

Interview with Tom Blanchard

Conducted by Dean Bones and Students from Nestucca Valley Middle School
April 19, 2002

Student: *Please tell me the name of the grade school you attended and describe, if you can, the exact location of the school.*

TB: It was, uh, Hemlock School, located twelve miles south of Tillamook on Highway 101, three miles north of Beaver on 101.

Student: *Uh, huh*

DB: *And actually, would you again ask Tom to say his name, because we erased that part of it.*

Student: *Oh. What is your name?*

TB: Tom Blanchard

DB: *OK*

Student: *If you have any idea when the school started and/or closed, please tell us.*

TB: I don't know when the school started, but it closed about 1955...1954... somewhere in there.

Student: *After the school closed, what school did the students attend... who went to the school.*

TB: The students came to the Beaver School.

Student: *Please describe the school building in as much detail as you can, telling us about the outside and the inside of the building.*

TB: Well, it was a one story building, two rooms, uh, had some side rooms in it, and had a basement...and uh, it was a nice building. Then we had an old one room school house out back that we used for a play shed, and then there was another play shed adjoining it. It was about forty feet square, I guess.

DB: *So the play shed... the one room school house.. was that the original building, then, that was there before the...*

TB: It was there before they built the new school.

DB: *What was in the basement? I didn't know it had a basement.*

TB: Oh, mostly.. we had a furnace down there... a wood furnace... and they stored the wood down there.

DB: *Was it a full basement?*

TB: No, it was about, probably half, or a little better.

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DB: *OK*

TB: And I've seen it full of water, and all the wood floating around.

DB: *(Laugh) We better not continue with that one!*

TB: (Laugh)

DB: *So, was there a coat room, or were coats just hung up in the hallway then?*

TB: No, they just had a place in the hallway to hang your coats and put your lunch buckets and stuff.

DB: *What about bathrooms?*

TB: Two bathrooms.

DB: *Inside.*

TB: Uh, huh (yes) inside.

DB: *Oh, that was pretty modern then.*

TB: Ya, it was.

DB: *Running water then, too.*

TB: Uh, huh (yes)

DB: *Ok, and did it actually have two classrooms, or was it...was it a curtain that separated them, or...*

TB: No, it was a solid door, but it was movable... it was on tracks and you can move it... accordion type you could fold it up or open it up and make one room out of it.

DB: *Didn't Hemlock also have a stage? Did they? Do you remember?*

TB: Well, we... we built one.

DB: *Oh...*

TB: We just put up a temporary.

DB: *Oh, and then you would take it down.*

TB: Uh, huh (yes)

DB: *Oh, I see, ok.*

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TB: Ya, uh, huh (yes)

Student: *Was there a bell on the school?*

TB: No. No, no bell.

Student: *Please tell us from where to where the students lived who went to this school.*

TB: Oh, they started on Highway 101 North, about approximately a mile, and they took up in the Sandlake Road up as far as the summit, and about a mile south of Hemlock on 101, and all of East Beaver, and ... I think that was about it.

DB: *So a mile south would be by... whose place?*

TB: Oh, where Fox's live... that was the deadline.

DB: *OK. They attended Hemlock, I think.*

TB: Ya, uh, huh (yes) and from there south they went to Beaver.

DB: *OK. Let's see.. there was another question I was going to ask you... let me think... oh, on the Sandlake Road, to the summit, we found out that there was another school called Sunnydale... do you ever hear... do you remember ever hearing about that one? That would have been a long time ago.*

TB: I've heard that there was a school over there, but I never seen it.

Student: *What are all of the ways students got to school while you were in school? Did they walk, ride in cars, ride buses, ride horses, ride in buggies, etc.?*

TB: Oh, they had a bus that ran the route that went up south and north and Sandlake Road and East Beaver. I think that was about it.

DB: *A high school bus, or...*

TB: No, it was a little... little bus, probably held about twelve or fourteen.

DB: *How old were you at the... all the time you went through school, they had a bus?*

TB: Uh, huh, ya.

DB: *Really?! I didn't know that.*

TB: Schuyler Fletcher had the contract for the bus.

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DB: *I'd love to see a photo sometime if anybody has one... I've not seen one.*

TB: Oh, I haven't... I've never seen a picture, either.

DB: *OK*

TB: I think it was a 1929 Dodge. (Chuckle)

DB: *Oh, good, I'm glad you added that. That's neat.*

Student: *Please tell us the time school started each day and when it was dismissed.*

TB: It started at nine am and closed at four pm.

DB: *Hmmm*

Student: *What were the days during the year that students didn't attend school, such as Christmas?*

TB: Oh, we had Thanksgiving day off, and I think a week off at Christmas time, and that was it.

DB: *No spring vacation?*

TB: No, no...nope.

Student: *Please tell us about a typical school day from the moment you left home to go to school to when you arrived back at home in the afternoon.*

TB: (Chuckle) Now you're taxing my memory! Oh, let's see we got there at nine o'clock, the teacher always stood out on the porch with a little hand bell about that big around, and she'd ring the bell violently, and then time to come in and start school. And then we'd salute the flag, and we'd sing some songs, and then we'd get started on our lessons... course we had a recess at 10:30, and then an hour for lunch and recess in the afternoon... did our studies and our work, four o'clock came, we were headed for home!

DB: *So when the bus dropped you off, what did you do until she rang the bell?*

TB: I didn't ... I never did ride the bus. We always walked to school.

DB: *Where did you live?*

TB: Well, you go up Blanchard Road, and, uh, and then you make a left up there and go all the way up on top of the hill.

DB: *By where the tree farm is now?*

TB: Uh, huh (yes) In that area. Ya.

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DB: *That's where your parents' home was.*

TB: Uh, huh (yes)

DB: *Was that their land?*

TB: It was my uncle's land.

DB: *Oh. No wonder they call it Blanchard Road.*

TB: Ya, he... he owned that whole valley in there.

DB: *What was his name?*

TB: Roy... Roy Blanchard.

Student: *Tell us about the regular curriculum. In other words, what were the subjects taught?*

TB: Hmm... reading, writing, arithmetic, history, uh, science... hmmm, I don't remember much more than that.

DB: *Do you ever remember them teaching any kids high school classes at Hemlock?*

TB: No.

DB: *No?*

TB: No.

DB: *OK*

Student: *Tell about any extracurricular activities like sports, clubs, etc.*

TB: We didn't have sports... as organized sports... we never played any other school... hmmm, had 4H club that we'd attend... I guess that wouldn't be school, but it was part of a...

DB: *What was that for? Was it farming?*

TB: Ya, mostly farming. And, let's see... I think that was about it.

Student: *How were the students taught? Was everyone taught together in one group, or were there smaller groups of instruction? Did the teacher mostly lecture, or did students study books?*

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TB: Well, it was a two room school, so we had grades four ta... one to four in one room and five to eight in the other room, so we had four separate classes... uh, the teacher would just gather her... whatever grade she was going to teach, and teach 'em... we had to do our studies, and I don't remember it disturbing us any. She'd get through with them, and then she'd take the next group...

DB: *Did you listen in sometimes on other people's...*

TB: Oh, ya, ya, we'd listen in. (chuckle)

DB: *So you can actually learn some of the upper grade kids' lessons, probably, sometimes.*

TB: Ya, ya. But sometimes the teacher would have to remind us that we had work to do that we... (chuckle)

DB: (chuckle)

Student: *Was there much homework?*

TB: No, I don't remember any homework.

Student: *If someone misbehaved at school, what were some of the punishments, and if possible tell about any incidents that you remember happening in regards to students being disciplined.*

TB: Hmm... I don't think they had much trouble that way. Anybody got in trouble, well the teacher would just take him off to the side and talk to him, and that was about it.

Student: *How were parents involved in discipline for school behavior?*

DB: *So keep... if somebody got in trouble at school, do you think... how would their parents react to them?*

TB: They'd probably give the punishment that they thought they deserved when they got home.

DB: *OK*

Student: *Please tell about any technology in the school. In other words, was there a telephone? What did the students typically write with?*

TB: No telephones... never even heard of a telephone. Well, we just had pencils and the old style pen that you dipped in the inkwell and write a few words and then have to dip it back in the inkwell again... keep scratching away. (Chuckle)

DB: *So do you ever remember any emergencies at school where somebody got hurt or something?*

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TB: No

DB: *No. Just wonder how they dealt with that without phones, and..*

TB: I... I don't know. Just didn't have that ... one girl got... remember got sick one day, but she just... teacher took her off in another room and had her lay down 'til school was out and sent her home.

Student: *Was the community involved in the school, and was there a parent support club? Tell about programs held for the public and tell how the building was used for community functions.*

TB: Hmm, well, every Thanksgiving we'd always put on a little Thanksgiving program... all the parents would come... Christmas time we'd put on a program. We'd practice for weeks for the Christmas program, and all the parents would come...

DB: *What kinds of things did you do for the Thanksgiving program?*

TB: Oh, we'd draw pictures of turkeys and pioneers... you know, the old people that started the nation, and have some ... some music, and recite some poems or some sayings or something like that. Be about it.

Student: *Please tell us the names of any teachers and administrators.*

TB: My teacher was Mrs. Edith Creecy for six years, and I had a teacher, Mrs. Curl, for the sixth grade, and the seventh grade was a young lady that came to teach, and I can't remember her name. She was going to get married as soon as school was out, so I never saw her again after that year.

DB: *Is Edith Creecy still alive?*

TB: No.

DB: *She's not.*

TB: Uh, huh (no)

DB: *OK, I was thinking she was.*

TB: No. Her daughter is.

DB: *Is that Margaret?*

TB: Uh, huh (yes), ya.

DB: *She's written us some things, but..*

TB: Oh. Ya, it's always nice to have teacher's daughter in our class... sometimes she'd say, "Oh, mom, you're making it too hard for us". (Laughing)

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DB: *Oooh*

Student: *What were the games you played at recess?*

TB: Hm, well, we played... when the weather was good we'd play baseball... or swing on the swings, play on the teeter totters, uh, played tag, "Annie Over" the play shed, uh... we used to build stilts... we'd walk on them, or get us a nice pole and pole vault the fence. We did all kinds of things.

DB: *Was the fence barbed wire?*

TB: No, it was a kind of a ... it was kind of a fancy wire fence with a two by four running across the top of it.

DB: *Oooh.*

Student: *Please tell us any stories about things that happened at school or concerning school. We would appreciate hearing any stories you remember.*

TB: Hm.. well if we ever had any snowfall, we'd have a lot of fun, throwing snowballs at each other. I remember one kid, he was ... he was a little bit slow, and he was standing around, he didn't want to throw snowballs, and he was standing around with his mouth about half open, like, I threw a snowball at him, and it went right square in his mouth. (Laughter)

DB: *Where did the swings and teeter totter go? Do you know?*

TB: Where did they...

DB: *Because they're not there...*

TB: No, I suppose when they shut the school down, they took 'em down.

DB: *Sold them or something?*

TB: They were just made out of heavy timbers.

DB: *Oh.*

TB: Outside.

DB: *I see.*

Student: *I'd like to change the subject a little and learn more about you, if I could. If it's ok to ask this, where and when were you born?*

TB: I was born September the third, 1924 in Nampa, Idaho.

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DB: *Hmm*

Student: *What is your ancestry?*

TB: Hmm... how far back do you want to go? (Laughing)

DB: *As far back as you want to go.*

TB: Well, at one time my grandparents owned Whalen Island over at Sandlake.

DB: *Hmm... were those Blanchard relatives?*

TB: No, it was on, uh, on mother's side... mother's dad...Schillinglaw... Thomas Schillinglaw. And on my dad's side, they came out here from Nebraska... lived in Salem and Sheridan areas, and my grandfather came over to Hemlock in 1902 and brought what... some of the kids were old enough to be out on their own, but there was some of the children that came with him and grandmother. Then my uncle... he took over the farm after grandpa died... he was a single man, so... and they had a... one of my... his sister died at childbirth with one of her sons, so my grandmother took over the two boys and raised them, so they were part of our family.

DB: *So did your grandpa homestead the land that was on your property?*

TB: No, it was... it was already... some of it was cleared, it wasn't much of a farm when he bought it, but they cleared a lot of land.

DB: *Was the hotel at Hemlock there when you were a child?*

TB: No, it was...

DB: *That was earlier.*

TB: Earlier, ya.

Student: *Why did your family or your ancestors move to this area?*

DB: *Ya, you said that they moved here, but why? Why did they chose here?*

TB: I don't know. I never did know. They lived over at Sheridan, and he decided he wanted to get... I think he wanted to dairy.. .be a dairyman, and it was a little bit better conditions over here.

DB: *Then why were you born in Nampa, if the farm was...*

TB: Well, my dad was going to college up at Nampa, and uh, then he taught for a few years out there, and then they decided to come back to Tillamook, so 1925, why they came back to Tillamook. And he worked for my uncle for twenty some years, I guess.

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DB: *Wow.*

Student: *Describe any significant events that occurred during your childhood.*

TB: Hmm... well, it was ... I witnessed a forest fire in 1933 in the Tillamook Burn. That was pretty dramatic.

DB: *Did it come... it didn't really come close to your place, did it?*

TB: No, it wasn't too close.

DB: *But you could see...*

TB: Oh, ya, especially at night, the sky would just be red in the east, and of course in the daytime it was so smoky you couldn't see very good.

DB: *Was that scary at all?*

TB: Oh, I don't remember being scared... it was interesting. Big maple leaves come floating down, you know, half burned and charred and... lots of dirt and debris in the air. I guess another dramatic time would have been when I was a junior in high school, my uncle was killed on the ranch in a logging accident.. and, uh, he milked twenty-six cows by hand and then we milked twenty-six on the other... we had two barns... two separate houses about a mile apart. So I had to go up and take over where he was left off and milk twenty-six cows, night and morning, go to school, take the milk to the factory, so I got a pretty good workout there for about a couple three months, I guess.

DB: *Now, when you say milk them, how did you milk them?*

TB: By hand.

DB: *Twenty-six cows.*

TB: Ya.

DB : *How long did that take?*

TB: Couple hours.

DB: *And then what would you milk into? A bucket?*

TB: Uh, huh (yes)

DB: *And then... would it go into cans after...*

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TB: No, after a bucket... after you milked each cow, then you poured it into a strainer, and it would go into a milk can.

DB: *And then... who delivered the milk... did it go to the cheese factory?*

TB: Ya, it went to East Beaver Cheese Factory.

DB: *Who did that?*

TB: I did.

DB: *You'd do that... would you do that before you'd go to school?*

TB: Uh, huh (yes)

DB: *You would. How early did you have to get up?*

TB: Oh, I don't remember... five o'clock, I suppose.

DB: *So, and then the same thing in the evening.*

TB: Ya. I was late to school a lot of mornings. (Laughing)

DB: *I'll bet. What about John? I don't know how many brothers or sisters you have, but did they also help?*

TB: No, John was at college. He wasn't there. And I think both my sisters were in college at that time, so I was the only one at home.

DB: *Oh. Anything else ... any other significant thing that happened in your childhood?*

TB: Hmm... no not that I recall.

DB: *OK*

Student: *Tell about your chores or responsibilities as you were growing up.*

DB: *Actually, he just told some...*

TB: Ya, when I got home I had to carry the water in, had to fill the wood box, and get the cows in the barn and get ready to milk, hoe the garden and whatever needed to be done.

DB: *Where did you carry the water in from?*

TB: Oh, we had a well about forty feet from the house, I guess. I'd fill all the buckets up, and...

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Student: *When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?*

TB: I wanted to be a truck driver. (Laughing)

DB: *And he is! He's many things, but he's certainly driven truck.*

TB: Yep... fifty years.

DB: *Wow.*

Student: *What were your favorite games, sports, books, hobbies, etc.?*

TB: Well, my favorite game was baseball, that's about all we ever played. Didn't have any hobbies. Oh, I liked to go fishing, and stuff like that... I had a bicycle ... I liked to ride that.

Student: *What do you remember most about your mother and your father?*

TB: Oh, their hard working life style, I guess. They did work hard.

DB: *And what was your dad's name, again?*

TB: Myron.

DB: *And your mom's name?*

TB: Jean

DB: *And it was Jean.... what was her maiden name?*

TB: Alma... oh, Schillinglaw.

DB: *Schillinglaw... right.*

TB: Uh, huh (yes) ... Jean Schillinglaw, uh, huh (yes)

DB: *OK*

Student: *What was the best advice your mother and/or your father ever gave you, or what were good lessons you learned from them?*

TB: Hmm.. I guess the lessons I learned from them was to be honest and truthful and hardworking, and....

Student: *Tell us about your occupations and accomplishments throughout your life.*

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TB: Well, I got out of high school, I worked for about a year, and then I went... I was drafted into the Army and spent two and a half years in the armed services... spent two years of it over in the central Pacific... on the islands over there in the army... when the Marines would take an island and get rid of the enemy, then we would go in and secure the island and clean it up and stand guard so they couldn't come back in and take it again, and... and things of that nature. They put me in the Military Police, so I was a... in there for a while on one of the islands... give me a motorcycle to ride... (chuckle)

DB: *No wonder your son likes motorcycles.*

TB: Ya

DB: *What was your job before you went in the service, when you said you worked a year or so ...*

TB: Driving log truck.

DB: *Oooh.*

TB: Ya. I started driving as soon as I got out of school. Oh, I first worked for Mabry... hmm, oh, he's a Cloverdale guy... I can't think of his last name... and then I worked for Alex Gigoux out of Tillamook... and then I worked for Willamina Plywood.... that's who I was working for when I got drafted.

DB: *So when you came home from the service... were you married at that point?*

TB: No.

DB: *When you came home, how did it feel to come home... I... that's probably a dumb question... uhm, what I mean is, did people ... did you feel welcomed back home after the war?*

TB: Oh, ya.

DB: *Because I know that wars that have happened since then, the service people haven't always felt... like the Vietnam... like the people weren't very proud of them and so on...*

TB: Oh, ya... we were treated royally.

DB: *Were there some traumatic things that happened during the war that you experienced?*

TB: Hmmm...

DB: *Difficult things?*

TB: Most of it was being bombed. Japanese would fly over... not every night, but two or three nights a week, and drop bombs on us... and... that'd be about the most dramatic.

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DB: *So were there people that you knew or worked with that were actually killed during the war?*

TB: We had one guy that was killed in a training exercise... other than that, we didn't lose anybody.

DB: *And are there... are you still in contact with any of those people?*

TB: Oh... one of my good friends died a couple years ago... I kept in contact with him... I have a friend up in Washington that I keep in contact with... most of the men were from the east coast, so... I didn't...

DB: *You know, that if you are interested, and you want to do it sometime, there are now web sites on the internet that we can go on that list people's names and where they live to actually find these people and get mailing addresses to write to them if you're ever interested...*

TB: Really? Is that right?

DB: *There are now sites for the different... uh, units in the army and stuff that you can actually go on and look for people who are writing... if you are ever interested, I would do that with you.*

TB: Hmm, well, that would be interesting.

DB: *OK, so that's it...*

Student: *Please tell us about your own family.*

TB: Hmm, well, I have a wife... we've been married... next month it'll be fifty-six years... I have a son and a daughter. And they have... my son has three boys and a girl, and my daughter has three daughters.

Student: *What special skills and interests do you have?*

TB: Oh, I have a little farm... I like to farm... work the land... work with cattle.

Student: *Are there community and/or religious activities you'd like to tell us about?*

TB: *You mean back in school days?*

DB: Any time.

TB: Oh, any time... well, I guess... when I was in grade school seemed like the church had quite a bit to do with the school... uh, sometimes a visiting minister would come to hold services at the church and then he'd come down to the school and talk to us... and... course, coming from a Christian family, why, church, I guess, is about as important as anything in my life...

DB: *Do you remember some of the pastor's names of the church while you were growing up?*

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TB: Oh, ya... there was a Leonard Hannen... his son is a state representative from Grants Pass...

DB: *Oh, ya..*

TB: There was a Glade Baker, Earl Mosteller... hm.. a Smith.. I guess when I was a kid, that was the one...

DB: *Is there a church history that is written?*

TB: Ya, uh, huh (yes)

DB: *I would love to get a copy of that, if that's possible... we've been doing that of other churches, and then at some point, we'll ... in a year or so, we'll also do some church histories.*

TB: Hmmm...

DB: *It would be wonderful if ...*

TB: Ya, we have a history at home of it.

DB: *Great! If there's some day that you might just stop by that we that we could... with it and we could copy it and we'd just give it right back, that would be awesome.*

TB: Ok, I'll do that.

Student: *What was it like having bombs dropped on you during the war?*

TB: Well, that was the first thing we did when we got on the island, was build bomb shelters out of coconut logs... and sand bags... and build 'em up so they'd take a direct hit before you could be damaged by a bomb... but it wasn't much fun being twenty, thirty guys in that little crowded space and listening to bombs being dropped here and there and around... I remember one night there was... I was the last one in the bomb shelter and there was an 'England' sitting about forty, fifty feet away and... and the... anti aircraft guns were going off and when they were doing that, it just shakes the island... you just feel the earth moving... and... the lights came on that ambulance, and somebody hollered, "Turn them lights off that ambulance!" Well, I didn't know anything about vehicles, you know, where the light switches was... I wasn't about to go out there and turn 'em off... I was the last one in the bomb shelter and about.... they had ... a plane in the search lights, we could watch it... and about that time, you could hear the bomb dropping, and it hit that ambulance, right square... well, the bomb went off in the tree tops, as soon as it hit the coconut trees, why it detonated it, and it went off... and just flattened everything for a hundred yards in every direction... all our tents... tents were on the ground and.... I still have a piece of shrapnel in... in my, uh.. my can of C-rations that came from that bomb.

DB: *So the lights kind of guided it in, in a way.*

TB: Well, ya, ya... we even allowed to light a match or anything... 'cause..

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DB: *What... What island were you on at that point?*

TB: That was... uh, Macon Island in the Gilberts.

DB: *Ok...*

Student: *Please share some thoughts you have about what it was like living in this area.*

TB: Oh, I love... I love this country. (Chuckle) Except sometimes in the winter time it gets kinda' dreary when it rains all the time, but... I remember when I was a kid they used... they used to be a bounty on cougars, and some of the guys had dogs and they'd go out and hunt cougars and bring 'em in ... they'd lay 'em on the side of the road there... we'd go pet 'em and look at 'em, and... they were paid \$65 a head for a cougar... and we... I liked it in haying season, 'cause we'd start cutting hay about... just after fourth of July, and if we were lucky, we got through by fair time... cut the hay, and rake it, and shock it, and haul it in all loose... they didn't have bales in those days... it was a slow process... and it usually end up getting rained on... (Chuckle)

DB: *You've done a lot of hay in your life.*

TB: Ya, ya...

DB: *That's what he hauls a lot of...*

Student: *Again, we are very interested in stories, particular incidents you remember. Pretend you are sitting here with your grandchildren. Tell some stories that you would like them to hear of your life experiences, or life experiences of your parents and family.*

DB: *Stories that you want your grandchildren to know ... not just about you and your family, but your dad and your mom and grandpas and...*

TB: Hmm... well, I can't get 'em to sit still long enough to tell 'em a story... (chuckle) ... I just tell 'em, well, that's a lot of interesting things that happened back there, and... I remember one time I was walking from school, and there's gonna'... there was gonna' be a circus in town the next day... of course, we didn't know about, but.. anyway, the trucks were going by ... all the circus trucks, and I was going along the highway with my lunch pail and there's... uh, one of the trucks had a elephant in the ... in the trailer.. and there's open bars about that wide... you know, he could see out... and ... he had his trunk out, and he just about got my lunch pail! (Much laughter) I went home and told my mother that, and she didn't believe me. (more laughter) But the trucks would only go about twenty miles an hour, I guess, in those days.

DB: *That's a great story.*

TB: And that was always my problem in school... a truck would go by, I'd raise up in the seat and look out the window and... "Thomas, sit down!" (laughter)

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Conducted by Dean Bones and Students from Nestucca Valley Middle School
April 19, 2002

DB: *So trucks always fascinated you.*

TB: Ya, they always fascinated me... I'd run a half a mile to see a truck. (Chuckle)

Student: *Thank you very much for visiting with us. We will type up your comments and stories and send a copy to you.*

End of tape.. discussion about the Gathering at the end of May 2002. Tom shared pictures of the Brown School... 1936... and others...

Transcribed by the wonderful Darleen Creecy Cole!