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Walker's way : an oral history of Mark Walker

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WALKER'S WAY:
AN ORAL HISTORY OF MARK WALKER

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Social Science
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Elizabeth L. Lake
August 1996

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ABSTRACT

WALKER'S WAY: AN ORAL HISTORY OF MARK WALKER

by Elizabeth L. Lake

This thesis is an oral history of Mark Walker. It examines his life and the culture in which he was reared, encompassing the time period beginning with his birth in DeHaven, Mendocino County, California in 1892 and concluding in Willits, Mendocino County, in 1945. It utilizes the theory of thick description as introduced by Clifford Geertz and, as such, includes an interpretive narrative collected from taped interviews edited for the purposes of this thesis.

The evolution of oral history, the use of thick description in oral history, is discussed, and the need for continued research of this kind in both the historical and anthropological arenas is emphasized.

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Introduction

I was introduced to Mark Walker by Dr. Thomas Layton, chairperson of the Department of Anthropology at San Jose State University. Dr. Layton had conducted an interview with Mark with the expectation that he would provide historical data relevant to Dr. Layton's archaeological investigation of Native American/White interaction in and around DeHaven a late nineteenth century mill town on the Mendocino County coast. Aware that I was interested in conducting oral history interviews as part of my graduate project, Dr. Layton invited me to accompany him during his second interview with Mark.

Although oral history in its most conservative form is used to preserve the richness and importance of tradition, it cannot be accepted uncritically , it must be read and analysed with full recognition of its social intent. Paul Thompson states, "Until the present century, the focus of oral history was essentially political: a documentation of the struggle for power, in which the lives of ordinary people, or the workings of the economy or religion, were given little attention except in times of crisis..." (1978:2). Clearly the social purpose of history can become obscured. The academic pursuit of fact-finding and data collection for its own purpose is one extreme; the political justification of war may be viewed as the other. Somewhere between these extremes lies the desire of ordinary people to understand events which preceeded them. The intent of this thesis has been to document for others the

life of one individual, Mark Walker, to preserve a record of his experiences in the “early days” of Mendocino County.

I arranged to meet Dr. Layton in Ukiah, California on June 27, 1992. From Ukiah we drove twenty-five miles north to the Walker residence, just south of Willits, CA on U. S. 101 where Dr. Layton introduced me to Mark Walker and his wife Ina.

At one hundred years of age, despite his failing eyesight and hearing, Mark was still a robust man. His gray beard and shock of white hair combined to create the appearance of a grizzled mountain man. Despite the warm weather, he was dressed in denim pants and long-sleeved flannel shirt, under which could be seen the cuffs of another long sleeved shirt. Later I learned from Mark that he preferred longjohns and wore them year-round.

Dr. Layton conducted his second interview while I took notes and listened. Mark’s failing vision did not prevent him from carefully fingering a group of archaeological artifacts which Dr. Layton had brought with him in the hope that Mark could identify them.

The artifacts had been recovered from archaeological site CA-MEN-2307, located on Lincoln Ridge, two miles north of Westport, on the Mendocino County coast. The now vanished town of DeHaven where Mark was born stood at the base of Lincoln Ridge. Mark’s experiences as a horseshoer enabled him to identify one of the artifacts brought by Dr. Layton

as a number 2 preformed horseshoe, a size commonly used in the early days along the coast. A small bit of tarnished brass, which I thought resembled a window latch, was a greater puzzle, but Mark's fingers traced the edges and molded ridges while he pondered. "Perhaps," he said, "it was from a saddle or off a wagon." Its pattern of wear indicated to him that something had hung from it.

Meanwhile, Ina busied herself with straightening the kitchen and preparing Mark's lunch. I immediately felt comfortable with Mark and Ina, and even before our visit was over, I was certain that Mark Walker was the person I wanted to interview. Age had not diminished his ability to articulate or his willingness to share his life experiences and knowledge with others. He was an ideal informant. Ina was spirited, witty, and quickly put me at ease. I made arrangements with Mark and Ina for my return the following weekend to conduct my first interview.

Photo Elizabeth Lake

Literature Review

Oral history in anthropological research has evolved from simple collection of folkways descriptions to the development and application of a replicable methodology for collection and analysis of oral narrative. This evolution has paralleled the evolution of general anthropological theory. The development of each passed through three general stages. The first stage, which spans the beginning of the twentieth century to approximately the mid-1920s is characterized by its emphasis on fieldwork and the description of lifeways. The second stage occupies the years between approximately 1925 and the mid-1950s, and marks the beginning of cultural analysis. The third stage began in the mid-1950s and continues to the present. Its focus has been an increased concern for research relevant to contemporary issues.

Individuals such as Franz Boas and A. L. Kroeber were instrumental in initiating the changes which took place during the first stage. To counter the speculative "armchair" theorists Boas stressed the importance of ethnographic fieldwork. He believed that Western anthropologists should live and study among non-Western peoples—a technique called "participant observation." Collection of oral

narratives became a core activity of the Boasian approach to anthropological research.

This early stage of oral history is most notable for its use in recording descriptions of the lifeways of Native Americans. For example, Kroeber used life history as an anthropological tool to describe three war narratives in "Ethnology of the Gros Ventre," (1908). Subsequently, a near frantic effort to salvage as quickly as possible the vanishing data on the pre-literate cultures of Native Americans lead to the publishing of brief biographical works by such scholars as Elsie Clews Parsons (1921), Paul Radin (1927), and M. R. Harrington (1933).

These works were primarily descriptive and did not incorporate detailed interpretations of events. In the spirit of "salvage anthropology" it was felt analysis could come later (Langness and Frank 1981:20).

During the second stage, which began about 1925 and continued into the 1950s, scholars began to collect biographies, employing methods focusing on the life of the individual. Paul Radin's *Crashing Thunder: The Autobiography of an American Indian* (1926), charted this new course in anthropological biography by emphasizing the individual's culture rather than that of the group's. In explaining his

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approach Radin emphasized not only the centrality of the individual, but the importance of analysis and interpretation of the data as opposed to passive data collection.

Interpretation of native languages, clear definitions of fieldwork objectives, and establishing the reliability of life history information were the main issues discussed during the second stage. Margaret Mead, for example, suggested that wherever possible the narrator's native language should be used to collect data (1970:21). Ruth Benedict in *Patterns of Culture* (1934) introduced the comparative study of different cultures and argued that primitive cultures be viewed within their own contexts. This contextual perspective, she believed, would expose the internal consistency and complexity of the culture as well as the relationship between the individual and his or her culture.

In 1945, Clyde Kluckhohn, and others, sponsored by the Social Science Research Council, investigated the use of personal documents in anthropology. Kluckhohn addressed the need for anthropologists to use all forms of documentation in their research: popular, historical, biographical and autobiographical.

Cora DuBois and Abram Kardiner independently demonstrated the importance of psychological analysis in the study of life histories.

DuBois, in *People of Alor* (1941), and Kardiner, in *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (1945), studied personality and culture—linking practices and institutions such as childrearing and religion with variable personality attributes. Life histories now facilitated intra-cultural comparisons aiding in identifying deviant behaviors.

In the mid 1950s anthropologists' desire to make their research relevant to contemporary issues marked the beginning of the third developmental stage of oral history.

In *Lives: An Anthropological Approach to Biography*, Langness and Frank (1985:24) observe that anthropologists have come to use life history for one or more of the following reasons:

1. to portray culture,
2. for literary purposes,
3. to portray aspects of culture change,
4. to illustrate some aspect of culture not usually portrayed by other means,
5. to communicate something not otherwise communicated, and
6. to say something about deviants and unusual cases."

Theodora Kroeber's highly successful work, *Ishi in Two Worlds* (1961) is a colorful record of the last "wild" American Indian. The biographical format demonstrates cultural and anthropological perspectives not usually revealed by other means. The literary success

of this book can be attributed to its easy to read format and the continued public interest in Native American lifeways.

Populist writers such as Studs Terkel have used oral history to give voice to those who have traditionally been excluded. Terkel is one of many who during this third stage of oral history have interviewed everyday people to reveal the common experience. *Hard Times* (1970), *"The Good War"* (1984) and most recently, *Changing Times* (1994) demonstrate his genius in eliciting responses that penetrate to the heart of people's experiences and thoughts. His works are collections of recollections that speak of a time or an event that touched the masses. *Changing Times* reflects, through the memories and thoughts of people over seventy, how times have changed and how these individuals feel about those changes. The popularity of oral histories has grown as evidenced by the increasing number of literary works.

In 1980, Ann Banks published *First Person America*, a book drawing from the vast archive of interviews collected by the Federal Writers Project [The Federal Writers Project was part of the New Deal's national work relief program, the Works Progress Administration (WPA)]. In 1931 Franklin D. Roosevelt began planning the WPA in an effort to counter the 17% unemployment rate and the economic

distress brought about by the Depression (Friedel, 1990:143). Where available, Banks included background information on the informant and, when possible, biographical information about the Federal Writer who collected the life history. As a result of the research carried out for *First Person America*, interviews which had reposed in dusty archives are now being organized to make them available to the public.

Contemporary Oral History Studies

During the past two decades the life history method has gained widespread respect and has been used successfully in studying venues from nursing homes to Indochinese emigration to the United States following the fall of Saigon. The technique is now being employed both for anthropological research and in the general trade press treatments intended for public consumption.

Modern anthropological research studies employing life history include James Freeman's *Untouchable: An Indian Life History* (1979) and *Hearts Of Sorrow* (1989); *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story* (1993) by Ruth Behar; and *Mabel McKay: Weaving The Dream* (1994) by Greg Sarris.

Freeman's *Untouchable: An Indian Life History* presents life as seen by Muli, a member of India's lowest caste. Through this expressive and deviant narrator Freeman explores social roles, caste relations, and ritual activities. Mandelbaum's (1973) template for analysis—focusing on dimensions, turnings, and adaptation—form the basis of Freeman's analytic scheme.

Mandelbaum's outline:

1. dimensions [the biological, cultural, social, and psychosocial aspects of a person's life]
2. turnings [the major transitions that a person makes during the principal periods of his lifetime]
3. adaptation [the personal changes that an individual makes that contribute to his survival]

Freeman demonstrates that Muli's life is dominated by *dimensions* of poverty and *turnings* in response to discrimination. Muli's efforts to transform his life, his *adaptations*, are the result. Freeman's, *Hearts Of Sorrow* is a collection of fourteen narratives representing Vietnamese refugees from a wide range of ages, occupations, levels of education, localities in Vietnam, political orientations, and religious views. Both the first and second waves of refugees (the first in 1975, the second after 1975) are represented. Freeman addresses the epistemological issues central to the study of biography: the moral implications of research, the role of the editor,

and the possibilities for cultural dialogue. Not only are the narratives influenced by these issues, but the informant and interviewer as well.

Behar's Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story records the story of sixty year-old Esperanza in her own words. Before meeting Esperanza, Behar had been told by other women in the community that Esperanza was a witch, combative, and to take care not to offend. Behar had begun reading documents from the colonial Spanish [Mexican] Inquisition and recognized the similarities between the Inquisition and the stories she had heard about Esperanza. Behar perceived Esperanza as a woman living in the present, within the context of these ancient stories. Interpretations presented in the first chapter and at the beginning of each succeeding chapter include Behar's description of her own integration into Esperanza's community. She acknowledges the influence she and Esperanza have had on each other and on the finished product.

Sarris' Mabel McKay: Weaving The Dream, begins at a Stanford University auditorium with Mabel McKay lecturing on basket making. She is a world-renowned Pomo basketmaker whose work resides in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian and several other museums. Interwoven with McKay's story are Sarris' own experiences providing the reader with a view of not only the subject but of the

complex developing relationship linking Sarris and McKay. The story of the bond between McKay and Sarris places the interviewer center stage with the interviewee—dramatizing the truth of deconstructionism—that the medium may indeed be the message.

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General trade press treatments of life history include Tracy Kidder's *Old Friends* (1993) and Sara and A. Elizabeth Delany with Amy Hill Hearth's *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years* (1993).

Kidder's Old Friends, introduces the reader to two old men, strangers thrust together as residents of Linda Manor, a nursing home. *Old Friends* illustrates the struggle by residents of Linda Manor with "separateness" and how, with friendship, it is resolved. Kidder chronicles the lives of the residents with humor, and occasionally with farce. Although the focus is on Joe and Lou, the full complement—nurses, aides, residents, and their families—are followed for a year. The result is a portrait of the cultures from which each came and how they are blended into their new community.

Amy Hill Hearth's treatment of the Delany sisters introduces a different genre of oral history [*Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters'*

First 100 Years]. Here a rare glimpse of the rise of the black middle class is presented through the narrative of two sisters, Elizabeth “Bessie” age 101 and Sara “Sadie” age 103. The book is constructed from anecdotes collected during a period of eighteen months. Hearth recounts how each of the sisters’ versions of particular events are identical or told in joint fashion—one beginning a sentence, and the other finishing it. Other events are chronicled with the sisters’ viewpoint illustrating different perspectives. This is a wonderful example of how each person perceives and remember the same incident making it his/her own particular experience. Amy Hill Hearth and the Delany sisters, have preserved a valuable piece of American history, and in so doing have shared the experience of being black and female during virtually all of the twentieth century.

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Prior to the *new ethnography*, marking the third developmental stage, of oral history, the narrator was identified as the carrier of his or her culture. His or her narration was influenced by personal intentions, motives, goals, attitudes, thoughts, and feelings. The narrator’s agenda corresponded to the anthropologist’s understanding of him or her. Consequently, information about the narrator was

required by the anthropologist in order to describe the narrator's behavior according to his or her own meaning. This was the *emic* approach and up to this point it was the method most often used by anthropologists.

Unlike previous emic efforts, the new ethnographer sought to treat emic phenomena with high standards recognizing intersubjectivity, while seeking verifiability, and predictability. The ethnographer dealt less with cultural idealism emphasizing instead cultural materialism. The significance of the narrator's observed performance was judged by the observer. The informant gave information and described behavior according to the categories and meanings established by the observing culture. Thus, informants often joined the community of anthropologists. This approach is termed as *etic*.

Ethnographies are a combination of both the emic and etic information supplied both the informant and the anthropologist. However, it is the anthropologist who sets the stage when conducting research. To the anthropologist falls the heavy responsibility of creating both the physical and intellectual context for the interview. The timing as well as the act of asking a question may influence the responses of the interviewees. Throughout my research I was

concerned with such issues. These will be addressed in the methodology section.

Review of Regional Literature

The preservation of Mendocino County's past has been undertaken by Bruce Levene and others (1977) in the two volume *Mendocino County Remembered: An Oral History* commemorative series celebrating the American Bicentennial. This two volume study includes 200 interviews. Chosen for the project were 150 interviewees, most in their eighties, with an additional 50 pre-existing tape recordings being added. The interviews focused on everyday occurrences experienced first hand. Each participant was asked the same specific set of question about their life experiences.

Fort Bragg Remembered: A Centennial Oral History (1989) also by Levene, with Sally Milkose, is another collection of interviews from men and women, most over seventy-five. The intent was to provide a glimpse into the quality of life in and around Fort Bragg during the first half of the twentieth century.

These two studies succeed in allowing the reader to glimpse a time now past. They are also an example of how dialogue can be edited to maintain the voice of the interviewee. The results are a collection of relatively short interviews providing an overview of life in the area. They provide a resource for verification of otherwise unrecorded events in the region. No analysis is included.

Life history as a tool in anthropology has come far, but there is much undeveloped potential. The definition of objectives, description of interpersonal dynamics, and the designing of a comprehensive interpretive plan for analysis are areas still being explored. My objective has been to share in this exploration.

Methodology

There are many different styles of interviewing, ranging from the friendly, informal, conversational approach which was used in this study, to the more formal, controlled style of questioning. The successful interviewer must possess an interest and respect for people as individuals, and flexibility in responding to them. Interviewers must have the ability to show understanding and sympathy for the individual's point of view, and possess a willingness to listen. This last requirement is most important. Interviewers who continue to talk, contradict, or push an informant with their own ideas, will find themselves with information that is incomplete, or misleading (Thompson, 1978:165).

Background knowledge is useful in gathering information, however, the interviewer is there to learn and often gains the cooperation of the informant by being ignorant of the details. During one interview in which Mark was detailing the process of cutting tanbark I asked where the tanbark was being used. It was then that Mark explained the extraction process to me. In my naiveté, I had envisioned thousands of play-grounds all overlain with fresh tanbark. Had I known that the tanbark Mark was speaking of was the source of

the tannin used for curing leather I might never have collected this wonderful account from him.

Mark laughed heartily when he learned the depth of my ignorance of the *woods*. In large part this was due to Mark's personality. The effect of personality is an integral part of interviewing. Some interviewers are naturally more chatty than others, and some informants are naturally more at ease during interviews (Thompson 1978:166). Mark was very much at ease with the interview process. Ease notwithstanding, there were subjects, and issues, that this study was unable to broach. Mark was quite willing to discuss his life, but it was always within the parameters of an old world gentleman. Gender differences prevented him from speaking on certain topics. He feigned ignorance of brothels, prostitutes, drinking and rowdiness. After several interviews Mark alluded to how unseemly it was to discuss a woman having a child out of wedlock. That sort of thing *happened* in the early days, but one didn't talk of it.

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Logistics prevented my staying in Willits for more than a couple of days at a time. Work and family required that I be home during the

week. As a result, Mark and I scheduled our interviews on weekends, an arrangement which worked well for us all.

It became apparent after my first interview with Mark that he would be unable to provide some of the historical data Dr. Layton and I had expected. Although his memory was excellent, his recollections of the Native Americans inhabiting the region one hundred years ago were limited. Indeed, Mark's contact with Native Americans during his childhood had been limited to attending school with Indian children. Although he later worked with them, he had been exposed only marginally to their culture. He had neither associated with them away from school, nor spent time in their community of dwellings on the beach at the mouth of DeHaven Creek.

Nevertheless, Mark's desire to share, and his keen memory, made him an ideal informant. His long tenure in Mendocino County made his story an important one. Since Mark at 100 was already well past average life expectancy it was clear that delay might result in the loss of his many rich remembrances. Dr. Layton and I decided that I would continue my interviews with Mark but with a different focus. I would explore Mark's life, beginning in and around DeHaven and continuing to the present. Dr. Layton would resume his interviews focusing on Mark's life in DeHaven, coastal commerce and woods

trades. (As of April 1996, Dr. Layton has completed and transcribed another twenty-four hours of interviews with Mark).

Time was of the essence. During the summer, I visited Mark and Ina every weekend, leaving work in San Jose on Friday evening driving the 175 miles north to Willits. Arriving at a local campground late at night, I would pitch my tent and prepare for my interview in the morning. By agreement, I arrived to begin my interviews promptly at ten-o'clock every Saturday morning, Mark declared that his mind was clearest early in the day. I maintained this schedule through the first week of November. During the winter my visits were made every other weekend. I conducted my last interview with Mark on May 22, 1993.

Throughout the year I made trips which did not yield interviews. Mark's advancing age seemed to take its toll. Some days I would arrive and Mark would inform me that he "just wasn't up to talkin'." On those occasions he would visit briefly and then retire to his darkened living room to rest in his recliner. There he would drift in and out of sleep. Many times I waited while he slept and when he awoke he told me he had been dreaming of the "early days." On one occasion I arrived in Willits with flu symptoms. Always careful not to expose Mark or Ina to illness, I called and explained the situation to

Ina. She agreed that we should reschedule my visit. In spite of these interruptions, I collected thirty-one hours of taped narrative during twenty-two interviews.

All of the interviews were conducted in the Walker's kitchen at a small table across from their wood burning stove. Mark always sat in his chair by the window. I always sat across from him. He explained that the sunlight from the window improved his ability to see. "Although," in his words, "not much." Our sessions were always informal, and came to be regarded by Mark and Ina, as well as myself, as *visits*. Occasionally, Mark would meet me in the front yard, and begin the interview himself. On these days the beginning of the interview would go unrecorded. I tried to anticipate this, but never found a satisfactory solution to the problem. I learned early that Mark did not like me to take notes while he was talking. He would reach out and finger the edge of the paper, offer to draw a picture of what he was describing, then not return my pen or pencil. I suspected that if I persisted he would gradually collect and hoard every pencil and pen and every shred of paper that I had brought with me. During one interview Mark captured three pens and my notebook. On that occasion he kept saying he was going to draw a picture to illustrate how merry-go-rounds were built in the woods. Instead, he assembled the

items, holding them in place, and demonstrated the construction process. Mark likes to perform and sometimes felt I was paying insufficient attention to him. Only once did Mark flatly refuse to let me interview him. He was “tired,” he said. He had lain awake all night thinking about the homestead of his childhood. Expressing my concern to Ina netted me the answer, “He’s mad at you dear. You went to the Nature Conservancy and didn’t take him with you.” I had made a trip to the Nature Conservancy to see the preserved remains of two early homesteads, and the site of Mark’s childhood home. As a result Mark punished me, allowing me neither to turn on my tape recorder nor to write notes. I could listen to him, and he told wonderful stories, but I could not make any record. This was the only time that Mark refused to be interviewed.

Following every interview I stopped at a wide spot on the roadside, pulled out my personal journal and scribbled every unrecorded story and impression I could remember. The insights and revelations within that journal kept me aware of my changing perceptions and enabled me to gauge their impact on my research.

Mark’s hearing loss and consequent inability to follow long sentences, detailed descriptions, or ideas, required that questions be kept short and to the point. His inability to see clearly prevented using

visual aids. Mark's most vivid recollections were of what he called, the *Early Days*. This period defined everything before the Second World War, frequently including stories passed down to him by other family members. His memory was sharp, for early events, but lacked details of the recent past. For example, when pressed to recall events between the end of the Second World War and the present, he had very little to say. He was cognizant of current events; his comments, in 1992, regarding the presidential election indicated that he was quite aware of that political contest.

I have ended Mark's narrative after he and his first wife Edith moved to Willits in 1945. The conclusion of the Second World War coincided with a reduction of Mark's activity. Although Mark continued to work—and work very hard—his focus was on maintaining steady employment and enhancing his new dwelling. At age fifty-three he did not range as far from home, and although his work was still an important factor to him he clearly enjoyed telling of the adventures from his youth. A brief epilogue follows the narrative to bring Mark's story up to 1994.

Ideally each interview would have been transcribed before the next interview took place. This process might have resulted in more structured interviews; however, due to other obligations this was not possible. I listened to each interview before conducting the next; but

was unable to transcribe each tape as it was created. This method of managing the vast volume of taped material resulted in the daunting task of transcribing all thirty-one hours of tape at one time. The job of transcribing was eased by reducing the number of hours of tape transcribed to seventeen. This was possible because of Mark's frequent repetition of stories. By listening to the untranscribed tapes I could still extract detail from repeated vignettes. This was acceptable to my committee. Transcribing and listening to so many tapes revealed patterns that I might not otherwise have recognized. For example, I was often unable to turn the subject away from a topic which Mark had been pondering since the previous interview. In addition, listening to interview after interview I became aware of the fluid pattern with which Mark related familiar stories. Mark Walker is a story teller, and a man who revels in the past. He is most at ease telling stories he has shared with confidence before.

The process of editing taped interviews is *powerful*. The editor has the ability to alter the context and meaning of the spoken word, or to relate as accurately as possible, the events as they were told. It has always been my intention to present Mark's life history accurately and true to his style.

To facilitate the flow of the narrative, redundant vignettes were merged to preserve maximum detail while superfluous sentences,

awkward pauses, and a multitude of *you knows* were eliminated.

Even though repetition was edited out, the reader will notice redundancies. Mark often used repetition for emphasis. In some instances that repetition has been preserved.

The process of merging vignettes into the basic narrative began by using my first interview as a foundation. This interview, more than any other, was ideally suited to this purpose because it was an accurate chronological overview of Mark Walker's life. The vignettes were collected from subsequent interviews to illustrate and complete this overview. Whole sentences and complete thoughts could be integrated from different interviews. With the exception of more pauses, or the order in which stories were told and the level of embellishment, vignettes remained consistent in content.

Occasionally Mark Walker would respond to a question and then digress. Often these stories were the most descriptive. Mark appeared to return to the event itself, transporting himself by *stream of consciousness* through his memories. This resulted in some very unstructured interviews. On other occasions Mark would respond to a question and then stop talking. He appeared to be daydreaming, reliving another time. In his words, his "...brain went to sleep." Sometimes a brief rest, or short walk in the front yard would revive him. However, when this happened during cold winter months Mark

would sometimes decide to go back to sleep. The rain and dreary weather seemed to tire him. Mark was most animated in the summer when the sunlight spilled through the kitchen window onto the table at which we sat.

During one interview Mark told me that he still remembered, “the twelve parts of speech.” He then began to sing a rhyme that he had learned in school, a mnemonic for remembering the rules of correct sentence structure. Although he was unable to recall all of the rhyme it was clear to me that he had a strong grasp of written and spoken English. Mark speaks like a man who has lived his life in the country. He possesses a limited formal education; however in 1988 at age 96, he wrote both *The Walker Saga*, and *The Elder Family History*. These documents are well written. This contrast in verbal and written styles presented an interesting challenge; how to remain faithful to his country *patois* and honor his literacy.

To maintain Mark's verbal style, I have refrained from *cleaning up* grammar and tried to keep the vernacular of his time. This has often required returning to the taped interviews rather than the transcript to hear how Mark actually spoke. Mark's speech varies from relaxed country pronunciations with contractions and sounds dropped from the endings of words such as the *g* in *-ing* and the *d* in the word *and*, to more academically correct pronunciations for the same words.

Contexts in which Mark spoke more precisely included discussions of his parents' homestead, their expectations of him, and his memories of school. Stories about hunting, working, and his experiences with Indians were more likely to employ casual language.

The narrative is not presented in strict chronological order. Mark's focus tended to be on what took place rather than on when and where an event happened. Mark often related stories by telling the events first and then providing the details—names, dates, and locations—as an afterthought. To aid the reader this order has been changed and similar events have been kept together where it seemed appropriate.

Because similar vignettes from various taped interviews were merged to form the present narrative, I have not included references for interviews and line numbers. Where a brief comment or word was inserted to provide clarity, I have enclosed it within brackets. In cases where more information was required to clarify the text I have provided end notes.

Clifford Geertz, in *Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*, (1973) borrowed the term *thick description* from Gilbert Ryle to discuss its use in interpretive anthropology. Geertz explains that at one level doing ethnography is "establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing text, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary,

and so on" (1973:20). But ethnography is not just performing techniques. It is also an intellectual effort at understanding and giving meaning to what others do. It is the process of discovering and reconstructing the deep layers of meaning involved in human interaction.

Geertz states, "Culture is public because meaning is" (1973:12). All human actions have multiple meanings or uses. His example of the *wink* represents an expression from which multiple meanings can be conveyed. Because culture is public, Geertz's thick description has traditionally been used to interpret whole cultures. For this reason it has not been identified as a theoretical construct used to interpret oral history. Taken at face value, by its personal nature, oral history is private. However, Mark's life is that of a *public* man. The manner in which he conducted his affairs, both work and play, was public. His work was an expression of himself in a public setting; holding dances, creating folk-art, conducting demonstration for children and museums, was both work, and public.

Geertz's approach to thick description provides a useful means for interpreting oral history in general, and Mark's life specifically. The process of constructing the oral history narrative: conducting interviews, transcribing, and editing those interviews, and assigning meaning to chosen vignettes, requires that decisions be made. Which

questions to ask, and when; which vignettes to use and how to blend them together; which events to expand upon in the endnotes; and whose “voices” to use, all conspire to become the interpretation of the individual whose life is being recorded. Making these decisions requires that the ethnographer understand the informant and make some judgments regarding what, in all those hours of taped interviews and collected notes, reaches the essence of the individual being studied so that an accurate representation may be made.

All of these questions had to be asked and answered to complete the oral history narrative presented here in Mark’s voice. In editing the taped interviews with Mark Walker I have attempted to preserve his rich description of his culture and to illustrate who Mark Walker is.

An essential feature of thick description is the multiple layers of culture which provide meaning. Therefore, it is important to note that in addition to my editing, Mark did his own editing. When pressed to relate nuances of their culture individuals edit their own stories. They strive to present themselves and their culture in the best possible light. Psychological studies suggest that remembering is a creative process of construction, not of replication. Some psychologists now believe that we don’t retrieve our memories, we construct them. In addition, they hold that a storyteller collaborates with his audience to shape the tale.

(Thelen, 1989:1118). Even when only one person is talking, every story is a conversation.

Preface

Mark Walker began gathering the material for his family's history when he was a boy of eleven. He listened to his relatives telling stories and collected information from anyone who would share it with him. Mark's first history of the Walker family [*The Walker Saga*], a hand-written manuscript has no date on it, however, on February 15, 1988 Mark received a newly typed copy of this manuscript from his cousin Everett, who had sent a copy to the Geneology Department of the Nathional Archives in Washington D. C. Mark finished writing the *Elder Family History* on August 8, 1988. The following text excerpted from both of these documents is presented as Mark Walker's personally written introduction to his own life story. I have not edited any of the text borrowed from these manuscripts.

The Walker Saga

by Mark Walker

Now it is the Spring of 1852 and everything is in good shape for the trip West. Now is where the family separates, some of them never to see each other again. Let's name the ones who will make the trip. The ones to go are Great Grandpa and Grandma (John Onsby, Sr. and Millie), Grandpa and Grandma with little Dave and John, Grandma's brother, Sam King, and his family, and Coonskin. There were enough other people to fill out and make twenty covered wagons. Grandpa's sister, Annie, who was married to Andy Packard, Jr., stayed behind. She thought Missouri was a better place to raise her children and said she would come later. All of Grandpa's sisters and one brother who also stayed behind were married now and raising families.

The twenty covered wagons were lined up on the road and loaded to overflowing. The party cast votes to elect a man for Captain, to take charge for the entire trip. Grandpa got most all of the votes; so he was in command. Of what I know and what I have heard about Grandpa, I think he was fully equal to the occasion. My dad said that there never was an object so great that Grandpa could not find a way under, over or around it.

..

Now, back to the covered wagons that are all lined up in single file and all headed west. There were either four horses or four oxen pulling each wagon. The horse teams and the ox teams were separated, the horses ahead as they walk faster. There were plenty of young men who wanted to work their way West; so it was no problem to have plenty of help along the way. Can't you just get a picture in your mind of those covered wagons? Some of the teams were driven by the women part

time, with their big sun bonnets on and leaning out to prod the oxen with the sharp goad, the lines of the horses in one hand and a young'un under the extra arm. Good life.

In those days everyone knew how to drive a team, even kids and women. Coonskin, at thirteen, could handle any team. But he was more valuable as a hunter. He told me that he kept most of the people supplied with meat all along the trip. He said there was plenty of game all along the way.

..

The caravan left Missouri and took the northern route that would take them by way of Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho and into Oregon. It does not seem far; but it took them all summer to make the trip.

..

In the Fall of 1852, the caravan pulled into Oregon. The Walkers stopped in a valley along the John Day River. Some of the wagons went on farther. Some went one way and some another. They each had picked out someplace where they wanted to stop. At least the long trip was over; and Grandpa's responsibility was over except for his own family and people.

..

They had been doing real well. Yes, Grandma had quite a lot of cash saved up in her trunk. My dad said Grandma always had the family's money in her trunk. He said that when Grandpa made a deal that took some cash, he would run to the house and Grandma would dig to the bottom of the trunk and get the required amount. When they were doing well and had some money ahead, that was a good sign that they were pretty apt to move. Just now, Grandpa and Grandma counted their money and surveyed all of their worldly goods and decided it was time to

move. The family decided that California needed to be explored a little farther south. They had never been farther south than Hat Creek in Shasta County. They wanted to visit Hat Creek for a while and see all of the new children.

..

Now they were on their way again, down through the Sacramento Valley. The grass was as high as the backs of the cows. Feeding the cattle and horses was no problem. They traveled along as far as Suisun, California, and then turned back northwest, through Napa and Sonoma, then into Mendocino County. They continued on, through Ukiah and still farther north and stopped at a little valley that was to be called Walker Valley a little later on.

When they got there they still had three wagons, the sawmill and part of the cattle. Some of the cattle had been traded along road for traveling expenses. My dad and Coonskin have both told me how Grandpa could travel along, trading, and almost make expenses for the trip. He would trade horses or cattle or what-have-you. My dad inherited some of that blood from his father. He could trade off something that I thought worthless and come out good. Dad said he did not trade to beat anyone. He just moved things around, placed them where they might be useful. I'm still under the impression that he liked a little profit — a lot if it could be had. He might not have seen it my way but he made a good deal quite often. A real, Old Horse Trader always lets on and tries to make you think that you are skinning him alive. The Walker family is all squared away and ready to move on. The children are of course anxious to get on their way and meet the Packard children, who are their first cousins. The family will be traveling light now, as they have no mill to haul along and no cattle to drive. The first time they have ever been so carefree, with less work to do and more hands to do it.

..

On the first part of the trip out of Walker Valley, they traveled an old road which had been carved out of the hillside a few years before. This was still primitive country. The road is not used today but still can be seen if one knows just where to look. It's been over a hundred years since the Walker family traveled that piece of road. I've looked at it many times, had a daydream watching the old Walker family climbing that steep grade in 1870.

They made it to the hill north of Willits the first day and camped there that night. That first day they traveled across the land that I own and live on today. That was ten or twelve miles made that first day. Now, it's a four-lane highway and a truck or car can cover the same distance in ten minutes. If cars of today were to travel that same piece of road as it was in 1870, the bigger cars would not get far.

On the second day they reached Sherwood Valley about fourteen miles farther on. The third day, over Strong Mountain and on down to the head waters of the Eel River. They were now in the redwood country. The third night they camped in a little valley (Jackson Valley). They chose a regular, early-day stopping place, a small ranch and farm with feed to sell and other accommodations — for a price. There was a nice house on one side of the road and a barn on the other. The feed for stock had to be carried along as no grass grows in the redwood country. After three days travel the folks were a little tired; so they took a day off now to rest up.

..

The day the old Walker Family left Jackson Valley for the Coast was a change for them. They climbed a real high, steep mountain and when they reached the summit, they could look down on the Pacific Ocean for the first time.

From the summit it was mostly down-grade all the way to the coast. The Walkers passed

through Westport, which is on the bluff of the ocean, north about two miles to the little village of DeHaven, destined to be a sawmill town which flourished many years. When they first saw it, it was only green pasture. Today it is green pasture again: no sign of a town's ever being there. I was born there eighty-four years ago. Now I go back every year to look and daydream.

..

Dad was only six when he was there. How he could remember and tell about every little detail! It was truly marvelous. Sixty years later he told me from day to day most every interesting thing that happened there. Of course, a lot of my telling you came from Coonskin. He was still with the family in 1870.

The Walker family stayed through the winter at the Packard home: from the fall of 1870 until spring, 1871.

..

They started on another trip which would take them back to Lynn County in Oregon. The horses had been on pasture all winter and were not very strong. The trip would be slow for a while. After a good part of the summer was gone, they were back in Oregon on a rented farm.

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The family lived in Lynn and Douglas Counties for a few years. In the year of 1875 they settled in Olalla, somewhere on Olalla Creek, somewhere near the Drew Prock place.

..

In the spring of 1884 the family left Olalla and was on the trip about three weeks to DeHaven.

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Grandpa built a house at DeHaven, along side of Dave's house and lived there while they were at DeHaven. The Company furnished lumber and each family had to build their own house. If a family moved away, the house then became company property. The Company would charge rent if another family moved into that house.

My dad built a house by the Company rules and moved into it after being married to Bertha Elder in 1887. Dad and Bertha Elder were married on the twenty-seventh day of September, in Grandpa's house.

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Elder Family History

by

Mark Malcolm Walker

In the year of 1870 a girl was born to the family, that will later be my mother, Bertha Delaney Elder. Her birthday was July 15, up until my mother was four years old the family lived around Magnolia, Iowa. They had been hearing a lot about the west, so all at once they were all packed up and with all the household goods they could manage they were on an immigrant train heading west, toward Sacramento, California. Along with Grandpa, Grandma and two kids came Grandma's sister, her husband S. J. Gordon and three children. Now I'll describe the immigrant train which they were to travel on: just as Grandma told it to me. The train is about forty, forty-foot box cars with a locomotive at each end: a conductor and enough brakemen to take care of all needs on this far destination. Of course there is a fireman and engineer for each locomotive. The families coming west could charter as many cars as they could afford to pay for. Some families had two cars and some had one. Grandpa and family shared one car with S. J. Gordon and family. That gave each family a space of 8 X 10 feet to live in. The center of the car was the dividing line. Each family was right at home with their table and stove and room to sleep. All of the other space was crammed full of the things they would need most when they reached their destination. The train would stop for a short time at each small village. About once a day, when a larger town was reached, the train would stop long enough for everyone to do a little shopping and get what few things they might need. Grandma said that each shopping hour was a jolly time. Everyone got out and stretched themselves, the women and children had a jolly time just meeting and talking to the people from the other cars, while

the men went shopping and filling the coal sack and water barrel. The railroad had piles of coal along the way which was reasonable to buy. When they reached a water tank, the water barrel was filled with no charge. The groceries from the stores were very expensive. Grandma said most of the people were in their class without much money. After the car was paid for they still had a few hundred dollars, less than one thousand dollars. I can remember when I was a boy, that people would brag and enjoy telling when their money got in the four figures. A thousand was enough to make a laboring man feel rather independent. When a man bought a horse for a cool hundred, that was seldom, but big business. Lets get back on the train and start rolling again. Now and then the train would go on to a side track by a water tank where the travelers could fill their water barrels and do out a quick wet wash. Grandma remembered that to be a regular picnic. By the time the trip was finished, most of the people were well acquainted.

After near a month on the railroad the train stopped at the Sacramento Station. Most of the travelers had their living equipment moved from the cars to a camp ground. Camping out in the edge of town was very common in those days. It was right in the middle of harvest in the Sacramento Valley, so the men who wanted to work were busy at once. It was during the time when they were camped right out of Sacramento, that the Small Pox struck in a lot of the camps. The Elder and Gordon family came through except Grandma's sister Mrs. Gordon: she was burried along with a lot of others right near the camp. On account of the dreadful disease it was very hard to get help. Most families had to bury their own people. Grandma said they tried to get a minister with no success until an old Negro Minister finished with some other sermons and found time and came and helped them. Grandma said this minister preached many times in the camp for only a thank you. Finally the epidemic was over and all were on their feet and back to work when winter time came: S. J. Gordon

and Grandpa separated and each went his own way. Grandma and family moved out to a little town: (Brighten). For a few years the family was permanently settled and made a living by or off the farms.

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We will now see the Elder and Gordon family on their way to Mendocino County. S. J. Gordon left his two girls in an orphan's home in Sacramento. Before starting on the trip Grandpa bought a wagon and two horses: a cow to milk each day on the trip. The cow was tied to a bail of hay in the back of the wagon, so she was ready for milking time. They piled the wagon full of the things they would need most along the way. Of course a camp outfit was the main thing for a trip to an unknown destination. They headed out of Sacramento and across Lake County, through Upper Lake and through Willitsville as it was called then. Out of Willitsville and through Sherwood Valley, over Strong Mountain and down through Jackson Valley where Branscomb is now located. The Branscomb family located there a few years later. The road went almost west over the Mountain to Westport, from where the town of Branscomb is now located. This road was called the Bald Hill Road. The County road farther north, which goes up Redwood Creek, was built some years later. The Bald Hill road hit the coast directly at Westport, then east, up Weages Creek where there was a sawmill in operation. The men went to work at once and they lived in a Mill Company house. When they reached Weages Creek the cows' feet were pretty short. She had finished milk for the trip. I was told the trip from Sacramento to Weages Creek took two weeks.

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The spring of 1885 is here and Grandpa has heard of some fine government redwood claims on Eel River about ten miles down river from Branscomb. Grandpa took a look and bought a

claim from a squatter. Some men had squatted on the claims: waiting for the government to throw them open for settlement. The claim was 160 acres of grass, brush and timber land with Eel River running through the middle. Grandpa and Charlie soon built a house and a real large barn and some out buildings.

Now moving was at hand and after a few weeks they were living at the new home. The house was on a almost flat part and only a stones' throw from the river. I have thrown stones in the river from there many times. This later was my home, and here is where I partly grew up. You will read later how this all came to be. The flat around the house was covered with Choke Cherries, so at once it was named Choke Cherry Flat.

They lived and called this home for about seven years. In the winters they worked clearing land and fencing, building roads and many things to keep them busy. Putting in crops of grain to make hay for the following year. In the spring they would take off for a tie or tanbark camp where Grandpa would work in the woods and Grandma would cook for the camp. The first couple of years before my mother was married, she stayed alone on the claim while her parents were away to work. After my mother was married, Grandma stayed on the homestead and my mother stayed some of the time when my dad was too far away working to come home every night. Some times the men were only home on Sunday. That was a weekend in those days.

I'm a little ahead of my story. I'll back up and tell you my mother Bertha Delaney Elder was married when she was past seventeen years old, to William Robinson Walker: that was my dad. After Dad and Mother were married they lived on the coast most of the time or as long as there was work there for Dad to do. When work was scarce, as in winter, they would come back to the homestead and help with the work there. Of course Dad always found time to hunt, deer, bear, wild hogs, and even do a little salmon fishing. He loved to

hunt and fish. In the winter of '89 Mother and Dad built a small house close by the Elder residence. Their second child was on its way so they needed a place for themselves. Their first child born July 15, 1888 was now approaching two years: that was Enice Hazel, born on the coast on Mother's birthday. The second child was born in that little house on January 25, 1890, Cecille Even. Now I'm going to write about the Elder family.

About 1892, the year I was born, Grandpa and Grandma located a government claim that suited them better than the one they had already improved. The new claim was just across the river from where they now were located. They gave the squatters rights on the first claim to my Dad and Mother and commenced to build a home on the new claim. They built a new house on the new place out of sawed lumber that came from a small sawmill which was located near Branscomb.

I'll explain the word squatter: a citizen twenty-one years old who settled on 160 acres of government land and waited for the land to be deeded outright to the citizen. After those claims were ready for filing on a homestead: it took five years of living there at least half of each year. If you stayed away too long, you were apt to have a claim jumper to deal with when you returned.

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Walker's Way

In The Beginning

"My folks lived in a cabin way back up on Lincoln Ridge before I was born. Dad built the house by the [DeHaven Mill] company rules¹ and moved into it in 1887. I remember when I was six my mother showed my sisters [Enice and Cecelle] and me the house where they lived in the early days. The little cabin was built out of split stuff, out of the tie maker slabs.² They used to put a spring pole up in the roof with a chair tied to the end of a string for the kids so they could bounce 'em.³ I remember my mother showed us the pole in that cabin where my sister used to dance [in her jumping chair] when she was little. And that was out the east way about a half a mile out there. There used to be the road on the main ridge and then there's another road went under the hill. It was a road where they hauled [railroad] ties out. They made lots of ties in around that country.⁴

"They never logged out of Lincoln Ridge in early days. They logged out there after I left. Within the last ten or twenty years they've logged all that out. From the DeHaven Mill they had a little narrow gauge railroad that run way up the creek and up the canyon and then back toward Lincoln Ridge about a mile to where the loggin' camp was. Most of the people who worked down around those logging camps were single men. Lots of Russians, Finns, and Italians⁵ that had come over from the old country and landed here and got jobs. Most hadn't even got their families over here yet. They come over first, and got a job and

worked, and afterwhile maybe, they might get their family here. The loggin' on Lincoln Ridge has been in the last forty or fifty years. They had the landing right there at the foot of Lincoln Ridge Road.

"When I was born they were still logging with oxen and ox yokes. Big teams of oxen draggin' the logs. When they logged with oxen they had to log downhill, they couldn't log uphill. Then when they got a lot of [steam] power⁶, they could take stuff uphill, or downhill, or anywhere, or lift it right out of a canyon [with helicopters]. But they didn't do that when I was young and on the coast. 'Bout that time all the mills, DeHaven, Howard Creek, and Wages Creek,⁷ had to log up the canyon and find timber that they could bring [drag with oxen] downhill. They didn't have the power [machinery] to drag logs uphill.⁸

"The main ridge has a low gap in it. One road used to go back towards the ocean, and up hill. The other road went up and out five or six miles plumb out to the head and down into Charley Creek. The Charley Creek runs into Eel River. That was the Lincoln Ridge Road. Up on the top of the hill where you get up where you can look down to the ocean, they used to raise hay up there and have a hay baler when I was ten years old. Then when Howard Creek Mill started down in Howard Creek, to keep from goin' around, men used to go up and walk up that Lincoln Ridge Road to the top to the little gap and then down to the mill."

"At the time I was born, why my folks had filed on a homestead over where the Nature Conservancy⁹ is now. That's down the South Fork of Eel River below Branscomb. My parents homestead was first

taken by my grandfather and grandmother Elder. They built a pretty good house and a fine barn and fences and fenced-in twenty acres. My grandfather wasn't an educated man, but he could lay out something so there was a place for everything. In the barn there was a place for the cows and a place under the barn for the calves, to feed 'em. The way it was finished off, it was "hand in nice".

"After my mother and dad got married, Grandpa and Grandma Elder gave them the homestead for a wedding gift and found themselves another place across the river. Grandpa and Grandma didn't like the place so well, but it had a creek that they could irrigate the whole homestead with. They had lots of water. They named the creek Elder Creek. The homestead my folks took over [from Grandpa and Grandma Elder] had a river on it, but in the summertime it was pretty dry. The Walker homestead came to be well fenced and built and nicely laid out because my grandfather was a great man for his home place and keeping it up. He was a great man for doing hard work. It wasn't my dad's doin'. My dad would never have had it that good. My dad, he wasn't exactly that type of a man.

"I talked to another old man one time, Owen Covelo, that had homesteaded right down the river a little ways below my grandfather. Covelo knew him probably better than I did. I said, 'I went back down to my old grandfather's old homestead, the last one he had after he moved across the creek, and I looked around there and everything I could see there was hard work. There's roads built through the rocks and there's rock fences made from rocks my grandpa took off the

ground and piles of rocks and cleared land and trees dug out and everything was just hard work is all I can see.' "Ah, by God," Covelo said, "If it wasn't hard, he wouldn't do it!" It's just like that about my grandfather. I think that's probably where I got my way of likin' to work. I'd rather go out and have a hard job with somethin' as to sit down and write a story. I'd much rather go out there and get up a sweat and dig up a ditch or somethin'. So, I've always blamed my grandfather. My grandmother was just as bad. If there was anythin' to do, why she'd be out there helpin' him. You know, if my granddad needed an extra man, why, Grandma Elder was the extra man.

"Our place as a homestead was the best homestead in there for open land and farm land¹⁰. We always had plenty of hay for the horses. A lot of people didn't have 'em. Some of the homesteaders in there didn't have no place to raise anything to feed horses. Everybody had lots of chickens in those days, but homesteaders didn't have many cattle. They generally had a milk cow or two, and a couple of horses to go and come on, but that was about it. Some people came in there later than we did, or pretty late, and some of them took up homesteads when they found out that the county was going to be surveyed and ready for titling. People rushed in there to see if they could get a homestead before they was all gone so they could title one and have it or sell it. By then the best parts were already taken. Homesteads were worth, at that time, a few thousand dollars. Homesteads with the best redwood claims were worth about six or seven thousand dollars. That was a lot of money then. In those days if a family man had ten thousand dollars he

was independent. He could tell everybody else to go along. Most of those claims in there sold for two, or three thousand dollars. That was worth goin' back and gettin', you know. There wasn't many family people that I knew when I was growin' up that had a thousand dollars."

"In those days most everybody was workin'. This year was payin' off what you ate up last year. Some of those big companies had stores. They would have a mill and a store and all that stuff, and they'd let you get in debt. If you was a good man at the mill, they knew where they was goin' to get a good man for their mill next year. They'd keep you in debt. They didn't want you to pay up your stuff. You might be leaving 'em.

"The man who ran the store at Branscomb near the homesteads didn't want you to get all paid up with him if you were a good customer because he wanted you to stay in debt to him. If you tried to pay him all up, he'd say, "You don't have to pay all that. You can let it ride." He didn't want you to pay up and go trade someplace else. Folks don't think about that now — you go to a store and pay the cashier. The cashier tells you how much you owe and gives you your change and that's that. Things are so much different now than what they used to be.

"When we first came to Willits they gave out coupon books. They had twenty-five [cent], fifty [cent] and dollar coupons in them and you'd go to the store and you'd spend that instead of cash. But, it was all charged up against you, you see. When you got so many of those

against you, you'd better stay and work it off. Folks would get so deep in debt they couldn't get away."

"My folks couldn't make a living on the homestead, but the law said you had to be on the homestead six months out of each year to keep somebody else from coming and taking it away from you. My folks couldn't live on the homestead year around, so they moved to the coast, to the little mill town of DeHaven, and worked six months over there. That's where I was born. The town is not there anymore, but one of the main houses, the DeHaven House is. It's been turned into a bed and breakfast place that caters to vacationers. There was lots of work in DeHaven: mill work and woods work and tanbark and stuff like that. My folks worked six months, and saved up what they made in DeHaven and then moved back over onto the homestead and stayed six months, and you might say they "eat, eat, eat" it all up. All that they'd made during the summer in DeHaven would buy provisions to go through winter on. When spring came, they were starved out, so back they moved to the coast and work six months again. They did that for several years, until I grew up.

"You know in early days, tan bark used to be the biggest thing in our country here. In these two or three counties [Mendocino, Humboldt, Sonoma counties] up here on the coast it was way bigger than the lumber business.¹¹ Where logs had to come downhill to get to the mill, tan bark could be took uphill, out, anyplace. They shipped thousands of loads of tan bark to other places — to tanneries in here and there and other places. A lot of it was ground up and the acid

extracted and put into fifty gallon barrels. Boatloads were shipped to China. There was a big place in Humbolt County where they took out the juice, barreled it, and shipped it. Our two counties along the coast here was just covered with tan bark. And it was just what they wanted. Didn't have it any other place in the world.¹² That was what was in full swing when I was a little kid. I've been all through the tanbark business from cruisin'¹³ it in the woods to peelin' it, to packin' it out on mules¹⁴. I have a picture of a load of tan bark that's just come off of Lincoln Ridge. They're takin' it to Westport¹⁵. In the picture the hills behind the wagon match up with the hills behind Westport."

Becoming a Man

"Westport was [a] town. DeHaven was just a workin' place, a mill town. All there was was a store with an office upstairs for the company bookkeeper. They had a few things for men. A few pairs of men's calk¹⁶ boots, overalls, maybe and some candy and nuts. Stuff the men needed in the woods. It wasn't a grocery store or a hardware store or anything general. It was more for the company to supply what company workers needed. In 1905 the DeHaven Mill shut down. It was never run after that, so from then on there was nothing left to do. A few people lived around there just for a place to live.

"Westport stores used to run little delivery wagons plumb up around DeHaven. You ordered, and whatever days of delivery they'd bring it right around to your door. There was no telephone back then, but if you needed anythin' extra why you could go down town and give

'em a message, and they'd bring out whatever you wanted. Some folks would pay for it, and [for] some of them it went on the books. An awful lot of stuff went on the books, charge accounts. Pretty near every family had big charge accounts in the stores.

"The only mail delivery that DeHaven had was when somebody went down to Westport and just asked for so-and-so's mail. You could go to the post-office and ask for anybody's mail and they'd give it to you. Maybe they'd bring it up to the store [in DeHaven]. Some of the men probably had their names there on stuff to order and then their mail would come up to the store [in DeHaven]. But the general families got their mail in Westport. DeHaven had no postal accounts at all, no government stuff. For a money order, folks went to Westport.

"When I got to be about six years old, the government made some kind of a law so people who had three or more children didn't have to stay the full six months on their homestead.¹⁷ Nobody could take their claim if they were away educatin' their children. So, because my folks had three children, they had enough to comply with that law. We moved to the coast, and let the homestead go. Let it take care of itself. We stayed and worked, and I went to school in DeHaven until I was eleven. I grew up right there, right at the foot of Lincoln Ridge where it comes down the hill, within a hundred feet of where the road hits the bottom of Lincoln Ridge Road.

"Before we left the homestead to go over to DeHaven, my dad would haul peeled oaks down just above our house for firewood. They were maybe about a foot through, and we had a big fireplace about four

foot long. Every night it would take a big back log, you know, put it at the back of the fireplace. When I was five years old, I'd work all day, mornin' to night sawin' one of those logs off with a six foot crosscut saw. My dad would have to start the saw on top of the log so it wouldn't fall over, then I'd work all day on it, from mornin' 'til night to get that piece off. When I could get one of 'em off in a day, I thought I was just about doin' a man's work. Even then when I was as little as I was, that was always my ambition. The harder somethin' was, the nearer I thought I was gettin' to bein' a man. If I could do somethin' harder than somebody else did why I was another notch up, you know. When I went to the coast, I started in doin' things like that and all kinds of work. And they put a lot of work onto me. They left it to me to take care of it the best I could. And I guess I did that all the time growin' up. Tryin' to do somethin' that somebody else couldn't. If I could do somethin' that somebody else couldn't do, why that was somethin'.

"When I was growing up I lived by my parents' rules. When they said something they meant it, and they didn't mean anything else. And I grew up to do everything I said I would do. When I say anything I mean it. If I don't mean it, I don't say it. And if I say I'll do something at a certain time, I'll be there at that time. Otherwise there'd have to be something very wrong if I wasn't.

"But, I did a lot of little tricky things that I probably haven't told many people that I talk to. And I'll admit that when I was growin' up I wasn't a very good boy. I was full of hell, I was. Anythin' to mischief or to make people wonder how it happened, or somethin' like that, I'd do

it just to see how it struck somebody else. And right there on the coast, when I was a about eight years old, my dad had a crosscut saw that was about six foot long. I used it to cut wood. I thought it wasn't sharpened just right, I'd been watchin' some of the men file the saws, and I thought, 'I'll bet I can file that saw so it will cut faster.' And I'd heard some[one] hammer the saw teeth, puttin' the right bend on so that they'd catch the wood just right. So I took the saw, put it in the rack and started filin' and hammerin' on it. I'd go back and try it on my log, and pretty soon it wouldn't cut at all. An' I thought, 'what am I going to do now?' I had a pretty rough dad, rough on me. And when I was young I was pretty much afraid of him. I used to be so afraid of my dad that I wouldn't stay in the same room with him. I'd go in the other room just to stay away from him. I was afraid of him and never got to know him very well either. And I thought, 'What's he goin' to do when he finds out what I did to that saw?' I took that saw a hundred yards from the house to an old pine tree, dug a hole, put that saw in there and buried it. Pretty soon my dad wanted it.

"My dad said, "Go get the saw."

"I said, 'I can't find it.'

"Where is it?" he asked.

"I says, 'I don't know.'

"And he looked around, and I looked around. And he said, "My god, [did] somebody take that saw?" I never did tell anybody, until I think I was eighty years old when I told my niece about doin' that.

"And she said, "Someday we're going back over there and find that saw." But things have grown up around there so much we didn't find it anyway.

"My mother used to wale the hell out of me about every week or so. It never did seem to do much good. I just got so I thought, 'A whippin' don't last, and a scoldin' don't hurt.' And go ahead. One of the boys would come by and say, "Come on lets go swimmin'. Let's go." And I was supposed to be workin' or doin' somethin' else. I'd take off. I'd go. I'd come back two or three hours later, I knew what was comin' when I got back. But it was worth it to have a little fun. I grew up doin' stuff like that.

"We moved to DeHaven when I was between five and six. At that time they sent us kids to school, me and my two older sisters, because, I told you the government had given the homesteaders permission to leave their homesteads if they had so many children to send to school. I started school at DeHaven in February of 1897, just before I turned six. I went to school there until I was eleven. I was in a new country from the homestead and there were new things around there. Everything was different to learn. I'd been growin' up over on the homestead by myself without many other kids around.

"When I got there to DeHaven, there were a lot of other kids that knew a lot of other things that I didn't know. Well, I'll tell you, I got over there, and we had an old cow that was about ready to have a calf and I thought she had to go out into the woods and find her calf. And these boys said, "Aw, that's not the way," and they told me all about

how all this happened, you know. When I was six years old I didn't know, they'd always told me the cow had just found a calf somewhere out in the woods, you know. When these kids begun to tell me, they were wise, and I was from the backwoods, and didn't know anything.

"When I was about six years old, and my dad was workin' someplace, my mother was milkin' a cow — and here comes old Bob, an old Swiss-Italian, and he says, "What are you doin' milkin' that cow with that boy standin' there?"

"And my mother says, "Well, he's too young to start milkin' a cow yet."

"Too young?" says old Bob, "Johnny's a year younger than he is, and he's milkin' all the time."

"Well, you know, that gave me a job. Mother said, "If Johnny can milk, you can milk." So I learned to milk right away.

"I think we had one cow then, and when I got so I could milk pretty good they bought another cow. I asked one boy that lived on the coast if his dad was about out of cows — I had seen him out buyin' milk cows.

"The boy said, "No, we're not out of cows. I and my brother just grew up a little bit, and Dad figures we can take on another cow or two."

"So that's the way I guess my folks did. As fast as I grew up there was a little more work that I could take over. First thing I knew I was takin' care of the cows and the calves, gettin' in the wood and stuff like that. Somebody's cattle come over on the other side of the mountain, down the creek, over where we was, and they'd come over lookin' for

'em. I'd locate 'em. I had to find my cows everyday. An' I'd locate their cows and tell 'em.

I never wore shoes 'til I was twelve years old, went bare footed to school and all. Lots of boys, went barefooted in those days. The girls didn't, but the boys did. I heard teachers say they liked kids goin' barefoot 'cause they didn't make a lot of noise. I was kind of lazy in studyin'. I didn't study very hard. I used to sit, and not study, and listen to the grade ahead of me recite and all. That's where I learned most everythin' I knew, listenin' to the other kids recite. I remember the first word that I ever saw written on the blackboard. And things like that.

"We'd have English poems. By the time they got through memorizin' poems like *Snow Bound*,¹⁸ I knew it too. And to hear them talkin' about mathematics, by the time they got through with their problems I knew 'em too. A lot of stuff I learned that way. On the last day of school they'd have recitations, and all the folks would come and mother's would come, and kids would get up and speak pieces and have dialogues. The kids would start-in about three weeks before school was out, and they'd stay after school, and in at noon, and whatever time they had that wasn't in school hours, and learn those pieces. The teacher would hear 'em all recite you know, and by the time we got to the last day of school I knew all their pieces. I could correct any of 'em. Some of 'em I can still say today.

"One little girl, Pearl Davis, was about two years younger than me, she got up there and said her second grade piece:

Once there was a little chicken,
who used to go a pickin'
all among the biddy hens to get its food.

It was a pretty little fellow,
plump and downy soft and yellow
but he never thought that anything was good.

So the other little chicks said,
'We'll put him in a fix.
We'll no longer play with you.'

'You are so glum and sour
we never have a happy hour
when we might be a jolly, happy crew.'

So they left him all alone,
perched upon a stone,
but they were very, very kind.

Then did he make up his mind
that he would really be a better bird.

"Pearl's little sister, Etta Davis, was in about the first grade, I
guess, just startin' out. Her piece was:

Once there was a great skipper,
who tried to take a drink, out of the Great Dipper.

He dipped it into the Milky Way, and slowly, cautiously filled it.
Until the Great Bear howled and the Little Bear growled
and scared him so that he spilled it.

"That was the little one's piece. I remember the first piece I ever
spoke. I was between five and six.

'Why is it that I am like the clock?'
says little Jack to me.

'Because I have two hands and a face,
as anyone can see.

The difference betwixt the clock and Jack
is very plainly seen.

I wish they were alike in this,
it's hands and face are clean.'

"My folks used the old adage, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.' It was nothin' for me to get a good strappin' every week or two when I was growin' up. That was a pretty regular thing back in those days. Lots of kids got whippin's in grammar school you know. Teachers'd take a kid, for doin' this or that, first thing give 'em a whippin', you know. Teachers always had a big strap up by their desk. That was regular. I was at school one morning when the Howards¹⁹ from Howard Creek in DeHaven come in a rig. They stopped out front of the school house, and old man Howard walked right up to the teacher and said, "My name is Howard. And these are my little children right here. We don't whip 'em at home, and I don't want you to whip 'em." And he walked back and got in his rig and went home. There was some families that didn't whip their kids you see. But that wouldn't work at my home because they did. I don't think my sisters ever got whipped much, but I was the only boy, and I got it right along. I guess maybe I needed it. I don't know. I don't hold anything against my parents for it now. I think whatever they did, in their own mind, they thought they were doin' the right thing.

"The school teachers that taught me used to board at the Gordon home²⁰. The Gordon family wasn't there very long. The house was named after them but, they weren't there much of my time. They had a business down in Ventura County so they moved there. The old man's name was Alexander Gordon, but we always called him old Alex Gordon. I remember the old man and his sons Johnny and Pete. Pete was the one that got killed on a horse. In 1895 he was dragged right past the school house and down the road. My two sisters saw it happen. That was when my two sisters were in school. I was only three years old when that happened. Gordons left there right around in 1900. They sold out to Chris Hansen and his family.

"I went to school with the Howard children and I worked on old man Howard's ranch when I was fifteen years old. I picked hay there. I knew them as long as they lived, and I don't think many Indians worked for Alex Howard."

"Diggers"

"The DeHaven school²¹ was about half Indians. I remember sittin' right next to a little Indian girl, and seein' the lice crawlin' across the part in her hair. I can still remember stuff like that about the Indians. I can remember the family names and what the Indian boys said lots of times too.

"The Indians at school were quite a bit like white people, but they weren't as smart. They were more backward. Teachers had to work with the Indian kids quite a bit. The teacher would ask 'em questions,

and the Indian kids would whisper the answer to her. It was hard for her to understand what they were sayin'. They didn't get very far in their books very quick either. Some of the white kids would start in on a book and in one day they'd know the lesson and the next day another lesson, and so on. The Indians were kind of slow.

"We used to play ball at school quite a bit, and different games. The Indians were very good at playin' games. Lots of times the Indians sat playin' grass games. They'd put a blanket down and sit around and gamble with whatever they had. They took somethin' that was of value, and they went around, one to the other, and somebody had to guess who had it. When they had those gamblin' games around there they'd have one Indian who's the chanter for 'em. He'd sing the Indian songs.

"There was Tony Bell, the Rocky family, the White family, and Frazier. Otis Frazier was a boy we used to play ball with in school. He stayed part time on the reservation, and then he'd come stay on the coast. He had relatives down there that he'd stay with and go to school. Old Billy Bowen used to work in the summer time when my dad run the hay baler. A couple of Indians used to work for my Dad on the hay press, baling hay and things like that. But that was the only time Indians worked for him.

"The Indian men my dad hired were good workers. They'd work hard and they'd work fast. Dad liked 'em and used to take a bottle of whiskey out to the field and every time the Indians tramped out a ton of hay, he'd give 'em a shot. They just worked like hell to get that shot.

He used to take a bottle of whiskey everyday I think. He said they just tramped hay to beat hell. When the harvest was on for potatoes and stuff, some of the Indian men worked in the fields and made a little money, and probably got some white man to buy him a bottle of whiskey with it. You could hire Indians for pretty near nothing. A little money, anything, pretty near. You didn't pay them much.

"In harvest time some of the Indian men worked in the hay fields and stuff like that. Just through harvest time, maybe through hay baling. This old Indian, Tony Bell, he used to work at the slaughter house all the time. He worked pretty steady there.

"The Indians all lived at a little Indian village on the beach, about a quarter of a mile from the school house. There was a big place all kind of sand and there must have been two or three acres in there. The Indian village at the end of DeHaven Creek had probably about a dozen houses in it. There were wickiups all over there. DeHaven beach got a lot of driftwood washed down to it, along with a lot of slabs, lumber, and other stuff. The Indians built their wickiups from the driftwood. Whole families would live in a place as big as a room maybe 12'x 20'. They'd sleep, eat, cook, and everything else on the dirt floor. I remember all of that. The Indian houses were just put together down on the beach with slabs of wood, with anythin' they could find along the beach that drifted in from the ocean or down from the creek. They were a pretty poor grade of Indians. They used to be called "digger" Indians because they used to dig a lot for roots and stuff, and get their livin' out

of the ground. The regular name that people called 'em was Digger Indians²².

"I don't think any of them that were in the school lived in houses like white families. Generally if an Indian lived in a house, it would be a white man with an Indian woman. Some of the Indians on the reservation lived like white people, in houses with their families. There was a rancheria just out from Laytonville about two miles. Up at Sherwood Valley there was a rancheria an' even an Indian school²³. My wife taught at the Indian school at Sherwood one year. There were a few Indians around here and there. But the Indians at DeHaven Creek were a pretty poor grade of Indian.

"If there were Indians out on Lincoln Ridge it was before my time. From the time I was born there were no Indians on the ridge. I doubt whether there were ever any Indians on Lincoln Ridge. There was no road out there before the white man put one in. I don't think my folks knew of any Indians livin' in the area. By 1887 only white people lived back in on Lincoln Ridge there. The Indians were all down next to the ocean where they could get fish and abalones, mussels, clams and rock oysters and seaweed. They used to dig rock oysters out of the rocks. The old squaws used to go up out and sit on the rocks there, hours, and hours, and fish you know. Under the mussels on the rocks there were big worms, called mussel worms; the squaws used them for bait. The old squaws would dig a mussel worm out, put it on her hook, and bite the head off to stop it from squirmin' around.

"The Indians used to fish up DeHaven Creek. One old Indian, his name was George Rocky, told me about catchin' salmon with a spear.

"I said, 'Well, when the creek gets high and gets muddy, you can't fish anymore.'

"Oh yes," he says, "that's the time the fishin's good. You feel along under that muddy water. You can tell a fish from other stuff. When you just feel it," he says, "you just pull out your fish. You feel for 'em with a spear."

"I said, 'If I was doin' that, I'd sure scare the fish.'

"Old George Rocky says, 'White man can't do it. Indian, he go easy. When he feels a fish he knows it, and he pulls him out. You don't need to see 'em. You feel for 'em. You can tell a fish,'" he says, "when you feel it."

"There was a slaughter house right there near the beach were they killed beef for DeHaven Creek, Howard Creek, Hardy Creek, and Walnut Creek mills. All the streams had mills on 'em pretty near. The butcher used to hang the hearts and livers and everythin' up that the camps didn't want. The camps just wanted the meat. They didn't want nothin' but just the quarters of meat. The Indians used to go there and get those hearts and livers and all that stuff free. When there was beef heads out there behind the slaughter house you could take an ax out there and cut the heads open and get the brains. The butcher shop didn't do nothin' with the heads much. They'd either cook 'em up for the hogs, boil 'em up in great big kettles, or you [could] just go out there

and chop the horns off and get brains. Dish brains out of a couple of heads and have enough for all you wanted.

"In DeHaven, out of a big beef maybe two or three gallons of blood would run out and the hogs would go right after it. They also fed the hogs, and butchered 'em. The main thing they butchered hogs for was to send to Westport for the meat market. The camps didn't use much pork. They used beef. They also used to butcher sheep there, but that mostly went to Westport for the little meat market. I know a little bit about it 'cause my dad used to drive the butcher wagon. He used to drive the butcher wagon plumb up to Hollow Tree and up to Rockport to deliver meat. Up and back I figure was about a two day trip with a team. He made about two trips a week. They had no refrigerators, no freezers to keep meat fresh, they hung it at night, and in the morning they'd load it on the wagon, and get it delivered up there as quick as they could. Before it had time to spoil it was ate up.

"In the summer time the Indians lived off the free meat, fish, abalone, and things like that. There was lots of seaweed along the coast. The Indians used to bring it out and dry it on the beach. They'd pile it up to dry it, then boil it and make soup. The Chinese used to come too and gather the seaweed by the tons. I don't know where the Chinese shipped it to. My dad used to haul it for 'em, put it on the boat down at Fort Bragg to ship it. I don't know, maybe they shipped it to San Francisco, maybe they shipped to Shanghai.

"I don't know too much how the Indians cooked. They didn't have many facilities for cooking, outside of roasting stuff. I don't think

that they cooked very good dinners. I think that they ate a lot of things any way that they could get it. They lived pretty near to nature, pretty near to nothin'. They would have had to pound the abalones or they couldn't eat 'em. I imagine that they roasted a lot of stuff over the fire. That's the way they used to do their meat. Stick it on the end of a sharp stick and hold it over the fire you know. When it got about right, they'd pull it off and eat it. They boiled mussels in ocean water. They'd have somethin' like a five gallon coal oil can on their fire to cook mussels. Maybe not in the wickiup, probably outside, on a fire that would hold this can. The Indians raised and ate a lot of potatoes around the coast too.

"Some of those things that they're gettin' out of the ocean now days the Indians didn't used to eat. They didn't used to bother with sea urchins. The ocean used to be full of them. In those days nobody touched them. Now days they're taken' them by the bushels and selling them.

"These Indians that I went to school with, were not much associated with the Indians on the reservation. The [reservation] Indians started in Fort Bragg for a little while. I remember the men that had charge of all that. Then they moved them to Covelo, and put the reservation over there. The Indians were brought in from different far away counties, Humbolt and Trinity, and settled there. The Indians on the coast didn't seem to associate much with those kinds of Indians. The government took care of the reservation Indians and helped to feed

'em. The Indians on the coast didn't get any of that. They were on their own.

"Right there where we used to go down to the beach was a little old shack, built out of some kind of old lumber. An old Indian named Tony Bell and his wife, lived there. In 1901 or 1902 the Indians all along the beach got a disease and they got quarantined by the county officers. Old Tony Bell's wife was in there with the "sick-to-death" small pox. An' old Tony Bell shut the door to his house and left his wife in there. She died in there. The Indians did tricks like that. He didn't have it, an' she did, so he shut his house up and stayed out. It was quarantined on the beach for quite a while. A constable in Westport hired this old bachelor for a guard to keep the Indians down on the beach and not let 'em get out.

"I don't know if the Indians living near DeHaven were the same ones as before the white man came or from somewhere else. There were a lot of old Indians there. I think that they probably grew up right around this country. Some of those old timers were maybe a hundred years old. They used to come up to our place when we lived on the coast and beg. They'd have on a man's overcoat, and that's all they'd have on. The coat might go down to their knees or a little below. They'd come and beg somethin' to eat, and every once in a while my mother would get out stuff an' feed 'em."

Gettin' To Be A Man

"I remember one story when I was a little kid growin' up, seven or eight years old: This old Indian named Tom come up there, and my mother just that day had made a big stew, and she said, "Come on Tom, eat some more, I've got plenty."

"Tom said, "Me go shit. Me come back. Me eat more."

"The old Indians used to come beggin' [and] sometimes they'd get all they could eat — maybe a stew, or somethin' else that was leftover. And they'd say, "What's the matter you? No cake, no pie!"

"My mother was quite a woman to do things. She didn't just *know* how to do things, she *did* 'em. My mother was as good a pie-maker as I ever knew. She could roll out pie dough, fold it over double, cut a perfect scroll design in the top with a knife, throw it on the pie like that, and unfold it. Fit exactly, she'd done it so much. I watched her, cuttin' out biscuits, an' makin light bread and stuff like that. There was no bakery where we lived. People in those days had to do their own bakin' to get along. I was about fifteen years old before my mother bought her first loaf of bread. She'd make biscuits, an' hotcakes, an' once a week make loaves of bread to last pretty near the whole week. Where we were, bakin' powder was pretty expensive to use everyday. [So] we always had a big jar of sourdough there, you know. That's what old-timers used to bake. You got to get your sourdough just right, and you got to keep it right. You got to make it every day, and if you want an extra batch you can't use it because it's not ready yet.

"There was lots of codfish in the stores in those days, I don't know where it came from. What we lived on was salted down salmon which is pretty near the same thing as cod fish. We called it "creamed codfish." We'd have lots of bacon and lots of ham that we'd made ourselves in the smoke house. Sometimes we'd have half a dozen deer hams hanging right up in the smoke house too, even in the winter. When the corn fields would get ripe in the summer time we would roast the ears, then shave the kernels off with a knife. We'd put the corn out in the sun to dry and have whole fifty pound flour sacks full of home dried corn. I don't know if everybody could do it, but in the winter time, my folks and my grandmother would take that dried sweet corn and fix it up so it was better than any canned corn you ever ate. My grandmother was the one who could do pretty near everything better than anybody else. She could cook a pot of beans like nobody else could. My grandmother was not a pastry maker, or like that, or much for cakes, or pies, but take the common foods, like any kind of dried foods, or vegetables and she could beat anybody in the country.

"I got my first suit when I was eleven years old. I think a little suit for me cost about five dollars — pretty high priced at that time. I got another suit when I was about twelve years old. I went to Fort Bragg and bought a nice blue serge suit. For ten dollars. There wasn't a special occasion except that I was gettin' old enough. Mother had been makin' my pants an' shirts an' jackets and everything else. So it was about time that I had a store bought suit. We probably just got rich enough to afford one. [laughter] A lot of things we didn't have because we

couldn't afford it. We just didn't have the money to buy it with. That's the reason she made all these things. A dollar then was hard to get a hold of. I seen some pretty hard times.

"I spend my time thinking 'How did we do this?' I look at our pictures, the clothes we had on, and I think, my mother made all those things, my shirts and the like. She'd take a pair of dad's old pants and take the good part that wasn't worn and get enough out of 'em to make me a pair. She'd take his socks after the feet was worn off 'em and take the legs and make me socks out of the legs. She would sew them up like that.

"My mother was a seamstress. I don't know whether it was natural, or where she learned it. To make a shirtwaist my mother would take a sheet of newspaper, put it up on a person's shoulders, tuck it down here, tuck it down there, mark it here, mark it there, put it on the table, cut it out, and give 'em their pattern. She could put a pattern right around your shoulder. That's the way she used to make all her patterns for our clothes and stuff. Some of those old fashioned dresses that people wore in those days, when she'd make the ruffles that go around on the bottom, the floor would be covered with ruffles. Sometimes there'd be two or three rows of ruffles around the bottom of a dress. I can still hear that old sewin' machine goin'. Our old house was not very solid. When she run that old Singer sewin' machine, it'd pretty near shake the house.

"When I was eleven years old the government had the homesteading country surveyed up and threw it open for filing final

proof for homesteaders to get their titles. But you had to live on the homestead to get your title. On June 3, 1903 we moved back to our homestead on Elder Creek. All the homesteaders wanted to get the title to their places, so they all moved back too. That left a bunch of kids there with no school. So the County built Elder Creek School in there, and gave the School Board the money to hire a teacher. My Dad was clerk of the School Board there, and we stayed there 'til we first titled the redwood claim. We stayed there from nineteen three until nineteen six.

"I'd grown up from age six to age eleven on the coast. About that time I was big enough to be thinkin' that I was gettin' to be a man, you know. My dad had things to do still that he was engaged in on the coast. Farmers along the coast had hay balin' to do and things like that, and he had to go back over to DeHaven. So, as soon as fall came, he left a team there on the homestead and I started plowin' up. Puttin' in our crop there on the homestead. I learned to plow with a team when I was eleven years old. Two horse plow, you know, and the horses were too high for me to put the bridles on. I was pretty small and the horses, they knew it, too. I would try to put their bridles on and the horses would lift up their heads so I couldn't reach. My mother used to come out and put the bridles on the horses. I could do all the rest, but I couldn't reach up and put the bridles on them. I was kind of small for my age until I was about fifteen. At about fourteen or fifteen, I grew up.

"We had a field, about twenty acres, about half a mile from the house. I used to drive the team down and plow there, barefooted. I

never wore shoes until I was twelve years old. I just plowed all day in that cool ground barefooted. I loved it! When I was that age all I wanted to do was work. I thought when I got so I could do this and do that I was gettin' to be near a man, you know. And I thought to be a man you had to do the hard things. And that's what I liked to do. I liked to see if I couldn't do something that was a little harder. And if I could get something a little harder finished, why that was what I liked. When I wasn't workin' I hunted quite a little bit.

"The first time I ever went huntin' was on August the 8th, 1903. I begged my mother to let me go huntin', and she let me take my dad's repeater rifle. I was only gone about an hour from home when they heard me shootin'. I had killed my first deer. It was about the biggest buck I ever killed, and just an accident. This big buck come down there by the river, to get a drink or something. He wasn't close, but I started shootin'. I never had it happen again like that, you know. He was in a kind of bad place. Down by the river, where there was a lot of big rocks around. There was a big bluff to climb up out of. My dad wasn't home, an' I wasn't very big. So my mother and older sister came down to help me. My older sister Enise wasn't so strong. My mother was an ordinary woman, you know, she was a fairly strong woman. So I took my little pony horse, and my sister and mother, and we went down and pulled that deer up on the bank and out on top of this rock about four feet high. We got the horse up close to the rock and pulled the deer over on top of the horse. It went plumb down the other side and down onto the ground. I remember that. Well, we dragged it, all three of us, my

mother an' Enise, an' me. We dragged it back up around on top of that rock again, and I said [to myself], 'this time I'm going to tie a rope on the buck's leg and tie it down into a cinch so when it goes over it will have something to hold it.' The horse was gentle — stand wherever you put him. We tied the deer onto the horse, and got it up the bank and the trail. We got the deer home, hung up, skinned, and in our big screened-in meat safe. We would have meat for dinner. I felt like I was a real man.

"After that, I had to go to school. I didn't get to school 'til about ten o'clock, I guess, but it was nothin' in those days for kids to be late for school. There was somebody late to school pretty near every morning. They had a long list of things to do, you know. The teacher, she had to mark you tardy, wasting time like that, but we never got no lecture about being late or anything. We just come late 'cause we had things to do.

"When I went to school if you wanted a pencil sharpened you borrowed somebody's pocket knife — no pencil sharpeners in those days that I ever saw. Maybe one kid in school would have a pocket knife and his pocket knife was pretty busy. Everybody borrowin' it.

"To go to school from my house, we lived across the South Fork of Eel River which wasn't awfully, awfully big in the summertime. We had a rowboat about twelve or fourteen foot long. Mother used to go down to the river and take us across to go to school. And, we'd go to school and when we'd come home — why, we'd holler 'cause it was about a quarter of a mile to the house. We got so we could throw our

voices across there pretty good. And when we had company comin', they'd come and they'd holler and we'd go down and bring them across and take them back, you know. Lots of people that had to go across, that wasn't even company, would come and want to ride across the river. We kind of had a home ferry. In the fall the river would be high and get rollin' pretty good. When I was little I'd go down there by myself and get in that boat and practice out on the river when it was high rowin'. But I got so I could handle a boat pretty good with one oar.

"I learned when I was growin' up that hardly anythin' come along that I couldn't see a way to do it, you know. I started in when I was a kid one time with my dad. I had a horse, and my dad said, "That horse is tender-footed, don't ride or use it no more 'til we can get some shoes on it." I didn't know when we was goin' to get any shoes on it, so I went to the blacksmith shop and found some shoes that I thought would fit the horse. I used to watch the blacksmith shoe horses you know, so I went and shod my own horse. Pretty soon, at the ranch when I was growin' up I was shoein' all the horses. I did things like that. There wasn't hardly anything to do in [the] early days, in the country, that I couldn't do."

The Horribles

"I have a memory for lots of things. I remember the first word I ever learned on a chart at school. I remember the first day of school. I went to grammar school here and every year we'd have a new teacher. I think I know every teacher's name. And I know pretty much what they

were like, where they were from, and quite a bit about them. Quite a few of our teachers along the coast come from Ukiah and Potter Valley, an' I'll tell you something ...when I was about thirteen there was a teacher there named Iva Suiter.²⁴ She was only eighteen years old. She had just got to be a teacher. She was pretty smart, she could answer a lot of questions and anything you wanted to know. One day when I was in about the eighth grade, I was sittin' alone at a double seat desk. I was havin' trouble with my mathematics and I raised my hand and Iva Suiter came down. 'I wish you'd show me how to do this,' I says. With that she sits down beside me in the desk and took my pencil. Well, I thought I'd just give her a squeeze. I reached over, put my arm around her, and squeezed. She looked over at me and really frowned at me. I've thought a lot about it since. A lot of teachers would have knocked me out of that seat. What a commotion some teachers would have made over something like that. And every kid would have had a big story to tell when they went home at night. She settled it just that way. I never did it again²⁵.

"One time when they'd finished building the White House²⁶ [in Branscomb] they gave a big housewarming. Iva Suiter was the teacher at that time. And she was at that big housewarming dance. I used to dance a lot when I was growin' up, I learned to dance pretty young and got to be a pretty good dancer. As soon as I got to the dance, I knew they were goin' to be havin' a midnight supper. So I ran and asked Iva Suiter, 'Do you want to be my partner for the supper dance?' And she said, "Yup." I remember an old bachelor, he was about forty, and quite a

ladies man. They used to make a lot of fun of him. That old bachelor, if there was a school teacher around he'd go right after her. He was a beautiful dancer. He liked to dance. And pretty soon he come runnin' and ask Iva for the supper dance. She says, "I already got a partner for that." She told me afterward, "You saved me." She gave me a hug for that. I took the school teacher away from the old bachelor that night. I remember up at Westport, before I grew up, my mother and dad danced a lot and would take us kids with them. We kids would sit around on the benches and watch. My mother was a beautiful dancer, and this same old bachelor fellow would make a run for my mother to dance one dance. They would dance a Military Schottische. They could dance it right to the step.

"We didn't go to church²⁷ that much. We used to go to Sunday school quite a bit. Sunday school wasn't too big back then, just a few kids. I used to be the only boy in Sunday school sometimes. And the man who used to take me on to Sunday school in his wagon was a German fellow, and had a big family. He always brought his family there. And he always said, "Mark come up here [and sit] by me, and when they're singin', stand by me." I learned to sing just like he did with German tones. I couldn't sing it any other way. I can still remember one song I used to sing,

'I wash my robes in Jesus' blood,
and he has made them white as snow.
My robes were once all stained with sin.
I knew not how to keep them clean
until a voice says sweet and low,
"Go, wash, I'll make them white as snow.'"

And I used to say,

‘I vash my robes in Jesus’ blood,
and he hass made them vhigh as znow.’

I can still sing it just in those tones like he did. But that’s when I was seven or eight years old, you know, just growin’ up.

“On Fourth of July, different locations would have a big celebration²⁸. They were big for those days, but they wouldn’t be nothin’ now. Everybody would go there and have a big celebration, a big barbecue, big picnic tables and everybody would get together and then have a dance and maybe the night of the Third and the night of the Fourth some of ‘em would get drunk. Down in Jackson Valley, at Standley Park, they had a big platform and had a big barbecue pit in the ground and every once in a while they would have a big celebration there, and everybody would come from miles around²⁹. Everybody who put in a concession would pay so much to get to have it and then they would get their money back through the day. That money that they had paid in all went to buy somethin’ for the celebration — to buy stuff for the platform and the Chinese lanterns for the nights and stuff for the dance floor. The people would put up a lemonade stand, they would bid for it and that money would go to help buy whatever it took, beef for the barbecue and stuff like that. They would maybe have a prize fight, and up at Standley Park they built a merry-go-round right out there in the woods.

“They built the merry-go-round by hand from a ten foot pole with a bearing at the top, wired it to surroundin’ trees, put other poles

across the first and wired them to the bearing. There'd be seats all the way around, maybe four seats or eight. Down at the bottom was a big lever on each side and they used to hire Indians to turn that thing around. The old man who used to run that outfit used to say, "Come on, come on!" He'd tell them about the great merry-go-round he had, with a lot of spiel he'd go on, "All of this is done by Injun-power!" The merry-go-round was maybe twenty or thirty feet across and the seats were just above the ground so you could step into it with your girl friend and away you'd go.

"We had speeches too. Yeah, we had a school teacher, Tom Young³⁰, that used to be pretty good at puttin' on orations. They would put on a pretty good oration and go plumb back into history, as good as there could be anywhere, I imagine. After everythin' was over, the formal deal, then they had what they called the *horribles*. In early days a lot of people would dress up in all kinds of clothes and imitate the oration and everythin' in a horrible way and because it was a horrible way they called it the *horribles*. The Indians used to come and get into that and a lot of the Indians — maybe somebody had furnished them a few drinks of whiskey — would be about half drunk and have a hell of a time.

"One time in Westport, about 1903, I remember one old Indian, just about the time they were having those *horribles*, he got right out there on the sidewalk there up in front of the hotel. There were lots of people watching him, and he was out there yelling an oration, imitatin' the oration they had had durin' the day. He was a little short old fellow

and all the clothes he had on was an overcoat that reached down to about his knees. He was out there tellin' what the White men did to the Indians and this and that and how now they were celebratin' the Fourth of July over their beautiful country that the White man "...took away from us a hundred years ago..." I think he was pretty well about half drunk and pretty wise to what had happened because he was getting it off pretty good."

"Well, some White man run out there and says, "Hey Tom, your legs are awfully short." This overcoat came down, you could just see the bottoms of Tom's legs below the overcoat."

"Old Tom says, "I don't give a God damn, just as long as they reach the ground!"

"I have often thought about that answer. That quick! That was right out in front of the Commercial Hotel in Westport. That old Indian's name was Tom Fergison. He worked for my dad a little bit one time, cut wood for him and one thing and another, so I remember him.

"Those old Indians, they used to get a bottle and that was the best part of their Fourth of July. If they could get that, they didn't want nothin' else. I talked to an old Indian one time about Christmas. He was workin' way up by my homestead [North of Laytonville] makin' posts, I said, 'What are you goin' to do for Christmas?'

"I'm goin' down to rancheria," he said, "and if I can get a bottle of whiskey, I'll come right back here. I can have all the fun I want with a bottle of whiskey."

"He wouldn't go to [stay at] the rancheria because a bottle wouldn't last long there. If he came [went] back there [outside of Laytonville] he'd have it all to himself³¹. When I saw him he was making [fence] posts out of white oak. The posts didn't look very good to me — they were small — so I said, 'Fox, do you think you're makin' pretty good posts?'"

"No," he says, "I don't think I'm makin' pretty good posts, but as Redimeyer wants three-cent posts, I can make three-cent posts."

"That was old Indian Fox. He's the one I hauled home the night before he died. I went to school with his kids and he was the one who [was] backpacked [as a child] from way up in the north on the horse.

"I can tell you a story about this old Indian Fox. The White people up from around the northern part of this county chased the Indians plumb out of the country, and killed off a lot of 'em, I guess. When they got through in the Indian camp in Trinity County, there was two babies left.³² They found these two Indian babies, picked 'em up, built a box an' put it right on top of a pack horse, put those two kids in there, standin' up an' brought 'em back to Laytonville country. There was a girl and a boy. A family by the name of Grey raised the girl, but I never did know what become of her. A family by the name of Burns raised the boy and this boy was Indian Fox. He was always foxy and full of hell. He was the only Indian that I knew all my life.

"As a kid for Fourth of July, up at Standley Park, I probably had fifteen cents to spend on somethin'. So, I went around and had a lemonade. I would play around an' do anythin' that there was to do,

see what there was to see. They had races for kids and stuff like that. They would have men's races, and women's races, girl's races and kid's races. Everybody had a race and a chance to make fifteen cents as a little prize. They'd have a greased pole with five dollars on top of the pole for any man who could get it. They used to take a little fir tree about so big around [gestures approximately ten inches around] and up about twenty feet cut it off, and put some money on top of it, peel all the bark off of it and grease it. Different ones would try to climb it. If nobody could climb it, then nobody took the money. Out there at Jackson Valley one time, along in the evenin', some fellow got a ladder and went around and climbed up and took the money. Somebody shot him and they had a fight over it.

"I'll tell you another thing that happened at Jackson Valley, at Standley Park. Sometimes they would kill deer and have deer for barbecues. There wasn't much of a game law then, they had just started about that year havin' seasons on deer, but a lot of them said, "Hell, nobody will bother us." They wasn't strict about it. Somebody killed two or three bucks and brought 'em there an' was barbecuein'. Just about that time there, they was evadin' the law and a game warden came down there. He had heard about it and he thought he'd go down there and make a haul and do somethin' about it, probably arrest 'em an' break up what they was doin'. He got down there and told 'em he was the game warden. The boys were havin' their fun and had been drinkin' a little bit and they talked to him a little bit and he said he had

heard they were barbecuing deer down there and he come down to see about it."

"They said,

"The first thing we want to do is to show you somethin'."

"There was four or five people that had got together while the warden was talkin'. One of the men, I don't know which one — several of the men were pretty strong minded, pretty strong every way, says,

"Before we talk about game, we want to show you somethin' right up the road a ways." I was a kid then, but I've heard this told to me."

"The warden was on horseback and they took him back up the road about another hundred yards into the woods and he says, "What is it you want to show me up here?"

"They kept goin' up the road, "We're just showin' you this road," they said, "it leads back to Laytonville. You take it, and don't look back."

"They said he got on his horse and took the road and never looked back. That is the way they treated those kinds of people.

Pretty Much A Man

"In the spring of nineteen hundred and six, I graduated from the eighth grade, out of Elder Creek School and worked the summer in bark camps. We moved back to the coast the following fall. When we moved away from the homestead, I left the gun there. We had so many guns and trash and stuff, we had to leave a lot of stuff, you know. We

had a collection of guns that my dad picked up. Old an' worn out, they'd still shoot, but not good, not accurate. When I was about eleven years old there was some kind of *shoot* on the coast, and this man was a brandishin' this gun around and they was afraid he was goin' to shoot somebody and my dad traded for this little thirty-two rim-fire Remington gun and brought it home to me. It was my first gun. With the firing pin filed off you think you got a pistol, but if you go to fire it, it won't shoot. So it wasn't much of a gun. It didn't shoot very hard. I did kill one deer with it. I shot it at evening time, at pretty close range, right under a tree, the only deer I ever killed with it. I shot the deer in the eye. I just saw the deer standin' under the tree, kind of blue like and I knew it was a deer and I shot and knocked him down. There weren't a bullet hole, I'd hit him in the eye. That's the only deer I ever killed with that first gun.

"We left pretty near all the guns we had. Lots of stuff we had we couldn't move back to the coast. Ranch stuff you know. Grind stones and stuff like that. Had to leave a lot of the stuff and sell some. I was fourteen back in February and we moved back [to DeHaven] in about October.

"By that time I thought I was pretty much of a man, and I began to get out.³³ While we were living on Eel River, there on the homestead, I learned to do a lot of things. I learned to work in the woods, and I learned to plow and farm and put in our grain, and pitch hay, shoe horses and stuff like that. I could do all that by the time I was fourteen.

"Mead Clark Lumber Company, from Santa Rosa, come up to where our homestead was and bought that whole country, all that redwood, out for miles up and down there, in 1906.³⁴ And pretty near everybody in there moved away. We moved back to DeHaven.

"I was going on fifteen when we went back to DeHaven, and Westport was only two miles from there. Westport is where the boats landed and brought in freight and took out railroad ties, poles, shakes and tanbark and potatoes and stuff that farmers were shipping to San Francisco.

"The first time I saw an automobile was after we moved from Branscomb to where we lived over on the coast in DeHaven. I think it was about 1907—I would have been 15 years old. Here come an automobile down the hill. I'd heard about 'em and talked about 'em, but that was the first one I'd ever seen. It wasn't long after that 'til, I think that summer, up where I worked at the Union Landing, folks up there bought an automobile called a Schaut, I think it had high wheels, like a rubber wheeled buggy.

"When cars started comin' in like that there was no trucks, just makeshift. It wasn't like now. Everybody's got pickups now, but before they had any trucks, they just changed the back and made pickups. It wouldn't be 'till 1915 'fore my dad owned a makeshift truck. That car was built off an old car with a truck back on it. The fellow my dad bought it from had a hauling business. He'd haul this or haul that. Kind of like an express business. [He'd] go to the station and haul stuff for you, bring it to you or whatever, anything that you had to haul. My

dad sold the truck to a fellow that went into that kind of business, and he got lots of jobs. Those old trucks'd run up to fifteen miles an hour, but generally they ran eight or ten miles an hour. After we moved to Willits, Macy Leak had a truck, with four wheels and a one cylinder gas engine, drivin' a chain. A chain-driven truck. He used to sell beer and he used to sell cold drinks and everything. Macy Leak owned an' built the ice company in Willits. He used to handle beer for other companies. And he made soda pop of all kinds.

"In 1906 I got a job down in Westport working on the landing, loading railroad cars with freight goin' out, unloadin' freight from the ships, an' workin' on the boats. I remember the first day I worked there. I didn't have any money. I had worked all day and I was going to work that night. When boats come in, when the Mendocino coast was smooth, they worked 'til the boats were loaded. They wanted to use every hour of smooth water. When the water got rough, they had to get the boats out. I'd worked for 10 hours, and I hadn't had anything to eat all day, so I went up to the hotel. The hotel, a big three-story buildin', had a bar and dinin' room and rooms to rent. I sort of knew the man, George Roche, who ran the hotel. He knew who I was from long ago. He knew my family. I went in to him. 'Mr. Roche,' I says, 'I'm working down here and I haven't got no money, and I'm hungry.'"

"He looked at me, and he says, "Any time you're hungry, you go in there and eat. Whether you got money or not. If you ever get any money, you can come pay me if you want to. But, anytime you're hungry, don't stop [to] say a word. Go right in there and eat."

"So I did, from then on. I got pretty well acquainted with George Roche³⁵.

"Upstairs in the hotel they had a big dance hall, with a piano and everything for dancing. The rooms to rent were also upstairs. Downstairs was the bar and a big dining room. The third story was a kind of an attic place. They had a dozen cots there where people could go and sleep. Single men, or anybody, for two bits, could go up there and get a cot, a good place to sleep, you know. George Roche held quite a few dances in the hotel and I got acquainted with the boys around there. A lot of them wanted to learn to dance. They couldn't dance. They'd come to dances, sit around, look around, they wanted to dance, but they didn't know how. So, I started to give them a few dance lessons.

"One day George Roche said, "You can have the hall, the piano, and everything up there, free. All I'll get out of it [is] the bar down here. I'll give the midnight suppers, and rent the rooms. That will bring more people into town and more into my hotel for me. But that place up there, you can have it free if you want to take [it] over."

"So I gave a few dances. I hired my violinist, and used to help him myself. I used to chord with him on the piano while he played the violin. And I'd get my father to be doorkeeper. He'd sell the tickets at the door and do the callin' for the square dances. My Dad would do it for free or for whatever I gave him, you know. He kind of enjoyed doin' it anyway. He was a good caller and a good man like that.

"I lived half way between Westport and Union Landing. There were about four miles between the places. So, I could either go to Westport or Union Landing. I got me a bicycle, and when I'd hear the boat whistles I'd know where the boat was comin' in. Then I'd head for wherever they were coming in, you know.

"Union Landing didn't have any town, but they had a landing where the ships tied up and brought in freight from different places like San Francisco, you know. They would unload the ship at Union Landing and you'd have to go there and get your freight and haul it to your store, you know, like that. If the boat wasn't in Westport, I'd go to Union Landing and work. I'd either work on the boat along shore, or work any place there was something to do. I did that from 1906 until 1908."

Ready Walker

"Around 1908 we got to talkin' about, an' gettin' letters from, an uncle I had down in San Joaquin Valley, just below Fresno. That's around Kingsburg, near Selma. My uncle lived down there, and he was writin' to my dad, tellin' him what a fine country the San Joaquin Valley was. There was a whole lot of work, and he was doing good. My folks had sold the redwood claim to the Mead Clark Lumber Company, and had a few extra dollars. My dad got enthused—we was doin' pretty good on the coast, lots of work over there, nice and cool, lots of wind blowin' all the time, and we kind'a liked it on the coast. But my dad

kind'a took a notion that he'd like to move. I guess he come from the old families where they moved all the time. My dad told me when he was young that if they stopped someplace and made a lot of money they were sure to move. That was a sign they were goin' to move, they'd made enough so they could. If they didn't make enough to move it might mean they would have to stop and stay another year. I guess maybe that was still in his blood. He got these letters and said, "Let's take a vote on it." My dad was great with us kids if we was goin' to move, he'd put it up to a vote to the whole family. Whoever won the vote that's what we'd do. So we sold out. He sold his wagons, and he sold his teams, and he sold this and that. We kept what we needed, put it in the wagons and hauled it to Willits, where we put it on the train and shipped it down to Selma. We moved down to Fresno County in February, 1908, from DeHaven. We got down there and there was a little work here and a little work there. Labor and living down there was cheap.

"Where we lived, I remember there was a bread man, used to drive a little bread wagon with a horse and a little bell. Every mornin' he'd drive by and ring the bell, ring the bell. We'd run out and get small loaves. Five cents a loaf, six loaves for a quarter. If you didn't want all six loaves today, you could give him a quarter, and he'd give you three loaves today and tickets for three loaves tomorrow. So you're still gettin' six loaves for a quarter.

"I worked different things — an alfalfa ranch for quite a while, I worked there for a dollar and twenty cents [a day] and my board. And

worked ten hours. I'd work in the field durin' the day, and at night there was chores to do. Pump water for the stock, and one thing and another had to be done. You know. But I liked it. It was a job. I stayed there for a while until the alfalfa was over. Alfalfa comes up and blooms out and that's when they cut it. Alfalfa grows all summer, but it has to be irrigated. Every time it's cut they take alfalfa. Comes up in the spring from the winter growth and about last of March, first of April they cut that off with *sell grade* sheep³⁶ because it's got lots of foul stuff in it. Foxtails and different kinds of grass seeds mixed into it. Then they irrigate that and the ground is all fixed up, big fields of it, hundreds of acres of it, it's all made up in checks.

"They fix the fields up with a Fresno Scraper, It scrapes about a hundred feet square, and makes little mounds. Then they do another hundred feet square, and rows and mounds are made. So they'll hold water. The water will come right up to the top of the mound. Those checks have lots of gophers workin' in that alfalfa. The people who irrigate will generally have a couple of dogs, little dogs, and they catch those gophers. They catch 'em as fast as they come up to get out of the water you know. That used to be lots of fun to watch those little dogs work. But the first crop is cut off about the first of April. Then every four weeks, you got to get your hay off of there right quick, as quick as you can, 'cause that stuff grows an inch a day anyway. If you don't get your hay off in six days why your next crop will be at least six inches high. You've got to cut it and chop it up, and get it off of there as quick as you can, and irrigate that place for the next crop. Then on through

the summer, plumb until cool weather comes in the fall, every four weeks we can cut that off. I think they get about six crops through December. April to December. And you can't do much hauling around in there with your hay wagon and stuff after it's set, 'cause it starts to grow pretty quick and you'll damage it. So it's quite a thing to take care of. It's a big producing feed. It produces a lot in one summer. I worked at it just long enough to know how to do it and that's about all. I didn't carry it out very long. But, I never had much trouble, any time with any job, most jobs it didn't take me long to know how to do it. And an awful lot of money is made off of alfalfa blooms. You get around close to those alfalfa fields and they got acres an' hundreds of stands of bees.

"When I was down there I worked with people who had lots of bees, and there was a couple of men had, I don't know how many stands of bees, thousands of stands of bees all over in the orchards, here and there, where the peaches were blooming out, and all, and the alfalfa fields. They wanted another helper. And they offered to make me a partner, if I wanted to. They were likable fellows and they liked me pretty well. So I went to work for them for about a month doin' all kinds of work in the summer time with the bees. Separatin' honey, extractin', and the whole thing through. And I understood it pretty well. But after about a month I made up my mind I didn't want to do that for a lifetime job. It's somethin' you got to be tied down to all the time.

"They didn't need me anymore. I got a job in a dryin' shed where they were dryin' peaches. I took care of the shed. What I had to do was

put the peaches up to 'em to cut and take their trays, when they filled 'em up, you know. Put 'em in the dryin' yard and things like that. I did that for a while.

"I went to school with Ray Butts. He was one of the homesteaders that joined us. I wrote to him and he came down and worked through the fruit season with me. Fruit had come in and they're short of hands everywhere. Pickin' peaches, pickin' prunes, grape pickin' was just about ready to come on. You could get a job doin' anything you wanted to. And pretty good pay. I think the best payin' job I got was pickin' grapes. We was makin' pretty near five dollars a day pickin' grapes. Pickin' by the tray, you know. We pick from four o'clock in the mornin' 'til dark, you know. Get up and get all we could done before it got hot, you know. We were pickin' fourteen to sixteen hours a day, and makin' pretty near five dollars a day. Ray nearly always made five dollars a day, and I'd make four dollars and eighty cents. I never could keep up with him. He was older and a little more mature than I was.

"One time Ray was out there with me, takin' care of the dryin' yard. We worked for an old man who owned a big peach orchard there and Ray was in the dryin' yard runnin' the peaches through the sulfur house, you know, and sulfur 'em, and run 'em out in the yard. Peaches here and peaches there, and peaches all over the place, as big as this whole yard here. [gestures to the front yard] Trays of peaches. It was hot and Ray got a nose bleed. He stopped and was standin' there and the old

man, the old boss, says, "Get to work over there, don't be standin' around."

"After while, it come quittin' time and Ray says, "When I stopped, I had a nose bleed." Ray was a good worker.

"And I says, 'We don't want to work for a man like that.'

"And he says, "No."

"So, I says, 'Lets quit?'

"We come in and says, 'You might as well pay us off, we're leavin' you.' He didn't want us to leave. He wanted to know the reason why. I told him the reason why. Well, he didn't know Ray had a nose bleed. I said, 'It makes no difference, we're leavin.' He tried to talk us into stayin' 'cause we was both good workers. I was doin' a good job in the shed and Ray was doin' a good job in the yard, and this old man thought he'd get a little more out of us. He didn't.

"We worked for the Japanese in a vineyard³⁷. The Japanese, I think, had about ten thousand acres of vineyard. I think of all the places I worked the Japanese were the best bosses I had. Give us a list of stuff to do, and we'd do it. Out in the fields, they had a little place, out by the trays, where the boss would take his little abacus and count your wages. The white bosses were always tryin' to cut corners and skimp you a little bit on your pay, the Japanese never did.

"There was a big watermelon patch, right close to where we lived, it must have been ten acres. When the melons were ripe, Ray and I would ride over on our bicycles and steal a watermelon, and ride back

home with the watermelon in our arms. We'd go out there about dusk. We lived on the outskirts of town, and nobody to bother us."

"Finally this old Jap³⁸, we were workin' for him in the grape vineyards, says, "You live over there?"

"I says, 'Yeah.'

"He says, "I got a watermelon patch over there, I never goin' to pick 'em at all. You just go over there and get all that you want."

"After that it wasn't half so much fun. He took all the fun out of it. But we'd go up there, about a quarter of a mile, we'd get a watermelon, jump on our bikes and ride home without the handle bars.

"When watermelon time came along, we'd go down to the ice house and get a big watermelon on ice for ten cents, or one that wasn't on ice for a nickel. If you had a way to travel you could go out to the orange orchard about ten miles out of town, and pick a gunny sack full for fifty cents. You had to pick 'em, and you generally didn't want a whole sack. But you could pick a sack full.

"I'll tell you, I talk about all these young people today and what they do, I was young once myself. When I grew up, I was one of 'em too. I've changed a lot of my ways, and what I think, but I think a lot of young people do that. A lot of folks don't like to say that they were mischievous. But my nickname for a lot of years when I lived here, was *Ready Walker*. Anything that anyone wanted to do, I was ready. So I finally got the name of Ready Walker. That was because, good or bad, I was ready.

"They had a big skatin' rink, just about two or three blocks from where we lived. I learned to skate and I skated a lot. They didn't dance much around there. Selma was a dry town, no saloons, it was a church town. It wasn't a very big town, but I think there was about thirty-six churches in that town and around. I never went to church much, most of my fun was the skatin' rink. If I had any fun at all out side of ... Well, that summer when this boy was down there, we both had bicycles, and we used to ride here and ride there on Sundays, and go down to Kings River and swim and stuff like that. Right below Kingsburg about a quarter of a mile, you cross a bridge across Kings River, is a nice little park and a big swimmin' hole.' And Kingsburg four miles below had a saloon, and six miles up north at Fowler they had saloons.

"We were used to the coast where it was nice and cool and windy, you know. Down in the valley it was just hotter than Hell. We stayed down there all summer. I worked in the grapes. I worked in the fruit. And I worked on ranches. I drove a six mule team from Fresno out into the Pine Ridge Mountains to pick up shakes for building drying racks. It took six days to make a round trip.³⁹"

Back To The Good Ol' Coast

"About October, 1908, my Dad took a notion to go up to Oregon, near Beale, to see his folks. He hadn't seen them since [the] early days. He went up there, visited, and came back. We took a notion that Selma wasn't our country. It was hot, and it wasn't the kind of work that we were used to doing. And, we thought we'd get out of there.

“So we thought we’d head back to the good old coast where we used to like it. We came back up through San Francisco, and when we got into Willits, my grandpa and grandma Elder, who had sold their homestead on Elder Creek while I and my family were in Selma, had bought themselves a home, about an acre with a garden spot and a little room, in Willits. We stopped off in Willits to see them, and that’s as far as we ever got.

“While we visited in Willits for a week we looked around. Willits looked pretty good. My Dad bought a home and I went to work doing this, and doing that, and we worked along for a year or two. I’d just had a grammar school education, so I took a notion that I’d go to high school, and get a high school education. I was sixteen years old when I started to high school. High school had only certain courses. All they had was Latin, ancient history, rhetoric, and English, and stuff like that. I stayed there for about three months studying that stuff, and I decided that stuff was never going to help me make a living. I wasn’t going to be a teacher to teach Latin. I wasn’t going to teach ancient history. I didn’t have to have it, so I quit high school, and went out and got a job with the carpenters.

“For about four years I worked with the carpenters. I learned to be a pretty good carpenter. When that was done, I went to work with the plumbers, and worked for three years with the plumbers. I learned so I could do anything that needed to be done around me. After that, I painted for about three years with the painters⁴⁰. After that I could go up the highway and do any job. I could do a whole job myself, or

oversee a job that I contracted for. Those three things I learned to do, and do pretty good. And I can say, the rest of my life, I've never been out of a job or down and out where I couldn't find something to do.

"I know when I was a carpenter, after I grew up to be a man, I always had a few things that I could do that a lot of carpenters couldn't do, you know. I've worked for my dad. My dad was the boss for a big layout for a long time. He'd have a bunch of men around and there was some new thing to start with, put up a big tower for a tank. We put up one tank I think was a round tank with hooks on it, twenty four foot tall I think it was."

"He says, while we was sitting there eating our lunch, "Which one of you fellas wants to start on that layout?"

"He went around, and each one said, "Nope. Nope. Nope."

"He came around to me and said, "Mark, do you want to try it?"

"And I said, 'Yep.' I was about eighteen years old then I guess. I liked to do something like that.

"After I grew up and got older and got to working up on the railroad [Northwestern Pacific RR] when they were constructing the railroad between here and Eureka. My [experience with the] row boat [as a boy] on the main big river [Elder Creek] came in pretty handy because I got a lot of that [rowing] to do up there. Nobody else could do it. The ranchers up on Bell Spring Mountain used to pack the meat down on pack horse all in quarters, you know. Big camps down toward Humbolt County packed up sometimes six quarters of big beef a week. They'd pack it down to the camps there for two, three or four miles, but

they couldn't come across the river⁴¹. The river was wide. One Christmas time when everybody was on their way, but the timekeeper—he stayed in the office Christmas week—and me, I was what they called a *stable buck*, and a few of the men, were getting some meat for Christmas."

"So, the timekeeper says to me, "Time to go down again. It's time for the meat to be coming. We've got to go get the meat."

"So I says, 'all right.'

"I hitched up what we called the candy wagon, two horses on the little wagon, and we went down to the river. There was the boat and the moon shinin' on the water and the timekeeper jumped in and took the oars! Like that! The river was rollin' pretty good so I says, 'You a pretty good boatman?'

"Yeah," he says, "I should be. I put in so many years in the Navy."

"So, he rowed the boat across. But going across with nothin' in it, I could see the boat rowed light and easy, and I could see that the timekeeper wasn't so hot a boatman. But, I thought, 'he's the head boss of everything, and he was left there in charge, I'm just a working man.' So, we loaded six quarters of beef in the boat. He got right in there and took the oars, and I told myself, 'I better really be thinkin' about how to swim.' We went out about a third the way across the river and there was a big rock sticking up right in the river. Before you knew it, we was right on top of it and all the meat went off down the river. First thing, I looked around and I jumped out on the rock and grabbed the rope for

the boat. Then, I looked around and the timekeeper was swimmin' ashore. He swam across to the shore. I stayed out there on the rock a little bit and got the rope untangled. I threw the rope across to him, it was about forty feet across to there, and he pulled the boat over to the shore. We dipped pretty near all the water out of the boat. One oar was gone.

"I called him by name, 'Mr. Larriman, I'm taking this boat back across the river,' I said to him like that."

"He said, 'Okay.'"

"And I took it way up along the side where the water was still. Goin' across with only one oar I knew I'd go down river a lot. I landed right where I should. By the time we got the boat settled a boss man had seen us dabbling around and brought down a bottle of whiskey. It was at Christmas time, you see, and we was kind of cold, we was both in the river a time. We each took two or three shots a piece of the whiskey, you know. We didn't have to put no meat in the wagon at all, there was no meat!"

"The boss says, 'Time for you to get some dry clothes.'"

"I says, 'I ain't got no dry clothes to put on. This is the last clothes I got.' All my other clothes had gone to the laundry man."

"The boss says, 'Come on down to the commissary, I'll fit you out.'"

"I went down there and he gave me a whole outfit of dry clothes out of the commissary. That was all on the company, you see, a company like that.

"I took a notion, when I was 20 years old, and a little money ahead, to take a trip around to visit all my relatives, and say hello to them. When I was eleven, livin' on the homestead, my great-uncle (Coonskin) had told me a lot about crossing the plains and all the family's travels throughout his life. I had written notes of all of that and hoped to get some data for my family history of the Walker family. I set out to stay with them for a day or two, and find out their births and their deaths and everything that had happened in the family, and put it down. And, that's what I did. I went into Oregon, traveled around, lived with this one and that one.

"I got up near Crater Lake, where an uncle lived, [George West Walker (Uncle Pat)] and he said, "Why don't you stop and stay with us for a week or two." He says, "Stay with us here. There's lots of work here, at the California and Oregon Power Plant. How'd you like to work for two or three weeks?" I says, 'Fine.' "I'll get you a job," he says. "I know I can get you a job. They need men over here now."

"So, I says, 'All right.'

"That day, at noon, he came back and said, "Well, I got you a job."

"I says, 'Yea, what doing?'

"Shoeing horses," he says, "you ever shoed a horse?"

"I said 'yep.' Because when I was out looking for work, if anyone asked me, "Can you do this or that," I'd say, 'Yep! Yep!' I was always ready. I never let them know I couldn't do a job.

"My uncle says, "You go to the boss. Tell him you've come over here to shoe his horses." My uncle was a kind of a sharp old guy. He

says, "I got you the job. Don't go over there and blow it. If he asks you if you're a horse shoer, you tell him you didn't come up here to learn how."

"I went over there and walked into the office, 'Mister,' I says, 'I hear you want a horse shoer over here.'

"And he says, "Are you a horse shoer?"

"And I says, 'I didn't come here to learn how.' Like that! Just like my uncle told me.

"The boss says, "There's the horses out there on the flat, all plowin', and livin', and landin', and grubbin' trees, and burnin' brush and stuff. I want all those horses kept shod up. They're all shod now," he says. "They lose lots of shoes. Pull lots of shoes around there, stepping on their own shoes. I want them all shod up and I want them all kept to work, just as much as possible. If one has to be shod, get out and get shoes on, and get it back there. I need 'em in there, workin' all the time.'

"I went over to the shop and started in. In a week I had all the horses shod up good. Big horses, nice, gentle horses, easy to shoe. I had no trouble. I'd shod quite a few horses when I was growing up on the homestead, you know, my own horses, when I was plowin' in the fields, and stuff like that. My uncle had been a blacksmith and I'd watched him many times shoein' horses, you know. It wasn't new to me. So, I got that done, and I said to the boss, 'I got the horses all pretty well shod up. I don't have much to do out there.'

"I'll give you a job then, if you'd like to work nights," he says, "keeping these big log heaps burning, all night long, rolling logs up keepin' them together so they'll burn."

"I did that for the rest of the time I was there. And some nights it would be snowin' and hailin' and rainin' like the dickens. It's pretty high up there, lots of snow, and cold. With the great big fire there you could turn around to the fire and dry and warm one side. The job was about finished. Everything was cleaned up, when I took a notion to come home. I came back to California."

Becoming An Old Timer

"When I got to be twenty-one years old, that would be in 1913, I wanted to be a homesteader and take a homestead like my folks did in early days. Not so much for a gain, but when I got old, I wanted to be a homesteader. I wanted to be one of the old timers. I took a homestead and built me a cabin and filed on it. That homestead was about eleven miles beyond Laytonville, down on Ten Mile Creek. A homestead only allows you to take 160 acres. Pretty soon the government had a deal to take additional homestead land. There was vacant land around, and I took an additional homestead of maybe 120 acres.

"Then there was another deal for stock raising claims. What they called script. You had to buy it from the government. You could buy 160 acres at a dollar and a quarter an acre, about \$200. Then you had to do this, and do that, to get your patent.

"The government used to lay land aside for different things. In early days every 36 sections, or so of a township was laid aside for school money. That land could be sold to raise money to open schools for kids. There were also forty acres of land from the government laid aside for water and power. I bought them. I had to ask the government for it and to file on it. I'd filed on it before this old land commissioner, old Judge Whitney. He used to be here in Willits, I knew him real well."

"I went back to him in about a month and I said, 'That piece we filed on, they rejected it.'

"He says, 'File on it again. Try it again.'"

"I did. They rejected it again. I went back in another month, and I told him.

"He says, 'File on it again. Pretty soon they'll get tired of you. They'll allow it.'"

"You know, the third time they allowed it.

"While I was still in my twenties I did a lot of tanbark work. I'd run tanbark camps with my Dad. He was an old tanbark man. I did a lot of that. I worked in the tanbark camps and loggin' redwoods. I didn't do that so much for a livelihood, as to know how to do it. I also wanted to be able to tell others [prospective bosses] I could do it. And, I liked the bark work and loggin'. Even today I could go out and tell you how to lay one of those big redwood trees down. How to cut it, and fall it. And where to fall it to save it, and all that stuff. I've done that kind of work.

"I learned to cut redwood. I've made railroad ties. I still got some of my tools left, and some of them, my big broad axes, twelve, fourteen, sixteen inches wide, to hew timbers, are in the museum⁴². In early days, if they wanted a bridge timber across there, they didn't saw it out, they hewed it out with an ax. They could hew out a timber there twenty, forty, fifty, sixty feet long, straight, as straight, and sixteen inches, square as could be. I've got just a few of those timbers, little timbers that's been hewed up, in my shed.

"I hewed redwoods up in Shasta County one year. I made what they call pole ties. They cut down all those little fir trees, and any kind of a little tree that was about ten or twelve inches through. They used 'em to make ties for railroads in loggin' camps where the trains were little narrow gauges.

"They took the pole-tie tree and felled it. Maybe it was sixty feet long. To hew the tie you walked right up the pole with your ax and you scored it all the way up, and then took your broad ax and hewed it back, right down each side. Just on two sides. The other two sides were not hewed. One flat side that goes down, and the other flat side the track goes on. They cut the whole tree, then, after it's all hewed, one end to the other, both sides, they took and cut it into six or eight foot ties.

"Mostly, they made pole-ties not on the regular big railroads, but on all the loggin' railroads and places where they were just going to be used for four or five years. They'd maybe be left to rot out. That's the reason the ties were made. It was a quick way of making rails, you

know, to make the railroad out of the stuff they had right there. I've made pole ties in Shasta County one year.

"I've hewed timbers in pretty near every place that I've been. If there was a job open, I'd try to fit in. And if I didn't know how, I'd try to make 'em think I did by doin' the job.

"I was twenty-six years old when the World War [W.W. I] was on, and I went into the army. While I was in there I never went overseas. I was in the old regular army. I was stationed northeast of San Diego about sixteen or twenty miles at Camp Kearny. There was a big water tank out there that took in about, I don't know, about an acre or so. I did guard duty right around that big water tank. Camp Kearny headquarters were up at the east end of the parade ground. That parade ground was about a mile long and I did guard all over it. And cut sage brush out there.

"In the army there were a lot of different duties. One day I would have 24 hour guard duty. Then the next day I would have old guard fatigue.⁴³ The next day I would put on my old dirty clothes and go out and clean the stables, or dig ditches, or do some other work. And then, maybe the next day I would take my stuff and go back to teachin' musketry school. I went through all of these, until the war was over.

"They put me to teachin' what they called musketry school. That was to teach all the recruits musketry: how to handle rifles and how to shoot them.

"The thing that makes me think I could always do most anything was one time while I was in the army, on KP. I was pretty well liked in

the kitchen because I'd always peel potatoes, peel onions, or anything, and knew how to do it. Some of the fellows that went in there didn't even know how to do anythin', you know."

"One day the mess sergeant came round to me and asked, "You know how to clean a turtle?"

"I said, 'Yep!' I'd never even seen a turtle."

"He said, "There's a couple of turtles right outside there. Get you one of these boys to help you and go out there and clean those turtles for supper."

"I went outside and there were two turtles out there that were five feet long and about four feet wide. Ocean turtles. They were great big things. It took two of us to turn one of 'em over. I went into the kitchen and got a big ax, and split those turtles down the middle of their shell. We took great big chunks of meat out of them. We had a big tub full of solid meat. The meat is quite a bit like abalone, it's nice white meat. The mess sergeant never knew but I was an old hand at cleaning turtles. But I thought if anybody could clean a turtle—there was just about one way to do it—just chop 'em open and go in there. And that's what I did. That's my attitude towards doing things."

Walker's Place

"I got out of the army in about 1919. I was 27 years old when I came back to Willits and I wanted to work. I liked hard work. My Dad and I made a tanbark camp and took a contract getting out tanbark.

"In the summer of 1920, I came into Willits and worked building a big garage. It's still standing, right up here in Willits [on Highway 20].

"I went into the woods and worked making railroad ties. I went back and worked with my Dad getting out, oh, maybe 600 or 1000 cords of tanbark in another tanbark camp. We peeled it, and packed it out to where the trucks could get to it.

"In 1923, I went down into Jackson Valley, that's right where Branscomb is now, and went into a tie camp. There was a lot of nice redwood timber that had been opened up to loggin' and I went in there to make railroad ties. That's the summer I got married. I was makin' ties over there, and a friend of mine [Robert White] was givin' a rodeo back over in the valley towards Laytonville. He asked me if I would go over there and go out in the woods on his place, and put up a dance platform, right out in the woods, so he could have his rodeo, picnic, and an all night dance. He was puttin' on a big show. They had a big ranch house and while I was over there building the dance floor platform, I was told to go up to my friend's house and eat there; I could sleep somewhere else. I was only going to be there a couple of days. A friend of mine, Ray Wilson, went with me, to dig a big hole for the barbecue. While my friend dug the hole for the barbecue, I built the dance platform. There was a big pile of lumber right out in the woods. I put down a foundation and then a big platform with a rail all around it. I built a good floor with seats all the way around. But I had to put it down so's not to spoil the lumber, 'cause it would just be used one

night, and then be taken up and the lumber used for something else. After the dance, I helped my friend take it down.

“My partner, Ray, and I were off our main job, we were plannin’ to have a little fun, and, of course, we had a bottle or two of whiskey with us. We didn’t get drunk at all, but we were out for a couple of days of fun. While I was workin’ there I met this school teacher. I got to talkin’ to her. She taught at the Pepperwood School.⁴⁴ I kind of liked the looks of her. The way she acted, you know. She was from Thailand, and part Thai. She was a very nice person, a missionary’s daughter. She didn’t drink at all. As long as she lived, she never knew the taste of alcohol. I talked to her a little bit, and after the dance was over I went back to my work.

“One day at the rodeo, after I’d built the platform, I was asked if I wanted to be the gate keeper. I didn’t want to get my money mixed up with the gate money, you know. So, when I went over to the house, I took the money out of my pocket and hid it. It cost about a dollar a person to get in the gate, so a man and his wife could get in for a couple of dollars. At the end of the day my friend came up to the ticket gate and I shoved all the money out to him. I said, ‘Here’s what we took in today.’ And he took all the money. That left me with no money in my pocket. There was nothing for me to do until people wanted to go, because I wasn’t collecting tickets anymore. The school teacher was helping serve this or that. I got to talkin’ to her, and I said ‘Let’s go walking around the different concessions. I’d treat you to this or that, I just didn’t bring no money with me.’ She pulled out her pocketbook

and handed me some money. "Take this. Use this," she said. I thought, what kind of a gal have I got a hold of? I remember that so well. We met that day, and spent it walking around.

"I got to thinkin' about her, so I thought I'd go over and say hello to her again, you know. The person who ran this ranch was a friend, so I could go there any time, and stay there. I had a good, new car. I took her for a ride. We went into Laytonville for some ice cream.

"The next time I saw Edith, by that time I wanted to see her again, we took a ride and we talked about gettin' married.

"I'm not going to be a bachelor all my life,' I told her. 'I'm going to get married some day. I don't want to be a bachelor when I die.'

"She answered, "So am I."

"Well,' I said in a jokin' way, 'what I've got to do though, I've got not much education so I've got to marry a school teacher, or someone like that. Somebody who can answer my questions.'

"Well," she says, "I don't want a man with a sharp pencil sitting behind the desk. I want a man that can do something."

"I told her, 'You're looking at one right now.' I said, and looked at her, 'You're looking at one right now.'

"She turned around and said, "I wonder what we're waiting for?"

"I says, 'That's what I'd like to know. What will it be?'

"And Edith said, "Just as soon as my school is out."

"I'd only seen her three times in maybe two weeks. Pepperwood school let out six weeks from the time I met her. We went right down and got married and lived together for fifty years, without a fuss.

"She was as nice a person as the world ever had. You couldn't get a nicer person than she was. She and her family had come out from the orient. After we were married she told me she was in debt. She said, "I've already signed a note to send my mother and sister and brother out to Thailand, and to see about my father's estate, and everything." This was about a year after she'd married me. "This note's due," she says. "A doctor that I was working for signed with me. If I can't pay it, he's got to. I don't want that." I asked her how much it was, and she told me. I had saved a little bit of money all my life, and I had just about enough to cover that bill. I said, 'Best thing to do with that is to pay it and forget it.' I took what money I had and paid it off. Edith, in her early days, had been a missionary. About the only thing she knew real well was how to help people and spend her money. If a kid didn't have a good light to study with at night, why she'd go to town and buy him the best light there was so he could have a good light to study by. If a kid came with a shirt that was torn off of 'em, she'd buy 'em a new shirt. If somebody came without a shirt, some man, she'd take one of my shirts and give it to him. I saw one of my silk shirts on my brother-in-law one day. He hadn't had a shirt. I never said a dang word about it. I just said to myself, 'That's the way it goes.'

"One day Edith told me, "After all you've done for me? You've given me a good home. You couldn't make me mad at you."

"I said, 'I bet I can! I bet I can!' We were sittin' across the table from one another, and I was eatin' apple sauce and a piece of cake.

"You couldn't make me mad," she said, "after all you've done for me? I could never get a home like I've got to live in, by myself."

"I said, 'I bet I can make you [mad].'

"No, no you can't," she says.

"I had a spoon full of apple sauce, I flicked it and hit her square in the face.

"She said, 'You did that just trying to make me mad. But you didn't do it. You didn't succeed.'" She says, "you didn't make it.

"By 1926 I had worked and schemed around and built us a home, bought three and a half acres of land right on the highway this side of Laytonville, built a nice house, dug a well, put up a water tank, and a garage. We moved into it in 1926. In 1929 I had it all paid for. Our homestead was built close to the highway. Edith's friends used to go by and would write back to her and say, "We went right by your place but we didn't know where you lived and we couldn't stop." Edith told me, "People pass here, and they don't know where I live." I told her, 'I'll fix it so they'll know where you live.' I painted a great big sign up on the water tower: Walker's Place. 'Now,' I said, 'all they got to do is look up there.'

"When the depression hit I was in a little different place than I am now. I lived through that depression, and I didn't know there was one. I was pretty well established, an' pretty well known up in the country. I was a carpenter and did this and that. I could do anything in the country that could be done. I built government fences, barbed wire range fences. The government used to pay the big ranchers to build

fences. I did a lot of that. On ranches I built water troughs, and put 'em in. One ranch I put in fifty troughs. I did things like that. I could build fences or build troughs, or put in septic tanks, and along the highway to Eureka I built cabins and stuff.⁴⁵ I had more jobs than I could do clean through the depression. I gave some of my jobs away and let other people have 'em. But other people right along side of me were starvin' you know. So I went through the depression and didn't hardly know there was one. But, all my life, I never had a long job that lasted years. I always had short jobs. Build a building or build a mile or two of fence, or put in fifty troughs on a ranch, stuff like that. A few months here and a few months there, but there was always somebody waitin' for me to get through with a job so I could do this or that for them. I was an honest worker and did good work. I learned to do a lot of things.

"My wife was teachin' school at that time. And she made just about enough to take care of herself and her expenses. School teachers have an awful lot of expenses, they got to do this and do that. And she made just about enough to keep herself clear, so she never cost me very much to take care of her."

The Other War

"I built a nice place up there on the my old homestead, [outside of Laytonville] a nice home. Garage and blacksmith shop and woodshed and chicken houses, and we had everything around there. And when my uncle died, up above us, his ranch went through litigation, and we finally ended up with it. In 1945, the other war [W.W. II] came on. We were up there on the homestead, and pretty far back, and things were

rationed at that time⁴⁶. Our government arranged it so you could get gasoline one day, and you'd get bread one day, and get cake one day, and you'd get macaroni one day, and meat one day. And we were so far from town that we couldn't go back and forth each day and shop. I had made arrangements with the gas company so that, regardless of the orders, I could get all my gas at one time. Why, I could fill my tank plumb full of gas.

"I came down to town one day, and I went into the rationing office, and the girl said, "You can only have this today. That's what it says on the book, and that's what I've got to do."

"I told her, 'I come 40 miles from home. I can't come back here tomorrow to get this, and the next day to get that.'

"She said, "That's what it says and that's what I have to do. I got to do what they say."

"I didn't know what to say. I walked out and I walked up the street. I knew, slightly, the man that worked in there with her. I saw him on the street. I said to him, 'I just been down there to the rationing office with my tickets, and all I can do is fill one today. I have to come back with the other one tomorrow.' And I told him what I was up against. 'I live forty miles from here, over bad roads and gasoline is rationed, and I don't have gas to do that. Is there any way around the daily rationing?' I asked.

"He just stopped a minute. He was a county supervisor too. He thought a minute. He said, "Come with me down to the office," he says. "When we got to the rationing office he told the girl, "He can't

come down here every day. Give him this, give him that, give him this, give him that, right today," he says. And he straightened me out so I could use my tickets to go buy everything.

"At that time Edith and I were over fifty years old, I told Edith, 'We're too far away from civilization and town to grow old up here.' We'd figured that out. 'We've got a good place here, everything we need, but I can sell it, and we can go down, some place else, nearer town. It'd be better.' Edith pretty near cried. She hated to leave her home. She said, "Yeah." And that's what we did.

We sold the homestead and I made a good sale. The woman who bought it from me, a year or two afterward, said, "I think when you sold us that place we took you."

"I said, 'I hope you always think that, because I love to deal with people who are satisfied with what I do.'

"The new owners turned the place into a dude ranch for tourists. We had a beautiful place for that. We had mountains and horses and trails with hunting and fishing and everything, but, not much money-making stuff. When we were up there we had all kinds of friends who liked to come and see us. Everybody loved us. You know, I can say, after we got away from there, got down here, where we didn't have that, they didn't love us so much. You see what I mean? The new owners put in trails and horses. They had a place where they fed folks. They also had a whiskey bottle and glasses on the table. All you had to do was go in there and pour yourself a drink and put a donation in the pot, you know. That's the way they had the bar fixed. The woman who owned

the place told me, "You get twice as much that way as if you charge people. They'll pretty much always put in more than enough."

"The dude ranch went over good, and they kept it for a few years, there, and sold it, and finally the land went into a great big deal where somebody bought the whole country, you know. Now all that country's been divided up, and sold off into homes for rich people that want a country place, you know, like that. That's what it's doing now.

"When we moved, it was to this house. It wasn't like it is now. It was just kind of thrown together. They started, but it wasn't finished. I came down here and bought eighty acres right here. The old highway 101 was below when we came here. The fellow that sold it to me, the agent, said, "This highway here has been surveyed through here for seventeen years. It may be seventeen years more before they build it." They built the new highway the next year. The agent who came here buying up right-of-way told me they weren't going to be ready to build this highway until the following year. They were just buying up the right of way from me. The old highway went right up through the property that I had bought. "This old highway will be closed off as soon as the highway is done, and it can never be opened again," the agent told me. "We don't want side roads coming in."

"I talked with him, pleaded with him. I said, 'I got property up in there that road comes up through, I'd like to have it kept open.'

"And the agent says, "It can't be. That's the way it's written up in Sacramento, and we've got to do what they write up."

"I got to doin' a lot of thinkin', like I always do. I lay awake at night, and figure out something. And I talked to myself, 'I got 80 acres here, and that road right up through it that I wanted to open up and do something with that country over there, and now, if they close that off, it's just nothing to me.'

I had a friend up by Branscomb, a carpenter, and his wife. I knew him real well. He wanted to come down into this country. So I said to my friend, 'If you'll come down here and build you a little house, I'll give you a piece of land right on the old highway.' And I deeded him two acres down there and I moved him down in my truck. He built his house and lived there. The next year, when they built the highway through, they wanted to close the road. But I had someone living on it. And they couldn't close it. They renamed old Highway 101, *Walker Road*.

"My friend finally sold the property, moved away, went back east somewhere, and died. Eventually a man across from here bought the place and burned the old house down. It's just a piece of ground, now.

"I had eighty acres here. Now I've got about four. I knew an attorney pretty well, he was in the American Legion with me. At that time you could sell off four pieces of land without any objections, taxes, or permits. So I marked it off, and I sold off four pieces of land, and one piece down here. And when I came out, I had \$2,000 more than what I paid for the eighty acres to start with, plus a house on it. Of course I've done a lot of work around here. This place is not like it was when I got it. I've put underpinnings on the house, I've put roofs on, I've built

this onto it and that onto it, and painted it, and things. But, that's the way I got this place. Now, since I got this place like that, for nothing, you might say, if I would sell it now for what it's appraised for, the capital gains would take about half of it. They consider what you paid and what you sold it for—capital gains.

"I pretty near gave one piece [of land] to a fellow to get him for a good neighbor. He came up here one day, and he bought the land on time. He said, "I've got to have a deed to the property before I can go to the bank and get money to do anything." Without a cent down, I gave him a deed to the land. He went to the bank, and got enough money to pay me for it, and enough money to build him a nice house. As soon as he got that done, in a year or two, he sold it, made a good profit and left."

Workin' Workin' Workin'

"When I built this place I was working all the time. Nights and mornings, Sundays and holidays. 'Fore I'd go to work I'd do this, and after I got home I'd work until the stars come out, you know. I worked at different things, building mostly and things like that.

"I went to work at a big mill, in the offices, as a night custodian in the office. I answered calls and told 'em when the bosses would be back and what they had to wait for, and things like that. I did that, so I could work some place where they kept books and paid into Social Security. I had been a contractor doing this and that, and half the time nothing was ever done about Social Security. If it was taken out, it probably wasn't

sent in, you know. My last ten years I wanted to get where there was a bookkeeper. So, I took this job as this night custodian. It didn't pay a big lot. They also had a lumber yard, just across a hundred yards from the office, where they delivered and sold lumber. I worked in the lumber yard makin' big water troughs—to put out on ranches for watering stock—and ranch gates. The gates were the kind folks buy and just take home and put up on the ranch fences. I did that along with my night job, and I worked sixteen hours a day. I'd work eight hours at the lumber yard, and at 5 o'clock jumped over the fence punched the clock over at the mill, you see. I'd come home here, and just eat and jump in bed, sleep, and get out of bed and go back to work. Eight hours off and sixteen hours on, you know. I did that for one summer. That's the reason that, now, I've got what little I've got. I've got this place, this home, and I've got the guest house over there.

"I never had no kids. But, I've taken care of a lot of them. When I built the tree house up there, I had that full of kids. We had a party up there with ice cream and hot dogs and we had pictures taken up there of kids looking out of every window. Every kid had a picture to take with them, you know.

"I went to work as a carpenter and as a builder. My main life's work has been in carpentry and plumbing. I've worked between Willits and Eureka building pavilions and camp grounds and building Highway 101⁴⁷. If somebody wanted a dozen cabins built here in the redwoods, you know, along the highway for transients, I'd take a contract to do that. And I'd build them. I'd put in plumbing, showers,

septic tanks, you know, and stuff like that. That was my line of work, and most of it was done between Willits and Humbolt County.

"Some of the old buildings are still standing up there. Up at Tan Oak Park all the cabins and stuff that I built are still there. I worked up at Richardson Grove and fixed the dining rooms. I built the cabins up on the hill and oversaw the building of the septic tanks. I didn't do it all, but I managed the doing of it. At Tan Oak Park I built pretty near everything that's there. Lots of cabins are still there. At Leggett Valley, Lanes Flat, I worked overhauling a bunch of cabins there and putting in showers.

"A lot of things I've done when I was younger, building things, I go back now and I wonder how I did it. I wonder how, with the strength I haven't got, it kind of bewilders me to look at that and see what I did one time, and I wonder just how I did that to get that up there.

"Up at my own ranch, I built a garage like, and the lath work was made out of fir poles, peeled and I had one long pole, I'd say it was thirty-six feet long and a foot through. And I wanted to put it up right through the center of the building to hold the rafters up, to hold the roof up, put a couple of posts underneath it. And I got that up there and I've wondered several times, just how I got that up there. I know how I got it up there, but I didn't seem to have any trouble doin' things in those days, but now, it bothers me more now lookin' at it and wonderin' how I did it than it did to do it.

"My dad and I, after I grew up, used to work together building and this and that, and different things.

"And he'd say, "Let's do it. I'll be there in the morning at nine o'clock sharp."

"And I'd say to myself, 'I'll get there at a quarter to nine and just beat him to the job once.' He was always ahead of me. I'd get there at a quarter to nine and there he'd be already standin' there. No matter how early I'd come he'd beat me there. One thing folks said was, "Bill Walker's word is just as good as a handshake or a twenty dollar bill."

"I'd like it if others would live like that, but they don't all do it. Some people say they'll do this and that when I don't think they even intend to do it, 'cause they just go along as though they never said anything about it. They say things they don't mean and you can't depend on them. I've begun to think that sometimes they must have been dreamin'. I've had people tell me they're goin' to do something and a week later they say, "Why I forgot all about that." That's the only excuse they have. Some people are pretty good people, that you think quite a bit of, and still they do that.

"Another thing I've practiced in life — get along with what you've got. Make the best of what you've got and if it's bad don't make it any worse than what it is. My first wife used to say, "No matter how bad, it's always just as easy to laugh as it is to cry." And it could have been a lot worse. So I learn to take things pretty much as they are and not make a fuss. If I've done something wrong, get along with it and not make it any worse. I was always taught to do the job with the tools

you got. Whenever you got something to do, whatever it is, do the best you can with what you got. You learn to do a lot of things with a lot less tools.

"You take plumbin', and septic tanks, and stuff. You know what a septic tank is full of. I've opened up septic tanks, and I didn't pay any attention. It didn't bother me any. I'm always reminded of a story I heard one time.

"This fellow says, "I tried to learn to swim," he says, "when I was young. I never could learn to swim. The instructor tried to show me the movements to go through to swim, but," he says, "I'd sink right down to the bottom." And, he says, "finally, about the time for me to graduate from swimming, I couldn't swim a lick."

"Then the old instructor told me, "Well, you know all the movements I've showed you. If you ever fall in the river, or in any deep water, I can't tell you how to get out, only I'll tell you, the best thing you can do is just start in, and use all these movements and it might bring you out, or might help save you."

"And this fellow says, "Yeah, I took down what he said and thought about it all. One day," he says, "I was working with the plumbers. And we opened up a big septic tank. There was a rotten board, or something, across the top, and I stepped onto it and in I went. Went right to the bottom of this big septic tank." And he says, "I was down under there, and I didn't know how I was going to get out. But I thought of what the old professor told me when I was learning to

swim." He said, "If you ever get down there, just do what I told you to do." "I just started in."

"My dad used to say, "If you've got somethin' to do, the first thing's to get at it." And that's the way we lived. My dad was a worker. If he owed somebody somethin'; why it worried him. He used to say, "When bills come in, as long as you got the money to pay 'em, it's all right. But, if you don't have the money to pay 'em at the time it hurts." So I was raised up with an honest family all the way around. All the people just meant what they said and paid their way. Soon as any work came in they did their share. They get there in the morning to get at it. And if I've done things that way along the way, why it was my folks fault.

'Seems as though, most of the time when I got a job, I never had any trouble holding it. Sometimes when I was doing carpentry work, people would come and want to know, "When are you going to get through with this so you can come and do a job for me?" There was always someone wantin' me. And I never had to go ask for a job. There was always somebody coming and wanting me to go do something for them, you know. So, I was never out of a job. All my life I've been lucky that way. I never had to worry about being out of a job or out of work because I would do anything. And I wasn't fussy about getting my hands dirty when I worked. If it was a dirty job, I could do a dirty job.

Conclusion

Cultural analysis involves placing events into their larger cultural context, by determining meanings through educated guesses, evaluating the guesses, and massaging the interpretations to produce insights. To quote Geertz, it is not "...discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping its bodiless landscape" (1973:20). Geertz illustrates his point and the importance of context with the classic metaphorical example, borrowed from Gillbert Ryle, of "the wink." Three boys each wink. The first boy winks, an involuntary reaction to a facial tic, or a dust-mote in his eye. The second boy, observing the first, also winks, in a grimaced parody of the first boy. A third boy witnessing the others winks to the second with a conspiratorial wink. Taken out of context each of the boys has winked. However, viewed within a cultural context each wink has a specific and different meaning. Context brings meaning to actions in culture. There is a great difference between the first "wink" and the two that follow it. Although they may appear the same as the first boy's, the second and third boys' winks are a communication. They are deliberate, intended for a specific audience; to send a certain message by a socially accepted code not perceived by others. Gillbert Ryle pointed out that contracting one's eyelid on purpose when there exists a public code for doing so "is" winking.

The possible variations in context are endless. Had the second boy not recognized the third boy's wink as conspiratorial the conspiracy would have failed. The meaning embedded in the wink must be supported by the audience. Without an audience to send the message to, the cultural value of the "wink" would cease to exist (1973:6-9). Mark's oral histories are not soliloquies, but verbal messages, performed for an audience. Mark used the interviews to perform. From his interviews the image of a self-sufficient, caring individual emerges.

The interpretation of cultural behavior shifts continually, requiring the observer to understand subtleties of meaning in the culture being observed. Understanding an informant's culture relies on more than the observing ethnographer's ability to select an informant, establish rapport, transcribe interviews, and complete any other tasks relevant to the particular study. These steps define the initial intellectual effort called thick description, previously discussed in the introduction. Ultimately thick description relies on what ethnographers refer to as data — the interviews, diaries, genealogies, mapping fields — and includes the ethnographer's constructions, as well as those of the people being studied, and of the culture within which the study takes place. These constructions are frequently obscured. Our ability to understand any given event is often implied

as background information. For the purpose of this thesis, the depiction of Mark as an *old mountain-man* creates a backdrop for the data conveyed through his narrative. His age and the rural community in which he continues to live supply details which elevate him to the status of cultural icon and purveyor of the region's historic culture. Through multiple interactions with students, academics, and historical societies Mark has come to be regarded as a living model of regional culture. As such, he embodies the values that define his cultural situation.

Central to Mark Walker's life are *Work, Honor, and one's Word*. Taken together they are a collection of acts and descriptors of the man's life. Viewed within the context of his culture, the acts singly and together form the fabric of his life shaped by a larger community inculcated by the work ethic that Max Weber labeled the *Protestant Work Ethic*.

The Protestant work ethic, as suggested by Max Weber, in his treatise *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1958) [1904-1905] was rooted in the Protestant Reformation's doctrine that God had *called* everyone to some productive vocation. Martin Luther's translations of Paul's Biblical teachings became a list of admissible callings. The work ethic continued to evolve and by the end of the American Revolution the Godly calling of the Reformers had been

replaced by public usefulness. (Rodgers, 1978:21). The theological superstructure of Puritanism dropped away gradually, but the work ethic persisted, guarding against the evils of idleness (Cherrington, 1980:12).

Work discharged doubts and subjugated despair; it curbed the animal instinct to violence; it distracted the laborer from the temptations of radicalism; it redeemed the convict prisoner. Work ingrained habits of fortitude, self control, and perseverance, and built character, in part, through systematic exhaustion. Through hard work a man of humble beginnings could rise to the top (Rodgers, 1978:12). A flood of literature, conduct guides, boys' storybooks, handbooks of business advice, and magazine fillers ingrained the work ethic as one of the century's most firmly held ideals. Over 122 million copies of six readers released as *McGuffey's Eclectic Readers* by William Holmes McGuffey (1800-1873) were sold between 1850 and 1920. It is estimated that four-fifths of American school children studied from them (Cherrington, 1980:36). They were the most well-known and widely read children's books, containing numerous stories illustrating the rewards of industry. Although Mark never referred to these literary artifacts it is likely that he was influenced by the prevailing popular culture they represent.

Work was a vehicle through which one could impress upon the material world something of oneself. This was the case with Mark Walker. Through hard work Mark would rise from his humble beginnings and leave his imprint upon the world. He would become financially secure and sought out by those anxious to learn from him. Mark's folk art ensures that his abilities and the culture they depict, will not be quickly forgotten.

During the mid-nineteenth century North American values and practices fused and reinforced each other to form an economic commitment to the moral primacy of work. For early Americans, work was a necessary and important part of life. It was accepted as the common lot of mankind, and was highly regarded. The moral importance of work stood virtually unchallenged as an accepted social value. Dignity and honor accompanied any honest job, whether it entailed working with one's head or hands. Regardless of wage paid, all honest jobs were imbued with dignity and value (Cherrington, 1978).

When Americans wrote or spoke of work, the settings of farmers, craftsmen and merchants were the moral norm. Poets and politicians alike dwelled on the dignity of labor and the moral worth of those who worked. William Evarts said in 1856, "Labor, gentlemen, we

of the free States acknowledge to be the source of all our wealth, of all our progress, or all our dignity and value" (Rodgers, 1978:6).

The behaviors which Mark found objectionable — tardiness, failure to keep one's word, and lack of initiative — were as unacceptable to him as public welfare was to the prevailing system. Social relief programs were not in place when Mark was a youngster. Social welfare programs were designed to assist new immigrants and were created to provide temporary help until permanent employment could be found. The nearest system to social welfare was the company town in which company stores carried many workmen on their books. However the Walker family avoided this plight by, as Mark put it, "payin' as they went."

People worked from sunup until sundown. Absenteeism was tolerated reluctantly, tardiness was not. Punctuality was a highly regarded virtue and a mark of good character. The Walker family regarded punctuality as such. Mark could never understand why if someone was supposed to be someplace at a particular time, they weren't. Illness seemed to be the only excuse, but only if it didn't happen too often.

Skilled tradesmen took pride in the high quality of their work and were valued for their craftsmanship. Young tradesmen served long apprenticeships, a sacrifice which strengthened their feelings of

loyalty and commitment to their trade. Learning a new trade, acquiring new skills, and obtaining an education were all accepted forms of advancement. As a tradesman, Mark took pride in his apprenticeships. He spent four years apprenticing himself to the carpenters, and three years each as an apprentice to the painters and plumbers. Although the actual number of years does not coincide with his version, Mark was sixteen when he began his first four year apprenticeship and twenty when he completed his second of the two three year apprenticeships, the pride Mark takes in his attainment of these skills is obvious and, in fact, may explain this discrepancy.

The homesteading population that migrated across the States, and from around the world had been steeped in the Protestant work ethic. Indeed, to carve a niche for themselves in a land still relatively unsettled required that everyone in the family and in the surrounding community carry out certain tasks. Although the rationalization may have been that work was a matter of survival, Mark never stated that his reason for working was because survival depended upon it. Rather, work is implicit to his culture.

Regardless of whether or not Mark read character-building readers in school, his family modeled appropriate behavior for him. His grandfather Walker was fully equal to commanding the wagon

train from Missouri. There was no obstacle so great that his grandfather could not find a way over, under, or around it.

The family stories on which Mark grew up included women and children doing their part. The Walker women drove the oxen, as did the children. Everyone worked along the way tending stock, "keeping house," and caring for each other's children. The Walkers had an additional job, operating their portable saw mill. Although the Elder family's crossing of the States was substantially different from that of the Walker's, their story is steeped in the ethic of work and a cheerful attitude. When the boxcars were stopped at rail sidings the opportunity was presented for all hands to fill water barrels and do laundry. Grandmother Elder thought such occasions were "a regular picnic." After staking their claim to 160 acres of grass, brush, and timber the Elder family spent the winters clearing the land, building fences and roads, and putting in crops. During the spring they worked in tie or tanbark camps. While Mark's grandfather worked in the woods Grandmother Elder cooked for the workers, Monday through Saturday. Sunday was the only day of rest in those days.

Mark's narrative fairly bursts with the glorification of work. Although uneducated, Mark, his parents, and his grandparents Elder and Walker were gainfully employed, able to turn their hands to any task, and have it "hand in nice" (Walker 1993). As a child Mark's

dream was to do something "...a little bit better, and a little bit harder," so that he might "...get a little bit nearer to being a man."

Between 1850 and 1920 the Protestant work ethic collided with the American industrial revolution. With the onset of industrialization, cottage industries such as the east coast shoemakers were replaced by shoe factories, displacing the skilled cobbler in favor of semi-skilled factory workers. Factory workers and others like them faced the realization that hard work would no longer guarantee economic success and that they would be trapped by their circumstances. However, the possibilities for farmers, small shop workers, and entrepreneurs to succeed still remained (Cherrington, 1980:36). With homesteading still in its early stages the population in California was relatively sparse, and economic growth remained based in agriculture.

Unlike their factory counterparts, the mill and farm workers in rural communities like Mendocino County still had opportunities to demonstrate and improve their skills. Although by the turn of the nineteenth century, industrialization had already begun to make its inroads into the long-held tradition of the work ethic, the commitment to it prevailed in the small towns that make up Mendocino County. Mechanization was slow in arriving, leaving agriculture and the timber industry dependent upon the skill and craftsmanship of its

workers (Rawls, 1986:293). The Protestant work ethic seems to have been diluted more slowly in the rural communities of Mendocino County.

Although Mark first observed an automobile in 1907, horses were still widely used. Indeed, Mark was still earning his living shoeing horses for the California and Oregon Power Plant in 1912. Narrow roads — often washed out by rivers overflowing their banks — deep mud, and steep terrain limited automobile access. In the interviews conducted by Levene, (1977a, 1977b, and 1989) work in all its many forms is a consistent and predominant theme. Mark and his contemporaries do not speak of the Protestant Reformation or the resulting work ethic. He, and they, speak of the work they did.

Many of the interviewees were immigrants or the children of immigrants. They were homesteaders, dairy farmers, timbermen, fishermen, and shop owners, to name the most frequently mentioned occupations. As a youth, Mark sawed logs, plowed fields, milked cows, hunted, and fished. As an adult he peeled tanbark, split railroad ties, constructed highways and railways, built fences, water troughs, and gates, and shod horses. As a senior statesman for his community he builds folk art, conducts tours, and conveys the richness of his culture through storytelling. Even entertainment is infused with the work ethic. Mark built platforms and booths, hired musicians and gate

tenders and made the fiddles on which he played. Mark and the informants interviewed by Levene not only did similar work, but they shared similar attitudes about work and the complex morality that accompanied it. They attributed their success to hard work, honesty, wise spending, and a general attitude which lent itself to helping others in need. Interviewees attributed the quality of their close-knit lifestyle to such things as: the slower pace attributed to the isolation of the coast; everyone knew everyone else; everyone was in the same situation; everyone helped each other; and men "had a lot of respect for women" (Levene, 1977a, 1977b, and 1989). The character and ethic that developed demanding attention to work, formed the basis of the culture in which Mark grew-up.

Most of Levene's informants, like Mark, found enough work during The Depression to maintain their homes and families. However, the Depression brought with it the National Recovery Act of 1933, the Public Contracts Act of 1936, and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. This legislation, designed to bolster the economy, helped to standardize the five-day, forty-hour work week, and changed the meaning of holding a job. Work was no longer a "privilege" with its requisite personal responsibility, but a socially derived "right" to employment (Cherrington, 1980:6).

Mark never identified the work that he did during this period as government supported. However, some of the interviewees from Levene's study revealed their participation in work projects. Some interviewees spoke of government assistance as a godsend. Others regretted the intrusion of government into their private lives while still acknowledging that assistance was necessary for some people (Levene, 1977a, 1977b, and 1989). For the generations reared during the early twentieth century, changes in legislation had little influence on their attitudes regarding employment. For the younger generations however, holding a job and working held different meanings for them than for their predecessors.

The belief that friendship was more important than hard work was the embodiment of the "personality ethic." This ethic began during the 1920s and bloomed in 1936 with the publishing of Dale Carnegie's *How To Win Friends and Influence People*. The basic tenet of the personality ethic was that "the way to success was through other people" and was the greatest philosophical challenge to the work ethic (Cherrington, 1980:38).

True success in the work ethic of early Americans was, most importantly, eternal salvation, and less importantly, wealth and happiness during one's lifetime. In contrast, the personality ethic insists that true success, the accumulation of wealth for its own sake, is

attained only by possessing a pleasing personality, getting along with others, and knowing the right people.

Although Mark was friendly and enjoyed chatting with his many friends and neighbors, he was not inclined to be particularly friendly with anyone he did not like or trust. It did not matter what an individual could do for him, if Mark did not like them they were off his property. Mark would give a stranded motorist a gallon of gas just to move them twenty miles down the road. On the other hand, if they *looked right* he might invite them into his yard to view his folk art and sip a glass of something cool in the shade of his private picnic grounds.

One afternoon, after a long interview session, Mark said with tears in his eyes, "I want to be liked an' respected ya know, but I want to make a difference — to leave things better for havin' been here."

Participant-Observation revealed that for the most part people in Willits, when engaged in casual conversation indicated that they still worked hard and well because they enjoyed their work and believed that what they were doing was important. Only a few individuals claimed to hate their employers, invariably timber companies and utilities. These individuals claimed they took pride in doing the least amount of work possible. It is difficult to know if young people in Willits identified with the personality ethic, but it is certain that Mark

Walker and others of his generation continue to identify with the Protestant work ethic.

Mark Walker's complaints about the deterioration of people's character, as defined here by the work ethic, are echoed by many business managers. They see the deterioration of the work ethic as a reflection of the general decaying of the society that grew and flourished on the ideals of rugged individualism and hard work.

Mark rose from his humble beginnings through hard work. He parlayed two different homesteads into his comfortable home in Willits. Careful management prompted him to sell unneeded acreage and pare down forty acres to four, increasing his financial resources while reducing the liability of maintaining a large parcel of land. In addition, his knowledge and experience combined with his willingness to demonstrate his skills elevated him to the status of highly regarded elder statesman to those interested in learning about the way things were done during the early days in Mendocino County.

At one hundred years old Mark could have sat back and taken it easy. Instead he continued to do things the way he always had. During the year that these interviews were conducted Mark dug and planted a thirty by sixty foot garden plot; built himself some wooden cart wheels; and continued to create his folk art out of scraps from around the

house. There were others living on his property who could have done the work for him but Mark insisted on continuing to work.

As the need to earn a living ceased to be a pressing issue Mark turned his desire to work to new endeavors. Most of his life Mark earned his living working with his hands. By his seventies he had become known as a story teller. Then as Mark approached his eighties, he began exploring creative avenues which would allow him to transmit his culture through artwork. Although he has been interviewed by local television stations about the early days in the region, what attracts most people's attention is the menagerie of folk art animals, people and early equipment that stands in his yard, fully visible from Hwy. 101. Donation of his highly desirable art work has served as a vehicle enabling Mark to place additional less desirable items in museums that they otherwise might not want. When he offered his Brownie Box cameras to the Mendocino County Museum the staff declined them. Mark incorporated the cameras into his "Ma and Pa" statues which the staff at the Mendocino County Museum accepted and now stand in the main exhibit gallery.

Just as his work was public in his youth, so are his present projects. In his youth, his work gave him a venue for public participation. His art work gives him a vehicle for public presence in his later years.

Although Mark does not think of himself as a teacher he knows that he possesses knowledge of how things were done in the past. Mark often refers to his limited education saying that he "...don't know much," but, he taught "the museum people" (Mark Rawitsch and Dan Taylor) when he approached the Mendocino County Museum and asked for their assistance in disseminating his own personal historical knowledge. This project was completed in joint partnership between the Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art and the Mendocino County Museum, resulting in an exhibit, an exhibit catalogue and a professionally produced thirty minute video tape. The video is now used by the Mendocino County Schools to present Mark's folk art, his stories and his values to elementary school children (Hernandez, 1989). Various folk art crafts demonstrated in the video include how to make a fiddle, and how to split shakes.

Mark intends his teaching to go beyond simple demonstrations on how to make things or descriptions of how it was done in the "early days." He is a performer and story teller. He is also a master of metaphor, and uses the opportunity presented by willing listeners to teach the values and morals from the early days. Mark plans his stories carefully so as to impart his wisdom to the right person at just the right time. Often as not, the message is received by Mark's intended pupil. On one occasion Mark took advantage of one particular person's

presents to talk about people “doin’ what they say, and meanin’ what they say.” This particular individual was a less than enthusiastic worker and seldom did what he said he would. Later, Mark’s intended audience confided to me that the message had been meant for him.

The purpose of interpretive anthropology, and by extension oral history, is not to find answers to profound questions, but rather to make available to ourselves and others insights into other cultures and to include what is said in the public record (Geertz, 1973:30). For Mark it is a means by which he can preserve for others a culture he values highly, the passing of which he mourns deeply. That anthropology and oral history has provided him with the opportunity to maintain a public image is also a factor. This is not a matter of conceit on his part, but rather another element of his culture. It is a public demonstration of how much a man he is. To be a man at the turn of the century required that he demonstrate appropriate character, which included strength, cunning, inventiveness, and endurance (Pugh, 1983:xviii). Mark’s work, demonstrations, folk art, and storytelling are deliberate communications, and intended for a specific audience which convey those values. The audience — myself, his family, the Willits community — amplify his messages of masculinity each time they observe his performance and understand his code.

In The Beginning

¹ In *The Walker Saga* Mark explained that the company would supply the wood to build a house. As long as the man lived in it the house was his, but when he moved the company was free to rent it to someone else.

² Mark defined tie maker slabs as slabs of exterior waste wood that have been split from timbers in the process of making railroad ties.

³ A spring pole, as defined in *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (1979:1760) is a pole used because of its elasticity. Mark indicated that his parents suspended a chair from the end of a flexible pole which was mounted from the rafters of their cabin; an early variation of a child's jumping chair.

⁴ Following the Gold Rush of 1849, hardrock mining created a new interest in lumbering. The deep shafts required large amounts of timber for re-enforcement (Dillon & Dillon, 1993:14). The growth of cities and towns created a constant demand for redwood, as did the railroad companies who were particularly fond of redwood for use as crossties (Wurm, 1986:21).

⁵ Expansion into the west involved people from every background: Northern and Southern European, Scandinavian, Mediterranean, Eurasian, and Asian (Limerick, 1988:259-61).

⁶ John Dolbeer, an ex-marine engineer turned to logging in the Eureka area, adapted a small ship's steam engine to power a winch to be used onshore and created the first steam "donkey." Patented in 1882, it had a skid-mounted vertical boiler and a small single-cylinder engine to power horizontal take up spools on opposite ends of a live axle driven by a direct gear. "Donkey" engine was coined in maritime use. It was larger and more powerful than "horse" engines (Mackay, 1978:170 in Dillon and Dillon, 1993:50).

⁷ Wages Creek, named for Alfred Weges who settled there in 1864 has over time become known as Wages Creek. The creek is a approximately two miles north of Westport. A sawmill was erected there and lumber was hauled to Westport for shipping (Holmes, 1987:122).

⁸ Bulls had replaced oxen in lumber camps by the 1860s when it was discovered that bulls were livelier than oxen, once broken, and were more readily available from nearby ranchers. By 1915 the last bulls were gone, replaced by steam donkeys (Wurm, 1986:68).

⁹ The Nature Conservancy's Northern California Coast Range Preserve is located 180 miles north of San Francisco and five miles northwest of the town of Branscomb in Mendocino County. The Nature Conservancy established the Coast Range Preserve in 1956. Within the 3,460 acres of the preserve are the sites of the Walker and Elder family homesteads (Johnson, 1979:120). The Homestead Act of 1862 provided that any U.S. citizen could file for the title of 160 acres after living on the land and cultivating it for five years (Sullenberg, 1992:59). The general policy of the Federal government, under the Homestead Act, encouraged the ownership of land in small farm units (Rawls & Bean, 1993:170).

¹⁰ The springs in the Preserve keep the South Fork of Eel River, and Elder, Fox and Skunk Creeks flowing all year (Johnson, 1979:19).

¹¹ Some of the earliest use of forest products from the Coast Ranges was the harvesting of bark from the Tanbark Oak (*Lithocarpus densiflora*) (Jepson, 1911 in Dillon, 1993:6).

¹² Tan Oak trees grew in Santa Cruz as well as other locations in the state and occupied a large part of the tanbark industry (Dillon and Dillon, 1993:52).

¹³ "Cruising" in forestry terms, means to explore or examine forests to estimate the quantity of timber that may be cut from the forest *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (1979:438).

¹⁴ Sections of bark about two feet long were "peeled" off tanbark oak trunks and limbs; a vertical cut joined an upper and lower circumferential cut so that a hollow "tube" of bark could be pried away from the heartwood beneath. Small trees were "peeled" as far up the trunk as a man could reach; larger trees were felled, and the bark peeled off in four foot lengths (Dillon, 1993:6).

¹⁵ Westport was the shipping point of thousands of cords of tan bark, thousands of split ties and millions of feet of lumber. All small mills on creeks north and south shipped from Westport. (Holmes, 1987:106).

Becoming a Man at age Six

¹⁶ Calk—pronounced as cork—a metal plate worn on the sole of a shoe or boot to give it longer wear or to prevent slipping *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (1979:257).

¹⁷ Lack of local schools placed a hardship upon early homesteaders. In 1903 Stephen Elder donated a piece of land on the south side of the creek that flowed in from of his house. The creek as well as the school house were named for him (Johnson, 1979:165).

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¹⁹ Alfred (Alf) Howard settled in the Westport/DeHaven area in 1867. He married Missouri Lavina Cook in 1877. Together they lived on the Howard Ranch until they sold it to Ira Thompson in 1909 (Bear, 1974:11).

²⁰ Alexander and Christiana Gordon came to Westport and DeHaven in 1875. The senior Gordons left the Westport/DeHaven area in 1885 for Ventura County where they leased ranch land. Some of the family remained; daughter Elizabeth was married in 1892 at her parents' home in DeHaven. In 1895 Peter, their youngest son was killed by a runaway horse; his last residence was noted as DeHaven (Bear, 1974:10).

"Diggers"

²¹ DeHaven School was located north of Westport at the mouth of DeHaven Creek (Holmes, 1987:116).

²² Whether the name "Digger" was derived from the Indians' alleged burrowing underground or from the digging and eating roots, it expressed an identification with dirt. Everything about "Digger" Indians seemed dirty to White settlers (Leeper, 1894, in Rawls, 1986:195).

²³ Sherwood School, named for Alfred Sherwood was located about ten miles from Willits on Sherwood Road. The Indians called the Sherwood Valley, *Che-hui-i-kai* signifying the north valley. Edith Walker is not listed among the teachers at Sherwood Valley (Holmes, 1988:49).

The Horribles

²⁴ Elder Creek School was located about four miles northwest of Branscomb and up the South Fork of Eel River about six miles (Holmes, 1988:106).

²⁵ Iva Suiter is listed as having taught at Elder Creek School in 1905 (Holmes, 1987:116-117).

²⁶ Owned originally by George and Annie Lovejoy, the house was located at Horseshoe Bend. It is located on what is now Nature Conservancy land and was named the White house by the Nature Conservancy because it was painted white (Walker, 1988:38).

²⁷ The church that Mark refers to was located near the homesteads at Branscomb. As was typical of churches in rural areas of that day it was a nondenominational church.

²⁸ "The Fourth of July was a day of celebration," said Edith Patton, recalling the Fourth. "They always had foot races, and a big table spread with food people had brought (Levene, et al. 1977:110-111).

²⁹ Admiral William H. Standley State Recreation Area is approximately one mile south of Branscomb on Branscomb Road (Holmes, 1988:107).

³⁰ Tom Young taught at the DeHaven School in 1902. His annual salary was \$60.00 (Holmes, 1987:118).

³¹ Referring to the Laytonville Rancheria.
In The Beginning

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³² Although the validity of Mark's story cannot be proved, the indiscriminate killing of Native

Americans in that time can be illustrated with the following examples. The Clear Lake Massacre took place in 1849. Pomo Indians killed two white men, Andrew Kelsey and Charles Stone. The two, who had established a ranch in the Clear Lake area had abused and murdered some of their Indian laborers. The following year an army unit confronted the Indians. The Indians were surrounded and killed indiscriminately (Phillips, 1961:44). According to the San Francisco Daily Alta California's informant, "They fell as grass before the sweeps of the scythe."

Pretty Much A Man

³³ Mark's expression for looking for work.

³⁴ The Elder and Walker Homesteads were purchased by John Metcalf and the Mead Clark Lumber Company in 1908 (Johnson, 1979:90)

³⁵ George Roach, son of Patrick and Catherine Roach, married Clara Johns and lived in the Westport area until his death in 1975 (Bear, 1978:22).

Ready Walker

³⁶ Mark referred to sheep grown for butcher and grazed on the first crop of alfalfa as "sell grade" sheep.

³⁷ The Japanese had their own variety of "Protestant work ethic." They valued honesty, industry, and punctuality. Many Japanese became land owners, becoming farmers instead of farm hands. In 1919 the Japanese produced approximately 10% of the dollar volume of California crops while working only 1% of the State's land under production (Limerick, 1988:272).

³⁸ Although Mark claimed not to be racist the Japanese success at becoming assimilated caused them to be met with hostility (Limerick, 1988:272).

³⁹ Mark was referring to Sanger Flume. Built in 1903, it was the longest and steepest flume in the world. Fifty-four miles long, and dropping 4,737 feet between Millwood in Bigtree Country to the town of Sanger in San Joaquin Valley. It dropped at a rate of 4,300 feet in the first 13 miles; 330 feet per mile. The flume, sold to Sanger Lumber Company floated out 250,000 board feet of lumber (*Time Life Books: The Loggers*" (1974: 150).

Back To The Good Ol' Coast

⁴⁰ There is a discrepancy in time here. Mark says that he was sixteen when he started working with the carpenters. He spent four years with them and then worked for the plumbers for three years. After that Mark worked for the painters for an additional three years. It is unclear whether Mark meant that he had worked for all three trades concurrently or not.

⁴¹ Kikawa Creek

⁴² Many of Mark's tools and folk art are on display at the Mendocino County Museum.

⁴³ Mark was referring to the fatigue he experienced after being on 24 hour guard duty.

⁴⁴ Pepperwood School was originally built on the White Ranch. It was later moved about two miles north, half way up what is now called Bushy Mountain. Edith Walker taught at this school in 1927, the last year Pepperwood School was used (Holmes, 1987:94).

⁴⁵ Tan Oak Park is located on Highway 101 near Piercy.

The Other War

⁴⁶ During 1942, the Office of Price Administration (OPA), through local boards, issued coupon books entitling users to purchase canned goods, sugar, coffee, meats, fats, and shoes. Rationing, it seemed, was the democratic way to guarantee equal supplies for everyone (Freidel, 1990:427-428).

Workin' Workin' Workin'

⁴⁷ The first section of the Redwood Highway in Humboldt County was completed through Garberville. Although World War II had halted most road building in the nation, work on the Redwood Highway went ahead because of the Convict Act of 1915. This act made it possible to employ prisoners in highway construction work because they were not competing with labor requirements in the defense industries and costs could be kept low. They could only use picks and shovels because it was impossible to get heavy equipment to the road site (Savage, 1991:31)

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