

Gathering Our Voice

Interview with Wilfred Woods

Interviewer: Nancy Warner

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Nancy Warner: Ok, today's October the fifth, 2007 and I'm here with Wilfred Woods, this is Nancy Warner. And, I think this is fine - I just won't hold this very close to you. I would like to just start with some background on your family and then your childhood today. I think that it's probably a very interesting childhood [chuckles] and I'd just like to start there. So could you start - some of this you told me already on paper but if you'd say it again; when were you born?

Wilfred Woods: Well I was born in Wenatchee on September 30, 1919. The middle child of three. I have, I had a older sister, five years older who is now passed away. I have a younger sister, two years younger, living in Tacoma. And the three of us...we lived in at 323 1st Street in the house which is now the Woods House Conservatory of Music. And we had a good time growing up. Dad was gone a lot; mother raised us for the most part, Dad traveled. And you know, being the son of a famous guy has its own challenges. But we had a good time. Dad would take us traveling back East. He grew up in Nebraska, as did mother, and so every few years we'd travel back, drive back to Nebraska, visit the relatives, sometimes go on to other places in the East. In 1936 mother was gone to a Methodist conference in Europe and Dad was traveling and so they left three of us in New York City all spring long. And the three of us had an apartment down in Greenwich Village and had a great time all spring when our parents were gone. [laughs]

NW: How old were you then?

WW: Well, I was in high school. I was 16 years old [laughs]. Traveled the subways, went to the opera – it was a great experience [laughs].

NW: Oh my. That sounds so fun. Well even those family trips to Nebraska, in fact, must have been pretty adventurous.

WW: Oh yes. We would stop at... we'd always... we didn't go to hotels. We'd stop at, they called them tourist homes in those days. There weren't any bed and breakfasts as we know them but there were tourist homes. So we'd stop in tourist homes for the night. Dad would go in and push the beds to see if they were soft enough. And we'd travel. It was...times were tough in those days. The Dust Bowl was going on. I can remember it would rain mud sometimes. Because of all the dust in the air and if it rained, why you'd really get a mess on your car [laughs].

NW: So was that here, or was that on your trips?

WW: Oh no, no. Back in the Dust Bowl, in the Midwest. Oh yeah, not here, no no. But the 30s were interesting times. And of course during that time my father had been chief local promoter of Grand

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Coulee Dam and the Columbia Basin Project so we'd always stop and see people in regard to that. We'd visit folks that knew about dams. He was interested in reclamation. And...and he would always stop for seeing old classmates. His - my father went to law school in Nebraska so he always remembered his classmates, or family and friends. He come from - both of my parents were from large families. There were 10 in my father's family and 8 in my mothers'. They were scattered all over and we would visit them. It was an interesting time.

NW: So what part of Nebraska? Central Nebraska or western Nebraska?

[5 minutes]

WW: Eastern Nebraska, 40 miles from Lincoln. Butler County. Both of my grandparents homesteaded in 1870s there. My father's father was a Union Veteran of the Civil War. And mother's father came from Connecticut. And... but they both homesteaded in a little town called Surprise, Nebraska [chuckles]. Which is barely ...I don't know that it even has a post office anymore it's so small.

NW: Oh, it's been sort of...

WW: Yeah...It's...everything's gone now. And then we have no more relatives in Nebraska. They're all scattered all over the country.

NW: Oh. So how many times do you remember going back there while you were a kid?

WW: Oh, well I went back in the 20s. And three or four times in the 30s. And then in '38 we went to Miami to put Dad on a plane to South America, drove down there. We traveled quite a little bit.

NW: That's amazing.

WW: Yeah.

NW: So I want to come back to Florida and so on. But on the Nebraska thing, I'm interested in those tourist houses. How would you know where a tourist house was? Did they have signs hanging out or was there a [?]?...?

WW: Yeah, yeah they would have signs on the house. There wasn't any problem finding a tourist home usually.

NW: That's interesting, I didn't know that. [inaudible]

WW: There weren't any motels. There were only hotels back in the 30s ya know. There was no such thing as a motel. At least I don't ever remember. There may have been tourist courts. I guess perhaps there might have been some tourist courts but we liked to stay in private homes.

NW: Oh yeah, well that makes sense. Well you know San Luis Obispo? Chuck I used to live there and they advertised having the first motel in the country. And I always thought it was kind of more of a post WWII thing when the car became more...

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WW: Well, it might have been. I don't remember. I do remember Wenatchee had tourist courts before the war, back in the 30's. Where the Chieftain Motel used to be was called, was called the Yellowstone Auto Court before it became the Chieftain Motel for instance.

NW: So what exactly was the difference between a tourist courts?

WW: They were little, little...little separate...

NW: Cabins?

WW: Cabins. They were cabins basically. Yeah.

NW: Oh well that sounds nice.

WW: Yeah. They were ok.

NW: Sounds pretty nice. Sounds like the kind of thing we seek out now when we travel.

WW: Yeah, kinda like separate little cabins.

NW: Yeah. Well tell me a little bit more about what it was like being a kid in Wenatchee when you were growing up. Your house, I've not been in there yet, but it's a neat lookin' house. Looks like it has a bunch of cool little hiding places in it and everything.

WW: Oh yes, oh yes. It was built in 1910 by a local dentist and my parents bought it when it was only a year old in 1911, moved in there. They were married in 1909 and it was a big house. The top floor was empty, was undeveloped. And so it was a great place for, ya know, putting stuff. And Dad would accumulate things. People gave him a bunch of stuffed birds I remember and a friend of mine went up and tried to make them fly. Well they didn't fly very well out the window [laughs]. But we had relatives here. One of my father's sisters was the principal of Columbia school, Ethel Woods. And she lived nearby and she would come for - we always had big family gatherings for ya know, Christmas and 4th of July and all that kind of thing. And my mother's sister, Eva Anderson, also was a school teacher. So there were a lot of relatives around. Dad had an older brother living up in the Methow Valley and he would come down. He was a bachelor. And so there were lots of, lots of relatives around. And we'd all gather. Then of course Dad's cousin Warren Woods was in the paper with us. He was the treasurer of our company and so they would come and their son Bob was involved in the paper with me.

[10 minutes]

So we'd have big family gatherings here. And it was - Dad was always interested in the circus and as kids we would have...we would put on family circuses in that house. And out in the yard. And Dad had friends with the game department and some nights they'd bring in animals to display and we had a big yard and we had whole circuses there in the summer time, it was really a fun time [chuckles].

NW: So would he assume his clown persona then too?

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WW: No. He was interested in the circus but the only time that I know he ever became a clown was 1937 when the Cole Bros Circus came in and made him a clown. Got national publicity on that. And he traveled over to the coast with them and it was...he was in Life Magazine as a clown at that time. Dad had a genius for publicity. He was also pictured in Life Magazine with a pair of star-spangled suspenders. And of course he'd always been promoting Grand Coulee Dam and the Columbia Basin Project and so the press knew about him. And it was amazing how much attention he attracted. He went to Russia in 1931 with nothing but a briefcase in his hand and then traveled all over the Northwest talking about it. Got...wrote columns that were reprinted in lots of papers. He went back in '36 again. He traveled a lot. He went to South America in '38 by plane which was quite unusual because they were just starting plane travels at that time in that area. He went to Asia and Europe. He was on the move a lot. In fact, he traveled a lot right from the beginning of his marriage. He would go East every year to sell national advertising. And he'd go back to NY, travel by train of course. And...so he was on the go a lot, he was away a lot from our home.

NW: So how did he and your mother meet, did they meet in Nebraska?

WW: Oh yes, they were both in this small town in Nebraska. Dad was older than mother by 5 years but they'd known each other as children and had grown up there in that small town. And he started courting her after he graduated from high school and was in law school at University at Nebraska.

NW: At Lincoln?

WW: At Lincoln, yes, mm-hmm.

NW: So tell me the story again of how they chose Wenatchee, how they ended up coming here.

WW: Well, Dad and his – had a twin brother. An identical twin. And during law school they decided to go to Alaska and look for jobs in the summer time to help support their school. So they started traveling to Alaska every summer and got jobs as...on a steamboat in the Yukon River. And then they would come back to law school. One summer they went to the College of Vashon Island at Burton, on Vashon Island. I think it was during law school. But they settled, after law school, Ralph, his twin brother went to Tacoma and became a lawyer. My father tried it out in Seattle and decided he didn't like it. He had a friend in Wenatchee. So he came over and got a job as, with the newspaper here. And became editor of the Wenatchee Republic, which was edited by a very flamboyant character by the name of Fowler.

[15 minutes]

And he did that for a year then went to the Wenatchee Advance which was the second weekly newspaper. And that was sold out from under him. And he became – then the secretary of the Wenatchee Commercial Club for a year. And in the meantime the Wenatchee Daily World had been started by 20 local Republicans. The Republicans in Wenatchee didn't like the political stance of either of the two weekly newspapers. They weren't Republican enough for them. So they all - 20 of them put up \$100 notes to the bank and enticed two men from Seattle to come over and start the Wenatchee Daily World in July of 1905. Well the town was only 3000 and it didn't do very well and they couldn't repay the bank. So in 1907 my father and his brother bought the paper. It had 460 subscribers and was barely alive but they struggled on

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and the town was growing rapidly because irrigation had just come to the valley by the Highline Canal. And so they were planting trees all over the valley. The bridge had not yet been built across the Columbia to irrigate East Wenatchee. That didn't happen until the year after they bought the paper. But there was growth going on and so they did survive. But the Republicans did not like their independent stance. My father favored Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive "Bull Moose" Party. And the "stand pat" Republicans, the traditional Republicans, got together under the leadership of the man who had built the Highline Canal - his name was Clark, W. T. Clark. And they started, they turned the weekly newspaper the Republic into a daily in 1910 in competition with the World. So in 1910 it was tough times for the World. We barely survived. Mother was able to get a loan from her father to buy the house that they were in. Dad had to get a loan from the publisher of the Spokane paper, Mr. Coles, to keep the Wenatchee World alive. Gave them stock in exchange for money, or a note rather. Until 1914 they struggled on. That year there was depression in the apple business. Apples had been planted all over the state and there were too many of them and the prices hit rock bottom. And so W. T. Clark decided to fold up his paper. And the Wenatchee Daily Republic stopped publishing in '14 and left the World for a field of its own. So it was a tough, tough time in those early years because Dad was an independent Republican, he wasn't about to tow the line. And so...but he carried on from there. And the World did well after that.

NW: So you were born in 1919?

WW: Yes.

NW: And your sister was 5 years older than you?

WW: Yes, she was born in '14

NW: So they started the family after things sort of stabilized a little bit it sounds like.

WW: Well there were two children born in 1910 and 1912 that died early on as babies. They had gotten milk that apparently had some pathogen in it and died as babies. So that was quite a tragedy in our family early on.

[20 minutes]

NW: Two babies.

WW: Yeah, two babies, yeah, yeah.

NW: And then what's your sister's name, your oldest sister?

WW: Willa, Willa Lou. And she was married to an executive with Boeing by the name of Hiltner who was running the space program for the Boeing Company. She had five children and he died quite young. He was only in his mid 50s. But she remarried then and only passed away a couple years ago at 90 years old.

NW: Was she named after Willa Cather?

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WW: Beg your pardon.

NW: Willa Cather. Did they name her after Willa Cather? It's a lovely name.

WW: It's a lovely name, I have no idea

NW: You never hear it. And I just think of Willa.

WW: Yes, yes.

NW: So your younger sister is still alive in Tacoma?

WW: Yes.

NW: And what's her name?

WW: Her name is Catherine Hailey. And she married one of the members of the Hailey family who are still running Brown and Hailey Candy Company, Almond Roca. And her oldest daughter is chairman of the board of the Brown and Hailey Candy Company.

NW: Oh, well we all like Almond Roca [laughs].

WW: We all like Almond Roca [laughs].

NW: Lots of good innovations in your family. So your parents were...you had the big house when you were born. You had the big house and you...so let's talk a little bit more about what it was like being a little boy. Sounds like your dad was traveling a lot, your mom was home. But tell me a little bit about your grade school years. What was it like living in Wenatchee?

WW: [laughs] Well, we had fun in the summer time. We lived on the back porch, we had a sleeping porch. And my sister and I slept back there and would run all over the neighborhood at night of course and had lots of friends that would do likewise. It was a safe neighborhood ya know and we grew up there. I was four-eyed. I had, I had...I was near-sighted. And I was always breaking my glasses. Doctor Widby, who was an optometrist here and an oculist, gave us whole-sale rates on glasses I broke so many of them. So I wasn't very good at sports, being always having glasses. But did play the cornet and we had a nice neighborhood and lots of kids were around there. And we had life-long friends like Howard Man and Sunny George and there were people all around there. Dad was...loved kids. He would carry candy in his pockets. He was only a block and a half from work and Dad was a gregarious sort. And was unafraid to do anything. He would gather unconventional things. Got interested in... was friends with the superintendent of the state schools, Noah [?] who got him interested in a medicine called HP. High Powered it was called. It had been developed by the Germans and they were producing this ointment, a brown ointment which was supposed to be good for most everything. Dad got interested in that, was involved in helping with the advertising of that. Dad had enthusiasms for developments of things. He went up on the border of Canada, near Cascade BC, got acquainted with a lady that wanted to sell her property. So we bought a whole town site of Cascade BC right up near Lake Christina, up near the Kettle

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River. It wasn't a good enterprise, I mean he never had the money to really develop it. And I finally gave it up when I inherited it for taxes, but he was always interested in people's inventions.

[25 minutes]

We had two garages in our house and I remember we had an invention that a guy had made on stoves. It was a down-draft stove and Dad had acquired one of them. It burned out its grate it was so hot, it wasn't a good invention. But he had a copy of that. He had a gold shaker in that garage. I mean he attracted people - he was interested in what people were doing. And we have a whole bunch of useless stocks that I think he traded for advertising probably at the World, the Aspestimine [?] Paint Company that was started here, and the Norco Oil Well Company that was up on Wenatchee Heights. And lets see, a sanitarium up at a lake in northern Okanogan county and...[chuckles] there were all kinds of stocks that he accumulated. [laughs] He knew all the old timers in the country. And they would come and visit him when they would come through Wenatchee. Because he used to write out his subscription list by hand when they were starting the paper. We had more subscribers outside Wenatchee than we had in Wenatchee. And we had mail subscribers all over Okanogan, Grant and Douglas counties and he knew them all. He knew the Indians and the chiefs would come down here periodically and visit him. We have some wonderful pictures of him and a bunch of the old chiefs coming down here in Wenatchee. It was an interesting time. He was interested in seeing the country develop. He was involved early on when he was secretary of the Commercial Club. A man who was an immigration agent with the Great Northern by the name of David McGuiness came to him with an idea to irrigate the Quincy Basin. He said "I think that we could irrigate the Quincy area from Lake Wenatchee". They got to checking on the elevations and it was higher than Quincy. They got the landowners of the Quincy area, which had been settled up heavily in the early years, to form a landowners group. They got quotes and the state of Washington actually did a survey of irrigating Quincy from Lake Wenatchee by putting a dam and a pipeline all the way from Lake Wenatchee with a big pipe across the Columbia River, a siphon, a reverse siphon. They got quotes from the steel companies for how much it would cost and in 1914 a bond issue was put together, a state bond issue for 40 million dollars to irrigate the Quincy Basin, which failed 2 to 1. But that was evidence of his interest in getting things going. So when he went over to look for stories in 1918 in Quincy, in Ephrata, it wasn't any surprise that somebody was interested in irrigating the Columbia Basin by a dam at Grand Coulee. And he wrote in July of 1918 a story quoting Billy Clapp, an attorney in Ephrata about a great idea of irrigating, putting a dam that would put water into the Grand Coulee and then by gravity over the whole Columbia Basin. And that idea started the formation of a, of an organization of people that were interested in promoting the Columbia Basin Project. They got James Sullivan interested who had been an engineer living in Ephrata.

[30 minutes]

They had what they called a Dam University, getting information out about other dams all over the world and in this country. Started promoting it. At about the same time a big time Republican from the Yakima Valley by the name of Blaine had come up with the idea of irrigating the Columbia Basin by a gravity canal from northern Idaho. His name was E. F. Blaine. And that attracted the attention of folks in Spokane who wanted to see the Columbia Basin irrigated and also the power company at that time and they formed

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an organization in Spokane to promote the irrigation of the Columbia Basin by gravity. They had political clout and the legislature appropriated \$100,000 to study that. They hired George. F. Goethals.

NW: Goethals?

WW: Goethals, the builder of the Panama Canal, to come out and put his stamp of approval on their idea. And the state put out a pamphlet in 1921 approving of irrigating the Columbia Basin by gravity canal. They compared it with the cost of a dam, but they gave no credit for any use of power from a dam at Grand Coulee because they said there was, there was no market for it. And so the costs of a gravity canal were decreed to be lower than that of a dam. Well it was a big fight that went on through all of the '20s. Finally, in 1927 I believe, the senator, the US senator from Yakima by the name of Jones put through a bill which authorized a study of the Columbia River. The Army Corps of Engineers was authorized to look at all of the prospects for dams and development. And a man by the name of Butler - Major Butler - took on the job of studying the river from the Snake River to the Canadian border and his study validated the idea of a dam at Grand Coulee. Which had been ridiculed by the folks from Spokane and the power company that obviously didn't want competition from public agencies. But from 1937 on the idea of a dam began to have a little more validity. And the Corps of Engineers, no - the Bureau of Reclamation finally got interested in it and during the Hoover administration actually engineered the idea of a dam and of irrigation works. But Hoover was not one that was going to spend a lot of money on public works. Well, 1932 came along and Franklin Roosevelt was elected. He had been presented with the idea of it earlier and came out, made a speech in Portland during his campaign for president and in 1933 authorized the spending of \$63 million to start a low dam at Grand Coulee from public works funds. It did not require Congressional authorization. He just allocated public works funds to start building both Grand Coulee and Bonneville Dam to put people to work. There was 25% unemployment in this country and it was obvious that something drastic had to be done. And so he started the project. Well a low dam wasn't going to irrigate anything. It was only a couple hundred feet high. Fortunately we had a congressman from the 5th district, Congressman Sam Billingsley Hill from Waterville, an attorney from Waterville who was the majority leader in Congress at that that time.

[35 minutes]

And thanks to Sam B. Hill they were able to get the 1935 Congress to authorize a high dam and the irrigation works. I think without Hill it never would have happened. But in 1935 on we were assured that there was going to be a high dam. Well it took 8 years to build the dam. It wasn't finished till 1951 - 1941. And at that time of course the war clouds were forming and the war started, so irrigation took a back seat to the war and it wasn't until after the war that the irrigation began.

NW: Ok. That's a good, a good summary. Nat Washington's dad was also part of the Billy Clapp group down there in Ephrata wasn't he?

WW: Nat Washington's father was the president of the early, early group promoting it. Nat's father was tragically drowned in the mid 30', the mid 20s at Washington flat along with his - along with one of Nat's brother. So...but Nat was always interested in the program and certainly his father was an early pusher for the project.

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NW: So I'm trying to imagine for you what it was like with all this stuff swirling around when you were growing up. All these politics and people are coming through your house and there's lots going on at the paper. It must have been so stimulating.

WW: Oh it was.

NW: And your experience, was it, it must have been so different from the kids around you that were your playmates.

WW: We had people coming and going all the time. Dad would bring folks home for dinner and mother was always entertaining folks. It was an interesting time. She was involved in the church. She was an ardent Methodist and went to a lot of big conferences and church meetings and things like that. And all her family were strong Methodists. Dad's family were Baptist and Lutherans [chuckles]. He had a couple of brothers who were Lutheran ministers but Dad joined the Methodist along with mother. So we went to the Methodist Church here.

NW: So did you go to the first Methodist Church up on Washington?

WW: Yes, the First Methodist Church was on the corner of Chelan and Orondo streets, across the street from the YMCA. That was where the original church was. They built a new church in the early 50's where it is now.

NW: So your playmates, your kids that you grew up with, did you go up to the foothills and down to the river? What did you - how far away did you go exploring?

WW: Oh yes, we had, we had toe-strap skis and we'd ski all the way up to Castlerock and ski down pieces of Castlerock and we were yeah, we were...and we had a place at Lake Chelan. Dad built in 1929 a cabin on the lake and so we would spend summers up there. It was really a fun time.

NW: Oh wow, that sounds great.

WW: Yeah.

NW: So how about the river? Cause the river was not developed into a trail until very recently and so did you ever go down there?

WW: No, the river...we didn't go near the river. The river was dangerous. Before there were dams there were lots of drownings. I never went to the swimming holes that people went to. There were a number of them. There was one in East Wenatchee, well-known. But no, I never went - folks didn't want us going to the river. And frankly, the river was a sewer for every...every town up stream, so there were lots of trenches along the river and no, we didn't go down to Shacketown, and...we just didn't go down there. That was not part of our growing up at all.

[40 minutes]

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NW: Makes sense. So your interest in the outdoors started as a kid with skiing 'n all. Tell me how you got into going camping and on the big hiking trips and so on.

WW: I remember one of the first hiking trips a man in Leavenworth called a Human Mountain Goat [chuckles] took us up on horses. He hiked to...up Icicle Ridge one fall and we camped up there in...with an old tent. He left us up there, I remember it because we had kapok sleeping bags and I remember never being so cold in a sleeping bag as it was snowing. And I kept getting closer and closer to the fire, and I burned, burned holes all over that kapok sleeping bag when I finally woke up. It was a miserable night [laughs].

NW: What month was that?

WW: Well it must have been late summer or early fall. [laughs] That was one of my early experiences. Dad wasn't much of a hiker, he would take a horse. But he was kind of heavy and he loved the outdoors so...he was in love with the mountains. Having grown up in the plains he came up to this part of the country and was in love with mountain country. And he'd like to go up on top of a mountain and roll rocks down [laughs] - something you wouldn't do today [laughs].

NW: Some people still do.

WW: Some people still do, that's right [laughs].

NW: So did you go up to Lake Wenatchee when you were a kid at all or did you always just go to Lake Chelan?

WW: When Chelan was our, our...Well my cousin's family had a place at Lake Wenatchee but we would preferably go where we had a cabin - that was Lake Chelan. In fact we - they used to camp at Lake Chelan, at First Creek before they got a cabin. And before that, in the 20's the folks had a cabin up Mill Creek, off of Stevens - off of Blewett Pass. It's on the road...it's on the way...the road that goes over to Leavenworth. The Mountain Home road, it's on that road. Dad had a quarter section of land up Mill Creek and of course that road that goes over there now wasn't there. It was timbered and they built a cabin in there and the folks always had girls that worked for them that looked after us kids. And I don't really remember those days of going up to Mill Creek but we have pictures of the early days. But they always had - we always had camping going on of some kind.

NW: So did you do hunting, did you ever do any hunting?

WW: No, I never was a hunter, and not much of a fisherman either. Yeah, yeah.

NW: So the families that you grew up with, were they mostly in small businesses and in orchards or?

WW: Well, I grew up with Howard Mann a half a block away. His mother was a teacher in the schools, his father was retired. Sonny George. I don't remember what his father did. I remember that his father, during the Depression, was hand cutting jigsaw puzzles and selling them. I remember the Peach family whose father was collecting pollen and was a beekeeper as I recall. Up the street was Royal Weinstein whose father had the fashion shop. And the Hoffman family lived across the street and they had a meat

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market. At the other end of the block the Gross's were preachers. And the Probst family were preachers and they grew up in the same black with us. The Rody's were a block away and they were...I don't remember what he did, I think he was in the fruit business. There were just lots of families all around [chuckles].

NW: You have such a good memory [laughs]. That's great. That gives me a feel for it, and that's good. So in high school. You went to...there was only one high school for East Wenatchee and Wenatchee right?

WW: That's right

NW: Could you talk about that?

WW: Yes, well Wenatchee High School when I went there...when I went to junior high school the junior high school had just been built and hooked on to the old high school. H.P. Ellison was the principal, he was a favorite guy. And the principal, the long time principal of high school was a man who was a favorite of...of...of everybody who went there. Oh my god I can't remember his name. I'll remember his name in a minute but he was an orator and taught the biggest Sunday school in town. And he was the principal of the high school for a long, long time here. And he retired the last year of high school and...I'll think of his name. But it was a traditional high school. I played in the band and the orchestra and I was involved with a High Y club at the YMCA and learned to swim at the Y. And the Y was very active at that time. I did not carry a paper but the paper would put out special editions for special fights, for the World Series, for elections and then we would put out extra editions at 5am in the morning and so we would - as kids we would get up for the those special editions and carry papers up and down the streets selling extras.

NW: Five in the morning?

WW: Yes, yeah.

NW: That sounds pretty hardcore.

WW: Well it was a nice way to make a little extra money. Buy them for two for a nickel and sell them for a nickel [laughs].

NW: So how long did you do that, all through high school?

WW: Well it was whenever there were extras going on why, sure. We would go out and sell papers. This was when I was younger. When I, when I was in high school they would catch me, I would go into the newsroom and swat flies for them [chuckles]. Help out like that [laughs].

NW: [chuckles] Starting to introduce you to the business.

WW: But most of our summers were spent up at the lake [laughs].

NW: So how did you meet Cathy? Did you meet here in town or did you meet in college?

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WW: No, Cathy had graduated from Washington State University and I went to Chelan to do a piece in the summer of 1951 about Chelan. We were putting out a special edition about Chelan and she was running the office for the Chamber of Commerce. So I went in, got acquainted and asked her for a date. And I asked her to go a date and we went to Hart's Pass and I forgot to tell her that we were going on a hike and she was wearing sandals and a tight skirt. But she brought a long a lunch that her sister-in-law had made of fried chicken. We hiked up Slate Peak. There wasn't any road up there, there was a trail that went up to the look out that was up on top of Slate Peak at that time. She says she doesn't remember doing anything but lying down on the path and gasping for breath [laughs]. That was our first date [laughs].

NW: That was a good - that was a good test I suppose [laughs].

WW: We were married December of that year [laughs].

NW: Oh [laughs]. So, so you went into the war before you met Cathy, you did the whole war experience before you met Cathy?

WW: Oh yes, oh yes.

NW: Oh ok, all right. I was sort of assuming you had gone to high school together or something but oh ok. So let's back up to high school. You graduated from high school in-

WW: Graduated from high school in 1937, went to work for a year, then went to college for two years, then went to work for another year and then college for a year and then I was drafted in 1942. And I went into the Air Force, they sent me to air force headquarters in San Francisco which was a delightful place to spend a year and a half or two years. And then I was sent to Edwards - what is now Edwards Air Base, it was called Muroc Airbase which was the...the center of the, the nucleus of the very first Air Force's jet group. This was the very original group of jet planes. I was not a flier, I was a desk pilot. And we organized a jet group there for the first jet plane which was called a P59. It wasn't a very good jet, it was a twin engine jet but it didn't do a very good job. But it was followed by the P80 of Lockheed after about a year and I spent the whole war with that - the remainder of the war with the 412th fighter group in Southern California. The, the end of the war, the European war came before we were operational and they didn't need jet fighters in the Far East, they needed bombers. So we spent the rest of the war in Southern California with the jet group and that's where I had my war experience: all over Southern California.

NW: Yeah I know that country, that's where I was born.

WW: Well I was stationed first in Palmdale, and then in Bakersfield, and then in Santa Maria.

NW: I'll be darned.

WW: Yes. And I had a motor cycle and so I... my brother-in-law was teaching at Cal Tech at that time in Pasadena so I would spend lots of weekends down in Los Angeles.

NW: Oh interesting, so that was Willa's husband?

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WW: That was Willa's husband, yes.

NW: That was neat to have them down there.

WW: Yes, so we had a good time. I would go up to San Francisco, and you know...Motorcycling was easy and I would trade my stamps for gasoline. My cigarettes stamps I traded for gasoline so that worked out ok [laughs].

NW: So did you go to, did you ride up the Big Sur Coast? Oh Highway 1 wasn't there yet though, was it there? I mean there were dirt roads...

WW: Up the coast? Oh yes, oh yes, yes, there was -.

NW: It was built in the 30's?

WW: Yes, yes. It was built in the 30's. Oh yes. Yes. I would put on two pairs of pants at nights to go up through Pasadena up through Santa Barbara and on up to - up the coast to Santa Maria because the fog would come rolling in, it was cold [laughs]. I didn't have any leathers [laughs].

NW: Wow. So did you ever go to the Carrizo when you lived in Bakersfield? You know the Carrizo Plain? It's this isolated place between Bakersfield and Santa Maria if you're riding straight over to the coast.

WW: I never went across that way, no.

NW: That's where we lived. Oh, well that's neat.

WW: Yeah. I used to hitchhike. Before I got that motorcycle I used to hitchhike into town on highway, well what's now I-5. Hitchhike from Bakersfield on into Pasadena.

NW: Oh.

WW: Yeah, yeah.

NW: Pasadena's beautiful.

WW: Yes, yes it's a beautiful town.

NW: So that's neat. So then after you were done with your service you ended up going to Europe on another detail or something didn't you?

WW: I finished my college at UW and came back to the World in '47, graduated in '46, '47 I was working at the World and '48 I was a photographer for the news department during the great flood of '48 and that was an interesting time because it was the biggest flood the region had seen since 1894 and the Wenatchee pumping plant was flooded out for awhile. Water came clear over Worthen Street and the whole of the Methow Valley, every ridge in the Methow Valley was washed out. The Okanogan Valley

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was awash, the paper was flying papers into the Okanogan Valley because everything was washed out. It had – the Wenatchee Valley was a mess, it was, it was really a terrible time.

NW: Huh. Now those were summer storms as I recall - I've heard about it in Douglas County - they were summer, big summer rain storms?

WW: This came at the peak time of - this was late May and early June. The Columbia peaks in late May normally and early June. And there were a whole series of cloud bursts all up and down the mountains and there had been lots of snow because it was a cool spring and a lot of snow, and so it all came at once. Yeah, yeah.

NW: So you got all those photos that you took here archived in the paper?

WW: Well we have a lot of them, yes, yes.

NW: Wow, it would be interesting to look at those.

WW: I hope we have them, I haven't looked at them in recent years [chuckles].

NW: That'd be really interesting to go lookin' for those.

WW: I'm not sure, all of stuff got dumped unfortunately and I'm not sure that we've got those original photos still or not. I, I believe there was a cleaning out in the late 40's and I'm not sure that we still have those, yeah, yeah. You want to take a break?

NW: I think, I think [inaudible]

WW: All right, fair enough. Well, we've been going on for