

Interview with Norman Rowell– September, 1973

By Patricia L. Carfra

This tape contains stories and reminisces of my grandfather, Norman Rowell, told to me in his home in Victoria, British Columbia, in September 1973, when he was 92 years old. He is a fine storyteller as you will hear, and is, as well – and always has been – an interested observer of people and events around him. His anecdotes are more than just that, for they give us some of the colour and reality of early days in our country. I hope you'll enjoy these stories as much as I did when he told them to me.¹



Norman and Jean Rowell, circa 1910

So tell me about your father then: John Rowell. You said that he was a joiner?

Yes, well, cabinet-maker. He spent seven years apprenticeship. A very good term in those days. He got a shilling a week. But he...the way he would make a joint. You would never see it. But of course he didn't do anything about it, although my mother said he would make their own furniture in the old country. But when he come out here he did carpenter work – joiner we'd call him.

¹ John Norman Rowell (July 4, 1881 to October 28, 1985).

So he was already established in his trade and had a family when he came out here?

There's two of us, my sister and I. There was only the two of us. There was a boy born in this country, but he died, young.

What would that have been from – some kind of a disease?

I don't know what happened to him for sure. It was many, many years ago. I don't know what happened. He died very young anyway.

Do you remember that?

No, no. It was far back.

And you were just a baby then when....

I was nine months old when we came out.

I think of the tremendous courage of families like that. Mothers with their new babies. When you think that now even with all the luxurious methods of travelling, you still don't take a nine-month-old child to too many places.

No. Hmm.

But they came out on a ship from where?

England.

Was it a so-called immigrant ship?

Not necessarily, no. Just at that time everybody was talking about going to the colonies. The British colonies. So my Dad, he got the bug and decided to come to Canada. So we left on a ship in the spring of '82. 1882.

In the spring. But yet they had problems...of course, they went so far north. Maybe you could tell me about that?

Well, the ship, it broke its propeller. We must have been pretty well over on this side I guess by that time. And it just drifted helplessly up north into the ice. It gets pretty cold in the spring. They tell me the men used to run back from one side of the ship to the other when they thought they were getting frozen in, because we were freezing in.

Oh my gosh.

And the food was scarce. The adults were down to a ship's biscuit a day, which in those days was called "hard tack".

And what did that look like?

Well it's a biscuit that would be about four inches across and about an inch thick. Hard as a rock.

You ever tasted it?

Yep, um hum, yep. You had to soak it it was so hard.

Well, then we were found somewhere or other.

How long were you out there?

Well, 28 days from the time we left Britain until we landed in Halifax. Twenty-seven days we were.²

How long would a trip like that usually take?

Well, in those days, it would go about ten days. The ship was reported lost with all on board, so our folks in the old country thought we were gone.

What kind of sealers would it be? Scandinavian sealers that come over? It wouldn't be – they were in a ship were they?

Well, no. There was no ship close by. I'm a little hazy on that, but I remember them saying that some sealers come across the ice to where the boat was. I don't know where they came from.

How did they get the boat back to Halifax?

Well, I'm hazy on that, but I know we were picked up anyway and I guess the boat would pick us up and then they would tow the other one in. I don't know.

So, then from Halifax you took off right away did you?

Yes, up to Winnipeg.

And how long were you there?

We were there for about a year. And going up to Winnipeg, we came up on a train specially made for settlers. Nothing else but immigrants on it. In those days they had "colonist cars". You've never seen them. I did so later on. The seats were facing each other and the seat and the back were made of narrow slats and at night, you pull those slats together – it's supported in the middle—and have a double bed. Hard as a rock.

Yes, I imagine.

² This is not completely accurate. They sailed on the R.M.S. *Peruvian* out of Liverpool on April 27, 1882 and arrived at Quebec on May 23, 1882.

Just the blankets on it. A stove at the end of the car for the women to cook on. But food was scarce, you see, because there was no way of getting food on the train. And about all the immigrants could do when the train stopped for water, they run over to a store or something like that to get a loaf of bread or anything they could get.

This particular day, my father was a little slow. By the time he got back to the station, the train was pulling out. Well, he thought he would catch up to it and, if not, why, being an immigrant train—nothing else but immigrants—they would stop for him. So, he kept running after the train. Well, my mother was frantic. She got hold of the conductor, she said, “My husband is left there. Stop the train.”

“Oh,” he says, “we can’t do that.” He says, “He can get the next one.”

“Well,” she says, “he’s got all our money, our tickets, and everything else.”

“Well, I can’t stop it.”

Well, in those days, the signal cord used to run open in the cars. She was quite a woman in her way. She jumped up and said, “I’ll stop it!” So, before he could stop her, she climbed up one of the seats and got a hold of this cord and bonged her down. Put on the air brakes and the train stopped with a “BANG!” And by the time that the engineer found out why he had stopped, my father got on the train.

I see what you mean, quite a lady.

She was very resourceful, by gosh, she did [sic]. Nothing stuck her at all.

Well then, from that, we went on up to...my father wanted to be a master farmer. The good government was going to give ‘im 160 acres of free land so he had visions of being a wonderful farmer. In the spring of 1883, we landed in the little dot on the map, 235 miles west of Winnipeg in a place called Wapella.

And you went by train, if I recall correctly?

Yes, by train. The rails—that were heading for the West Coast—were only 35 miles west of there at a place called Broadview³. And that team of oxen and a bunch of farming implements...there wasn’t anything on the town site at all but a couple of energetic young fellows that had put up a tent and got a few things in there for the settlers – selling it to them.

Our farm was ten miles south, and they went down there and of course they had but a tent to live in until they get someplace of a shelter.

I think I told you before, but if there’s no mention of it, I’ll mention it again....

Yes, do. I’d enjoy that.

³ Canadian Pacific Railway line.

It's all rather comical. In those days, man's boots came in 30 pairs to a wooden box. No cartons in those days. And the pairs were tied together with laces. This particular day, a big, tall, raw-boned Scotsman named Robinson—he stood over six feet—and he was sitting down trying to get a pair of boots on. I said he had big feet didn't I?

Yes.

And, uh, an Irishman name of Jim Girvin sidled up to him—he was quite a card—said, “Why not try on the box?” The Scotsman looked up at his tormenter and said, “Mister, I'd like you to understand it's men coming to open up this country, not boys!” That settled it.

Well, then we were on the farm there for about five years.

Well, tell me Grandpa, about when you first went out then to your farm site. You had a tent that you'd brought in the wagon with you?

Yeah, just sheltered a bit 'til we'd built some place.

And how long would you have been in the tent then?

Oh, I don't remember how long, but wasn't very long. See, there was summer coming on and we soon got our shelter up. My father was a carpenter anyway.

So he actually built a house?

Yes, well, he just did the house, yah. Well then, neither of them were farmers of course, and they were trying to break the land. My mother had to lead the oxen and they'd keep stepping on her feet while my father held the plough—he didn't know anything about farming! And I remember she saying she'd “shed enough tears for her to float back to England on” for those first time [sic].

Then we stayed there for about five years and by that time we were getting along better. The town as building up. And my father used to go and work for a week at a time at the carpenter who worked in town and we had a fellow helping us on the farm. That brought in a little money.

But a prairie fire come along and got into the woods behind our place and my mother and the hired man come to the conclusion they couldn't save anything, so they started taking things out and they put it way in front of the house...oh, three-to-four hundred feet on a patch that was bare. And they didn't notice it but a spark came over from the trees and set fire to it. Well then, the hired man was quite a hunter and must have had cartridges and one thing another along with all the stuff they'd piled there. The fire set them off, so they couldn't go near it to save the stuff. So they lost everything there. We ended-up with just what we were wearing. Not a thing by it. My father came home, found the place all burned out, he went to the nearest neighbour, Girvins, and found us there.

We left the farm then. Went to Wapella. I don't know how we got started up again because we had nothing. But the people were very, very friendly those days and if any got into trouble, the neighbours came to help.

Took care of their own obviously.

So I guess they must have helped us out or he must have got credit enough because he built a bit of a house in town and then he worked in his trade all of the time we were there, in the years afterwards.

I went to school. Left there on the 12th—I got my 12th grade—and then I went to work in the store. I was about 16.

What kind of a store was it?

A general store. That's what there was in those days. Kept everything: from hardware to groceries. And I got the magnificent sum of 17 dollars and a half a month, working from eight in the morning to eight at night. But after I'd been there, oh, some little time, the boss called me in and he said, "Norman, I think maybe we can give you \$20 a month." And—I don't know how I got the nerve—but I said, "Look, Mr. Knowles, don't you think I'm worth more than that?" [Pause] "Alright, we'll give you twenty-two fifty." So I got the magnificent raise of five dollars a month and I thought I had the world by the tail.

Well, I wanted to be a telegraph operator, station master. Didn't know to learn how, but fortunately the younger brother of the station agent wanted to learn too. So after the store closed, I used to go into the telegraph office—and we had a way of cutting off the main power—and we could send back to each other on our machines. He would send a while and I would send a while, and so on. By spring, I thought I was a telegraph operator.

But in and about that time, my mother thought I should have a business course, so she financed me. She was the going concern in our family. She financed me for to go down to Winnipeg and take a business course with the Winnipeg Business College. So after about six months, I graduated and got a very nice looking certificate. But I had a chance then to go and work for the C.P.R. yards where they told me I'd be able to learn telegraphy. My job was to go out and call out the crews when a train was made up—they wanted the brakeman and the conductor—and I used to have to go to their home and tell them when to report for work, on a bicycle. But they kept me so busy I couldn't learn anything, so I told them there's no use me staying there so I come back and started to work in the store again.

Same store?

In the same store, yep.

Then I heard that the coal company wanted someone to run a small supply store for the miners and they were going to put in a loop for a telegraph key because we were about three miles away from the station and there was no telephones those days. So I accepted

and went down there. I found out to my horror that instead of being just a local thing (which they told me), just three miles, I was on the main line from the American border right down to Winnipeg. So I made arrangement with the telegraph operator over there during the winter: he would listen to my call and he'd take the call – he'd make my message, whatever it was – and then he could ground the wire and send them in to me slowly. But he did it all winter because the office there closed in the summertime. So by spring, I didn't care who I talked with then. I got along all right. And I was there for five years.

You were still wearing two hats—you were still in charge of the little store and you were the telegrapher?

Yes, but by that time it had developed a lot and I was really working for the railroad company. In this way I got commissions on all the telegraph messages I took in. And then, the manager of the mine there, Mr. Hamilton, decided he was going to go to another mine up in Alberta and it was about a half a mile from the Mormon town of Taber. He wanted me to go up with him because he said they were going to develop things—we were going to have a store there. So I went with him.

What were they mining?

That was a different type of coal: it was bituminous coal. Much better than the one we had down at Coalfields⁴. They didn't go ahead very much. They got a good chance to sell out about two years afterwards and in the meantime I kept the books. Then I...when they sold out...I went down to Esterhazy where my brother-in-law was. I'd been sending money down there all the time anyway, and went into business with him. I was there for about three years I guess.

Was that a general store as well?

General store again, yep. And, then they went broke because it was a black year in 1907. Practically all the banks in the United States went broke. Our crop was ruined. But anyway, my friend Hamilton helped me out with a loan or I'd have gone broke I guess. And, I took over my brother-in-law's share of it and he took the Post Office.

Well, then eventually I traded that for a hardware store in Dubuc, two stations away, and that's where Grandma and I started our married life in 1909. Well, I was only there for about a year when Mr. Hamilton moved again, up into the Crowsnest Pass where there was coking coal. He come and saw me and between the two of us we decided that we'd try and sell that hardware store. He said I could buy out a store up in Passburg that had just started up, just in the foothills of the Crow's Nest Pass. So we moved up there in 1910, just the year after we were married. I was there for five years.

Well, did a lot of business, but the strike come on and it lasted about eight months. In the meantime, the coal company were developing things. They made 100, about 105 ovens, coke ovens, great big washing plant, and a great big machine shop. Spent a lot of money

⁴ Coalfields, Saskatchewan. 49° 06' 00" N - 102° 44' 00" W. Near Estevan, SK.

which they borrowed from the bank, but at the end of the eight months, they'd more or less lost their business. They carried on for about two years after that. Oh, the war come on then, in 1914. They carried on for about two years after that, then they folded up. They owed me about \$23,000.00. All kinds of reasons for that, but I got practically nothing out of it, almost broke, got six thousand dollars out.

But a friend of mine that I worked with in one of the stores in Wapella said there was a store for sale in Wapella and he wanted to know if I wouldn't go down there and go and visit with him. So we moved back to Wapella, or I did. That was in 1916. My partner⁵ died in 1925 and I carried on there for 22 years. Then I moved from there to British Columbia, to Victoria.



Rowell & Creary General Store, Wapella

We went on a trip with a trailer down to the United States for three months in 1938/39 and then we came back up here and the second war started then, 1939, so I never used the trailer again. Had to sell it because you couldn't travel, couldn't get gas or anything else. So I've been here ever since.

Your Dad and Florence were born in Passburg and your aunt, Norma, was born in Wapella. So here we are.

I remember your telling me a story about Passburg. Now would that have been when Florence was very small? Was it a sod, you were living in a sod house at first in Passburg?

No, no.

⁵ Gerard A. Creary.

I remember some story you were talking about...maybe you were just describing sod huts to me?

Yes, well in the Prairies in those days, they were all sod places you know.

But you didn't live in one?

No, no, no. That was just in the Prairies. Oh, no, we could get all kinds of lumber in Passburg, all kinds of lumber. But I had just a bit of a shack to start with and then I added on to it after a while. Nice little home there: it was two bedrooms, and a living room, and a dining room and a good-sized kitchen. We had a nice little home there.

I think it's from Passburg that a couple of stories came that I've enjoyed. You told me once that you were responsible for the payroll, is that right?

Oh, yeah. Yes, it was an advantage to me in this way: because I was so closely associated with the company—Mr. Hamilton became manager—so he suggested that they would allow me to cash the slips that the miners would get. They could bring them to me and I'd cash them and then I'd take them to the coke coal company and they would give me cash for it, see. And that would give me quite a help to collect my accounts. Well anyway then the company got in trouble and Hamilton said to me, "You know, you don't need all this money. How'd it be if we give you a little less than what payroll is and we'll give you 10% on your money?" Well, at that time they had 600 acres of coal land and they looked to be financially 100 percent. Well, that went on for a while and that's how they got into me for so much money.

I used to have to go up to Frank, over the slide, which is an awful trip, and I'd bring down—they got paid every two weeks—maybe \$10,000.00. I'd have to keep that overnight. I don't know why I wasn't robbed. I don't know. In fact, I used to...I bought a revolver. I thought that would be something to protect me with.

I remember an incident [laughing]. I had the payroll under my pillow and I also had the revolver under my pillow. And in the morning—Florence was then just a little bit of a tyke—first thing you would know, she would crawl into bed with us. We were having breakfast, and here she walks out into the kitchen where we were having breakfast with this revolver. Sucking the barrel of it! Of course, it wasn't as bad as it sounds because the safety was on it—she couldn't set it off anyway, but it gave us quite a start!

I often wonder why I wasn't robbed because they knew about that money; kept it there over night. But that's how I got into difficulties with them.

I remember another story, and it sounds like it might be a Passburg story, of a wagonload of dynamite?

Yes, between Hamilton and I, we sold explosives. And sometimes we used to deliver it because I had a big delivery rig anyway. And this particular day I had a load of "monobill" they called it—oh a big load—standing in front of the store. I had to go up to the house for something and the lines were tied to the door. The door slammed up above and broke the glass in the door and the team ran away and I just came around the corner

as they were going and I got a hold of the lines but they pulled me down. In fact I hurt my shoulder over it. And they started across the Prairie, lickety skit with this load of dynamite [laughing]. But they headed for quite an open space and they got tired running after a while—they quit. So I went and caught them and got the dynamite and delivered it. But it gave us a start for a while.

Yes, after something like that you start thinking about what might have happened.

Just to go back a little bit Grandpa, I remembered another story I enjoyed. This goes back to the Prairie again of your wedding day?

Well I had a licence all right, in the safe in the store, and there was only one train a day and it went from Dubuc down to Esterhazy.

And Grandma was in Esterhazy?

Esterhazy, yah. That's where I was going to get married.

Well, I was waiting on a customer—didn't notice—first thing I know a train came in. There was only one a day. So I grabbed my hat and my coat and hustled over to the station. Forgot all about the licence! So, when I come to get married, I said to the minister, "I haven't got a licence because I forgot it!"

So, my brother-in-law, Flook, he was the registrar, so he said, "Well, I tell you what I'll do. I'll go on down there—just to satisfy myself—and if I see where there's one been issued, you can mail it down to me." So I always used to always kid your Grandma saying she was never legally married because I didn't have a licence!

Another thing that I'll just tell you about—you may find it worthwhile—in about 1948 I guess it was, we drove from here down to Regina (we were going to Esterhazy to visit my sister) and we found out that the roads were so terrible bad off the main road that we could never make it by car down to Esterhazy, so we decided to take the train. In those days, it was a mixed train. It was freight cars and a passenger car on the end that you could ride in. And of course, you didn't know when it was going to reach there because it depended on how much freight they had. Well anyways, it's only 150 miles and it took us all day to go down there. But anyway, they stopped at Dubuc—that's where we started our married life—and they're unloading freight and it was exactly 39 years to the day—seemed funny—June the 9th, 39 years later.

There was a man unloading freight, so I said to him, "We started our married life here 39 years ago", and I said, "Right over there is the store that I used to have a hardware in. Have I got time to go on over there?" And he said, "Yes, go ahead. If we're through before you're ready," he said, "I won't leave you. I'll get the engineer to give you a couple toots." That's cooperation wasn't it?

That's really obliging! [long pause – sounds like people drinking tea].

I wanted to ask you more about that black year of 1907. You mentioned that the American banks had failed....

Yep, a tremendous lot failed there that year. Tremendous lot.

What was it like? It obviously wasn't as bad as the Depression of the '30s?

Well, no. The United States banking system was different to ours. Any little one-horse bank would start up on the corner: somebody had a few dollars. They couldn't do that in Canada. And so many of the banks went broke down there. Tremendous lot. And our crop was an absolute failure. It was frosted and those who burnt their fields were further off than those who threshed it because they needed all the chaff to turn it back in.

Well, how about contrasting that to the Depression years, because you were right in the heart of the Prairie Depression area, weren't you?

Well, of course the Depression was all over Canada.

Right.

With us, it was local because of the frost. Now Manitoba was better off than we were. But just that part of Saskatchewan had an absolute failure.

How about telling me something about what it was like during the Depression of the '30s in a small town. You were in the general store then, which would put you in kind of an awkward position wouldn't it?

Well it did in a way and yet we were better off than some of the bigger places because we were among farmers, small farmers, and we could get supplies. But the trains going through, the top of the cars would just be black with men on top going from one place to another trying to get a job. They would hop off the train—our home was straight across from the tracks—and they used to get up there for something to eat. I used to tell your Grandma to be sure to feed up all of them but keep them outside. So she always fed them.

The system in the town was that if two or three blew in they would put them in the jail for the night. I mean not put them IN jail but let them sleep in the jail. They would give them a chit in the morning to go down to the restaurant to get them breakfast. "Move on," [chuckling], "keep 'em moving." Oh, it was a bad time.

And you'd have been hit by the dust and the....

Well, we didn't have the dust but we had something that was worse than that. We had rust. That killed the crops. Made it bad. Crop would look wonderful and inside of a month there wasn't anything in it. The rust would just destroy it all. You'd walk through a field and your clothes would just be all red with rust.

Now, is rust a disease?

Yep, yes.

It's not caused by a bug?

No, disease. And it'll travel for thousands of miles up in the air, the spores of it they tell me. It comes from a certain plant. I've just forgotten the name of it now that turns them off⁶. Of course nowadays, afterwards, they developed rust-resistant wheat. That settled it.

Well now, did the Depression finish a lot of the families?

No, I wouldn't say so. No.

Pretty well everyone you knew sat it out?

Oh yes. We didn't feel so terribly bad in our little place there because, as I say, we had lots of food.

Now you were able to sell your store...really before the end of the Depression, were you?

It was practically over—1938—just getting out of it. It was 1938 when we sold out.

Why did you sell?

Well, I just decided I'm going to quit.

Just wanted a change?

Yeah. I figured that I could come out here to live and I thought I'd get a small store but, oh my gosh, the work was from eight o'clock in the morning to eight o'clock at night and I did didn't want that so I never went into business again. Although, I had an interest in the business afterwards because the man I sold out to died a couple of years after I sold to him. And a clerk that had worked for me for about 17 years, he was named McKeown, he wanted to take it over. And he came out to here to see me see if I wouldn't go into business with him. I said, "Well I'll lend you money Alec to start it." No, he didn't want that. He wanted to, uh—I think he was a little nervous about going in—he said, "No, I wish you would take an interest." So I took a half interest with him. So I had an interest in it for five or six years after that. And then he sold out and went up to Prince Albert. He died of cancer about two years ago.

Well now, why did you pick Victoria to come to? Had you been out here from...?

Yes, well we had visited out here three or four times and then...

...from Passburg when you lived there?

⁶ Wheat rust is caused by any of several rust fungi of the genus *Puccinia*.

...then Grandma's father and mother were out here, you know: Grandpa Fairbairn and
....

Oh! No. I didn't know that.

Oh, yes. They lived out here for years. And then her sister was out here: MacFarlane. Step-sister.

Oh that's right. I've met the MacFarlanes.

So we come out here and I and I always thought I wanted to buy a trailer. So I bought a trailer out here and we went down to Saskatchewan the next year. Stayed there for a while and then we took the trailer and went down to Toronto and Montreal.

I remember that.

And then the next time, when we come back that fall, we went down to Florida with it. Left Regina in a snowstorm – about ten below zero – but I never used the trailer until I got down to Nashville, Tennessee. And that was one of the best trips your grandma and I ever had, and I'd have gone again but the war come on the next year. By the time it was over, why, we didn't go any more.



The Trailer, circa 1938. Jean Rowell is standing, wearing the dark outfit.

What kind of facilities would they have for trailers, because that's before the trailering bug hit?

There wasn't a thing between here and Florida. Not a place. But I would go to a – well I said I didn't use it until Nashville anyway – I just parked it every night and went to a hotel. And when we got down there, what we would do is go to a park – before I got down to where the parks were – I'd go to a filling station and they would let me put my 90 feet of wire through their window, connect it up to me and that would get me light in

the – light and power - in the trailer. They'd never charge more than about fifty cents for it. In fact when we were down there in Florida – in Miami - we were in a place twenty blocks from the centre of Miami. We had a space 30 by 40 for our car and trailer. We had water right handy. We had a great big place that you could go and play shuffleboard and you could play cards and there was a little restaurant. And I paid two dollars and a half a week for ... to stay there.

A week!

They didn't give us any cooking facilities but they give us light. But we had a Coleman stove run by gasoline with an oven on it and you your Grandma could make, bake lots of things in it.

Very special....

Things have changed now an awful lot. It was a wonderful trip – we came all the way across southern part of the United States through Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. Went down into Mexico, down as far as Monterey. Wonderful trip.

Did you have the trailer made or were there some on the market?

I was very fortunate about that. I was looking for a trailer and they had one over here from – that was made in Vancouver. And it was a terrible thing. I said to your Grandmother, "I could build a better trailer than that myself. I don't like it." But finally the fellow said, "Look, if you're not gonna buy this trailer, I'm gonna send it back to Vancouver." So I said to your Grandma, I said, "Let's go out and see if we can't find one." So I went out first the next day, first motel I come to, I said, "Do you happen to know where there's a good trailer?" "Yes" he said, "I know where there's a dandy." He says the woman has driven it up from Florida, her husband has taken terribly ill and she's gotta sell it. So he told me where to go and get it. Soon as we got in sight of it, your Grandma said, "This is it." So I just give the woman what she asked for it – it was almost \$550. But it was a dandy trailer for those years, my gosh. Wonderful.

We had a place to put a – there was no refrigerator in those days – but we a place to put 50 pound of ice in and when we got down south there, they had it all manufactured. And the ice was in blocks. Otherwise, I'd just get a piece and put it in there. The ladies' clothes closet had a plate glass, full-length mirror on it and the man's was just a short affair. And we had all the widows – had rubber in them to keep the dust out, and we had lights all over the place; a 25 gallon tank of water with a pump on it and you could pump it into a sink and then it would run away outside. It was a wonderful trailer for the times. They are better now, but....

Well, yes, but does sound very sophisticated.

Well I just happened to locate it, you see. That woman was, oh she was so sorry to sell it but she simply had to do it. In fact, when I was selling it – taking it over to Vancouver to sell it – she said, "Won't you come round this way so I can have one look at it as you go by?" [chuckling]. And the funny thing you know, she came to the border with that

trailer – she'd traded an old one down there for this new one that she liked – and she came to the border at Estevan and she unfortunately came across to this side and they charged her \$275.00 duty on it. “Oh,” she said, “I won't stay here.” “Oh,” he says, “you'll have to, you can't take it back now.” So she had to pay \$275.00 tax on it to bring it into Canada. So she didn't make much on the \$550.00, but that's what she asked for it. But we travelled, oh – in that trip down south – we travelled 10,000 miles out of it.

How long were you gone?

Three months. I'd have stayed there another three month if it hadn't, eh, Grandma's stepmother fell and broke her hip and she was in the hospital. In fact, she never come out. She died in there. So we came back home. Otherwise we'd have stayed down there longer. Never went back again after because the war started.

I was harking back to your stories about when you sold out from your general store and you told me that there was a sequel with many years elapsed in between about that related to some of the debts you were unable to collect at the end of – when you actually sold out. You had left many debts standing.

Oh I had a lot on the books – a tremendous lot, but I left the list of my accounts with the lawyer if anyone was going to pay them, but I left strict instructions that he wasn't to take action against anybody unless he let me know and, times started to change. You'd go down there every year to try and collect and, along about '43 – that was five years after I went down there – conditions had changed. Whereas a cow when I left there was worth \$25.00, they were getting \$125.00 for them. Well, everybody is more or less honest. I think 95 percent of people are honest. And a lot of the people felt that they wanted to pay me, but what is the use? They hadn't the surplus money, they could never pay me but they began to see daylight and I'd always told them that if ever they could pay, I'd meet them half way on it because we all went through the Depression. And I went down there in 1943 this particular time, and I went into this lawyer and I said, “Now here's a list of five fellows. This fellow has paid \$200.00. That fellow pay \$150.00, and so and so.” He started to laugh at me and said, “Gosh. I've been trying to collect from those fellows for five years.” I said, “I'll bet you \$10.00 that everyone pays.” And they did. They wanted to throw out their chest and say “I don't owe Rowell anything.” See. And everyone paid. Mind you they got a big cut on it, but I got money out of them and I was satisfied. So I take about 50 percent, but that's all. I lot an awful lot of money.

How about – there was a further sequel too, was there not – when we were living here? Now I understood that this was quite a bit later on. Someone had...was it passing through...someone had found your name in a phone book and he came to see you here? I'm trying to remember....

About paying a debt maybe?

Yes, it was paying a debt.

Ha ha. Yes. I don't know how he got his [sic] name, but his name was McCormack and he came over from Vancouver one day and he said – he phoned me – he said would I be in and I said, “Yes”. He says, “Mr. Rowell, I owe you some money.” I says, “You do?

Gosh, it's 30 years you know. Thirty-five years." And he says, "Yes. My name is Malcolm McCormack." "Oh, yes, I remember you, Malcolm." "I owe you a hundred and twenty dollars and I want to pay it." [chuckles]. I said, "Well look. I gave everybody else a cut. I'll give you one." I said, "Give me a hundred dollars and we'll call it square." [chuckling again]. But they come back after 30, 35 years! He comes round and pay me a hundred dollars! It's almost unbelievable.

That's right. It goes to reinforce your belief that most people are honest.

In human nature. That's right. But, oh, I lost a tremendous lot of money.

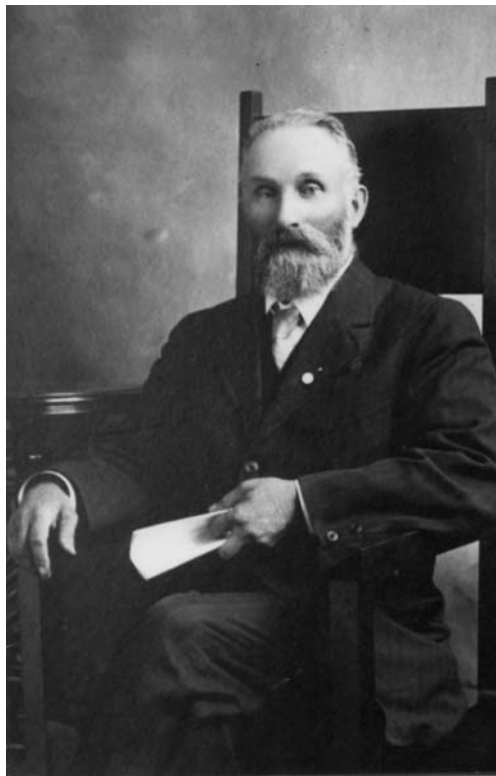
You've really had a financial career that's had it's marked ups and downs.

Ups and downs. Yes. Up in the Crowsnest Pass I was making so much money that I didn't know what to do with it hardly. Lost it all. Right off the bat. But we had a very pleasant time up there, just newly married. Two of our children were born there, and of course – a lovely place to get.... We all had riding horses and we'd go away on them.

[sounds like tape stopped and then re-started.]

As you remember you father then, he was bearded?

Had a beard all his life. But in later years his beard, as he got older, got grey, why, he just had more of a shortened beard. But he had a beard all his life and a heavy moustache.



John Rowell (April 20, 1855 – August 7, 1932)

And the black hair – and your mother you remember as....

He got pretty well bald of course in the older years. But I have a picture, I'll find that by next week. I'm sure I will.

OK, I'd like to see that.

My mother was quite stout and very high strung. She was really the force in our family.

Strong personality.

That's right, yah.

How do you remember her when you're thinking of strong personalities? In what way did it manifest itself?

Well, anything that had to be done, she did it. Now, for instance, she was the one that sent me to business college in Winnipeg. My father'd never have thought of that. And she used to nearly always have a boarder so she'd have money for herself. And she was the one who got me into the store. She was the driving force in our family. My father was always a bit more of a dreamer. He sure loved music, by gosh.

Was he a musician himself?

Yes, he could play the piano, but he had quite a wonderful voice. He and my sister had good voices. She followed after him. He used to drive all through the country round Wapella in the wintertime, 10, 12 miles away in the snow for putting on a concert. He used to play the banjo. I remember my sister had a little one. It was only about six inches across. My father had the big size. And they would sing duets together. Oh, they were very popular.

I never knew that!

Crawled all over the country.

What kind of music did they sing when they were together?

Well, it was the old type stuff, you know. *In the Gloaming*, that kind of stuff, you know? The old songs.

Oh, sure!

There was no jazz those days.

No.

Well, then so what my father would do – he used to play the concertina. Ever seen one of them?



A concertina

Small...

Yes, they're octagon-shaped. Bellows, you see? Very different to the, uh, what do you call...

The accordion. Is much bigger, more complex.

The accordion. Yes. Has a few keys on it. Now he would go and he would play *all* night for a dance over in the hall. Never got five cents for it. But he'd play and they'd dance to his music. That's all the music you'd get. And then he'd go home at first light.

Oh, my.

Oh, he was sure crazy about music.

He must have been a popular fellow around town.

He was, yeh.

And what about these dances, were they dances like these held now?

Well, they were the old type, you know. We used to have the square dance and the waltz, the schottische and the quadrille. They were all very popular in those days.

What was the third one you mentioned, the "shot-teesh"?

Schottische?

Yes. I know the other ones but I don't know that.

Well that's danced nowadays. It's a kind of fast thing and it had quite a hop to it. It's a fast one. The waltz was the most popular. And of course, the square dance was very popular.

Oh right! Nothing like a square dance for letting out steam. That's right. Were these dances held regularly?

No, just off and on. But they were quite frequent, you know. It was a very poor sort of a hall. It was what we called our agricultural hall, until they got the better one. Well then, he didn't play there anymore – it was just in the very old days. Way back. I've got a picture – I'll show you him too – of years gone by. A picture I figure was taken, oh, it must have been...let's see...80 years ago [i.e. circa 1893] of a bunch of men in Wapella. The old-timers. In those days, a travelling photographer would come from town to town and he'd stay for a day or two and take pictures and move on to the next. That's the way it used to be worked.

Oh, I see.

Well, there's about eight or ten men taken in this picture. If you'd like to shut it off I could get that picture. I know where it is.



This is the photo to which he refers here

OK. [tape off and then resumes] Now we were talking about dances, I guess, and we got on that subject because... May was your sister's name was it not?

May, yeah.

Now, did she continue to play and sing?

Oh yes, until...well...she used to go all over the place really. We had a team of horses and a cart and they would go miles out. Storms and everything else. But that was the only entertainment we had in those days, you know?

Yeah. Would they sing for weddings too, or was it mostly less formal?

Just mostly entertainment. Now take an outlying district, in their schoolhouse, would have an entertainment. And, of course, my father and my sister were invited out to take part in it.

How would the dealings go? They would be introduced, presumably? And then they would sing and play. Was there ever audience participation?

Yes, in some places they'd have a stage. And they'd have all local talent, that's all it was.

Mmm hmm.

Anybody that could sing or play an instrument, well...and they'd might happen to have a dance besides, you never could tell. Or it could be a box social. Something like that. We used to have box social in those days.

Right. Tell me about a box social.

Well, a box social is all the women take a lunch and that's put up for auction. If they want to get some money for a church, for instance. The box lunch would be put up and whoever bids it – it's bid by the man of course – the woman has to have her lunch with him.

Oh, she shares the lunch with that she brought?

She shares with him. And they probably go \$1.00, \$2.00, maybe \$5.00.

Depending on how pretty she was or how well she cooked?

Yes, well sometimes the bidding would go up pretty good because it would be for some local improvement.

Mmm hmm.

Yes. Probably, fix up their hall or something like that.

So that would be in conjunction with entertainment or with a dance?

And after that they'd probably dance or sing songs.

Mmm hmm. Sounds like fun.

Yes. You know, it's wonderful looking back over those days – everybody was happy. We didn't have the things you have now by any means. No telephone, no TV, no radio, or anything else as far as that goes. But everybody was happy. We never had them so we never missed them.

Yes, that's right.

That's right. Such a friendly feeling in those days too. Didn't matter who got into trouble with some disaster. Everybody would flock around, the government never asked to do anything. People, the local people, helped them out. That's the way it worked.

Well, that makes me think back to the prairie fire that just took your house and everything that you owned...

That's right.

And yet as far as you recall, within a short while, the family was back on its feet again.

Well, yes.

Did you not tell me too that your Dad took you all back to Newcastle-on-Tyne?

To where?

To England? Was it back to Newcastle?

Yah. Just after we got burnt out. I don't know where he got all the money from. Maybe it was sent to him by [sounds like "an Englishman" but it is unclear], I don't know. But he...he had got the wanderlust in his veins and he wouldn't stay there. He was going to stay there, that was the idea.

He'd sort of had it.

Yes. He had to come back to Canada again. So he come out some months before us and had a house for us when we come out.

Oh, I see. Do you remember anything about that trip?

Very little. I was about, uh, four or five years old at that time. I is just hazy, that's all. In fact, most of I guess I did believe what was told to me it was the way I remembered it. I remember being on the farm. I remember that part.

Do you have any vivid memories of that fire? That must be a terrifying thing for a child.

No. No, I haven't. No...

That's probably fortunate.

Too young for that. My sister would I guess – she was three years older than I was. I only knew what I was told.

You, I don't suppose then, had any chance then to get to know your grandparents at all because you were just a baby when you came out here, weren't you?

That's all, yeah. No, I never saw either of them. Any of them as far as that goes.

Do you know anything about them?

Not a great deal. My grandfather – my father's father – he was in the same business as my father was: cabinet maker rather than picture, eh...paper hanger. But I don't know what my mother's father did. I was never told. He lived to a ripe old age too. He was over 90 when he died.

Did he ever come out here to visit?

No. No, no. He must have died very soon after we came out here I guess. I don't know anything about it. He may have been alive when we went back to the old country, but I wouldn't remember.

Did they come from large families?

Ehm...let's see. No, they weren't very large. Neither one was a large family. I don't just remember how many in my mother [sic]. She left home when she was quite young. She couldn't get along with her step-mother. Her mother had died. And there was friction in the house, so she started off on her own. And she went out working. Worked for some Quakers. She went half a year until she got married. As a cokabeef [?] she was – domestic servant at any rate, cause she couldn't get along with her step-mother.

Sounds like another example of her strong will. She sounds like somebody who'd land on her feet most of the time. What about your sister May – she sounds like kind of an interesting person?

Oh she was a wonderful girl, by gosh. Yep.⁷

And she had a very large family. How many children did you tell me?

Uh, I have to pick it up again [referring to a paper placed nearby].

I won't put you through that exercise. I have it written down somewhere. One, two three, four, five, six, seven children?

Yeah. Mmhmm. He was the post master in those days. She went to this – she spent one year after she was married in Wapella. That's where we lived. And then Vernon – that's her husband – went to Esterhazy and started a store that had a Post Office. The line had

⁷ Mary Jane "May" Rowell (1878 – 1965).

just gone through. In fact, they had to move the store a little bit because...to get it on the right spot. And they built a little bit of a place there. They kept adding to it of course. But she lived in that from the time she went there until she died. It must have been 45 years I guess.

Oh, my. And she was long-lived too wasn't she? I have great hopes for myself you know, it's good stock I come from!

BREAK

I'd like you to reminisce about your cars. You've had a fair number.

The first car I owned was a Metz, M-E-T-Z⁸. They only made a few of them and then lost or died I think because they were never very popular.

Coming up the Crowsnest Pass when I was – in 1910 – and I always wanted a car. Well of course there weren't many cars around in those days. And, I saw this advertisement in the paper down in the States, and I thought, "Gee, that's just what I want, just a runabout." And this may not interest you, but it would be to anyone in mechanics, it was what they call a "friction drive". I never saw one like it because I didn't wear it out. It was a great big cylinder on the drive shaft which kept revolving as soon as you started the engine. Then, to go against that, to drive the car, there was a friction wheel made out of paper so it would grab and that would go against this revolving thing on the drive shaft, and that was attached to a bar that went across and that was a chain drive. You had to push that thing against this cylinder so it would be in gear. And there was 10 speeds forward and one reverse. Every time you moved over an inch, you got a little higher gear and when you got to the outside, you were in high gear. See where you are?

[Non-committal, nervous sort of laugh]

And if you got past the centre, that was reverse, going the other way. But it was no good up in that part of the country. I couldn't keep the...couldn't buy the fibre wheel. They wear out too fast on the hills. So it didn't pan out too well.

Yes. Rugged country.

So I sold it to a doctor who was there and I bought my first Ford. It was...brass radiator, the old type, you know, open car. That was in 1911, I bought that. I had that for quite a while.

⁸ The Metz Automobile Company built cars and motorcycles in Waltham, Massachusetts from 1898 until 1922. Some claims to fame for Metz include the first U.S. production motorcycle, and a car with a continuously variable friction-drive transmission. Its advertisement read, "The Gearless Car, No clutch to slip - No gears to strip". A Metz automobile won the Glidden Touring Trophy in 1915. The company ceased to exist in 1927. The reason given by a source was that after WWI, there was such an anti-German feeling in the U.S., that all German sounding names were either changed or shunned. Metz, though an American company, was severely affected. It went from the largest auto manufacturer east of Detroit to shutting down the business in 1927, despite changing the company name to Waltham. The factory also produced airplanes for the British during WWI.

I'll tell you one experience I had with it. Course your Grandma used to drive too and we had a girl staying with us. She was looking after the children. She was a Hungarian. And this particular day, Grandma and the girl went up to one of the towns, and when they come back they put the car in and I took it out and the damned thing wouldn't drive. With an old Ford, you could do almost anything to it, but it had a radius rod and that was all bent. And I just got down below and give it a pull, straightened it out, and went on. So I, when I come back, I said, "Now confess, fess up. What'd you do to that car yesterday? [chuckling]" Grandma said, "Well, I come smack into that garage and I didn't know how to stop it." Well it hit the side so bad it went out about 30 feet! So they walked around and Grandma said, "Well Annie, I don't think there's anything wrong with it. We'd better not tell Norman." So, they pushed the car in [hooting with laughter]. Bent what they call the radius rod so that the wheels [rest lost in laughter].

Well, and I was the only one around there that had a car for a while. But then I went from there down to Wapella. When I started to get my feet again after pretty near broke I thought...an older man there, old guy you never heard of I guess.... I know going down on the land I couldn't tell ya the cars I had [chuckling]. Your Grandma said I was car crazy and guess she was right because I did.... I know at one time she said to Mrs. MacFarlane, "My, I wish Norm wouldn't buy so many cars, spending so much money." She says, "Jean Rowell! If Norman can afford to buy a car, let him buy it. He doesn't drink and he doesn't do anything else. Let him but it!" [more chuckling] So she never interfered with me after that!

I ended up here with Oldsmobiles. I had, what? I guess five or six of them, one right after the other.



Daughters Florence & Norma Rowell and his 1936 Oldsmobile F36 Sedan

The good car that I had that I went down to Florida with, hauled the trailer about 10,000 miles. It was a 1939 Chrysler and, boy, that was a good car. It had an overdrive on it – nobody has that nowadays – that meant that when you got going along, you put this into overdrive and it would cut the revolutions from the engine down 30 percent. Give lots of power but yet cut down the gas mileage. Of course, it was an old stick shift, you know. They hadn't any automatics those days. But that was a wonderful car; pulled that trailer

– weighed 3,500 lbs. Went up into the Grand Canyon, 7,300 feet, never a cough. Intermediate gear right up to the top. Wonderful old car. I had that for quite a while because the war came along and you couldn't buy another car. I think I'm an overeater – I've had a new car every two years.

Well I seem to remember something about that. Something like I walked into the 40?

No, I think it must have been going on 35 or 36 anyway, I'm sure it must have been.

That is quite a record! What about the roads back around the time when you first set off?

Oh they were something terrible. If we ever had gravel we were in clover because they were nearly all dirt roads. And then of course, you keep your eye on the weather because if the weather got bad, why, you get stuck. They were always [?] terrible bad.

Well, your cars, they had to be closed in?

Well, you know, we didn't closed in cars for a long time. In fact, I didn't get them when they first came out because when the sides were closed in on a Ford (you haven't seen an old Ford I guess) but all they had was little places about three inches wide and about, oh, 18" high, fastened up the side. They weren't a closed car, they were just made out of waterproof material. And there was Eisenglass in between each one. That's where you could see out.

Well, your Grandmother couldn't stand it. She'd get sick every time if those sides were on. So I didn't buy a new, closed-in car when they first came out, but I had an old Hudson, 1916 Hudson, eight passenger, open car.



1916 Hudson

And I saw down in the States where you could buy widows for it. They were just made out of ordinary glass, but it had an edging of waterproof material and there were gaps in it. And instead of being able to run it up and down, you slid the glass back and forth to open it – two pieces of glass in it. Well you know, your Grandma wouldn't get sick in that at all; she could see out through some goodly piece of glass. So the next car I got, I got a closed car. That's the way it worked.

Mmmm. And in what way did you use the car, when you got those first few cars?

Well, I'll tell you [about] one trip we made to Yellowstone Park. That was in this great big, old 1916 Hudson. And, the winter before, I'd frozen the radiator: left the water in there too long. And I took it to the garage man in the spring 'cause we were going to go down to Yellowstone Park. Well he looked it over and drove it out. "There's nothing wrong with this." So I said, "All right." So away we went. Loaded up. You could only get in outside the car one place because all the left hand side was loaded up on the running board with tents and things like that and there was five of us that went in there.

Well, I never had such a trip in all my life! Because the weather turned awful hot and that engine was boiling, boiling, boiling. We had a friend along with us by the name of Bacchus. He had a Ford with what they called a Ruxell axle. And he'd be out of sight and here I had a great big car that couldn't keep up with him. I had to keep putting water in. I went to garage after garage. One would tell me one thing, one would tell me the other. And it really spoiled my trip because I couldn't do a dashed thing.

I went up the top of Mount...er...I've forgotten the name of it now, anyway it was 10,100 feet. I said I was going to go up to the top of that with this old car. Bacchus, he wouldn't go. He says, "I'm not going up there." So I said, "Well, I'll meet you round the other side." So, we had quite a job! It would get too hot, we'd stop, and somebody would jump out and put a rock at the back because it was just a one-way road, all gravel. No, no hard roads in those days. This was back in 1925. Well, anyway, we got to the top and there was even snow up there, so I said, "Now you fill your thermos bottle with snow and take it down and show Bacchus that we did get to the top."

So, away we went down below and of course there was no motels or anything else those days. There was no garages in there even! But there was places where people could tent. So, where we were going to tent was up on a sort of plateau, but to get there, you had to go down into an valley and up. Well, I went down into the valley and pushed the lever over to get it into intermediate to get it up the other side: the lever broke off! So there I was, locked in high gear. Well, in those days, you could throw the clutch out, you see. Different to what you do with the automatic now. And I would let the car come back as far as it could and then I'd put the brake on. It was all locked in high gear, see? And then I'd give it all the gas I could and get as high as I could. Well, then it would stop of course. I'd put it into neutral, let it come back again, and after about four times I got to the top!

Well, here we were, miles away from any place to get it fixed and I didn't know what the dickens to do. But somebody says, "Say, there's a blacksmith's fellow over there, he

does some work on these busses around here. Maybe he can do something for you?” So I took the top off and took the lever off and went over to him and I said, “What can you do?” “Oh, gosh. I’ll weld it for you. That’ll get you out of here anyway.” So he welded it and I put it back in again, we’re off the next morning. I thought we’d be there for days. And that was in there in the car until I sold it. It worked all right. See, they were simple in those days because this lever would move it from low to high and intermediate and reverse by having the two prongs fixed.

Well anyway, I got back to Regina. The fair was on. And we were always putting fancy things on our cars in those days. There was an Indian chief on it – I put two wires in it – so I grabbed one of these and, sticking the wires in, I went and made a hole in the radiator! So I went to a fellow and I said, “I punctured my radiator. Will you fix it?” So he took it out. He says, “How in the dickens have you ever been driving this car?” I says, “I haven’t been driving it. It’s been driving me mad.” He says, “There’s only half of your radiator working.” He says, “You must have frozen it last winter.” And I said, “Yes, but it didn’t leak!” “Well,” he said, “the water passages in these Hudsons are very, very small and thin.” And he said, “What you did when you froze it, they just went together.”

[speaking together – neither intelligible]

“All you had was a little piece of radiator all the time. I’ll put a new core in for you.” Well, we put a new core in, going back to Wapella, I could go as fast as I liked [laughing]. Spoiled my trip until I had that fixed. You never know.

You mentioned a fair coming to town – this is off the topic of cars – that the fair was in Regina. Did the fairs make the rounds to small towns too?

No, they had their own fair there. Oh, they had a wonderful fair in Regina. They had all kinds of stock and vegetables and the like like that, you know. And then they’d have the midway. It was very good.

How about back onto the subject of cars again, and I’m thinking of roads and the lack of lighting and that kind of thing. What about poor roads at night? Would your car lamps be adequate?

Oh, well, in the earlier years...by the time I went down to Wapella they got pretty good lights. Different altogether from what they were before. See, the old Ford car was just terrible. You probably heard about that. Because it worked off the generator and if the car was working hard there was no lights at all hardly. Then as soon as the car didn’t have to work hard, up would come the lights. But that was soon fixed. In fact it was fixed before I left Passburg. Somebody got the bright idea to put new headlights on with gas in them. And we put a pair on this running board – we had all running boards those days – that you could put carbide in and water and that made a beautiful light. But you had to be so careful because if you didn’t keep the carbide in there you had no lights at all many times. But they made wonderful lights.

But by the time that I got down to Wapella of course, they were all electric – very nearly.

I vaguely remember snatches of the story or an account, and it must have been up in Passburg, of Grandma walking with a lantern. Now that would be very hilly roads, would it?

Oh, very hilly. Oh, I guess what you remember is with the old Ford car, and up in the mountains where the hills were steep, it was terrible because the cars were fed by gravity. Now that meant there was a tank in the car and the gasoline flowed down to the carburettor. Now if you had a full tank of gas, you could go up most of the hills, but if it got down to about half full, and the engine got to high, the gravity wouldn't feed it! So I guess what you remember is that we used to go visiting down at a place called Police Flats. It was a dickens of a hill to come up for it, narrow road, course all dirt. And many, many a time I backed up that at night with your Grandma going along in front of me with a taillight, which was a coal oil light. That's what they used for taillights is coal oil. And she'd go along walk at the very edge, and I'd see that taillight and I'd go to the edge and back up. That's the only way you could get up the hill.

But your father has probably told you about his trip to Yellowstone in that Bug did he?

Yes....

Now he overcame that with the Bug. He had the same thing, an old Model T Ford. Just a stripped up thing. And he of all ... had the idea of boring a hole in the top of it and putting a valve in from a tire and then he got a hand pump – and there was always somebody along with him – and one would pump while the other drove. Why, he went up the top of Mt. Washburn where we went. That's that one, the mount I was thinking of in the Yellowstone Park. Ten thousand, one hundred feet. He and his chum went up there and passed everything on the road! One fellow sitting up on top of the tank pumping air in, which forced the gas through the carburettor, and they'd get two toots and away they'd go past them [laughing].

Well, I think you passed your love of automobiles on very directly to your son.

I think so, by gar. I think so. Yes, he sure like automobiles.

Did you get the same enjoyment out of tinkering with cars as he does?

No. No I didn't so much. I just seemed to leave it to the garage men. I never did much tinkering. Minor things I'd fix.

I don't know whether I told you this once before – you want to go now don't you?

Tell me.

This is something that's kind of interesting in a way. When living in Wapella, we were invited out about, oh, about 10 miles I guess, out to a wedding of a girl we knew very well. And I had an Oldsmobile at that time. Took it out of the garage and brought it over to the street to get filled with gas and when I went to start it up, the wheels were locked! "Oh," the man says, "you broke a pinion that's what's the matter with you." "Well," I said, "what the dickens am I going to do?" I said, "We're due at a wedding in about two

hours.” “Oh,” he says, “I’ll lend you my wife’s car.” It was an Oldsmobile. No it was a ... I forget what it was. Anyway, an open car. And of course those days we’d run with cranks. You couldn’t...no starters on the cars those days. So anyway, he gave me that car – chains on it, you see. Snow on the road, you know. About 20 below zero. Awful cold. Well anyway, we got about half way along there and I was going through a little drift kind of slow. Engine stalled. So I went out. By golly, the fellow forgot to put the crank in, so I had no way of cranking the engine to start it. Well, I’d read in a book somewhere that you could start a car by hind wheels. So I took and got the jack out and jacked the hind wheel up, put the car into gear – into low gear – and got a hold of the chain and started turning the wheel. By golly, the car started! So we got out of there otherwise would be awful cold. That’s the only time I had to do that. But I started it anyway.

I’ve never heard of that. Aren’t you lucky that that piece of information came flashing back just when it was needed?

We got there about an hour late but we saw them get married. They waited for us.

Things were pretty flexible I imagine.

Yes. Yes. Yah. Well, say, you’ve got to go! We’re five minutes to 12:00.

Right and you have to get ready too I guess.

ENDS

In the Gloaming

In the gloaming, oh my darling
When the lights are soft and low
And the quiet shadows falling
Softly come and softly go.

When the trees are sobbing faintly
With a gentle unknown woe
Will you think of me and love me
As you did once long ago?

In the gloaming, oh my darling
Think not bitterly of me
Though I passed away in silence
Left you lonely, set you free.

For my heart was tossed with longing
What had been could never be
It was best to leave you thus dear
Best for you and best for me.

In the gloaming, oh my darling
When the lights are soft and low
Will you think of me and love me
As you did once long ago.