

Irwin, Bonita

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K-25 Oral History Interview

Date: 9/23/05

Interviewee: Bonita Irwin

Interviewer: Jennifer Thonhoff

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Thonhoff, J.: You'll let me know when you're ready. And I'm just going to first have you start out saying your name, and then we'll go from there. And then I'll have -- I'm going to have him let you know when it's ready, when we're ready to go.

Irwin, B.: Okay.

Thonhoff, J.: And you don't need to be nervous. We can -- When we talk it'll be just like people.

Male: Okay. You can go ahead and start.

Thonhoff, J.: Okay. Can you start with your name?

Irwin, B.: Anita Irwin. I'm secretary of the Wheat Alumni Association.

Thonhoff, J.: Okay. And so you were in the Wheat community before K-25 came.

Irwin, B.: I was born in the Wheat community.

Thonhoff, J.: Wonderful. Can you tell me about what you remember being a child in the Wheat community?

Irwin, B.: Oh, children got together a lot. You know, neighbors. And we'd have these games that -- And we -- There was -- East Fort Creek ran close to our house. And our neighbors would all meet and we'd meet down at the swimming hole. [laughs]

Thonhoff, J.: That sounds like a good time.

Irwin, B.: Yeah. It was a good time. We -- Our neighbors was real good. We loved everyone. I mean, if one was in trouble, they had help. Everybody went in to help them.

Thonhoff, J.: They had a great -- It was a great community.

Irwin, B.: It was a great community. It was a model community.

Thonhoff, J.: That's wonderful.

Irwin, B.: The fact is we got recognized from New York Times. They wrote about the accomplishments about our community, Wheat community.

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Thonhoff, J.:

What did they -- What did it say?

Irwin, B.:

It said that people like -- that live like the ones lived in the Wheat community not only talked but they acted on problems. You know.

[02:51]

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah. What was it like to be in that kind of community, that kind of environment?

Irwin, B.:

Uh-huh (affirmative). Wheat was a farming community. And we raised there about everything. We didn't have to go to the store very often. Just like for sugar, coffee, kerosene for our lamps.

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah.

Irwin, B.:

We didn't have electricity at that time. And it was -- I can't understand you know. We always had a full table of food three times a day. And if you work on a farm you have to do that. You have to -- But my dad, we got up around four or four-thirty every morning. And he would want to be in the field almost by the time it come daylight.

Thonhoff, J.:

Wow. You guys had a farm on your land?

Irwin, B.:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Thonhoff, J.:

What did you grow?

Irwin, B.:

We grew corn mostly and hay, you know, for our cattle. And we see there's -- We had our meat of all kinds. Beef, chickens, and pork of all kinds.

[04:19]

Thonhoff, J.:

So you had all of that on your farm as well? You had cows and --

Irwin, B.:

Oh, yes.

Thonhoff, J.:

Oh. And can you describe for me what the family life was like there?

Irwin, B.:

Family life was good. After I got the age of sports, I had a brother and two sisters. And we all loved sports. So we was in the sport program, and our parents backed us too. I don't think I played a

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ballgame that my dad wasn't there if he could get there at all. And of course I lost my mother when I was 14, so that -- And she loved it just as well as he did.

Thonhoff, J.:

Do you want to tell me about some of your memories about the community and living there?

Irwin, B.:

Well, like I said, you could go in to the neighbor's home anytime and feel welcome. And we just looked forward to church and school. Now Wheat got its name from the first post office. Uh, Papa Creek Seminary was the forerunner of Roan College. And I suppose everyone knows that we did have a college in the community.

Thonhoff, J.:

Oh, I didn't know that.

Irwin, B.:

It was Roan College. And that's where Roan State got its name. We had Papa Creek Seminary first. That was in 18 and 77. And then Roan College, when they knew that they were so many that had moved into the community. And they had heard of the school being a real good school, and we had to build dormitories. I think you'll see the picture of some of them. And the women's dormitory was right close to the school. The men's dormitory was about, oh I guess a fourth of a mile from the school. But we had students that came from out of state because it was a good school.

Thonhoff, J.:

Did you attend that school?

Irwin, B.:

From the first grade -- From the primary on through twelve. Yes I did.

Thonhoff, J.:

And what was it like to be there?

Irwin, B.:

In school?

[07:29]

Thonhoff, J.:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Irwin, B.:

With our friends?

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah.

Irwin, B.:

Oh. It was good. It was good. We had good teachers. Good a -- They was strict. We couldn't -- Today you see the children I guess closer than we was, because we wasn't hardly -- We was supposed

to right notes even. We could speak to the boys, you know. [laughter] And we slipped a note every once in a while. There's one girl -- There's one girl that got a note from a boy, and the teacher, study hall teacher saw it. Well, she was going to take it away from her. And this girl ate that note. [laughter]

We had good -- We had sports of all kinds. Volleyball, basketball, football. Champions. The year I was a senior we went to the regional tournament. We lost our first game, but we went to the regional tournament anyhow. And our boys, it was a six man team. A doubt if you've ever seen one.

Thonhoff, J.: I don't.

[09:03]

Irwin, B.: But a lot of these smaller schools went six man. And they won the championship. Our school did. We was proud of them.

Thonhoff, J.: Good for them.

Irwin, B.: Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.: And then the community, the Wheat community got displaced when K-25 came in.

Irwin, B.: Manhattan Project. Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.: What happened? Yeah. What happened when that --?

Irwin, B.: Well, they didn't give us any time to pack up and get out hardly. They was -- I've understood. I don't know of any certain family that I have understood -- have heard it all these years that they burned barns before they could get their hay out. And they tore down some mighty good houses.

What was just -- It had some beautiful homes there. It wasn't thickly populated, but it was nice.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah. It sounds like the community had come together so well.

[10:13]

Irwin, B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Well, the college had over 200 students. Of course, they came from out of state, too.

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Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah.

Irwin, B.:

And Reverend George Jones gave over 200 acres of land for the churches and schools and for the community. And he give -- If they would want to build a house on any of that, they was supposed to let a student board, or stay with them really cause the board didn't amount to very much. And that was one of the requirements that he had. That if someone wanted a place to stay to attend the school there, that they could have that acre of land. A lot of them did.

Thonhoff, J.:

And what did you do during that timeframe when your community was --?

Irwin, B.:

Well, right at that time where the big move was, I was living in West Tennessee for six months or something like that. I missed a little bit of it.

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah. Well, what do you remember of it?

[11:27]

Irwin, B.:

Of the move?

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah. What was it like for your family to have to leave their home?

Irwin, B.:

Well, my family was already -- One of my sisters was married. My brother was in college, and there was just -- Another sister had moved to Indianapolis. So there was just my father and me. And we moved just outside of the area. It's close.

Thonhoff, J.:

So that you could kind of keep the community together somewhat?

Irwin, B.:

Uh-huh (affirmative). Uh-huh (affirmative).

Thonhoff, J.:

What --

Irwin, B.:

And we -- The first Sunday of October we always have our homecoming. And when the government let us back in there for the -- Of course it was after the war and so on -- Let us back in there to have our homecoming. We had been having it different places. We had part of the time at Harriman because the church I went to bought a church in Harriman. And we'd have it down there. But the first homecoming, I understand that there was over 1,000 people there at that little church. Of course they couldn't all

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get in. [laughs]

[13:05]

Thonhoff, J.: Take turns.

Irwin, B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). And now our attendance is -- It's fell an awful lot because each year I have a memorial list to read of the ones I know of.

Thonhoff, J.: Right.

Irwin, B.: I'm sure that that's not near all of them because they moved out of state away from Washington State to California.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah.

Irwin, B.: And I just don't hear about their families anymore.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah.

[13:41]

Irwin, B.: But one year at the homecoming, we had pictures made. You know. And that's very interesting to go back and see those pictures.

Thonhoff, J.: Did you do a comparison?

Irwin, B.: A little. [laughs] But a lot of our younger generation is carrying on now. Many of our old ones are gone. We don't -- And I'm the old one now. [laughs]

Thonhoff, J.: Are there some stories that you remember from -- Since you're the secretary and you hold these reunions, do you have any particular stories you remember of some families?

Irwin, B.: Well, not really. I know we was just real close families and friends. If you needed help, you didn't care to call for it.

Thonhoff, J.: It seems like such a different time from then to now. How would you describe the difference?

Irwin, B.: Ah, traffic. [laughter] Traffic and prices.

Thonhoff, J.: Right.

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[15:17]

Irwin, B.: And discipline. Ah, we was disciplined. Our parents knew where we was all the time. And it's different today.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah.

Irwin, B.: Ah, but we lived by -- We lived right on Bear Creek or close -- Bear Creek where it circles around.

Thonhoff, J.: Oh, okay.

Irwin, B.: And it runs into East Fork on the place where we live. And East Fork then runs into Poplar Creek. And we used to go back there and there was a little knolle right just about where it ran together. There's a little knolle there, and we used to find Indian heads there. The Cherokee. Yeah. There was a mound up at the back of our house in the woodland park. Our parents always told us to leave that alone. Don't you touch it. So we didn't. We didn't dig in it or anything.

Thonhoff, J.: Were there stories about what the mound was?

[16:49]

Irwin, B.: Well, they felt like that it was where they had buried a lot of their utensils. And I think they buried a lot of their cookware and things like that there. But it was a big territory that they was in anyhow. It came on over to Dilus (phonetic sp.) and --

Thonhoff, J.: How bit was it about?

Irwin, B.: Oh, honey, I don't know. It's just -- It came over from Sugar Grove Valley.

Thonhoff, J.: Okay.

Irwin, B.: And it was just a big territory the whites went in.

Thonhoff, J.: Right.

Irwin, B.: Which was sad.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah. It does happen.

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Irwin, B.:

Well, we was sad to see our people move out. But we also had 157 young men that went into the armed forces at that time.

[17:53]

Thonhoff, J.:

So you lost a big chunk.

Irwin, B.:

And there was nine that didn't come back. They was killed.

Thonhoff, J.:

So nine didn't come back but everybody else did?

Irwin, B.:

And I had a classmate in one of them. Kind of hurts.

Thonhoff, J.:

That's sad.

Irwin, B.:

Yeah. But we've always just thought that the Wheat community was tops and all. And you can look around any communities and come see how they get along. Right now I have neighbors on each side of the road that I don't even know their names. We knew people from five miles around. So it's different in that way. We're not as friendly as we used to be.

Thonhoff, J.:

No. What do you think has changed so much that has changed the way people interact with each other?

Irwin, B.:

I don't know whether it's busy jobs. I guess it's most of it. But money. Have more money now to give their kids.

[19:20]

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah.

Irwin, B.:

If we had 50 cents, that'd pay our way into a ballgame. A quarter would pay our way and then we'd have a quarter to spend.
[laughs]

Thonhoff, J.:

(Indiscernible).

Irwin, B.:

We had big crowds at our ballgames. And one thing that we had was our fair. It was a community's -- Anyone that wanted to enter into the fair. And we'd have fair exhibits. And on the balcony of the school was needlework, quilting and all kinds of needlework. And down on the floor there was the displace of all kinds of things that they grew. Everything from tobacco down to cucumbers.
[laughter]

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We had -- The floor was always just filled with exhibits. And they'd be people come from everywhere to that little fair. And it'd last three days. And we had a fair barn that they'd bring their cattle and sheep and anything they had like that. To bring in goats.

[20:53]

Thonhoff, J.:

Any livestock.

Irwin, B.:

Uh-huh (affirmative). All kinds of livestock.

Thonhoff, J.:

And they'd do kind of like they do at the fair now with the rabbits and their prized things.

Irwin, B.:

Yeah. Right. Right. And they gave prizes. They gave -- They gave maybe quarters and fifty cents. Whatever, whatever you had on display if it won. We always liked the blue ribbon. [laughs]

Thonhoff, J.:

Yes. Yes. And then did you do -- Was there like cooking contests and things like that like pies and things like that at the fair?

Irwin, B.:

Yes. They had food. Of course, I was young and I didn't take part in that. [laughs]

Thonhoff, J.:

What other things did they have there at the fair?

Irwin, B.:

Well, they had on display eggs, even down to eggs. Well, they have those on display now at the fairs. It's about the same display that they have at the other fairs.

[21:58]

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah. It's just changed a little bit.

Irwin, B.:

Yes. More of it. [laughs]

Thonhoff, J.:

All right. More electronic things, right?

Irwin, B.:

Yeah. Yeah. True. True.

Thonhoff, J.:

And then are there some important dates that you can remember about things that have happened?

Irwin, B.:

Well, like I said, post office was about the first thing -- You know, they had the seminary, and then they had the college. And they had a post office, but it didn't -- It wasn't organized as a post

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office. But the post office was established in 1881. And a gentleman by the name of Frank Wheat ran that post office. And that's who -- They honored this man by naming the community Wheat.

Thonhoff, J.:

Oh.

Irwin, B.:

And I thought that was an interesting thing for people back then even. You know. But then of course the Roan College was established. And they was active until 19 and eight. And they was -- The school was doing so good that they, Roan County board of education took it over to run it. So that's when we got the high school in 19 and eight. But Roan College was there until 1916. And we can point out where it was through pictures and everything.

[24:10]

Thonhoff, J.:

Wonderful.

Irwin, B.:

There was three superintendents beginning 1914. Superintendents of Roan County schools. They all graduated from the Wheat school. One stayed 38 years. Mr. Briton stayed 38 years. And then there was Mr. Williams. And he was there for -- from '56 until '63. And then a Mr. Ottomanliet (phonetic sp.) was there from 19 and 63 to 1966. And then Mr. Williams was called back, and he served until 1978. So we was right proud. You know. And we've had noted doctors. Knoxville has -- Well, Dr. Ross Crofts, he was a child specialist. He graduated there. And A.T. Christenberry (phonetic sp.). He was an eye, ear and throat doctor.

[25:34]

And our people has spread out and done real well.

Thonhoff, J.:

It sounds like they made names for themselves.

Irwin, B.:

Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.:

And then what was it like to have such a great close-knit community and then disperse?

Irwin, B.:

Well, when we first moved to the Dilus community we still knew everyone. And, but the last few years there'd been people coming in buying land and building. I live on Sugar Grove Valley Road, and it's a popular place. They like to -- There's some beautiful lots

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there if the people that owns the property would sell them.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah.

Irwin, B.: But for a good while, I knew everybody that lived next to me. But these peoples not been there very long. I've visited them, but they've not been there very long.

Thonhoff, J.: So --

[crew talk]

[End of Tape 1]

Thonhoff, J.: I've learned the history of the Wheat community and where it all came from and originated.

Irwin, B.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Thonhoff, J.: I've got some wonderful --

Irwin, B.: The spring is still there that Roan College tear their water from.

Thonhoff, J.: The what?

Irwin, B.: Spring. Some water. Spring.

Thonhoff, J.: Oh.

Irwin, B.: DOE said they was going to clean it out. You know. But they never have. You can still see it though.

Thonhoff, J.: And where is that?

Irwin, B.: Well, I guess it'd be maybe a fourth of a mile from the school.

Thonhoff, J.: Okay.

Irwin, B.: Maybe not quite that far. But we can't imagine hardly having to carry water for 200 students.

Thonhoff, J.: No. Is that something that you guys did in school?

Irwin, B.: Me?

Thonhoff, J.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

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Irwin, B.: No. No. I never did. No, we had -- I'm sure it came from a well, but they had fountains. You know. We had fountains. Water fountains at school and showers. Showers in our bathrooms. And of course there's indoor plumbing. We had all that.

Thonhoff, J.: Oh, good. And --

Irwin, B.: And the lights was run by Delco.

Thonhoff, J.: So you had electric lighting up there.

Irwin, B.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Thonhoff, J.: Wonderful.

Irwin, B.: It was -- You know the college, they was real close too. Because I don't know of one that is still living though that went to that college. I'd like to know if there is.

Thonhoff, J.: People from --

Irwin, B.: People that went to the Roan College. If they know someone, I'd love to get in touch with them.

[02:15]

Thonhoff, J.: That shouldn't be too hard to ask that information.

Irwin, B.: But they'd be getting mighty old. We had one, Newton Adams. He was 100 years old when he died. We have another one and coming. I hope she's able to come this year that will be 100 years old. And she comes every year to the homecoming.

Thonhoff, J.: That's probably what keeps her going.

Irwin, B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Oh, yeah. She looks forward to those homecomings.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah. Well, lets --

Irwin, B.: And she's -- I mean, she's quite active. She lives at Colville. I don't get to see her very often.

Thonhoff, J.: Let's see. You guys have been having reunions every single year since when?

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Irwin, B.: 1932. This is 73 years.

Thonhoff, J.: And have you been attending the whole time?

[03:18]

Irwin, B.: All the time. When I was a little girl I didn't like to go. [laughs]
But now I don't miss.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah. Big change, huh.

Irwin, B.: Yeah. Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.: What were the reunions like? Can you describe --

Irwin, B.: I can remember when I was little when I didn't want to go. But all the people, all the women wore long black dresses and bonnets. And that just almost smothered me to death. I couldn't understand why they'd -- My mother didn't dress that way. I couldn't understand why they were doing it. Of course, that was back in those times I guess when -- And the most of them be black. Black dresses and black bonnets.

Thonhoff, J.: Not very exciting colors.

Irwin, B.: No. No. Well, there's one year the gas rationing that we decided that we shouldn't have the homecoming. But we had one at Oliver Springs. Met up there. And then we had one at this church in Hammond that the Presbyterian Church bought. And then they invited us back into the old stomping ground. [laughs]

[04:54]

Thonhoff, J.: (Indiscernible).

Irwin, B.: Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.: What are your gatherings like? What do you do for your reunions?

Irwin, B.: Well, my musicians called me last night, and they can't be there. Two or three of them is sick, and they can't be there. But they've been there the last two or three. And we have a speaker that he went to school there. He's not a preacher. That's what we're going to have this year. And he's a mighty fine person.

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Thonhoff, J.: Oh.

Irwin, B.: And he loved the community and he loved the school and so on.
But he'll be there this year.

Thonhoff, J.: Oh, good.

Irwin, B.: And I told him, I said, "You know, 15 minutes is long enough."
[laughter]

[05:40]

Thonhoff, J.: That is very good for a speech. That's not long enough
(Indiscernible).

Irwin, B.: Yeah. True.

Thonhoff, J.: People will start getting antsy after 15 minutes.

Irwin, B.: That's true.

Thonhoff, J.: Well, so you guys just get back together and talk about memories
and --

Irwin, B.: Oh, yeah. Do you remember this? And we bring our books. You
know. Not too many of them keeps up with it as close as I do I
guess, because I've been secretary of this. This is my 28th year.
And I really try to keep up with it. Keep up with our people that
passes on. Have a memorial list that I read all the time. When we
first started -- When I first started 28 years ago, I don't reckon
there was any minutes or anything. I couldn't find a thing. So
there was -- There would be up to 60, in the 60's sometimes of
people that we knew that had passed on. But like I say, we're so
scattered. There's some that I don't know about.

[06:56]

Thonhoff, J.: Right.

Irwin, B.: But, and I think we're down to about 20 something this year. So --

Thonhoff, J.: Getting smaller and smaller every year.

Irwin, B.: It sure does. It sure does.

Thonhoff, J.: You had mentioned that you wanted to talk about the peach trees

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and the groves.

Irwin, B.:

Well, we had six I believe it was. Don's, Don Watson's brother had one orchard. Had three thousand trees. And that wasn't the largest orchard. Dilus orchard was the larger orchard. Well, they'd -- My dad was foreman of the orchard. That was the Wheat orchard. He was foreman there, and it takes a lot of work with peaches. You have to keep them sprayed and all that, you know, if they bear. And then sometimes if it comes a hail storm or something and the peaches are -- have set on and you can see a dent. But they kept them sprayed, and you didn't find any insects in them at all. But they was such as -- They'd grade them. Which you grade each peach, and if it has one -- just a mark on it of any kind it goes into the coals. And they get -- just about gave those away.

Thonhoff, J.:

Wow.

[08:42]

Irwin, B.:

And they shipped when they got them graded out. They'd ship them by train to Cincinnati. And then a lot of people would truck them. Truck them to Knoxville. And they'd be people come from out of state and buy, you know, cause they could get them cheap.

Thonhoff, J.:

Right. (Indiscernible).

Irwin, B.:

Three dollars a bushel for number ones. And now it's almost three dollars for one.

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah. Peaches are incredibly expensive.

Irwin, B.:

Uh-huh (affirmative). But that was 19 -- The big money crop that we had.

Thonhoff, J.:

Oh. Okay.

Irwin, B.:

That would buy our books for school and our clothing, winter clothing for our families.

[09:43]

Thonhoff, J.:

So that was mainly the largest producing?

Irwin, B.:

It was the largest paying crop at the time.

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Thonhoff, J.:

And then everybody else usually -- Their crops were for home use or to share within the community pretty much. Is that how it worked?

Irwin, B.:

Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah. Everyone would come along if they wanted peaches. A lot of times they'd just give them to them cause -- But that was excitement for all of us. You know. We liked peach time.

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah. What was it like during peach time?

Irwin, B.:

Ah, I know my dad, like I said, was foreman. And he had to be there, you know, from daylight 'til dark almost. But the orchard that he -- It was built a half a mile from our house. And I'd cook dinner and take it out there, and there's a little spring across the way that we would spread out a little lunch and have lunch. About everybody done it that way.

Thonhoff, J.:

That's sounds so nice.

[11:10]

Irwin, B.:

And then we'd invite others to eat with us. [laughs] And it was fellowship.

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah.

Irwin, B.:

We had a lot of fellowship at that time.

Thonhoff, J.:

And you said your dad was the foreman?

Irwin, B.:

Foreman of the orchard. Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah. What did he need to do? What was his main --?

Irwin, B.:

Well, he needed to see that the ones picking the peaches knew which ones to pick at the time. He'd take them from one plot to the other. You know.

Thonhoff, J.:

Then he'd show them what -- He would teach them?

Irwin, B.:

Uh-huh (affirmative). His -- There was one boy. He never did -- He never could learn how, what kind of peaches. He kept sticking his finger. He'd mash them. [laughs] He wasn't supposed to do that. He never did. He had to let him go. I mean, it was just that way. I mean, he was determined to do that. [laughs]

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[12:18]

Thonhoff, J.: That doesn't work for your money deals yielding crop. Smash them all.

Irwin, B.: [laughs] Well, the Halin (phonetic sp.) Orchard that I was talking about, his brother owned it. Don Watson's brother owned it. And they got so crowded up with peaches they'd take them down to Poplar Creek and dump them in the creek. They almost dammed the creek up one time with peaches. I said, "I bet that made the fish happy."

Thonhoff, J.: I bet it did. There were some sweet fish then.

Irwin, B.: Absolutely. [laughter] But we loved our community. We loved our neighbors. And I never did hear of anybody having a feud down there with their neighbors.

Thonhoff, J.: Wow. In all that time there was not any disagreements or anything?

[13:22]

Irwin, B.: Not that I know of. No. If there was, they kept quiet about it.

Thonhoff, J.: Or worked it out.

Irwin, B.: Where I lived we had three apple orchards. And do you know about dried apples? Dried fruit?

Thonhoff, J.: I love dried fruit.

Irwin, B.: To make pies and cakes? Stack cakes? You never heard of a stack cake. Okay.

Thonhoff, J.: What is that?

Irwin, B.: [laughs] I may make one for the homecoming.

Thonhoff, J.: Oh.

Irwin, B.: Okay. You dry your apples. And they would find ways of taking care. You slice them thin. Thin slice them and then lay them out in the sun to dry.

Irwin, Bonita

Thonhoff, J.: Okay.

[14:26]

Irwin, B.: And then when you want to make your fried pies or your stack cake you cook them and they swell back up just the size that they was when you put them in there before you started drying them.

Thonhoff, J.: And so that's something that you guys did often, because you had the apple orchard.

Irwin, B.: Oh, yeah. We did sacks full of dried apples. And these things you fix so many different ways. Sulfur. We had a barrel that sat on our back porch that had sulfured apples. You burn sulfur on charcoal and put it down in those apples and it sulfurs them. They are so good. [laughs]

Thonhoff, J.: (Indiscernible) apple.

Irwin, B.: Yeah. Uh-huh (affirmative). Sulfured apple. Uh-huh (affirmative). And then you can make applesauce, apple butter. There's a lot of ways to use your apples. Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.: Wow. I never had any idea.

Irwin, B.: You've not lived on the farm.

Thonhoff, J.: I have not lived -- Indeed I have not. [laughter] I was living where there's about four acres of apple orchards. They're very small, not so sweet apples.

[15:57]

Irwin, B.: Well. Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.: I don't know what to do with them.

Irwin, B.: Most of these was wine saps or the good apple that you can -- that holds up. You know.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah. And so you had the -- Is that the only kind of apples you had on the orchard?

Irwin, B.: No. They had different apples. They had one that they called just sweet apple. Don't know what it was, but it sure was good. [laughter]

Irwin, Bonita

Thonhoff, J.: I love apples. And so you're going to make an apple cake?

Irwin, B.: I may if I have time. [laughs] It takes a while.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah. So are you going to dry apples to do it?

Irwin, B.: I have them.

Thonhoff, J.: You have them.

[16:39]

Irwin, B.: I already have them.

Thonhoff, J.: Oh. See. It's all taken care of.

Irwin, B.: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah. Well, that's for the cooking.

Thonhoff, J.: And you were saying that there used to be cooking for days and days before.

Irwin, B.: Oh, yeah. Making pies and cakes. Not now. That was on back when these old people came that wore the black dresses and bonnets.

Thonhoff, J.: So now is it kind of like everybody comes and brings something? And you guys just get together and talk about stories?

Irwin, B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.: Is there -- Are there any particular stories that you remember from your reunions that you'd like to share?

Irwin, B.: I don't usually have time to stop to hear many stories, but you can see them. Families get together, you know, that -- They just get together and talk about the old times. Do you remember this? And do you remember that? So, it's you know, that they're getting the good story.

[17:58]

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah. Well, are there any old times that you remember that just, you know, that you hold dear to your heart?

Irwin, B.: Uh, I guess when your family is all at home, you hold that dear to

Irwin, Bonita

your heart. I had all of mine home last Sunday. All but one, and he's in Mississippi trying to help clean up down there. But I had sixteen for dinner that day. I went to church and Sunday school. [laughs] They help me some, you know. They bring a dish, and we put it all together.

Thonhoff, J.:

Well, is there anything else that you want to add?

Irwin, B.:

Not really. I don't know whether I should say how we was treated.

Thonhoff, J.:

I think I'd like to know, you know, how it felt and how you were treated. Absolutely.

[19:19]

Irwin, B.:

My dad had just a little trucking farm, and that was the farm where I was born. It's right at the end of K-25. This end.

Thonhoff, J.:

Okay.

Irwin, B.:

Coming this way. And it wasn't enough land to take care of his family, so he moved -- We moved to a large farm. We didn't own where I lived. We owned where I was born.

Thonhoff, J.:

Oh, okay.

Irwin, B.:

And my dad, most of his was in beautiful pine timber. And it had a good house on it. It was a lot house, but it had been weather boarded with whether boarding. And, ah, had a office. A doctor used to live there. Had a nice office, and a well house, and a barn. He got 800 dollars for that. They stoled (phonetic sp.) it. I mean, and that wasn't only us. It was everybody.

I have a friend that had over 100 acres. And they had a house that had five bedrooms, and I don't know how many barns. And they had two other smaller houses on it. I can tell you where it is. It's on the turnpike after you pass the Scott cemetery. It's that building project that's going on. That's where it was. They got 12 thousand for that. And they stoled (phonetic sp.) our land.

And now we wanted to put up -- We had found our school bell. And I was excited to death about it. I was over at the ribbon cutting at Wheat when they opened up the greenway. And I was so excited about the bell. This lady told me that she teaches school over at Landview or something like that. That's not the name of the school. But she said that the Wheat bell was stored over there.

And she and her husband brought me up there to see it. And we have worked and worked and tried to -- We picked out a place at the church to put it. But that wouldn't do because the church is a historical thing, and we'd be using new stuff like new brick and stuff.

[22:37]

And they thought, well, would it be okay to put it down on the school site? And I was for that all the time. Someone come through and stopped it all. Said we couldn't do it. See, they won't give us back enough land to even put a but a bell.

So, you know, you have hurtful things that -- It's things that I don't understand. Maybe it's right. We won't say it's not.

Thonhoff, J.: Hurtful nonetheless.

Irwin, B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.: And so you feel like pretty much everybody that had to move had their land taken.

Irwin, B.: It was taken. It was just taken. Now when they built Norris dam, the people up there, several of the military community. And they was paid well. But you -- I don't care where I live now. I've been there 50 some year. We built the house. I'd sure hate to have to leave it. You know. The effect that it had on the people. And they didn't seem to care.

Thonhoff, J.: (Indiscernible) progress was more important.

Irwin, B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Well, they needed some land, but they didn't need all of it. Where I lived, it's not been touched.

Thonhoff, J.: But they didn't even really need the land. It was a --

Irwin, B.: Uh-Uh (negative). I don't feel like they did.

Thonhoff, J.: Do you feel that that's kind of general consensus of the community?

Irwin, B.: They helped win the war. I mean it did win the war.

Thonhoff, J.: Yeah.

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Irwin, B.: The atomic bomb. They needed all that.

Thonhoff, J.: Do you feel like you contributed by giving up your land and your homes?

Irwin, B.: Taint anybody realize what the people gave. Eight-hundred dollars for a mini farm. You couldn't buy a chicken house for that. My dad never did have his own home.

[25:09]

Thonhoff, J.: After that.

Irwin, B.: He lived with me.

Thonhoff, J.: I think you guys contributed the most. I mean sacrificed the most. Giving your homes. That's where your heart is.

Irwin, B.: Uh-huh (affirmative). It's true. True. Don was ahead of me in school, but he had the most lively class. [laughs] My class was lively, too. But now they stayed together. Had reunions ever year about. But they've stopped. Many of them left now.

Thonhoff, J.: And so after you moved, did you get married and start a family?

Irwin, B.: Oh, yeah.

Thonhoff, J.: Because you said you had sixteen people over, so I'm assuming you had a pretty large family.

Irwin, B.: Yeah, they -- I had a -- have a son. It's a -- He's a dentist over at Fairgate (phonetic sp.). And I have a daughter that is a dental hygienist. And I have nine grandchildren. Six grandchildren and three great grands. And they're grand, too. [laughs]

[26:44]

Thonhoff, J.: That is wonderful.

Irwin, B.: Yeah. Yeah. I don't think I -- Back to the peaches. I don't think I said -- Did I say that they was shipped out by train?

Thonhoff, J.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah. And --

Irwin, B.: They were refrigerated cars I think. And that was the shed. It was huge, Dilus orchard shed. And you know where Dilus is? Well --

Irwin, Bonita

Thonhoff, J.:

I don't, but --

Irwin, B.:

That's where the shed was that they graded their peaches. And then the train came and picked up. They'd haul them from the other orchards there and pick up.

Thonhoff, J.:

So did everybody come and bring their peaches to the Dilus shed?

Irwin, B.:

Yes. All these other orchards did.

Thonhoff, J.:

So that's kind of another little community get together.

[27:56]

Irwin, B.:

Yeah. I can --

Thonhoff, J.:

Is there anything else that you want to add? I think we're getting close to being done with this tape.

Irwin, B.:

Okay. We had wonderful teachers. They was interested in every student. They didn't -- I don't think they had their picks. I think you notice things like that.

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah.

Irwin, B.:

But we had an ideal school. It was number one in the state at one time. Kingston come in second. That kind of tickles me. [laughs] But when students come from out of state and hunting a good school, you know that there's something going on there.

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah. Absolutely.

Irwin, B.:

And they boarded at the dormitory. Principal and his family lived in one side of the dormitory at Wheat. But I was so -- I've always felt like we had dedicated people in our schools teaching.

[29:26]

Thonhoff, J.:

Yeah. It sounds like you had dedicated people everywhere.

Irwin, B.:

Yeah.

Thonhoff, J.:

And throughout the community.

Irwin, B.:

Yes. That it?

Irwin, Bonita

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[End of Interview]

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