

Francis Anderson Laucamp

Interviewed by: Janet Miller 08/11/1997

Transcribed by: Jennie Hakes x

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Side A

Introduction

Janet: This is Janet Miller, a volunteer for the Aitkin County Oral History Committee, Aitkin County Historical Society. The date is August 11, 1997, and I am interviewing Francis Anderson Laucamp at the home of her brother, Burton Anderson, in Balsam Township.

How she got to Aitkin

J: Right now, Francis lives in (*unintelligible*). Francis, I'm so glad that you agreed to meet with me this afternoon and tell me something about the history of your family.

What's your earliest memory of coming up here to this area?

Francis: Well, I came up here when I was a child with my mother on the train many times. And I was at the Larson's (?) home, where... it's been torn down since then. Marilyn and her husband had a beautiful home, so I (*unintelligible*) up there in that same area where the farm home was. Oh, it was just beautiful. We used to go and see them (*unintelligible*) just beautiful. So I remember many times when we would take up there, but I can't remember exactly the year, because, well, I was about probably around eight or nine years old when we moved up here. I don't remember if it was... I don't remember exactly the year.

I was reading some paper where they thought it was 1924, but I don't think it was. I think it was about 1927. We lived on (*unintelligible*) Lincoln Street in Minneapolis, northeast Minneapolis, and our dad and mother decided to move up here because of my dad's health. He had worked for years and years as a (*unintelligible*) in Minneapolis. And he was a miller at Dakota (*unintelligible*) Mill. And the dust was getting to him, so they wanted to take him up here, be better off, or something, I guess.

But anyway, we moved in with the Larson's. It was a struggle, because we had a houseful of people.

J: How many children were there in your family?

F: There was, finally, four. But we didn't have Burton until 1931 or 1932. But when we came up here from Minneapolis, it was myself, and my brother Robert, and my sister Doris. And she, later on, married Bill Hoffsted (?). My brother (*unintelligible*) joined the Marines. And he went to San Diego, and he never did come home from training. He was shipped overseas - and I think it was October. And he was killed in November...no, he was killed in January, five days before his 23rd birthday. He was killed on the island of Guadalcanal.

And getting' back to the Larson's... Should I name the ones who lived there?

J: Yes! Who lived there?

F: Well, it was Marilyn and Mildred, the sisters. Marilyn and Mildred Larson. And their dad, John Larson. And I don't remember if Herbert lived there all the time or not. But he was the one that later on married Ruth Saar (?). And then an uncle came after we had lived there for a while. He came from Washington State. He was a logger, (*unintelligible*) from Washington. He was a bachelor. And he came to live with us, too.

J: You didn't have a washer and a dryer?!

F: No, no, no, no, no! We had to carry the water from way up, two blocks, I think. The one place we got our drinking water was from the spring. And had a big farm and milked cows, and they had a... what was... the electric plant that they used a lot? (*unintelligible*) It didn't have anything... they had lights in the house and lights (*unintelligible*) was the name of it. And then they had to run all day in order to generate enough electricity so we use it at night.

I remember those... it was runnin' all day, and it was in the... we had to attach it to the back of the house, and it was in that back, to the side of the house.

Well, anyway, I don't remember just how many years we lived there. But I think, when I came up here, well, when we did, I was in the fifth grade.

Attending Balsam School, District Number 80

J: Where did you go to school?

F: I went to the Balsam School (*unintelligible*). District Number 80, I remember that just as plain. Because it said right above the door, District Number 80. (Laughs)

J: Who was your teacher?

F: My first teacher's name was Mary Reilly (or Roland?), and I even have a picture of her in my album, I'll show it to you. And oh, she was a big, huge, big person. And she stayed with the Jim Peterson family, just about a quarter of a mile south of the schoolhouse. This Mrs. Peterson, she roomed all the teachers 'til my mother started, when my mother and dad moved here, and they roomed teachers. And then, oh, we had a big school. There got to be 30 kids in that school, and that was a lot for a country school.

And then my next teacher, who was a very, very good teacher, I really... I was in the sixth grade... and her name was Lorna Woodrow, and she married a man by the name of (*unintelligible*). I even wrote her obituary in the Aitkin paper. And she was a good teacher.

And then the next teacher I had when I was in 7th and 8th grade, was Myrtle Bonneville. And she lived out on a farm, out of Aitkin. She was an older... older person.

(*unintelligible*), you know. Maybe it was even her first year of teaching, I don't remember. She was young compared to Mrs. Bonneville.

So then I graduated from 8th grade, then, from Mrs. Bonneville. And then, after we moved from Larson's, we moved where (*can't tell what the name is, phonetically, it sounds like "Maggio's"*) live now. And we lived there... we always called it the

Richards place, because years ago, the Richards did live there, and she was the one... Mrs. Richards was (*unintelligible*) had the Balsam Post Office.

J: Oh! There was a post office there?

F: Oh, yes! For years, they had a post office. You'd come right by it. Reuben Thompson lives there now.

J: Ok.

F: And Mildred Larson told me one time when I was visiting her, that that was the first schoolhouse that was built up there in the north. And her dad built that. And it was moved from up there. And moved... first it was moved over by the Sudan (?) River, and Pauley Knutson and his wife lived in it. And then it was moved to where Reuben Thompson lives house. And that was the first schoolhouse in the Balsam Township.

J: Oh! That's a good piece of history!

F: Yes, it is!

J: And to think that it's still livable - a home!

F: Well, now what else should I say about...

J: When did you... is this where your family lived? (*Referring to where the interview is taking place?*)

F: We lived out on Richards' place until I was... my first year of high school. I was 14. And I walked from the Richards' place down to the (*unintelligible*). There wasn't any school bus that year, because the school board, uh, the district, couldn't afford a bus driver. So we walked - my brother and sister, and myself - we walked. But I walked as far as the Balsam Schoolhouse every morning. And then the family that I rode with - her name was - what was her name? Margaret (*unintelligible*) her first name, they lived right across the fields from the schoolhouse. And they had a Model A. And lots of times, oh, sometimes it took me a little while to walk that 2¼ miles, you know? That was a lot! And he'd be sittin' there by the gate honking for me to hurry up! (*Laughs*)

Attending MacGregor High School

J: (*Laughs*) Where did you go to high school?

F: MacGregor. We were a long way from here by then. Henry Hanson, he was... and Irma Green were two of the other passengers that we'd pick up. And they all.. Irma Green is Margie's, was Margie's aunt.

J: Ok.

F: Yeah. She always called herself the Irma Green (?), because she has never married yet. She was like 20 some years old when she finished high school.

J: Oh, really?

F: Yeah. And then we continued on toward Tamarack and we picked up, I think it was, was it two more, sometimes there was eight of us in that small A. Sometimes, one had to sit on somebody else's lap! (*Laughs*) And that was before they started the new highway going through Tamarack. That was before...

J: Oh.

F: ... even started. So then, we went the old highway.

J: Where did the old road go?

F: Well, the old road went right clear south of Tamarack. And then, I can't remember where you, where we turned and went west, but it went by the Lowe's (?) place and come out there (*unintelligible*). And so I went to high school, I went that first year of high school until we...

Their house

Then my grandpa came up from Minneapolis, and helped my dad start this house. And my mother was, she was sick so much, so many times, she had to go down to Minneapolis to go to the University Hospital, and be an outpatient there. So when I... I liked (*unintelligible*) I never thought anything of it. Burton was a baby, she was 42 years when Burton was four.

And you know, well, the house is much different now than it was when we lived here. We never even had the... the walls weren't even finished. We had to move in before the walls were finished. And then, this back part wasn't on yet. This was the kitchen, right here. And the outside door was right there. And my dad and my grandpa... he'd come up every so often and help my dad do things. You know, work around. He was quite, he was (*unintelligible*) he was old then. Because he lived to be 90 some years old.

Oh, I tell you what! In deer season, well, first... the first year I went to high school, I did like I said, and then, see then, the car picked me up here at the corner. And then the next year, I went to Tamarack, and stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Carl Olson from Tamarack. And he run the Bushey (?) Store. The grocery store right... that's where the Fire Department is now, in Tamarack, where the Bushey Store was? (*unintelligible*) They were really nice, good to me. And ... Adley (?) Ostermann... built the school bus. See, nobody... everybody that (*unintelligible*) and so his name was (*unintelligible*), because his wife is still living. She was one of the teachers here, too – Donna Ostermann? She taught here, too. But that was after my... after I was in school. And I rode on the bus from Tamarack to MacGregor.

Hard times

Well, (*unintelligible*) the worst part of it, the Depression had been on and everything, nobody had any money in those days. But I can remember it cost four and a quarter for me to ride on that bus a month.

J: Four and a quarter? Really?

F: And of course, I always had the money to pay. My dad saw to that, that I had the money to pay for my bus ride. Well, then the next year, I couldn't go to school. I went to high school just two years. Because of the conditions here at home. Because of my mother's health. And I stayed home. I practically raised the family. Doris was... Pauly was 2 ½ years younger than I, and then Doris was just 3 years. They were born on the same day, the 20th of January, three years apart is all. Of course, by then, Bobby – he was gone. He went... he joined the CCC camps. Did you ever hear of that? The

Conservation Corps? And he was sent out to... he was sent out to Oregon. Oh, we thought that was, that was the end of the world. In those days, that was the end of the world. And he... I never... we would just wait and wait for his letters, and wait for his letters. He had one sheet of writing paper, maybe he'd write "I'm saying hello to everyone. I am doing just fine. The trees out here are just huge!" (*Laughs*) And then he'd say, "I'll be seeing you one of these days." And then he'd say goodbye. And that was it! We used to get so disgusted! We'd wait for weeks for his letters and then that was all he would write!

J: (*Laughs*)

Canning ducks

F: Well, then he finally came home from there. And then he, let's see, I can't... three years? I can't keep track of the years. Well, I can remember when I was about 17, all the guys come from Minneapolis up here to deer hunt. And who was doin' the cooking?

J: You!

F: (*Laughs*) And I almost (*unintelligible*) and they would always have a... one uncle would have this (*unintelligible*), so sometimes I would have 12 men to cook for! And I... nobody here to help me! Just mine. And bake all the bread. And yes! I remember my dad would always get up – he was... he was very good in the house, my dad was. (*unintelligible*) washing dishes. And lots of times, sometimes, he'd even knead the bread, because my mother always had eczema on her hands, so she couldn't knead the bread dough. Well, anyway, I had to learn to make bread, let me tell you. Every other day, I made 5 or 6 loaves of bread.

And I can remember one time, they were gone, they were down... and they had Burton with them, they stayed for 3 weeks, because my mother was... but my dad worked while he was down there, and my brother Bobby was only 14 years old, and it was duck season. And he walked over, he was just prayin' to go hunting, I guess, that's what... that sure runs in the family. And he would walk over to Lake 16 and he came back with 6 great, big mallards. And he would, he had an old boat to go out in the lake with, he didn't have any dog, of course, to go out and fetch 'em, and he would shoot, and the ducks would get up and fly, and fly over to Lake Savann', where Herbert and the Larson's would be out there, and Herbert would be out there and shoot! And then they'd fall! (*Laughs*) That's what he told me, anyway.

J: (*Laughs*)

F: Well, anyway, it was nice weather. We didn't have any electricity, you know. And we, so we... there was no way to keep those ducks, and there was only the three of us kids here. And so then you know what I did? He picked and cleaned all those ducks, and I cut 'em up and put it in fruit jars and canned 'em. And my mother days when she come home, "Well, Francis, how did you know to do that?" I says, "Mom, I don't know how I do it!"

J: You must have seen her...

F: Well, I remember puttin' (*unintelligible*) covering them up with water, and salt, put salt in 'em, cuttin' it up, (*unintelligible*) I think I had three 2-quart fruit jars full of duck. Well, then they tasted pretty good even if they were...(*unintelligible*)

So then they finally come back from Minneapolis, and Bobby, he was only 14, and he had to go out in the woods and hunt for the cows because they would walk, you know, we never had a pasture for them. One time when we waited, Doris and I waited and waited and waited – she was just a little kid, you know – those cows had gone so far, and they weren't lettin' their bells ring, so he couldn't... and it was getting' dark. But you know, he found those cows? Well, he heard the bells, and they came out on the way up the road by where Greens used to live at that time, right by the Greens? So I was really happy he finally...(*unintelligible*) lost in the woods. But you know what? It didn't seem to bother him to go out in the woods. I think he was only 14 years old.

So then, what else should I tell about?

J: Did you get back to high school, then?

F: No, I never went back to high school. And my class graduated in 1935. But you know, I never even got to go to graduation. There was weeks and months that I never even got to go to Tamarack. I don't know how I lived!

But then, you know, we used to have good times up there. We had lots and lots of community stuff.

How they had fun

J: Ok, what kind of things did you do?

F: Well, the Balsam Hall was just a mile down the road. And we used to have what we call our community parties. Every... once a month. Once a month, everybody would bring a cake, and we had a five-gallon coffee can, and they'd fill that... make coffee and fill that up with coffee, and then we had cake and coffee, and then we'd have music and dance.

J: Who played the music?

F: Did you know Alva Schwetz (?)

J: Yes!

F: Well, she played accordion. Pauly Knutson played the drums. And we would dance until who wouldn't have us! We had the best time! And even my dad would come, and you know, he wasn't a dancer! But we, once in awhile, they'd have a couple of square dances. Well, he knew that, but he couldn't do the other dance. I can remember square dancing with him. And my brother was just a kid, you know. And he'd see how many pieces of cake he could eat! (*Laughs*) They had a contest, him and his boy friends, and how many pieces of cake they could eat. Well, that was one of the things we did.

We had, I don't know, there was... it was just something... and we'd go sliding. We would slide downhill there, (*unintelligible*), we'd go up to the Green's hill, and you know, there was a lot of trucking going by there for people cuttin' wood, you know, and haulin' it with the big trucks?

And then we would, the Boyers lived right next, over here where *(unintelligible)* anyway, Bernard was the same age as Bobby. And Margaret was the same age as Doris. And then, well, she... I had to go... the older sister was married then... so I... we would go up way up to Thompson's up to Wolf Lake to go skating! That was eight miles! Eight miles we'd go up there and skate all afternoon and walk home! *(unintelligible)* do that. But it was something to do! You looked forward to it.

And the Boyer kids would come over here and we'd play cards.

And my dad had... my uncle had given my dad a radio that was run with battery, you know? And we could only listen to certain things. And, of course, his favorite... of course, that's where Roosevelt was president... Now he dearly loved Roosevelt. He just had to listen to every speech he had, he made and everything. And then... but his favorite program was the Gangbusters. Did you ever know about the Gangbusters?

J: The Gangbusters!

F: Well, that's what he would listen to. So then, well, let's see...

J: What did your dad do, then? Did he farm?

F: Oh, yeah. We had cows, you know. You know, you had to clear the land before you could farm. He cleared all the land. But now it's all grown up again. Yeah. Same way with the Larson's. They had cows, you know? And hayed, and I don't know if they planted any other kind of crops, because – you know the corn in those days wasn't like it is now. It wasn't set for the short summer seasons. You know. It was hard to raise corn here. Of course, down in Iowa, that's all you see for miles and miles! Is corn! *(Laughs)* Corn and soybeans.

So let's see, now, what else did we do?

J: Well, let's stop here, because I gotta turn my tape over.

(end of Side B)

Side B

Working at the Klondike Lodge

Janet: You mentioned Klondike Lodge. What do you remember...

Francis: Oh, that's when we lived up at Richard's. I was 14. And they came and asked if I could come up there and wait on tables at the big lodge. My mother said, "Well, of course!" And so I did. I think I worked there one or two summers. And they had two children. The boy was, I think he was about 10, I don't say for sure, but I'd say the girl's name was Jean? And of course, you know, they used to have people from all over – Pennsylvania... I mean, people would come there for years, year in and year out! And the lodge was full. It was so nice inside. A great, big fireplace, *(unintelligible)*.

Well, and I can remember when they had a cabin, and it was built on stilts, and we had to climb up the ladder to get in, and that's where my sister and I slept. *(unintelligible)*...as big as this room. I stayed right there, yeah.

I don't remember if I got a dollar a day or if I got a dollar a week *(laughs)*.

J: And what did you do? What kind of work...

F: I just waited on tables, and just like they do in a restaurant. Everybody had their, I mean the guests that sat at separate tables, you know? Four to a table. They had... it was quite a big dining room. Then we did the laundry. My mother and I, we did the laundry for Klondike cabins for many years. We had a Maytag washing machine that we had got from *(unintelligible)* when we had moved up, and my dad had converted it to a gasoline motor. Well, my dad was so, he was... he would get the water all ready. We had to heat the water on a cook stove, of course. You know we didn't have any other way to heat it. And we would wash, and we would wash.

And mosquito bites! Blood all over the sheets. My mother would have to soak those sheets because of the blood spots, you know? Forty-two sheets sometimes! Pillow cases, *(unintelligible)* towels, bath towels, dish towels, white uniforms. And we had to starch those uniforms. And they got so stiff they practically stood up! I always ironed on the cook stove. I can remember one year... we ironed all the sheets, too.

J: Really?

F: Yes! We ironed all the sheets. I can remember one day I ironed 21 sheets. My mother would have an old ironing board, and we'd just... you know, we'd just use for an ironing board, was tables, you know. You'd put it between two chairs. Yeah, and my dad *(unintelligible)*. We got paid by the pound. How much we did, it was weighed. I can remember that. I don't remember what we did with the bags. *(unintelligible)*

Then we'd get to the Klondike cabins, and every Fourth of July there were fireworks there. All the neighbors came to those fireworks. That was something everybody enjoyed around here, because there was no place else. That was wonderful! In 1936 and 1937, to have somebody *(inintelligible)* ...how far it is down to the lake, you know, the fireworks would go all over the lake, and oh, it would look so beautiful.

And they were real nice to me, they were. *(inintelligible)* And then there was another couple there that came up all the time, and their name was Quade Stewart. And he had had the misfortune of having both of his hands cut off. And so then I *(inintelligible)* my mother, she would get me a job with them. I went back to Minneapolis with them! ...

J: Oh!

F: ... and worked in their home. And they lived right on Minnehaha Boulevard. The name of the street was Quade Street. I can remember yet, it was 111 Quade Street.

Working in Minneapolis

J: Why do have...

Unidentified person: That was his first name.

F: 111 Pratt (?) Street. And I was there for quite awhile. Not quite a year, though, but I was there quite a few months. He... I was even...their daughter, they had one daughter, and there was seventeen students here. And she was married at home. They had a home wedding. Maybe she was married in a church and they had the reception at home. Mrs. Stewart, *(inintelligible)*... frilly headband and little white apron, you know? (Laughs) And boy, I was honored serving all those guests. And they were very well known people

that came to that wedding. And then one of the other persons that lived there, (*inintelligible*) his name was Allen...

J: What was his first name?

F: Wilbur Allen.

Unidentified person: Oh, I remember Wilbur.

F: Did you remember Wilbur Allen?

U: Yes.

F: Well, they were from Rock Island, Illinois. And he was a ... had charge of the sports in the high school in Rock Island. And several time, they picked my mother up and brought her down to Iowa with them, to stay with them, when she came to stay with us. Sometimes, she'd stay a couple of weeks or more.

J: How did she get to Iowa?

F: Well, that's a long story. When I was sixteen, these guys came up from Iowa. And John was one of 'em. And they came up here to work in the woods. And Burt Thompson – did you know Burt? – they lived up by Wolf Lake. And I was real good for (*inintelligible*). I knew Bert all my life.

J: How did you know them?

F: My mother and Thompsens and my dad were good friends down in Minneapolis. So we knew them practically all my life. And I would go up and stay at their place, and they'd cut wood for Charlie, too. And I remember, my sister and I and Margaret (*inintelligible*) were walkin' along the road one day, and Burt was comin' back from Cloquet with a load of wood, and he had gone with 'em. And he stopped the truck and he says, "I got somebody I want you to meet." And it was John. John the (*inintelligible*). Well, you know, I was only sixteen, and I thought, "boy, oh boy" and I still can remember what I had on.

J: What were you wearing?

Meeting her future husband, John

F: I was wearing, like they wear now, culottes, I had made 'em. You know, people think, just because it's years ago, that we weren't stylish. But we were! In fact, I think we were more stylish than they are now! And I can remember it was navy blue and it had little white figures in it, like sailboats, and that, you know. So that's how I met John. And I can't remember what I said now. Anyway. Anyway, he liked me. Apparently. And his birthday is the day before mine, so when I was sixteen he was seventeen. So he stayed here all summer.

But they did a lot of other things, too. Other guys came up. Johnny Gerard was another buy. Could he play the sax... the trombone! Oh, he was a wonderful player! He got killed in the service, too. He got killed on the Aleutian Islands. And then there was another guy called, his name was Richards. And you know, he died, he's been dead several years now. He was another one of John's friends. And you know, when I had my 80th party, 80th birthday party, they put it in the paper, and she was out in California, if I

didn't get a letter from her out in California! And, for my birthday. And then she said, down in the bottom of her note, she said, "Can you still polka?" (Laughs)

J: Can you?

F: I can't now, but I had for years! And oh, dear, we had fun at those dances. And one time, when John Revard (?) was there, he had his trombone, and he'd play at the dance, you know? And oh! It was such a good time! Lots of fun! Lots of fun! I had lots of fun when I was young. Well, anyway, John would take each of (*inintelligible*) ... one night he asked me for a date, and we went over to Minnewawa. Remember when we used to have the (*inintelligible*) over there? They used to have that big dance every week? Over the weekend? Well, we went there one time. I know that was wonderful. And so that's how we got acquainted. And he'd just keep on writing to me, writing to me, and I would write to him. And sometimes it was maybe two or three... well, then he went out to California for... he went in the CC Camp, when he got back from up here. Anyway, down in Iowa. So he went in the CC Camp, and he was sent down to Albia, Iowa, where they did surveying. I don't know how many square miles of land they surveyed down there, around Albia, Iowa. But then some other guy got ahold of him, and he says, "I got to get back to California." So he went up, he went out to California on the bus. And worked at this garage, where he learned how to do body work. That's what it was.

J: Okay.

F: That's what he did... that's what we lived on, after everything else happened. And you know, then, when I was working for these... first I was working for the Stewarts down in Minneapolis. Well, then, they were going to move to... they had a ten (*inintelligible*) farm down... it was one of the southern states. Georgia, or someplace down there. (*inintelligible*) Well, they were going to move down there. So she got me this other job with another couple. And their names were Upinson (?). They were altogether different from the Stewarts.

J: Oh.

First years of marriage in California

F: They had two kids, too. And the girl's name was Fanny (*inintelligible*) – oh, how I hated that name. And the boy's name was (*inintelligible*). And he was a pill! But I did all of their cooking. Served all their meals. And I worked there until John came and got me, and that was in... he wrote he was going to come and get me, and he says, "We're gonna get married."

J: What a proposal!

F: Yes! He says, "I want you to stay." So when he came to Upinson's, he had his sister with him. And another thing while he did, while he was working at this garage, was he was sent, he and his... John Revard (?), he worked there, too. – they would go on the bus to Detroit, and pick up these new Packards. They had the Packard, sold Packards there. And that was a beautiful car in that day, you know. It was almost like the Cadillacs are now. And so then, that's what he came in to Minneapolis. And I didn't want (*inintelligible*) I sat up there on my bed in my room, and I (*inintelligible*). I had been home for Decoration Day, and I told Mom, that John wanted to get married. And Mom,

(*inintelligible*), because I hadn't seen her for four years! Oh. So I thought, well, it can't be too bad. So then, I said yes. So then we went to see my grandpa and grandma. (*inintelligible*) and grandma cried, she just cried. She said, "I'll never see you again! Never see you!" Poor grandma! But she lived to be 90 years old. I probably thought she was old then, but she died in 1955. Now this was 1937, '38. And I came down to Iowa, went down to Iowa with them. And we got married the next day, at the parsonage for the... Methodist parsonage out in the country at the South Bethel Church. South Bethel Methodist Church. And the minister at that church, his name was Otis T. Ward. And he remembered (*inintelligible*). And my brother-in-law, Don, and the minister (*inintelligible*). And lived to be a missionary, and was sent to India in those days, and I often wonder what happened to them. I never did hear. In those terrible, terrible days during the war. And I never did hear from them, anything about them anymore.

Then we left for California that same night after we had (*unintelligible*) folks, and I think it took us about two and a half... the first night in Omaha, and then we stayed in Wyoming someplace one night, and then when we got to... that was when the (*unintelligible*) and John said "Wake up! Wake up!" he says, "We're going to cross the bridge." And I said, "What bridge?" I didn't know anything about San Francisco Bay! (Laughs) (*unintelligible*) about eight miles (*unintelligible*). We got to (*unintelligible*) some people in Palo Alto (*unintelligible*). And their last name was Davis. And she was sweet (*unintelligible*). She was a really a nice lady. They had one boy. So we could always stay there. And then we had a (*unintelligible*) for homeless, you know, to sleep there a couple of nights, and then we had a (*unintelligible*). Well, we lived in a boarding deal at first, upstairs in a home, and I think our rent was like \$25 a month. John was only making \$27 a week, you know. And he had bought a car, and was paying \$12 a month on that car. It was a nice Chevy. And so then he still kept working at that garage, and then I got pregnant with (*unintelligible*) and that was in October, and we moved to Menlo Park. That's a little ways south of there. And Shirley Temple's big home was not very far from where we lived, but you never did see it, because it was all... out there, there was privacy, you know. Of course, now (*unintelligible*). I never did see the house (*unintelligible*). And then we moved back to... we moved back to San Mateo. San Mateo and Burlingame (?) were right side by side. (*unintelligible*) the garage that he was working at went bankrupt.

Moving back to Iowa

There was hard, hard times! Terrible! And so then we decided to come back to Iowa. And that was in the 1940s. And Barbara was my month-old, and we had to put all our stuff in a big box and sent express, whatever they did in those days... I remember it was...

J: Like UPS.

F: No. (Laughs) We had a big, wooden box, and we put so much stuff in there as we could. And then he hauled a load of passengers back. (*unintelligible*) John's dad, he was always sick. And that was why we came back, because he was sick. Well, Barbara was going on a year old, and he pushed her all over in her buggy, and I think that's what helped him learn to walk again. And he would push her up and down all over... he would go all over! He wore the tires off of that buggy, because he was pushing it. She

just loved it. And you know, she could see forward, but she couldn't... and she was always sitting on the edge to see around the corners! (Laughs) Well, anyway, he got better. We lived there for... John couldn't find a job, oh it was awful! Awful, awful. He would work down on a farm for some people, I don't know, he didn't get hardly any money. And then he went to work at the garage there in town, and got \$10 a week. (*With great emphasis*) \$10 dollars a week! And it wasn't anything!

I said, "After living in California!" Being out there, all that progress, and all, everybody was... the streets were always paved or else blacktop, and all the highways were lighted, and the signs were lighted, you know, and all these great, big semis and double-semis – I had never seen a semi before. Smoke came out of it, you know! I said to John, "Well, what in the world trucks are those that smoke comes out of?" "Well," he says, "They call them diesel." Well, then, let's see... When we were still out in California, we went up to Oregon for (*unintelligible*) and this, these people that I lived with when I went to high school, they owned (*unintelligible*) in Oregon. And they lived out there in (*unintelligible*), Oregon. Now that's, we went there the first Christmas we were out there, we went to (*unintelligible*), Oregon. Oh, that was really wonderful. Over the mountains, and it was across the bridges and then you know, I was pregnant, and all the way home I was carsick! Oh! I was so carsick! He had to quit smokin'. Because it made me so sick. Well, then after Barbara was born and all that stuff, (*unintelligible*) would be comin' back to Iowa. He didn't know it was so hard to find work. And Grandpa and Grandma, and John and I and Barbara... and then...

Every Sunday! Every Sunday the relatives (*unintelligible*). He had a sister, and her three kids, and then a brother-in-law, and then this other brother, Joey, was a bachelor. And then Dick, and Hazel and then they had the one daughter, was just the same age as Barbara, and her name was Janice. They never missed a Sunday. Never! Never! Grandpa would peel the potatoes and he'd sit down, and I'd have to make the rest of the dinner. I was only 22 years old! I hadn't had any experience cooking. Well, that went on forever. Then finally, John got a job. He finally got a job, and it was at the (spelled phonetically, I couldn't make it out very well) Bettendorf Company, in Betterdorf. And they made replacements for railroad cars, you know, all the things where you hook together underneath the railroad, underneath the cars, the tracks? Not on the tracks, but on the wheels of the... then he worked there until the government bought it out. And then they started making tanks. It was the government bought that, and (*unintelligible*). Anyway, he worked there for about 5 years. And it was terrible, terrible. You know, he worked in a (*unintelligible*) was his boss. All that first winter, we... after we moved away from Grandpa and Grandma, and got our own house, we burned nineteen ton of coal in that winter.

J: Did you stay warm?

F: No! Not half the time! And it was a terrible winter, just a terrible winter. That was where Joanne was born, in 1932. Oh, it was an awful winter. Well, anyway, he was working at that place, and then he couldn't... it was hard to find a ride in those days, and he just... he finally found a ride with somebody, but he had to drive so far before he could get a ride with this other guy.

And Ordman (?) Steel was the name of that company. Ordman Steel. And they made tanks. They made tanks there, and he worked under the crane. You know where the crane goes over the railroad cars, and loads? And he parked under the crane and pushing these great, big pieces of tanks. Oh, he had a terrible... I know it was hard work. He didn't make very much doing that, either. Well, anyway, he was there until... we came up here, and his sister and Mary and Freddy came with us. That was in June.

Oh, and Freddy, he had never been away from home hardly at all. And he and I had the best time here, I think it was one of the happiest times in his life (*unintelligible*).

World War II

And so then, John... they called long distance up here. I don't know how they did it. Anyway he had to go into the service. He got his papers to go. So that was June the 25th, I think. He just had to go. You know, the gas rationing was on, so you can imagine, we had two five-gallon cans of gas in the trunk. Because, you know, you had to have stamps to buy gas! And so anyway, we made it back to (*unintelligible*), and he left for the service just not long after that. And he was sittin' out in Portland (?) and I still got his cards that he wrote to me, and he says, "Well, we're gonna leave now. I'm all ready to leave but I don't know where I'm going yet." But they sent him to Fort Knox. That is where he was taking his training. But he learned to be... learned to drive a tank. And he was in the Armed Forces, Armed Division, whatever the number, I can't say it now.

And I found out I was pregnant. Oh, boy! And so, there's Robbie. Of course, I get a note in August the 1st, it was the... I was down there to visit him in August, I think it was, and that's when it was VJ... VE Day. So the camp made a big celebration. Oh, I never will forget, the first time... I was down there twice. The first time I went down there, I sat and waited and I waited and I waited in one of those places... what do they call them? The service club. And somebody played "Sentimental Journey." And everybody that (*unintelligible*). They came in afterwards, after everybody came in, some other guys, and they all looked at (*unintelligible*) because they had their fatigues on. Oh, gosh! So then, finally, he got... he finally came. He had to clean up all the guns before they would let him off for the weekend. So then, I went back home. I stayed there. And I went up to visit Marsha Lee (?) up there in Waukeegan there, went up to visit my... she was the Boyer's girl that was like a good friend. She married a cousin of ours that was adopted by our aunt, so she hadn't changed her name. It was Marsha Lee (?) Boyer. And I stayed there for a few days and then... you know I got sick when I was at the camp? There was some kind of, some kind of virus goin' around. They didn't (*unintelligible*) viruses in those days, it was like dysentery? Oh, boy, I was really sick. I was really, really sick. I had that for so many years. I just had it for 35 years! I finally got rid of it! (Laughs)

So then I went home. But he got discharged in November. Because he had to come home. He didn't have to go overseas. Some of them had to go over to Germany. Well, he didn't have to.

So then, that was after he had been home awhile, he started his body shop. First it was called the Wilton (?) (*unintelligible*), but he changed it to Laucamp Body Shop.

So he was in that business until 1979. See, Barbara was born in '39, and Joanna was born in '42, and then Robbie was born in '46. So I was almost 39 years old when Robbie was born. So that was your dad! He said, no, we'd never have a boy. (*unintelligible*)

This old hospital that I was in, I had to stay out in the hall because (*unintelligible*). Oh, God, it was awful! And the doctor (*unintelligible*), almost 85 years old now, but he lived in Arizona for a good many years. But he has that degenerative eye disease, so he's partially blind, you know.

Every time that I see him, you know, I say "How you doin' today, Dr. Wettstein?"

"I don't know who it is!"

"Oh," I says, "Come on. You know who I am." I said, "You know my voice. I'm Francis!"

"Oh, yes!" (Laughs)

He delivered Robbie (*unintelligible*). What else should I say?

Reminiscing over photographs

J: Let's (*unintelligible*) all these picture that you brought, and I think they're just wonderful. One of them is of the Klondike Cabins. One cabin.

F: Yeah.

J: How many cabins were...

F: Oh, I don't remember. There was quite a few. Yes. Maybe six or eight, maybe? Six at least. And when we did washing, we washed from (*unintelligible*) that's why we had such big washings. And then lots of people came. Every year to the same place. There was one family from Pennsylvania, and they never missed a summer. That was a long ways to drive.

J: How long would they stay? The whole summer?

F: I suppose – what do you think?

Unidentified person: Maybe stayed two weeks, maybe stayed a month.

F: It was cheap living in those days. You know? They probably got... it was more or less expenses they had like if they were living at home.

J: Who did the cooking?

F: I don't know. I don't remember the name of the cook. Though I think Mrs. Cairns did help some. Yeah. And I loved to wash dishes, I remember that. I remember when I wasn't waiting on the tables, I had to go out and wash dishes. Of course, there was no dishwasher, you know? You had to wash it by hand, like you do at home, you know, if you don't have a dishwasher. And then, see, Jake (?) Knutson worked there, you know? And later on, Wally Knutson worked there, oh they worked there all the time, you know. This Jake Knutson guy, he had been at work that day, at the Klondike Cabins, and on his way home, he felt so bad and set down to finally take a rest. And he died. Oh, And Wally died in the woods, too, the same way. (*unintelligible*) You'll have to find out about that, yeah.

J: Here's a picture of that (*unintelligible*) bridge, it says, in Aitkin. You know where the (*unintelligible*) bridge was?

F: No. The postmark has got 1909, isn't it?

J: Yes. So this "Miss Minnie Bloom" was your mother? (reading the postcard)

F: She was my mother.

J: That was your mother. And who was it from? Ah, "Your friend, Laura." (reading the postcard).

F: That was Laura (*unintelligible*) and her family had a home along the Mississippi River, and they had a (*unintelligible*) like a rooming house, I suppose. You know, they kept people overnight.

J: Ok.

F: And also, the Post Office was in her home, too. I'm pretty sure about that.

J: Ok. Was it on this side of the river?

F: What do you think, Marge? You'll have to ask Ruth that. She would know more about that than me.

J: Ok.

F: The boat stopped there. And then they'd go into Aitkin by boat, see? My mother did that many times. When she was a young girl.

J: Then there's a picture of Fourth Street looking north, in Aitkin. And this is also, Miss Minnie Bloom., who is your mother. And this is from Ella Jacobson.

F: I asked Ruth about that, and she was the first teacher they had in Balsam.

J: Oh.

F: That's how my mother knew her.

J: Ok. And this one is postmarked July 10, 1914. And then there's a train, Number 11, on the Knox Bridge in Aitkin. I think I've heard them talk about the Knox bridge. And this also is to your mother, and this was (*unintelligible*).

F: And I have more at home from Laura. And I also have her graduation picture of 1907 and 1908. But there's not a single one name on there. And I have another picture of them that somebody cut out, I don't know if they cut out the stamp, or they cut out Laura's picture, but then she says, "That's my sister, Laura" (written) across the front. So that was her sister. But whatever her sister's name was, I don't know. You know, you can find out...

J: Did she graduate from Aitkin?

F: From Princeton.

J: Princeton.

F: The Princeton (*unintelligible*) College, or something. It says that right at the bottom of the card.

J: Ok. Yeah. Those things would be most appreciated.

F: Well, I thought, gee whiz, I said nobody in our family ever... it really means a lot to me that mom even kept these cards. Think of how many years that we've had 'em. And I can remember taking that box of cards and lookin' at 'em and lookin' at 'em, and so then when she knew she was gonna leave, you know, here, she said... we were getting' all her stuff out and she had this box of these cards, and I said, "Mom, do you care if I take what I want out of this box?" She says, "Go ahead and take 'em." So I took what I wanted. Now what was left, I don't remember what, you know, I don't remember how many more was left in there, I don't know. And then do you remember that little purse that Cindy took? The chain purse? She still got that? That was in that box, too. You know, you see these chain purses, and a chain handle on it? Oh, Cindy was here, too, when we were doin' that. She says, "I'll take that purse." And she took the purse.

J: Well, it's good to have those things in the family.

F: Yeah.

Conclusion

J: Well, Francis, we're running out of tape, so I certainly appreciate this opportunity. I hope we have a chance to get together and visit another time.

F: Yeah, I'm glad, too.

J: You're a wonderful person to interview! You've been a wealth of information.

F: I know. (*unintelligible*) my mother to do this while she was still alive. (*unintelligible*) When they wrote that book on Tamarack, I don't know who wrote it. But you know, she was just (*unintelligible*). Her hands got so full of arthritis, you know, when she was 82 or 83 years old, she learned how to type on a typewriter.

J: (Laughs) Good for her!

F: And I've got all those letters that she wrote to me on the typewriter.

J: Good for you. Thanks again!

(end of Side B)