separate, of course first mother had the pans that we'd put the milk in and then she'd skim off the cream, and that was put into butter.

E. LAINES: Did you have to let it set awhile?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, sure. I suppose she did that maybe for a couple days.

E. LAINES: I see.

M. WITTENBACH: The cream would rise up.

E. LAINES: Did you get together with the neighbors very often?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, sure.

E. LAINES: Like on Sundays, was. . .

M. WITTENBACH: Well, I don't know if we did that so much but I'll tell you, if anybody needed help. . . we lived in a good neighborhood.

E. LAINES: How did . . . did you go horseback from . . .?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yes. I had a friend in Whitbury that loved to ride a horse and we'd go out horseback riding.

E. LAINES: Do you remember your horse? Did you have . . .?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, sure.

E. LAINES: Were they . . .?.

M. WITTENBACH: They weren't fancy horses but they were, you could ride them and have nice times.

E. LAINES: That's the important thing. Did they do what you told them to do?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, well, my horse did. We had one horse we called Lucy; she was raised good and we had a cart and she would pull the cart.

E. LAINES: Did you run errands for your mother and your father?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, what do you mean errands?

E. LAINES: Did you ever go into town?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no no. We were too far from town.

E. LAINES: How many miles from town were you?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, about 10.

E. LAINES: That's pretty far. How long did it take to get to town?

M. WITTENBACH: You see, we didn't have a car for many, many years. But we didn't come to town every day either. I think my folks came to town maybe every two to three weeks. We didn't have to come to town. They had plenty of groceries. It isn't like now where they don't get the supplies. We had lots of groceries. We could be set up for months and have plenty to eat.

E. LAINES: Did you have chickens?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, sure.

E. LAINES: You had your eggs and you had your milk.

M. WITTENBACH: Chickens and cows and pigs. Of course they don't do that anymore.

E. LAINES: When you lived in . . . later on when you lived in Cheney after you left the farm with your mother and you lived in town, did you get to know quite a few people in town?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, I knew most everybody when we came to town. We really had lots of friends here and they would come out to the country. So, really you knew many people here in town. But now I don't know anybody.

E. LAINES: Did you meet them through your church or how did you meet so many people?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, they, getting acquainted and then they would get us acquainted with more and, I don't know, we'd come to town and shop and people were

friendly. We'd get acquainted. Mother was very, very close to many of the storekeepers, and to the bank.

E. LAINES: She really knew a lot of ...

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, yeah. Oh, we had wonderful friends, I will say and we had

...

E. LAINES: Were there any special friends that you liked the best?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no. I'm not going to say that.

E. LAINES: [laughs] Do you remember who the banker was or who some of the storekeepers were?

M. WITTENBACH: Do you mean when I got to shopping? Well, yes. Mr. McCartney was the banker, and he was a very good friend of mine, Mr. and Mrs. McCartney were very good friends of my folks. I know when my father passed away there was no will, and Mr. McCartney helped mother in many ways. Mr. Haupt had a store here. Of course, I didn't come to town, so often and mother had eggs and butter and things to sell.

E. LAINES: Did you belong to a church?

M. WITTENBACH: We belonged to the congregational church. We didn't come to church too often. We were out a long ways but whenever we came, we went to the congregation church.

E. LAINES: Do you remember any of the ministers?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, I thought of one the other day he was such a nice, you know, names leave me. Then of course after a while the church was federated, Methodist and Congregational, and there was a Reverend Field when my brother passed away. We really didn't know him very well, but everybody said what a lovely sermon he gave my brother.

E. LAINES: That means a lot. Did they have a funeral home in Cheney at that time?

M. WITTENBACH: Yes, they did. Oh, yes, when my father passed away in 1924, they, I think they had kind of one, but anyway, they had to keep my father at home. Then funeral services were from the home until after 1924.

E. LAINES: You've really kept in contact with a lot of your friends, Minnie.

M. WITTENBACH: Well, they've taken me in, you see. They really have been wonderful to me, I should say, and I've tried to do my part too, but when I can't get around anymore it isn't so easy.

E. LAINES: Well, I know when I come in you're always so cheerful and you always brighten everybody's day with your nice smile and a kind word means a lot.

M. WITTENBACH: Well I hope I don't go like some people in here, but we never know how we're going to end.

E. LAINES: That's true.

M. WITTENBACH: I don't have words for; I don't know why I should live on as long as I do. None of my family did.

E. LAINES: I know you're an inspiration to a lot of people, Minnie.

M. WITTENBACH: Sometimes. . . Well, let's finish.

E. LAINES: Do you remember any Januarys when it's been this warm?

M. WITTENBACH: No I don't. They said in 1918, somebody said... I can always remember lots of snow. Nothing like this. I'm not too happy about it.

E. LAINES: It just doesn't seem right.

M. WITTENBACH: Starting to green up.

E. LAINES: We were talking earlier about the birds. How many birds there used to be around? You said there used to be a lot of bluebirds?

M. WITTENBACH: Bluebirds and Indiana flock and Yellow Pinnows and Yellow Canaries, and of course lots of robins and sparrows and then we had these ...

E. LAINES: Starlings?

M. WITTENBACH: Starlings. Oh, they were naughty birds. They were terrible. I just didn't. . . I used to see them out when I lived in my home. A robin would come and get a worm out of the grass, you know, and then those sparrows would come and take it away from them. [both laugh] Oh, they were naughty birds.

E. LAINES: Did you ever go out to Turnbull Wildlife Refuge very much?

M. WITTENBACH: No. I went more the last year or two when I was driving because I could go out there and park. But I was so disappointed, you know, they had, it was so lovely. They had the fence around there and they kept it up nice and now they let it grow all into weeds and tore down that fence. I think it's terrible.

E. LAINES: Well, are they trying to kind of let it go back to natural state or . . . ?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, I don't know. You know the swans used to come in and then we'd take feed out for the geese and they'd come up to the fence and they were so friendly.

E. LAINES: How far was your place from Turnbull?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, it was quite a ways; of course, I never went over to Turnbull when we were on the farm.

E. LAINES: I see. Well, it wasn't a wildlife refuge then, was it?

M. WITTENBACH: No, there was a dairy; the Pine Creek Dairy was there once upon a time. . . but I just didn't get there then.

E. LAINES: Did you know the people that owned the Pine Creek Dairy at all? Did you have a lot of trees on your farm or did you cut them, did your dad cut them down?

M. WITTENBACH: No, we didn't have any pine trees.

E. LAINES: No pine trees?

M. WITTENBACH: No, there were no pine trees. This place over here where we moved to when I was four there were two fir trees growing up together and they were right by our bathtub/toilet area.

E. LAINES: Outhouse?

M. WITTENBACH: Outhouse, and, that is, they were farther up on the hill, and my sister and I used to have our playthings under those two pine trees, and my brother, he never cut them down and they're still standing there. That's the only two and they were fir trees.

E. LAINES: He went right around them. Was that land . . . was that a virgin land when your family moved there. Had somebody already cut the trees or were there . . . ?

M. WITTENBACH: I don't think there were trees out there. I don't think.

E. LAINES: Was it just a wild grass?

M. WITTENBACH: It was just grass. Bunch grass.

E. LAINES: How did you, did you irrigate any of your crops?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, no. We didn't do anything like that.

E. LAINES: It was all...

M. WITTENBACH: Well, of course, we didn't raise the crops they do now but we didn't put the money into it either for fertilizer and everything.

E. LAINES: Did you? Did they? Did you ever? Well when, in the springtime when they . . . did they plowed it, when they plowed it up what, did they plant right away?

M. WITTENBACH: Sometimes they did but usually what they planted in the spring they would plow in the fall, and then in the spring they would seed it.

E. LAINES: Did they plant wheat?

M. WITTENBACH: Yes, mostly.

E. LAINES: What kind of wheat did them . . . ?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, they have the blue stem for one. I don't remember the other. Then some barley knows, of course they had horses, they planted oats and . . .

E. LAINES: Sounds like you really had quite a few animals on the farm.

M. WITTENBACH: Of course we had lots of horses. Every farm had horses.

E. LAINES: Well, did you have cattle?

M. WITTENBACH: Yes, some cattle. He never raised a lot of cattle but he always had a few.

E. LAINES: The ones that you milked?

M. WITTENBACH: No, there's some beef cattle, too.

E. LAINES: Oh, I see. Did. . . it sounds like you really had a lot of neighbors that helped and . . .

M. WITTENBACH: Well, it was a neighborhood that helped one another. I often think when. years back there was no undertaker and my mother went many, many times when someone passed away, to help them.

E. LAINES: What did she do to help?

M. WITTENBACH: Well she would get them, you know, dress, clean up and then after that the people would go sit up all night.

E. LAINES: Did they call that a wake? Is that. . . ?

M. WITTENBACH: What do you mean?

E. LAINES: What . . . were they sitting up praying or were they. . . ?

M. WITTENBACH: No, they were there, and they to go and change . . . they put some kind of solution . . . they took some kind of solution and put it on their face so they wouldn't turn.

E. LAINES: Oh, to keep the color in the face of the person that passed away? Your mother knew what to use and all the. . .

M. WITTENBACH: Yeah.

E. LAINES: But they just put it on the face.

M. WITTENBACH: I set up a few times in later years and we'd have one there's something there that they'd put the cloth into and then put it on their face.

E. LAINES: How often did you have to do that?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, I don't know. Three or four times a night.

E. LAINES: How many people would be there? Would the immediate family be . . . ?

M. WITTENBACH: There wasn't too many there who would want to sit up.

E. LAINES: I see, and how long did they keep the body there?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, of course you couldn't keep them too long of course but some of them had relatives not just right there either and you had to wait for them.

E. LAINES: Where was the person buried?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, some over here in Cheney. My folks are all buried in Spangle.

E. LAINES: Did they use that old cemetery here off of Salnave Road? Did the neighbors come in and bring food?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, sure.

E. LAINES: Then the minister would come.

M. WITTENBACH: Yeah.

E. LAINES: Up and would he perform the service right there in the home? Where did they? Did they have a special casket there?

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, sure. I'm sure there must have been a place here in Cheney where they had 'em.

E. LAINES: Well, it sounds like the whole neighborhood kind of helped with any situation they had to kind of take care of it. Minnie, it sounds like you've had a really long and very beautiful life.

M. WITTENBACH: Oh, I don't know. I just hope it won't be too much longer.

E. LAINES: Well, I really appreciate you putting this on tape for us.

M. WITTENBACH: You have to do what God wants us to do.

E. LAINES: That's for sure. Reynolds? He wanted to learn how to make cheese?

M. WITTENBACH: No, he wanted for me to come over and show him how because his wife wanted to know how to make cheese.

E. LAINES: Oh, I see.

M. WITTENBACH: So then, he said, "Now, Minnie be careful. Don't you hit that," you see, I was tall. Well, anyway, I had this tie on and it kind of got down and I flopped back my head and bumped that and I had quite a bump on my head.

E. LAINES: Was that down in their cellar?

M. WITTENBACH: Down in Reynolds's cellar. They're both gone.

E. LAINES: Where did they live?

M. WITTENBACH: Well, they were our neighbors then, but they moved to Roseburg, Oregon.

E. LAINES: Oh, I see.

M. WITTENBACH: Of course they're . .

>>>>>>>End of Interview<<<<<<<<<