Voices from the Past

Development of Agriculture on the Rexburg Bench

Interviewee: Frank R. Webster

December 10, 1983

Tape #97

Oral Interview conducted by Harold Forbush

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Harold Forbush: This is oral history of the Upper Snake River Valley and the interview to be conducted will be referred to as a primary subject the Development of Agriculture on the Rexburg bench. It's my pleasure this afternoon of Saturday the 10th of December 1983 to interview Mr. Frank Webster.

HF: Will you please state your full name?

Frank Webster: Frank R. Webster.

HF: And your date of birth and where you were born.

FW: I was born in Rexburg, Idaho on March 6th, 1917

HF: Now, Frank I think it's important to know something about the Webster's so if you'd like to start with your father and grandfather and explain something about the origin of the Webster [tape cuts]

FW: My father was James S. Webster, James Smart Webster and he was born in Franklin, Idaho on May 9th, 1886, son of James [inaudible] who married James Smart whose parents were from England and my father was the oldest of five children in the family. The other members of the family where in order of their birth Elmo Smart Webster, Viva Webster, Rainy [inaudible], Kenneth Smart Webster and Lucille Webster Howe. Those were the members of my grandfather's family.

HF: And I think that the record would bear out and you mentioned it the other day, when the Webster family were being honored by the Historical Society locally that the last of that family, Lucille, had passed away.

FW: Yes, Lucille passed away about a month or six weeks ago being the last remaining of the five sons and daughters of my grandfather.

HF: Now, you would have a number of cousins.

FW: Yes, as I recall as I worked up the information for the presentation at the Historical Society, there was 28 of us—grandsons and daughters of my grandfather, 28 in the family.

HF: And do many of them live here in the Upper Snake River Valley?

FW: There are about 8 that are still living in this immediate area. The others are scattered around various areas of the western United States.

HF: Okay, now Bill is a brother.

FW: Bill is my younger brother, yes. There were five in our family, my father and mother had five children. My oldest brother is James Weldon who later was a doctor in Provo, passed away in 1975. Next after him was my brother Tom who was a farmer in this area,

all his life and passed away just two years ago now. And then I was the third one in the family, my sister—my only sister—Marianna is married to Dean Porter and lives in Los Angeles and has been there for a number of years. Bill the youngest in our family, is a resident of Rexburg and farms here also.

HF: Okay. Now we'll get specifically to your family later, now there's a Mark Webster over at Sugar City. Would he be a cousin?

FW: Mark is a cousin. Mark's a son of Elmo Webster, yes. Mark is—and his one sister Lavina Solenger lives in Idaho Falls now and they are the only two remaining ones in that family that are in this area. There was an older sister, Mary Romrell who lives in Malad and that is all the members of that family that are left.

HF: Now on the Kenneth Webster, there are some sons and daughters.

FW: Yes, they had three sons and one daughter, Teddy Lou, who is married to Seth Wood she lives in Rexburg here now, and they are farmers. And their oldest boy Bud, Kenneth Jr. passed away about 20 years ago. Another son Louis, lives in Island Park has a cattle operation up there and their youngest son Robert is teaching school in the Challis area.

HF: Okay, now let's see, Kenneth, Elmo, JS, and what others?

FW: Vita, the girl—the oldest girl Vita, the oldest girl Vita Rainey, her husband was a dentist and he passed away about 18 or 20 years ago and she died about six years ago. They had three children, William Rainey, who is about a year older than me, and then Mary Marsette who is about the same age I am, and a younger sister, Emma Dean Cave as her name is now and they all three live in or near Los Angeles area. And then, we mentioned Lucille a little earlier, she had four children. Two of them died in infancy and she has one daughter who lives in Salt Lake, Katherine. And then her only son that is living, Jim James Howe lives here in Rexburg and has a farming operation in connection with his son Wesley.

HF: And that's an H-O-W-E.

FW: Yes, H-O-W-E

HF: Now, would it be correct to say that if there is anyone in the Upper Snake River Valley who carries the surname of Webster; it's quite likely that they descended from James W. Webster.

FW: Yes, there are none in my estimation or my knowledge, there are none here in the valley of other members of our family, my grandfather's brothers who'd have any relative family here and most all of them in the Upper Valley are from this family. There are some Webster's out in the Dubois area and there are some in Idaho Falls not very

many but there are some we have knowledge of but we have not traced a relationship to either of those families.

HF: Oh. So there are some with the name, but not a kin.

FW: As we can find out, that's right.

HF: Now let's turn to your mother. What was her name –her maiden name—and then something about her ancestry?

FW: My mother was Floretta Ricks and she was born in 1887 in Rexburg and her family were the original ones called here by the presidency of the LDS Church to settle the Upper Snake River Valley. Her grandfather was Thomas E. Ricks who of course we are all acquainted, those who know the history of this area. Was colonized this area and came here along with others who were assigned to come with him and his oldest son Thomas E. Ricks Jr. was my mothers father, and both of them were pioneer stock and very influential and aggressive people in developing the Upper Snake River Valley and she was their only daughter.

HF: His—what mother did Thomas Jr. come through? That is, what wife of Thomas Ricks?

FW: Mary Ann Hibbard was her name.

HF: So was Thomas E.'s first, was that his first wife?

FW: I'm not right certain, but I made an error on that Mary Ann Hibbard, was her grandmother, Tabitha Hendricks was my mother's-mother.

HF: Tabitha Hendricks. And that was Thomas E.'s, one of his five wives.

FW: Yes she was.

HF: What I didn't – I guess I didn't realize that, that's very interesting. And of course the Rick's came out of England didn't they?

FW: Yes, the Rick's, the Webster's, and the Smart's all came from England.

HF: But that was many year ago, too wasn't it? They'd been here in America a long time, hadn't they?

FW: Yes, I don't recall now as I look through the history, I don't recall just when they came here, but my grandfather and grandmother Webster, my grandfather Webster and his wife were English descent and they were born over then in England and in about 1834, both of them—and I don't know just how long after their birth they came to United States. But they have been here many, many years.

HF: And they came in response to the gospel?

FW: That is correct.

HF: As announced Frank, I'm really interested in having you share with me this afternoon something concerning the agricultural development of the Rexburg Bench. Now, I've interviewed a number of persons including Charles Zolenger who is a youngster had an assignment to take cows from the little community of Rexburg up on the hill, herd them all day long, it was a marvelous range pasture, bring them back and I guess it became important for the pasturage of sheep as well as cattle, didn't it, in the early days?

FW: Yes, that's right there was quite a lot of interest in the grazing areas and the cattlemen and the sheepmen had to be quite careful that they didn't infringe on each other or naturally problems would arise. But there was a lot of that, I recall having been told of the experiences you've mentioned about Mr. Zolenger, I'm not old and don't remember seeing any of that, but I have been told that is what happened in the earlier days.

HF: Now, in time, the area commenced to be broken up and dry farmed. Can you tell me where the first dry farm grain was grown and by whom?

FW: Yes, I can't tell you exactly the year but it was somewhere around 1905-1907 and interesting grow about—the possibility of growing crops such as grain and wheat and whatever in this area. And one early pioneer, Mr. Albert Luthy came here and went up in to the area of Herbert about 18 miles southeast of Rexburg, where he acquired some land and planted a crop of wheat and of course everyone thought he was making a big error because it could not be done, most everyone thought so, but there were some who had faith in his venture. And Mr. Luthy has a reputation and his history will show that he produced the first grain crop in the Upper Snake River Valley and it came from the area, as I say, Herbert about 18 miles southeast of here, and after that was shown that it could be done then of course others began getting interested in doing the same thing.

HF: Specifically dry farm.

FW: Yes, it was all dry farm until not to many years ago.

HF: Right. Now, I know the history also talks about two outstanding gentlemen getting together, a Charles Woodmancy and James W. Webster and they farmed the—what? Webster/Woodmancy operation?

FW: That's right.

HF: Tell me all you know about that. (chuckles)

FW: Well, I won't tell you *all* I know but I'll tell you as much as I can and hope it's interesting. Mr. Charles Woodmancy and my grandfather I don't know how they became friends but in the earlier days before the history of them getting together, my grandfather and his brother-in-law were in the sheep business together and their venture grew into quite an extensive sheep operation.

HF: Now you say his brother-in-law.

FW: Yes, Thomas Smart, my grandmothers brother. Thomas Smart. It was Smart/Webster sheep livestock company and then along with that, he expanded and got connected with Mr. Woodmancy and they developed a dry farming operation about 1908 or 1909 somewhere along that era of time. And they had a good successful farming operation. My grandfather did the farming supervising and physical type of that and Mr. Woodmancy was the business manager of the farm and they had a very successful operation until, I believe it was 1911 when Mr. Woodmancy passed away at an early age, he was only 44 years old when he passed away. But the operation stayed in force and in action until about 1916, still carrying the Woodmancy/Webster Woodmancy name and then my grandfather bought out the Woodmancy interests and they dissolved that partnership at that time.

HF: And there after was just referred just as?

FW: Well then and not long after that, Mr. O.P. Soule from Salt Lake City who was an attorney became acquainted with my grandfather because my grandfather and grandmother spent much of the time in the winter in Salt Lake they had a home in Salt Lake City and they would go down there and spend much of the winter. He became acquainted with Mr. Soule.

HF: S-o-u-l-e?

FW: S-o-u-l-e. Orson P. Soule. Yes, and the farm they consolidated and incorporated—I should say—into the Webster/Soule farm in about 1917 or somewhere in that area. I'm not going to be real specific on these dates exactly but, I'm not far off on any of them.

HF: Now did that take the land that had been formally Webster and Woodmancy?

FW: Yes, all except there was some that was Mr. Woodmancy's—part of Mr. Woodmancy's share at least, what my grandfather didn't buy from the family stayed in the Woodmancy estate and was farmed by some of the Woodmancy's and some of it still is farmed by his decedents—Charles Beezley who was a grandson of Charles Woodmancy his father and mother farmed some—a part of the Woodmancy estate which is over east and a little bit north of our present operation. And Charles Beezley's three sons still operate part of the land that Charles had, so it's still in the family, under the name of Beezley now, and then there was some other land that was later sold that was a part of Mr. Woodmancy's estate. HF: How many acres did that combination or that partnership embrace?

FW: At the time Mr. Woodmancy and my grandfather were together, I'm not right certain what the acreage was, later on when Mr. Soule and my grandfather were together it was around 5500 acres their operations—Webster/Soule farm operation.

HF: Can you tell me just—would you know the legal description? Which [inaudible] township?

FW: It in the five and forty and forty-one basically in the southeast part of the country from Rexburg southeast [inaudible] of here clear to the southeast area of the country but from Rexburg it starts about two miles southeast of Rexburg and runs about six miles from Rexburg southeast, and east and west about two miles or a little more.

HF: Now, do you and your two or three sons own and operate part of that original?

FW: Yes we do, we have some of the land that was originally in the Webster/Soule estate as well as having acquired additional from other people but we do have a fair part of our operation was originally the Webster's and some of the Webster/Soule estate the other of it was in my father's estate plus as I say some we've acquired from other sources.

HF: Would it be correct to say that in the Woodmancy/Webster holdings from 19, you said about 1907, to about [19]11?

FW: Until he passed away, it was 1916 when it was dissolved, but he passed away in 1911.

HF: What do they grow on there?

FW: It was nearly all fall wheat, hard red fall wheat. Winter wheat we called it, and it was planted in September --longing about September—and then it was laid through the winter and matured in the summer and we started combining the grain somewhere about the 25th of July to the 1st of August and the harvest took place from there until late fall.

HF: Did they use summer fallowing practices?

FW: Yes

HF: About half of the land would lay idol then.

FW: As far back as I have any record, or recollection or record—either one—it was done on that basis, about 50 percent of the land was in crop and the other 50 percent would be summer fallowed each year, yes.

HF: And can you give me an idea what the productivity was per acre in those early years? Dry farm grain.

FW: It was not unusual at all to get 35 to 40 bushels of grain per acre off the dry farm land as long as I've dry farmed—as long as I dry farm until we went into water, we were still getting somewhere around, it would vary naturally but, 35 bushels to the acre was a good round figure and it wasn't unusual to get 40 and sometimes even more. On a dry year, short crop, it wasn't unusual to get down around 30 or below but the average would be somewhere between 35 and 40 bushels per acre.

HF: Anything else grown up there in those years?

FW: there was little barley, not much, and very few oats were grown, it was all a dry farming type operation and barley of course is a spring crop that would be planted in the spring; oats is a spring crop that would be planted basically for feed, oats were very—not very many oats grow because of the wind situation, didn't take much wind to shall out a crop of oats and blow it on the ground so oats weren't grown. But there was some barley and mostly it was hard red winter wheat.

HF: Any dry farm hay?

FW: There was a little, but it was very—not much. In later years, my grandfather and my dad brought the water out of the Moody Canyon down into the area where I'm living now at the present time, and after they got water available, then more water than they needed for their livestock and other farming operation, then they found—decided that they could grow some hay so they picked about three pieces of land that was relevantly level and put hay in that land and were able to run the water on it but it would not be classified of course as dry farm hay. But they had about 200 acres of hay that they did water later on.

HF: Was the ground quite rough [inaudible] rolling type so it made it rather difficult to surface irrigate?

FW: No, the land they put the hay on was relatively level I, I was a young man and it was quite easy to get the water on it and quite easy to—they selected land that could be watered surface, watered quite easily.

HF: Tell me about how they came to divert water from Moody Creek. How far did they have to bring it in order to get it all in the ground?

FW: It's about 10 or 11 miles from the headquarters of Webster/Soule farm up to the dam in the Moody Canyon and it was quite an operation, quite a feat and accomplishment. My grandfather, my dad went up to the Moody Canyon they got the water rights of course and all the legal angles taken care of and then they went up in the Moody Canyon and with horses and scrapers they built a dam in the canyon, to dam Moody Creek water and hold it back into a reservoir and then they brought the water out up along the side of the canyon and as they came down out of the canyon, they kept the water going along level that the water would come out of the canyon about three miles from where they built the dam the water was able to be brought out of the canyon into the open farm land and they wound around and had to circle around hills and one thing or another to keep it at the right level so the water would run and still not wash and they went through many farms, they went through the farms of many farmers up there and the farmers were all very cooperative because as they came through their land with ditch and the water, that gave the farmers the opportunity to have water for their own operation, for their own livestock and whatever else they might want to use the water for. It was not used for culinary purposes, that was hauled from wells. There were about three wells in the area that everyone got their culinary water from, but in order to get the water from the canyon and down on the farm where they had a goal to stop the water and hold it there. They did this and as I say, it was quite an accomplishment. They used a regular carpenter's level as a transit which makes it even more amazing to me how they were able to do this. And as I used to follow that ditch either on foot or horseback as a young fellow, I was always amazed how the water was brought out there and came down there at the right speed and at the right elevation came down into the farming area.

HF: Can you tell me a little about how the dam itself was constructed I guess primarily rocks and soil.

FW: Yes, it was rocked up and then earth filled dam on rock they hauled in many, many tons of rock I know, I was not there at the time, but they hauled in many, many tons.

HF: Did you have to go far to get the rock?

FW: No, it could—it was brought in from the sides of the canyon and its rocky terrain there, there's a lot of rock there; shale rock and they brought in a lot of shale rock and made up the dam. And then with the horses and scrapers they dragged the dirt in from various areas not too far away and build an earth dam and then on the north side of the canyon—the canyon in this particular area runs more or less east and was on the north side of the Moody Canyon they built a what's know as a spill way so when the reservoir got filled the water would go over this spill way and on down to Moody Canyon. And it was high enough that then that the time the water would get to that point that it was high enough on the ditch that our family was building the water could be diverted out there when it was needed, and when not, it was dammed off and everything would go down the Moody Canyon

HF: That would be the diversion for your ditch would be on the south side then?

FW: Yes, it was on the south side of the canyon and came out of the canyon before it got to the—where the water left the canyon—the canyon turns a little bit to the north so it's going about northeast. And so we were able to come out or they were able to come out with the water where it came out of the canyon going northeast and it went more or less east and got out of the canyon and then it held pretty much…northwest I should say not east but northwest. They were able to go northwest all the way on an angle—different angle's all the way into the farming area.

HF: Do you have any idea how much water was impounded, how many acre feet?

FW: No, I really don't, I can't—I have no idea.

HF: Would the water pretty well was able to bring water all summer long?

FW: Yes, yeah.

HF: All summer

FW: Yes, very seldom did the Moody, got to Moody Canyon, Moody Creek got down low enough; we could not have water as late as we needed it. Normally they didn't need water too late in year because they had a big storage pond on the farm and it would hold enough water normally that they didn't have to worry too much after late summer or early fall. However, they did like to leave this storage pond on the farm quite filled as it went into the winter because during the winter months they would go up there and stay with the saws and a derrick and the other equipment, and would saw blocks of ice off this pond when the ice would get somewhere between 12 and 16 inches thick, they would saw it into blocks and put it on storage on our place and our grandfathers place and some others and then cover it with saw dust so that we would have ice for the next summers living operations.

HF: Especially ice cream.

FW: Yes!!

HF: (laughs) Well now, this storage pond, was that man-made?

FW: Yes. It was just a big pond we—they dug a pond. Oh, it was probably 125 or 150 feet across and around it was just a regular round pond and it was out in the middle it would've been twelve feet deep. I know it would swim a horse so you could get a horse out in the middle of it and horse could only wade halfway to the middle and then he had to swim. As a young kid I used to delight and sometimes in taking, getting on a horse and riding across the pond just to have an opportunity to swim this horse across there.

HF: Now that water was used for stock?

FW: Which they used for stock, and like I say, not for culinary purposes. They kept a fairly large garden on my grandfather's farm and they used it for that, and then there was a—they built a stand pipe and an opportunity down over the hill side that you could fill a tanks on wagons and team and wagons would come under there and fill with water to haul to other farms around that were not right close to the ditch, or when the ditch was not in operation. We would haul water from it and several of our neighbors would and that water was used for them and for their stock and other farming purposes.

HF: That pond then supplied with water from Moody Creek?

FW: Yes. And I might say later—I shouldn't, I guess not later, but about the same time this was done, it was when these steam engines came into operation and of course they required a lot of water and the water was also taken from this pond to operate these steam engines.

HF: Well, and all those dozens of horses.

FW: Oh yes, lots and lots of horses.

HF: (laughs) Were pretty important weren't they?

FW: Yes.

HF: Yeah, and in that connection, now lets see, can you give me an estimate when that pond was put in, maybe was that done when Woodmancy was still there do you suppose?

FW: Uh, I think it was. I think it was. I'm going to have to guess a little bit, I'd guess between 1915 and 1920. And I'm not real certain on the dates on that.

HF: And it was important there probably through the 20's and maybe into the 30's.

FW: Very. Very important. That was very important through the 20's and the 30's into the early 1940's before the ditch was discontinued after we got into mechanical tractors operating the farm with tractors and less need for horses. I of course, the ditch was not so necessary for stock and of course the hay operation was discontinued. And as I recall, we plowed the ditch in and discontinued the operation somewhere around about 1945.

HF: I see, that's very interesting. Now, up until that time, well—let's put it this way, all of your farm equipment was horse drawn up to about what? 1914-15?

FW: Along about that time yes, it was all horse drawn and of course, a lot of horses were involved, a lot of work, a lot of men, a lot of manpower, and a lot of work with the horses. Then about 1914 or 15, they acquired these three steam engines, such as the one that is at Smith Park at the present time.

HF: Let me—let's not go into that quite yet.

FW: Okay.

HF: I would want to know your recollection of the farmstead. Now you, I suppose, there was a primary home up there in which your grandfather lived?

FW: Yes.

HF: In the summer time, maybe not in the winter time?

FW: That is correct. The farm headquarters are about a mile south of the Walker grain elevators on the railroad citing at Walker, about a mile south and about a quarter or a half a mile west of the road that goes south of Walker elevators and that's where my grandfather's headquarters were, and he and grandmother had a nice, one of the nicer homes, of the time. Just at the north side of the main headquarter buildings, and that's where they spent their summers and then in the winter either in Rexburg, or as I say, they spend a lot of winters in Salt Lake City.

HF: Now, support buildings like, barns, sheds, machine sheds etc. describe those that were on the stead.

FW: They had a large barn that would house about 40 or 50 horses, I think 40 horses was the size of the one barn and then there was a side barn that would accommodate probably another 20. The one big barn had a hay storage in between the middle of it and the horses came in from both sides and faced the hay storage where they were taken care of, and then the side barn had other facilities for feeding the horses, and also on one end of that barn there was section of it set apart for about four milk cows which they kept all the time of course for milk and would make their own butter and would have cream for the hired help. Altogether, as I recall one time counting the buildings that were on the main headquarters there, there were about 22 buildings.

HF: My golly!

FW: And there were all kinds. There were three large machinery storage buildings, another smaller machinery building and other four small buildings that were used for grain storage to use the grain for feeding the horses through the winter and summer. And then the bunk houses for the hired help to stay in, the main cook house, and an office for the men in charge of the farm, and the ice house for the storing of ice that I just mentioned, and the repair building for repairing harnesses, their own blacksmith shop. Another building that had a big oil vat, a big vat tub that they would heat the oil and during the winter months they would repair the harness and then they would dip them in this heated oil, so that the leather wouldn't get dry and crack and break up. Just a number of other buildings.

HF: Took several support families I suppose wouldn't it?

FW: Yes, they had large operation, large pay roll, and large operation in the summertime, somewhere between 20 and 30 men on hand, most of the time. Sometimes it would get down slack season would be less than 20 and then the winter months would be from four to six men that would be employed year round and they would stay there in the winter to put up this ice and to repair the harness, and other things to prepare themselves for the next summers operation.

HF: Primarily a husband and wife.

FW: No.

HF: Singles, huh?

FW: There wasn't a husband and wife, some of the men had wives and families and would live maybe in Rexburg or somewhere else nearby. And they would stay on the farm for the week and then on occasion come down into the town for the weekend. The lady that was the cook there for many years, as I recalled her and knew her as I grew up, was a widow lady, had two small children about my age and she was a widow lady; lived there alone. The foreman was a single man; I don't think he had ever been married before. After about three or four, five years, they got together and were married and they didn't stay there too long, they moved—she quit the cooking operation and moved into Rexburg and they had a home here on west main street in Rexburg for many years.

HF: Who was this?

FW: Ellen Tea was her name and he was Thomas Cook, one of the finest mechanics and repairman and farm foreman that anyone could ask for and she was just a fine of a lady.

HF: And she had the two children.

FW: She had the two children

HF: From the previous...

FW: From a previous marriage. Ralph and Errelee Tea and they grew up there

HF: T-E-A?

FW: T-E-A. And they grew up there while she was cooking there and then they moved into Rexburg and finished their schooling. She and Mr. Cook had one daughter, who is married to Quincy Jensen the great historian from Idaho Falls now.

HF: That's tremendous. That's really tremendous. Quincy stopped into see me following that presentation that you gave because he was there he and his wife.

FW: Yes. I made a point to invite them and see that they would come up.

HF: That's really great. Now, incidentally, what kind of work horses were they?

FW: Well, I don't...

HF: Did you use any particular breed?

FW: No, there wasn't any particular breed

HF: Belgium's?

FW: Belgium's, and oh, I don't recall, I can't remember the names –the breeds right off, I know they as well, but they didn't go into thoroughbred type horses of any kind, a blood line of horses. There was a lot of horse trading took place in this area, and so as a result why, you didn't anything in a full blood, one line.

HF: Did they use wild hay primarily that they could get from the range land or?

FW: They did until the time that I mentioned that they were able to put water on some of the land and grow their own hay. Then it was alpha with a grass mix in it.

HF: I see. And that was a lot better?

FW: Oh yes. Much better.

HF: Now let's turn our attention to this self propelled; these big tractors. You mentioned there were three of 'em that were purchased?

FW: Yes my father got one and grandfather got two. My father and grandfather farmed quite a lot together.

HF: More so than the other boys?

FW: Yes more than the other two boys farmed with him. They all had a good operation and they all worked well, but I don't know whether it was being the oldest or we, our farm headquarters were a little closer to his than the others, or whether they just had a much better relationship or what I don't know, but my grandfather and my father were very close and farmed a lot together and they acquired these three steam tractors, steam engines together at this time.

HF: And one of those is now there at the Smith Park?

FW: Yes, about 15 years ago, somewhere along about then, we cut up two of them at the outbreak of the war in 1941. Cut up two of them and sold them because there was a demand for scrap iron and everyone was – the government and everyone was in need of scrap iron and so we cut up two of them for scrap metal but as we got to the finishing, the cutting up of the second one, they idea came to my father that it wasn't bringing us enough return to make it worthwhile to destroy all three of them and so he's lets keep one as a memento and a relic and so we kept the one my father had and that's the one my brother Tom and Bill and I gave to the city about 12 or 15 years ago and it's the one that's on display in Smith Park at this time.

HF: Now I think it would be really great if we could get maybe not here but you could supply me with the manufacturer, when it was manufactured, describe the equipment, was it international or what-who the manufacturer was we can work that out later.

FW: I can do that, it was a Holt. H-O-L-T was the manufacturers name and I'm certain it was built in Oakland California, not positive of this but I can get that information also, I have access to a photo that we can get of it if you you'd want one of those.

HF: That would be great. And I think it would even be fine to put a plague on that [appropriate] so that persons visiting the park could be enlightened where it came from, what it was and just how important. Now up to that time you used horses to draw and pull the harvester.

FW: Yes, at the time I can recall, even after the steam engines were taken out of use which was about 1927, they were taken out of operation.

HF: So they were in usage maybe 15 years?

FW: about that yes. And they were a big operation. It took a lot of water, it took a lot of coal and it took quite a few men to operate the entire thing because they had to have men hauling water and coal to the steamer and then they had to have a firemen or two and an engineer and it was quite an operation the big steamers were very effective for their time, they were slow and lumber some but at least they were an improvement for their time over the horses but the other equipment became available but we still maintain quite a lot of horses for a time after they were taken out of operation. During the time horses were used, my grandfather on his farm would have between 125 and 150 horses and we had somewhere around 40 on our own farm, my dad and our family. So we were in the vicinity neighborhood of 200 horses. And of course, the ones my uncle Kenneth and uncle Elmo had it would make at least 200 horses in the operation there that we would have when they were all gathered together in the fall for the winter feeding.

HF: How many horses would it take to hook on to one of those big combines? Is that what you called them in those days?

FW: Yes, harvester/combine, yes. Twenty four was what was used to pull a 20 foot cut grain combine at that time. And the operator, the driver of the horses had a long ladder that stuck from the machine at an angle up over the rear horses and he sat up there and he would be sitting up over the heads of the rear horses and driving the entire horses from the ones on the front that would be three or four lead horses we would call them and he would drive those too.

HF: There would be three or four abreast then?

FW: No, they'd, that would be on the very front on the lead. There would be six and six and six and four so it would be 22 horses and he would have lines to the four on the very lead and he would drive them right or left and the rest would follow so it was not a big operation to drive them it was quite a thing to get them all hooked up and hitched properly so they would all pull together.

HF: Could they move along at three, four, five miles an hour?

FW: Probably about three miles an hour. They would pull the machine they would pull the grain combine as fast as it was capable of running the grain through it and coming out properly thrashed.

HF: Now on those days, did all the grain that was thrashed have to be sowed in sacks?

FW: No, for the first short while they, it was all a sack operation but my grandfather and my dad were a long ways ahead of the general farming operation in the fact that they got into the bulking

<Interruption>

HF: Okay Mr. Webster just continue that description.

FW: They got into bulking the grain and getting away from the sacks because it was a lot of work and extra expense so they built bins on the combines that would hold about 75 bushels of grain and ran it into these bins rather than into the sacks as it had always been done. And then when the bin got filled they had wagons throughout the field and when the bin got full they would stop the combine, a wagon would pull up to the side of it and they had a spot from the grain storage bin that would drop down into the wagon and then they would let the grain into the wagon and the team would pull the wagon away and they would go ahead and fill the bin again.

HF: Were they doing this in the 20's would you say?

FW: Yes. Uh huh.

HF: That early?

FW: Yes. Uh huh. They got into that quite early and it was, like I said, they were quite a ways ahead of the general farming practice of the manufacturers of equipment and other things and designing their own bulking operation. And I'm sure, that because partly at least because of this that the combine manufacturing companies began picking up this idea and of course it was very long until they all got away from using sacks for the grain.

HF: Now, were they using in a lot of the farmers, when they were still using horses, they were still doing it with sacks?

FW: Yes, quite a lot of them still did it as long—till they got about out of the harsh era there were still a lot of sacks. I was old enough to get into hauling sacks and I was not old enough to do that too much until it was getting into the tractors but it ran out along in the night of 1930 or 31, or 32 from then on it was very few sacks that were ever used.

HW: Before we get out of this subject with horses, name two or three teamsters that were just, really had a tremendous amount of expertise in maneuvering those horses.

FW: One of the best, one of the best that I had—I knew him after he got away from there but I knew him then too, one of the best horseman that I think that was ever on a farm and that has ever handled horses was Mr. Evan Lewis who was a father to Jack and Archie Lewis who are residences of Rexburg and both still farm his land up there south and east of us. He was one of the finest horsemen that ever had anything to do with horses others just take a second or two to think a little bit. My brother Tom was about as handy with horses as anyone could have been. Another that was always very good and still has horses that he uses not so much in his operation as to have team and nice show horses is proud of having some horses and he worked up there quite a little bit was Dell Palmer. Dell was always interested in horses.

HF: Now you had him speak the other night?

FW: Yes he gave a couple of experiences the other evening of when he worked up there as a young fellow along with my grandfather.

HF: That's interesting. Now you described in part what the Webster's had. The Webster/Soule and so on. Were there other ranchers that were of equal size and enthusiasm, and operation as the Webster's?

FW: Yes.

HF: In the 20's let's say, nearly 30's.

FW: Yes, there were. Maybe not in size, for some period of time and I don't know how long it lasted maybe until the Webster/Soule farm was dissolved and broken up, but that farm was known, had the reputation of being the largest wheat reproducing farm in the state of Idaho for quite a long period of time. I might just divert if I can recall the figures exactly. At one time, my grandfather made the statement they could ship a hundred cars of grain a day for 100 days, meaning about a tenth of a million bushels of grain they could ship from this farm operation in a year or sixty, er, five, pardon me, five sixty car trains of grain a day could go out of—be shipped. So it was big operation, but other farmers that were prominent in the area at the time as I can recall and I may miss some but Fred Parkinson and Joe Parkinson—when my grandfather stopped his sheep operation, Fred Parkinson and Joe Parkinson bought the operation of my grandfather the sheep operation and also my other grandfather was a sheepman, Thomas E. Ricks was a sheepman and the two Parkinson brothers bought their interest as well so they had a large sheep operation, but Fred Parkinson who has still some sons here Ross and Keith and Morris and they had a farm operation east of our location.

<Switch Tape>

HF: Interview on the 10th of December 1983, with Frank R. Webster. Yes, now you were mentioning some of the other big roles.

FW: Another one, maybe I got a little of this on the other side of the tape, Mr. Fred Smith who was a pioneer and his parents and his of family pioneer stock. Father of Snuffy Jack Smith who still farms their operation, he had a large operation, not to far from us. Another one was Harvey Summers who still has family—descendents farming up there and over on the west side of our operation there were others, some of the Rick's had land over in there and they also had sizeable operations.

HF: It's my understanding that about 1916 the railroad branch, the loop as it were called came up through there. Up until that time it was quite a chore to haul your grain down here to Rexburg wasn't it?

FW: Yes, the grain was hauled in. We built, my grandfather I should say, built a big elevator that would hold about 80 thousand bushels of grain and they would haul it into there during the harvest season in the fall. And then during the winter months, a lot of the time was spend with the team and sleighs and they would use the same grain boxes off the wagons and put them on sleighs and they would load these sleighs with grain and haul it into Rexburg during the winter months.

HF: And ship it out from Rexburg.

FW: Yes, then it would come into the Rexburg and be taken to the various elevators for grinding or shipping or whatever. About—it was about 1916, you're right, that the railroad went through our farm, the loop railroad it comes out of Idaho Falls up through Ammon, Ririe, and Archer and up through about the middle of my grandfather's farm and winds around to the northeast and winds up at New Dale and then it used to go into St. Anthony until the flood took out part of the track and they never did replace it so the train goes up to New Dale now and turns around and goes back.

HF: Was a big help wasn't it?

FW: Yes, it was a tremendous help. My grandfather built a big elevator on the railroad citing on the track and put a citing out to it so he could load his own cars from there.

HF: Did they call that any...

FW: Gale. G-A-L-E. Citing was where my grandfather built his elevator. And when I was a kid I remember on occasion or two, we'd be up there loading grain out and the wind would be blowing so hard you could hardly stand up. And two or three different times I remember asking my dad why the citing got the name of gale, and he said step outside and you can tell, that was exactly the reason because the wind blew across there quite severely at times. But it did make quite a difference because he could call his grain into this elevator and ship it on rail and then also the next year after that, my father built a big grain storage on our farm and then during the winter months we would haul our grain from there down to this elevator and put it on rail so it cut the hauling of the grain way down, the expense and time involved in hauling the grain and getting it...

HF: Was there a name assigned to that particular citing of your fathers?

FW: No, it was out in the middle of our farm.

HF: So Walker's?

FW: The Walker elevator was about a mile east of the Gale citing and not to many years after this, Midland elevators built a grain storage there which is still there and operated by Jensen brothers out in Burton and there are several there now. But they built one and General Mills built another one, and so there were two commercial elevators there that other farmers could haul grain into when they harvested or during the winter whichever they preferred and shipped their grain there and made it a lot better for all the farmers in the entire area.

HF: So these big companies came in and erected these big elevators and leased space to the farmers for the storage?

FW: They would either lease it or buy the grain out right and ship it, what was brought in.

HF: I see. Now, all that's changed and about every farmer has his own storage.

FW: There are very few farmers that do not have their own grain storage. And on this Walker citing there's about eight different individual grain storages. My brother Bill and I have one there that will hold around 180 thousand bushels of grain and there are others there.

HF: Now, Frank we've talked a little about this surface irrigation that your grandfather did. Were there others that also diverted water from any of the creeks maybe from Moody? Or maybe from Lyman Creek or any other creek?

FW: Not up in our area there weren't. Mr. Albert Luthy as we've talked about earlier he may have done some and also another farmer that was a neighbor of his in the Herbert area it was John Clements and Alec Lathen those three were the prominent farmers up there along with another Mr. Henry Blunk who is the father of Kenneth Blunk a Rexburg resident who still farms Kenneth and Leo, two brothers who still farm in that area. But they didn't—weren't able to get into, didn't try or weren't able I don't know what reason but they didn't get into surface watering any crops or trying to raise any hay according to my knowledge.

HF: I see. Up until they were really able to develop water, they really didn't grow any potatoes commercially did they?

FW: No. No, they were—in fact there were none growing in that area anywhere south and east of Rexburg at all. There were no potatoes other than just maybe a small garden.

HF: No you have commented that there had been some wells that were developed for purposes of culinary usage.

FW: Yes.

HF: Where were these located and how early were they developed?

FW: Well, my grandfather drilled a well—dug a well—there on the farm right near his headquarter buildings quite early in his operation. And they weren't able to go down too deep and they go into a little water that they also encountered a problem and quicksand came in and took that well over so that it shut that well off. But over north and east of our operation there are two large buttes. And on the north side of the one that belonged to Harv Summers, who I mentioned a little earlier he drilled a well and had water on this one. And my uncle Kenneth also drilled a well behind one of these buttes and was able to get some culinary water. South and west of us about two miles, there was another one drilled there and I'm not right certain who drilled it, a man the name of Swenson farmed it for many years and he had a well there with a windmill on it, and a storage facility up on the side of the hill. And we would haul water from that well for culinary purposes, we'd go over there and pull under the pipe down below the hill—down lower than the storage—and turn the water end of our tanks and to haul it back and put it in the storage systems that we had for culinary purposes.

HF: Now did every ranch have a cistern where they would bring this water and that's where they would keep their water, dairy products, milk and cheese and butter and things like that down in the cisterns. Isn't that right?

FW: Many of them would and some of them would go if they had a steep bank ground steep side hill on the north side but they would get a deep snow bank and a lot of them would early in the spring or late winter they would haul straw and cover this snow bank. I've seen those snow banks last until late summer and they would store their cheese and butter and milk and stuff in those snow banks, but otherwise they did all use these cistern or the ice as I mentioned earlier we used to use that all summer and you ask if most of them did. I cannot recall just as I sit here and think about it I cannot recall anyone who did not have a cistern for storage of water purposes.

HF: For culinary purposes.

FW: Yes.

HF: How early were these wells dug or drilled that you were commenting about. Where people would go and get there culinary water?

FW: The one I mentioned, Mr. Swensen had, it had to be in the early 20's if not before that, but I'd say it had to be in the very early 20's because I can recall when I was only seven or eight years old I either rode with someone or when I got old enough to handle a

team of horse myself, I would haul water from that well so that would've had to been not later that 24, 25.

HF: I've interviewed others up in the Clementsdale area, and they would go down to Canyon Creek and load up with their water in these tanks or whatever they call them and take them and load and put them into the cisterns.

FW: A lot of farmers did that and a lot of them did this from the Moody Creek as well. They would haul water and store it in these storages, out at the Moody Creek. What they would try and do would be to find a place along where the water, where the stream went by and get the situation where they could get the wagon lower than the water and then they would run a pipe up to the canal and pull under this pipe down lower and just stick the pipe out in the canal and it would run through the pipe and load their tank and it was quite a simple operation. Otherwise they would have had a hand pump or some nature like that.

HF: Once your grandfather had completed this reservoir up there, did that serve this added purpose to help anybody get their water, culinary water?

FW: I think some of the farmers between from where we brought the water out of the Moody Canyon and to our headquarters that I mentioned earlier I think some of the farmers, in fact I'm certain that some of them did get water from the creek and use if for their culinary purposes, yes but when it would get into the storage on the farm, the pond that I mentioned, this reservoir that I've talked about, when it would get into there then it was not fit for human consumption because we watered the stock from it and they'd go out and water in it and wade in it and so—but coming down through the farm area it would have been clear and pure enough that it could been used for culinary purposes.

HF: Incidentally, are there some remains of that dam still up there?

FW: Yes, the [spillway?] that I mentioned where the water would go over the Moody, go down through the Moody Canyon when the reservoir got filled, it's still there. And the dam is still there and of course it's deteriorated but you can still see where it its. One of my boys flies quite a lot, Bart and I fly quite often together and we'll fly up around over there and you can even see it from the air as you fly over it.

HF: Can ya?

FW: It's still there yes.

HF: My gosh, that would've been, 60 years ago

FW: 60 years ago.

HF: Isn't that something? Who was the first person on the bench to your knowledge that drilled a deep well, whether it was successful or whether it was a failure. Do you know who drilled first?

FW: I would think as I recall back in my memory I would just have to say it was my brother Bill, and about 19 and 60. He drilled a well on the farm on that land he's operating which incidentally, part of it was homesteaded by my mother. My mother and father home—my mother homesteaded 160 acres up there and developed it and that's where my brother Bill's headquarters are at the present time where we were raised as children, we lived there in the summer and Rexburg in the winter and he drilled, I think as I can recall the first well, it would have been about 1960.

HF: Was it successful?

FW: Yes. He hit good water, a good supply of water and he still uses the well.

HF: How deep?

FW: It's about 1,050 feet to the bottom of the well that he drilled and the water comes up the hole to about 600 feet below the surface of the land, ground.

HF: What was his first procedure, to pond first, reservoir it, and then sprinkle from that or did he—does it go right directly into your sprinkling system?

FW: Yes, it goes right into the sprinklers, he never did build any storage, none of us have that have drilled wells, the first part of his operation when he ventured into this thing, we did not have electricity in that area and so that was a feat to accomplish and get through the power company to run the electricity up there and so he drilled his first well and they ran the power line up into the area so power would be available, and as soon as he found that he had a good supply of water, then he buried what we call a main line out through the field 'bout an eight or ten or twelve inch line—depending on how far and how much water you wanted to run out onto the land, and he would—he ran that out at various locations on his farm and then where the water was going to go out onto the land, they put pipes up off this main line where they would connect these sprinkler lines onto there and lay them out across the land and when the pump was in operation water being pumped would go down this main line and out into the sprinklers and when the pump was shut off, of course the water would stop and then that was the end of that operation. And we're still doing very, very much the same way now, and watering many, many hundred acres up there.

HF: Okay, 1960, approximately, was the beginning?

FW: Yes

HF: Did you follow suit?

FW: Yes. 1966. I had been dry farming all of my married life from the time I took on my own dry farming operation in about 1944 or 5, so I'd been in it twenty years or more dry farming and others had drilled wells in the mean time I was by far not the second one, but

anyway, I did follow suit, yes. We— it got to where dry farming was not productive enough with the escalating costs of farming and so forth until we decided that we would have to get into a different type farming. I did not want to do it, but my family and I discussed it on several occasions so we decided to drill our first well in the summer of 1965 and got into watering in 1966. At the same time we built a home up there we had been living in Rexburg from the time we were married, we built a home up there and moved up not to far from our first well and that's where we are still farming.

HF: Did you—how far was your well from some of the other wells?

FW: From Bill's well in a straight line across it's approximately two and a half miles. And my well is about thousand feet deep. We have incidentally...

HF: About the same as his?

FW: Yes, about the same, maybe not quite as deep as his. We have three wells now in our operation and they're all about the same depth and Bill has three wells, they're well from where I live I can look every direction I can see, not maybe the wells themselves, but I can see the location of about 25 different wells from where I live now.

HF: So, would you say that most of the land that was dry farmed now, is under sprinkling systems?

FW: From Rexburg back south and east until you get back, probably at least ten miles from Rexburg south and east and every—you will not run into any, very, very little dry farm land now it's almost 100 percent under sprinkler irrigation of some type.

HF: What changes have occurred with the use of water, what has been the result? On the Rexburg Bench?

FW: When we were drying farming as we talked earlier, we summer fallowed half our land each year so we only produced a crop on half our farm. So it, we put every acre of land under water so now we farm all acres each year. Which of course doubles our production in acres, plus the watering will about double your production per acre. So in reality, we're getting about four times the production off the farm as we were before we had water on it and we are raising, most of the farmers up in that area, principally potatoes and barley, some wheat but not much. It's nearly all potatoes and barley being grown and nearly all farms are, as I said are about 100 percent under water this time.

HF: And wheat is planted in the spring or is it planted in the fall?

FW: What wheat is grown is about 50/50 percent on that. I imagine half of it is planted in the fall and half in the spring. There isn't much wheat grown now because barley has been a better return crop for us, but there is a little, about half the acres of wheat that are planted are planted in the fall and the rest in the spring.

HF: You get what type of productivity with barley?

FW: We feel like we are getting a good average crop off of barley if we get 75 bushel per acre. And when we were dry farming, we used to think if we got 40 bushels of barley we had quite a good crop of barley so as you can see, it has doubled our production and cropping every acre has doubled it again. However, I might point out that our expenses are tremendous, sounds like a big improvement, which is really is, but when we were dry farming we didn't apply any fertilizer, we didn't have any power bills for pumping water, we didn't have the expensive watering equipment that we do have now either in the center pivots or hand lines, the labor of moving those, so our expenses are much, much greater than they were when we were dry farming.

HF: So you have to go to crops that will bring per acre a much larger price and then that has to be potatoes? Unfortunately, some years the potatoes prices are very poor. That's tough!

FW: Well, that's right. We can't always depend on a good return financially from our potato crop, right at the moment the price isn't too bad, it isn't as good as it really ought to be for the amount of investment that we have. But yes it does about have to be potatoes. Now I mentioned we raise barley, we water the barley the same as we do the potatoes to mature it. But, in order to drill a well, and put in the investment that is necessary to develop a well, and water a farm it would not be possible to do it and grow a grain crop of any kind. Barley, wheat or any combination of any grain at all. You need to have a crop that will bring enough to return to pay for the expense of the expensive operation.

HF: Now Frank, when you and your father, so forth, were farming up there in say in the 30's, prior to the Second World War, could you give me an estimate of what farm land was worth? What it would sell for.

FW: Yes, I remember about 1935, 6, or 7 somewhere along, probably about 1935 or 6, my brother Tom was able to buy a section of land, 640 acres. It became available and the farmer that owned it was selling it, was asking ten dollars per acre. And at that time that was quite a lot of money per acre for dry farm land. But because of its location and other things involved, my brother Tom did buy that land for ten dollars an acre. I'm going to say it was about 1936.

HF: Did it have any improvements on it?

FW: It had, no, nothing at all. No buildings...

HF: No fences, no nothing no.

FW: No fences, no buildings, no anything at all, just farm land. And we thought that I know discussing that at the time that it was quite expensive for farm land. Now what it was done, what it was sold for before that I was not aware because I wasn't interested in buying any of course and that had not been discussed in our home.

HF: That of course would be right during the Depression period?

FW: Well, yes, 1935, 6, 7 those years there when the Depression was maybe just breaking over a little bit. Before that, I'm sure land would have been much less expensive.

HF: At that time, of course, a bushel of grain what would it bring?

FW: Well, I've seen the time when grain forty cents a bushel, in my early years. I've seen time when it was forty cents a bushel was a good price for grain and on occasion when it was even less than that. And so

HF: Take you quite a while to pay for an acre.

FW: Yes, yes it would.

HF: At forty cents a bushel.

FW: The expenses for growing the grain and everything else included it would of ten dollars an acre was a fair price for ground, yes. Then in 1940, about 1941 or 42, I recall I had an opportunity to buy some state land at a state auction, and it was appraised, as I recall, appraised around 25 dollars an acre. Now this would be just in the middle of the War Years, maybe right following, probably following the Second World War in 1945 maybe.

HF: Did that include some improvements?

FW: No, there were no improvements on the land that I was interested in buying, it was state land and it was put up for sale and handled by a state auction. And as I recall it was about 25 dollars and acre that it was appraised. And because of the location, again adjoining our existing farm and because we did not have to move very great distance to operate this land it was bid up when the sale was conducted a fellow came along, I never did know why, but that's incidental, but he bid me up on that land to about 35 dollars an acre. And I thought, boy I was really paying dearly for that land, which at that time I was. And so the land did escalate in price a little bit within a ten year period then and the war I'm sure had something to do with that. It wasn't too many years after that, probably mid-1950's or maybe as late as 1960, my brother Tom and my brother Bill and I had an opportunity to buy some land that adjoined each of us that was separate parcels but it was owned by the same person.

HF: Privately owned.

FW: Privately owned by the same person, yes. And we had an opportunity to buy about a third of which was available and we had quite a time buying that land we finally got the job done but we had quite a time buying that land for about a 140 dollars an acre. Now

this was about the advent of the time of water, but there was no water of course on this land or no nothing in the immediate future.

HF: And farmers still weren't capable of raising potatoes, were ya?

FW: No, no it's still a farming operation of dry land only. And so, but there again we got involved in that because partly we needed to have more acres to expand our operation and exist in farming and the other thing I mentioned was the location of it, it joined us that's why we were doing it in three parcels, part of it on my farm, part of it on my brother Bill, and part of it Tom.

HF: Any improvements on the land?

FW: None on any of it, no. Very rarely any land was sold up there that had any improvements because there were not very many buildings, and hardly any fences that were valuable at that time anyway. So there was nothing, all you were really buying was just strictly the acres.

HF: As a diversion question, in buying sort of raw land, maybe from the state or whatever state land, did you have to do much to improve that land, rub sagebrush off or anything like that or had this already been done?

FW: No, in our area where we are, this is already under farming, under cultivation, in fact we bought, from the time I can remember back my father bought quite a little bit of a lot of acres that were in state ownership. And other farmers around us as well and they did it the same way we did because of the location of it and the availability. They would be operating it possibly and then when it came up for sale—it was very rare that one farmer would try and buy land that another was operating and bid against him, we all tried to work together that way, it was very seldom a farmer would come along and bid against another farmer and try to take any land away from him because he was already operating this land and it was in production, yes. But some of the land back east further up into the hill area towards Teton Basin Mountains from our area. There's some of that up there that was not under [inaudible] and it has come up for sale and some of it has been developed some was for grazing only of course, and there have been few occasion in more recent years when there has been a little bidding and little competitive buying on that, but that was not so in my time.

HF: Now, pursuing this same line of questioning, as to land values and their increase, in the 60's after it was discovered that water could be applied to the land through these deep wells, what happened to the land value.

FW: The price escalated immediately, tremendously. It got up to where ground was being sold for as much as 5 and 600 dollars an acre. And people thought that was an awful high price to be paying for land but with the escalating costs and inflation and all that it has been now, its way more than double that. You could sell your land now for way more, well for fifteen, eighteen hundred dollars and maybe even more per acre. 'Course this

would be land that would have, you talk about improvements, this would be land that would have water on it, pipe laid in the ground, and the well and other improvements of that nature. I know I would at this particular time I would hate to offer my farm for sale for a thousand dollars an acre, unless I meant business and wanted to sell it because someone would pay that kind of price for it.

HF: To put the water on, and drill the well and put out your pipes and do everything, it just literally, doubles the value or even more.

FW: Even more than that yes, uh huh.

HF: Before we complete this particular interview, touching on the subject, the primary subject, would you wish to offer any comment on what your own personal observation has been living up there on that Bench for literary all your life Frank. (chuckles) You've lived up there all your life haven't ya?

FW: Yes, I was born in Rexburg but we, my folks were farming at the time. The summer I was born, mother and father built a nice home over in the northeast area of Rexburg. And we lived on the farm in the summer, and we'd live up there the entire week and then on Saturday afternoon we'd come into town and build a fire in the little water heating stove we had and we'd take our Saturday night bath and stay in town on Saturday night and go to church on Sunday and our church activities would normally finish about 4 o' clock on Sunday and then we'd go back to the farm and we'd take care of the feeding of our stock and our other chores that were necessary. And stay there for the next week. And then we would move into town in the winter and fall when the work was finished or even maybe a little before, my mother and children into town and we'd start into school and so I had been raised there yes. I've grown up on this particular farm that I said where Bill has his headquarters now it was my home, it was the only home I knew other than the wintertime down here in town. Then 17 years ago, in 1966, we decided when we drilled our first well in 1965 and we found out we were going to have water available, and we were going to have an irrigated operation, we decided for the progress and the good of our entire operation, we would get out of Rexburg, so we sold our home in Rexburg here that we have had from the time we were shortly after we were married. And we moved and built a home there and moved into that home and the spring of 1966 where we have since lived and it has been a very fine thing we've really enjoyed it we [inaudible] the operation I mentioned earlier that I didn't want to get into the watering operation, I just in my own mind I knew I would not like it because I didn't want to like it, so we got in that started in that and I have never enjoyed anything as much in my whole life as the operation. We used to work, actively farm from somewhere between 75 and 90 days a year outside of a little moving grain in the winter, farming operation took us somewhere between 75, 90 or a 100 days a year, now its everyday of the week. We have things we are working in, 'course we have a much, much larger operation, much more equipment and machinery that needs maintaining and there's just much more to it. And during the summertime we hardly have any time that we don't have quite a lot of work that we need to be doing. And so it has increased everything, our activity and our expenses, and our machinery and the whole thing. But I certainly do enjoy it I'm trying to retire at the

present time, I'm trying to retire and get away from it, and turn it over to my sons who incidentally put an interest in it and have a terrific ability to manage the farm and hopefully, I can slow down and get away from quite so much activity as I have done all my life.

HF: Frank, we haven't commented much on changing from driving horses in your plowing and your harrowing and summer fallowing and so forth, to that of a tractor, but I suppose you haven't missed the horses and their problems too much have ya?

FW: No, no I really didn't. I always enjoyed horses, in fact I had a horse for quite a number of years after we married and got into farming to mechanical farming, I always have loved a nice horse and I still do, but I do not miss having them. They were a big operation there was a lot of work feeding and maintaining horses and taking care of them and the work was done so much slower of course you could go out with a seven horses on a two bottom plow and plow somewhere between six and seven acres a day and that went on for a long, long while in the spring. Now we can go out and get on an air-conditioned tractor and all the comforts of home and it isn't unusual at all to plow a hundred acres a day with one tractor so it's a tremendous change has taken place.

HF: How much did it cost to buy your first tractor?

FW: The first tractor I have, in fact I still have it, it's a quite old in years, but not in service, it cost me 5,400 dollars. At this particular time I built a home in Rexburg, no I've got to take that back. This is the second tractor I still have now, but the first one had the home we lived in Rexburg when we built it in 1941, cost the contract price on the completed home ready to move into was 5400 dollars and I bought a Caterpillar Tractor, a D6 Caterpillar Tractor the same time for 5400 dollars easy to remember because they were both identical figures. And now that same tractor is well over 100,000 dollars to buy.

HF: Isn't that something. Talk about the price of operation! (chuckles) It's fabulous. What kind of soil is on the Bench?

FW: It's a rather sandy soil, it isn't heavy, it's a rather sandy type soil. It is ideal for potato operation because it doesn't clod up if you farm it at all properly, it doesn't form clods and interfere with the good farming operation. We can have storms like we have had the past [tape skips] on occasion and the water would be standing in the potato rows for a day or two even, and within a week or less in a week. In fact I've seen it that way within two days or three days, a dust would be coming up behind your pickup as you drove up the road, so it absorbs the water real well. And it doesn't set up hard; it's an ideal type soil for our type of operation.

HF: I was interested your comment the other night when this, when your grandfather was honored when you made the comment that after he had produced a few potatoes up there, with some of the water that had been brought out of Moody, he indicated that if you only had availability of water, that would have been the finest soil to produce potatoes.

FW: I was interested in finding that out myself, I guess that's another place like we've mentioned about [boaking] grain over sacks, he had foresight if it could see these things or could visualize the possibility. And this little garden they have maybe would produce 50 or 75 sacks of potatoes for their next years use. I was able to look at that and say this land, this ground is the right kind of texture apparently that would produce potatoes if it had water available to it and I'm farming at the present time—I'm farming this exact land where the garden used to be, so I know just what he was talking about. That whole area is prime for this type/kind of farming.

HF: How many hundred weights of potatoes do you produce per acre now?

FW: We like to look at an average of 250 sacks, 250 weight of sacks per acre. It isn't unusual to get more and isn't not to really unusual to get a little less, but for an average and a good way to figure our crop, our storage facilities, and everything considered, we like to look at 250 sacks per acre.

HF: Your father—or grandfather undoubtedly was very proud of being a farmer. I take it your father was too.

FW: Very, very much.

HF: Tell me a little about your father and his endeavors on the ranch.

FW: As I mentioned a little earlier, my dad and granddad worked very close together. And he learned a lot from my grandfather I'm sure, but he also had the ability to learn on his own from experiences and experimentation. He was a dedicated worker in anything he did, he was just as dedicated and just a great a man as my grandfather. He didn't have quite the opportunity of pioneering some of the things as great as my grandfather did of settling this area, of course, but he was a very outstanding man. He had a business ability that was second to none, and just an outstanding manager. And he was well respected in this valley as any person as I suppose there ever was. My grandfather was a short man probably about 5'6'' or 7'' and not very heavy he probably wouldn't weigh over 160 or 70 pounds at the most. My dad was about the same height and weighed well over 220 or 30 pounds, he was very heavy and short but he was—even at that he was quite active until his later years when he became inactive physically.

HF: Now you're a little bit smaller than your dad then aren't ya?

FW: I'm a little lighter, I'm a little taller but lighter than my dad yes.

HF: You look like your dad? You resemble your dad?

FW: No. No everyone has told me all my life, if they could see me in a dress they'd think I was my mother, so I'd have to say I look like my mother, which I'm proud to do. But my dad and mother were outstanding in the community in every respect. Civically, my dad was on the city counsel, was on the school board, he served many responsible

positions in the church. My mother was of the same nature, she was very active and a leader in her field no matter what it was. They were just an outstanding couple, and we're very proud of the ancestry we have coming from that. And as far as we're concerned they produced sons and daughters that I hope can be just as well respected.

HF: Well that's great. Tell me about your wife, who was she, when did you marry her?

FW: My wife was raised in Sugar City, she was a daughter of John W. Hamilton who was a sheep man and because of that I suppose my dad and my grandfather were acquainted with him. She and my, one of my mother's brother's was single for long, well, most of his life in fact he was married a short while and from then on was single. He herded sheep and worked for Mr. Hamilton for a long, long while. She comes from a family of seven daughters and one of the youngest is their only brother. And we were not acquainted until we met at Ricks College the first year I was at Ricks College, we became acquainted and we went together for about a year, year and a half and then I left to serve a mission when I came back during that time she taught school a couple years. When I came back we were married in the fall of 1939 and we feel that we both come from good stock, good pioneer stock, good dependable people. And I have always have the greatest respect for her, she's been a very, very great help to me, and anything that I have endeavored to do, she's always supported me very well. She has always been active in the community and various activities and as well as church activities. We have both tried to fulfill our responsibilities in the community in everyway that we can.

HF: Tell me about your family—your sons and daughters.

FW: We have four children, our oldest is our only daughter, Sandra, who lives in—just out of Boston, Massachusetts at the present time, has two boys had three and lost one in a tragic accident. And they are doing well, very successful in their business ventures there, she's very active in her church and community work there, she's on the city counsel, she's chairman of the school board and active in the church activities. Her husband is a church Stake President at this time. And our three sons all live in Rexburg, Boyd, our oldest boy, has been in business in Rexburg for quite a number of years. Byron and Bart both graduated from Brigham Young University and are the boys that working with me now on the farm. Sandra incidentally graduated from Utah State University and our three boys all served church missions and all are taking part in the community and church responsibilities as well.

HF: Now, you and your wife also served a mission a few years ago,

FW: We served a mission in Canada with the Indian people from the spring of 1978 until the fall of 1979 had a very enjoyable experience and learned to love the Indian people yes.

HF: Mr. Webster, I want you to know, personally I've just really enjoyed this today and as we complete the interview you have any added comment that you would like to make.

FW: I think nothing Harold, I certainly enjoyed it, the time has gone very rapidly and very interesting and I've certainly enjoyed it. I've enjoyed the opportunity and I appreciate you calling me in and asking me to do this because I'm very proud of my family all the way through my ancestry and down to my children and grandchildren which we have fourteen. And I'm very proud of them. <End of Interview>