

Alfred A. Monner

Oral History Interview

By Don Sterling

1993 February 25 – March 4



MONNER: Al Monner

DS: Don Sterling

Transcribed by: Danielle C. Hyman; Jean Taban; Clair Stites; Christina Mueller; Griffin King; Maya Gable 2016; Deborah Fisher 2017; Sara Stroman, 2018

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Tape 1, Side 1

1993 February 25

DS: This is an interview with Alfred A. Monner, conducted at his home at 11403 Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard, Portland, Oregon 97216, on February 25th, 1993. The interviewer is Donald J Sterling, Jr.

[Tape stops]

MONNER: So, the only picture – that’s the only picture I have of them, I’m afraid. Well, I...

DS: One of the questions I wanted to be sure to ask you: What does the “A” in your middle name stand for?

MONNER: Anthony.

DS: Anthony? Were you named for somebody in particular?

MONNER: Yes, named for my grandfather

DS: His name was Anthony?

MONNER: Yeah, his...

DS: Well, tell me a little bit about your father. What did he do, and where did he come from and all that?

MONNER: Well, gee. [Laughs] He actually was a combination of metal worker and a handyman and ran an old awning shop. He could do most anything, you know; fix those awnings, which were was just hanging them or putting them in place or something.

DS: Awnings?

MONNER: Awnings, yeah.

DS: Where was he born?

MONNER: He was born in – let's see. Mankato, Minnesota.

DS: Was – how far back does your family go in the United States?

MONNER: Well, it goes back as far as my grandfather, who was not – he actually wasn't born in the United States. He was born in Luxembourg then moved here when he was a small boy. He was about seven or eight years old, I think, when he moved here, and my dad was born after they came here. My dad was born in Minnesota.

DS: Is that where your grandfather came to, was from?

MONNER: Yes, that's where he came to move. He moved there because there were a lot of people there that spoke the brand of German he used to speak in Luxembourg.

DS: So, that's what the name Monner comes from, is Luxembourger.

MONNER: Yeah.

DS: Was it ever another name, like Monnerschein, or anything like that? Or was it always just Monner?

MONNER: I don't know. I know very little about my father's family.

DS: How did your – did you – so your father grew up in Minnesota?

MONNER: Well, he grew up there 'til he was about – see, what would he have been? Sister was about 12 when she died. He had a sister who died of sunstroke. They had 12 children. There were 11 children left in the family then. Twelve of 'em were, including his sister, were born in all in the states here, as far as I know.

DS: By the way, what was your grandfather's occupation? What did he do?

MONNER: Oh, he was one of those fellows who [were] always looking for someplace to make a lot of money in a hurry, and he bought one run-down rooming house after another, and fixed them up and then sold them for – I never did hear what he actually – he died in the house he lived in in St. Helens.

DS: Oh. He moved out here too, eventually.

MONNER: Yeah, he moved out here with his wife and the whole family. And they lived with – started living down near Oregon City at – what do they call that? I don't remember the name. One of the places that was famous then.

DS: Yeah. Canemah or something like that?

MONNER: Huh?

DS: Well, I don't – never mind. I don't know where it would've been.

MONNER: Well, it was in Oregon City is where he moved here. And he was quite an expert carpenter. He had a beautiful set of tools, which his dad (who he was staying with when he died in St. Helens) I suppose, sold them for nothing. But there were all these – two had these planes where he could put different size bits in and plane – made moldings and all that sort of thing. He had all the tools for that sort of work.

DS: The kind of thing they do with power tools now, and then...

MONNER: Everything you do with power tools now. All different.

DS: So he brought a family of, what, 11 children out here from Minnesota?

MONNER: Yeah. Eleven children.

DS: What was your grandmother's name? Anthony's wife.

MONNER: Anthony's wife?

DS: Your grandmother; your father's mother.

MONNER: Oh, my father's mother? Gee, I don't remember what her name was. I went to her funeral down there. She was buried down – no. I don't know if that was his wife who was buried there with him.

DS: Well, yeah, it would – oh! Did he have more than one wife?

MONNER: No, just one. I was just talking about – I'm getting mixed up on families now.

DS: Well, I was talking about your grandfather Anthony. Do you remember what his wife's name was? Your grandmother?

MONNER: No, I don't remember that anymore.

DS: Yeah. So, anyway, your father grew up, then, here in Oregon, in the Portland area.

MONNER: Essentially, he grew up here. Yeah. And he went to work at the Oregon City Woolen Mills when he was about 14 years old. He never did finish school. He got in about the seventh grade, and he quit school and went to work, because the family was having quite a time getting along there. My grandfather was – he built several of the buildings in Oregon. Not in Oregon, I think. Not in Oregon City. The next town down, the historic town that still has the...

DS: Champoeg? No.

MONNER: No, not Champoeg; this side of there, on the highway. On the old highway, I should say. You still drive through there when you...

DS: Canby?

MONNER: Canby, yeah. He built a lot of the old buildings that were there, according to my dad's story, but that's all I know; what my dad used to recite about.

DS: He built them as a carpenter, then...

MONNER: As a carpenter, yeah. He was a [carpenter]. He contract – he knew enough about carpenter work that he could contract for a house, and he could build it, put it in. Anything they wanted to build, well, he could build.

DS: So your father went to work in the Oregon City Woolen Mill when he was 14. What was he doing? Tending a loom? Or that kind of...

MONNER: I think he was tending a loom, if I remember rightly. Yeah.

DS: How long did he stay with the woolen mill?

MONNER: I don't really know how long it was. Not too long, because he – well, shortly after that, the family began to break up. The boys began to grow. My dad was one of the oldest of the boys in the family, and he died when he was about 71 years old, he died, down in Portland, at that time.

DS: I should have asked, about when do you think he was born?

MONNER: He was born in – oh, thought I had that written down somewhere. Now I can't remember. About 1875 or thereabouts.

DS: So he would've been working in the woolen mill by about 1890. Is that right? If you add 14 to 75.

MONNER: Yeah, I suppose he would. Yeah.

DS: And he didn't stay there very long. What did he do next? Do you have any idea?

MONNER: Well, the next thing, he went to work in an awning shop where they were hanging awnings, and he did the – one of his brothers of that time was part owner of the Portland Tent and Awning Company. And I don't know how this all came about. Anyway, my dad went to work for him in the awning shop and worked at that for some time.

And then later he got teamed up with a fellow who was travelling around and later married the daughter in whose house my grandfather died, down in Oregon, St. Helens. I don't remember how all this came about now.

DS: What was your mother's name? Maiden name?

MONNER: It was Stephens.

DS: Stephens. What was her first name?

MONNER: Angie. That was her first name. Belle, I think, was her middle name.

DS: Angie Belle.

MONNER: Angie Belle Stephens.

DS: How did he spell Stephens? S-T-E-V-E-N-S?

MONNER: S-T-E-P-H. I tell you, somewhere around here I have a book that they...

DS: Don't forget you're wired up. We can turn it off.

MONNER: Oh, I can. Right.

DS: That's alright. We can turn it off for a minute.

MONNER: I wanted to get...

[Tape stops]

DS: Alright. Your mother's maiden name was Stephens?

MONNER: Stephens. Yeah.

DS: And where did – where did the Stephens family come from? You've handed me a book here. I'm going to get into it, but.

MONNER: Yeah, this Stephens moved in there and took up what they call a donation land claim, where they — as I remember.

DS: It says here, "About four miles west of Sutherlin, Oregon" and...

MONNER: Yeah, that's right.

DS: I'm looking at an issue of the *Umpqua Trapper*, the magazine of the Douglas County Historical Society.

MONNER: The old-timers were putting that out for a time.

DS: Yes. Volume 24, Number Three, and it's about the Stephens Historic District. So your mother was part of that Stephens family.

MONNER: Yeah, she was part of that family.

DS: And that was – who was the original Stephens down there? Was that her father?

MONNER: No, that was her grandfather; this man right here. I never did meet him, of course, I – well, “Mrs. Ebenezer Stephens, wife of a donation land claim pioneer of 1852.” That would date him because he was the first man to write the deeds of all people in Douglas County when they were taking down the names of the owners of the property.

DS: Oh? He was a land recorder of some kind?

MONNER: He was a recorder for the county, temporarily.

DS: I had an ancestor that settled at Yoncalla that I have to look into someday.

MONNER: Carla what?

DS: I have an ancestor that settled at Yoncalla, which is near Sutherlin, I have to look into some day.

MONNER: Oh, yeah. My mother probably knew her 'cause she, my mother knew – she grew up in that country. She knew everybody all for miles around. In fact, she's now buried out at, oh, the vault, the place up on the hill here.

DS: Lincoln Memorial?

MONNER: Lincoln Memorial Park, in a – she and my dad have – are in caskets.

DS: In a mausoleum, you mean? In a building rather than buried in the ground?

MONNER: On the third floor, I believe it is. I never did put any of this down. This is the only recording of that that I know about.

DS: Well, let me see. Just for the record, we're talking about that your grandfather is this man on the cover, and he's Ebenezer Stephens.

MONNER: Yeah, that's right.

DS: Alright. He served two terms as county clerk, in 1870 and 1874. Well, anyway, so that Stephens family grew up near Sutherlin; your mother's family.

MONNER: Yeah, they did. In fact, they owned that property up until this, oh, last ten years or something like that. They finally disposed of it all to Californians. They bought all – I had one uncle who owned a farm over north, maybe southwest of there, and he had a lot of land there he bought. He did pretty well for himself for a while. Let's see, he was ?

DS: Were there a lot of brothers and sisters in your mother's family?

MONNER: There were six children altogether. See, five girls and one boy, I guess.

DS: And so, Angie, your grandmother, grew up there in the Sutherlin area.

MONNER: She grew up there until she was about – she took up school-teaching. Oh, I don't have a copy of that picture. There are some pictures of the school class, I think, that she graduated in at Oakland, Oregon. She spoke very highly of a teacher she had there

who helped her to get started as a teacher, and she got her first teaching contract when she was about 21 years old, out there in the Shaniko Plains area,

DS: Oh! Over there.

MONNER: Before they put irrigation in, believe it or not. I can – I vaguely remember going to school there one time. I was out there and staying with my uncle on his farm, who – I don't know how that all works. Somehow or another, my uncle was renting a farm that belonged to my grandfather, who had taken it up in his wife's name 'cause he was kind of one of these fellows who did all sorts of things, and he got the sheriffs after him, trying to collect back rent [Both laugh] or something that way.

Anyway, when he, my uncle took up this, renting this grain farm, just raising wheat for practically nothing, I guess, at the time. Anyway, he did make a living at it. And he had a tank wagon, which he went down to Gateway, Oregon and filled with water, and he'd take it up to his farm up there and dump it into a hole where they kept their water.

DS: I know that road. That's a tough haul out of Gateway.

MONNER: Yeah, it's quite a stiff road, alright.

DS: Alright. Well, I want to get to that, but I want to stay with your grandmother for just a minute. How much schooling did she have? Did she get through high school?

MONNER: She got through high school.

DS: Any college?

MONNER: No, she didn't go to college at all; just got through high school and got her diploma and then got a graduate's – at that time you get a job as a teacher when you had a high school graduate degree.

DS: And so this was over to Shaniko that she taught school to begin with.

MONNER: Yeah, it would be near – well, near Shaniko, it'd be nearer Madras is the nearest town.

DS: Yeah, I see. In – it's kind of between...

MONNER: No, no, no. That's not quite...

DS: Gateway and Madras, in the valley there?

MONNER: Yeah. Well, it wasn't. It was up on the plains.

DS: Well, we both know sort of how that land lies in there.

MONNER: Anyway, it was just rolling land, you know.

DS: Did she teach in other places? Or did she teach...

MONNER: And then she taught – oh, I don't remember the places where she went. Anyway, that's where she met my dad, and they were married. And then shortly after that they went to Portland. I was born in Portland, in a house out on Northeast...

DS: I have a little biography that you provided the Historical Society one time. It says what the name of that street was.

MONNER: Yeah. Holbrook Street.

DS: Holbrook Street. But let me get your father and your mother together. How did your father happen to be over in the Madras area?

MONNER: Well, he was just sort of a wandering young fellow, looking for – in fact, I have a picture of him.

DS: Remember, you're wired up there. If you want it, let's stop.

[Tape stops]

DS: You've given me a framed picture of a blond guy with curly hair and blue eyes. This is your father, right?

MONNER: That's my father.

DS: About how old...

MONNER: He gave that one as a present to his mother when he was about 21 years old; somewhere in there, I guess, as I remember the story.

DS: Was he a big man?

MONNER: No, about my general height and build.

DS: About five-nine or ten?

MONNER: No, about five-eight-and-a-half.

DS: Well, he looks like a handsome German type here. So he met your mother somewhere over there in the Madras area, right? While she was teaching school. And what was he doing? Working on a ranch?

MONNER: Yes, she was – [He] lived boarding with some other ranchers up there, and he met her there.

DS: Was it a short courtship?

MONNER: Well, I gather that it was, because he had been in San Francisco when San Francisco was devastated by that earthquake.

DS: Yes. Which was 1906, I think.

MONNER: Yes, he was working as a helper there, somewhere, along with this fellow Jack.

DS: Someone I might know?

MONNER: No, you wouldn't know him. He's been dead for many years now. He was another sporting type of fellow; liked to run around. He chased women a lot, I remember that. [Laughs]

DS: You mean Jack did? Or your...

MONNER: Yes, Jack did. My dad wasn't a chaser. No, I don't think he ever chased anybody that I remember.

DS: Except he married your mother.

MONNER: He married my mother.

DS: [Laughs] And when did...

MONNER: Well, that's a fairly short courtship, right, so, because he came up here in 1906, wasn't it?

DS: That was the year of the earthquake.

MONNER: Well, he was working then in San Francisco on the earthquake repairs, and they came up here, and the two of them, my mother's – this house where my mother was staying, which was my uncle's...

DS: What was this uncle's name that had the property over there?

MONNER: Tony.

DS: Tony Monner?

MONNER: Monner, yeah. He later moved to Gateway and rented a house there and lived there for years.

DS: So he had the same name as your grandfather. He was named for your grand – he was another Anthony?

MONNER: I hadn't thought about that, but I suppose he was. Yeah.

DS: So then he moved to Gateway. That's interesting. So when were your father and mother married? What year? Do you know?

MONNER: In 1908, I guess. Or 1907? Seven or eight, somewhere along in there. And I was born August the first, 1909.

DS: And by that time they had moved back to Portland.

MONNER: By that time, they had moved to Portland and were living in that address that's given in there.

DS: On Holbrook Street. I don't know where Holbrook Street is. Is that Northeast?

MONNER: You know, it's kind of mixed up now. I went and drove over one time and tried to get a picture of the house. I couldn't locate it because the numbers were all changed around and everything.

DS: Is this – that would that be Northeast Portland, though?

MONNER: On Holbrook Street.

DS: Is that Irvington or?

MONNER: Well, that area, now, is all black.

DS: I bet its name was changed. I'm not so sure Holbrook Street still exists as a name, but we can always look that up.

MONNER: I don't know. We had a house on Holbrook Street. I found that – I think I did find that – I remember finding a house, or if I did, I didn't know which one it was.

DS: Were you an only child? Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MONNER: I had a sister who died in 1939.

DS: What was her name?

MONNER: Ida May.

DS: Was she older or younger than you? You must have been younger.

MONNER: She was younger; about a year and a half.

DS: So, the two of you, your family of four then, lived on this Holbrook Street.

MONNER: Well, we didn't live there. No. Later, my dad decided to move out to Eastern Oregon, out near where we – oh, how would you locate the place? Our post office number then was Kaskela, of all places.

DS: Oh, yeah? Did you live down in the bottom, there?

MONNER: No, we lived up in the hills, about – had to walk four miles to get our mail.

DS: Wow. So you lived on that flat between Highway 97 and where it drops off to go down into the Deschutes...

MONNER: In the flat where it drops off. Yes.

DS: Boy, that's dry country.

MONNER: Oh, yeah, except that my dad was smart. He'd lived around, been around that, and he knew you had to have water on your house, on your place, or you'd – so he got a – by jogging of – I have a map of the farm he had, one of those little maps they made out, and he jogged around so he got a cut off, by taking one corner off one side of his place, he was able to take in a spring on another corner. [Both laugh] So he had seven springs on this one piece of property.

DS: Was it reasonably level, then?

MONNER: No. It was uphill-downhill everywhere you moved.

DS: What kind of farm was it? What'd he do? What'd he raise?

MONNER: Well, we had about 40 acres of hay land that you could grow rye hay on.

DS: You run any cattle?

MONNER: He had about 15 head of cattle when we moved away from there, as I remember.

DS: Did he build his own house up there?

MONNER: No. He bought a house that the railroad company was building. The railroad up there? And they had a lot of shacks that the Chinese laborers had slept in, and he bought one of these. It was a double construction, double-board type, so it could cut out the wind a little bit. But, unfortunately, that – I think that's all burned down now. I don't

remember. I got a – took a picture. Oh, gee, what'd I do? I remember taking a picture of the place from up – or did I? I guess I didn't take a picture of it.

DS: But you remember seeing the house? Well, of course you...

MONNER: Well, no, I remember it was burned down by the end. All that was left of the building on the place was part of the barn and chicken house over there in the corner. The thing is the house was built in the middle of a flat piece of land.

DS: What I was trying – when I was looking into this biography of yours. Says that you – well, it doesn't say, but when do you think your family moved over there to Kaskela?

MONNER: It'd be about – let's see. They moved over to a rented place first.

DS: How old were you? A year or two?

MONNER: A little more than that. About four years old, I guess.

DS: So, do you remember living in Portland at all? As a baby? As a child?

MONNER: I don't remember at all.

DS: Your first memories, from then, would be of this farm in...

MONNER: My first memories would be of a farm quite a distance from there. It'd be about six miles from where we were living at that time, I guess. What was the name of the people?

DS: In other words, they moved first to somebody else's place, before they had their own.

MONNER: They moved to a rented place. And my dad, he looked around at the property and the countryside, and he decided that this was the best place to pick out, so he picked out this piece with the seven springs on it. One of them, I remember, went down a big canyon and then came up. I don't remember how it worked, but apparently it took off two branches, and one of them went out and came up into a garden spot where we were growing watermelons and all sorts. It came there. And then...

DS: This would be somewhere down in that canyon of the Deschutes. Is that right?

MONNER: Well, it'd be in the canyon country over in the Deschutes. Yeah. We used to go fishing in the Deschutes River in those days. I remember my dad would come home with a whole basketful. He was the only one who could catch fish. He could go up there and get a whole basketful of fish in a half a day or less.

DS: How did he fish? Was he a fly fisherman, or did he use...

MONNER: He'd fish with a fly. He was an expert at it. Boy! He could throw – look around and see what the fish were biting on, throw a fly out there, and pretty soon, oh! A fly on the end of it.

DS: Boy! The Deschutes in 1915 must have been a wonderful place to fish.

MONNER: It was. I remember all of catch – I even have vague memories of his catches of fish, coming up to the homestead ranch where we'd fry them all. [Laughs]

DS: Did anybody else live on the ranch when you had it, besides you and your sister and your mother?

MONNER: No.

DS: Just the four of you?

MONNER: Just the four of us.

DS: So where did you start going to school?

MONNER: Well, I once started going to school in Jersey School. Actually, Jersey School, at that time, started in a railroad building at the town of Jersey.

DS: I don't know. That was a stop on the railroad, in the canyon?

MONNER: There's a water tank there that's – I think there's – it's still used to fill our tankers with water.

DS: Where is that with regard to Kaskela? Is it downstream or upstream?

MONNER: It's upstream from Kaskela, about four or five miles.

DS: Up near where South Junction is now?

MONNER: Well, it would be this side of that, about a mile, and South Junction later was – they put in a pump there, too, I guess, and I think they've...

DS: That's a bigger railroad now.

MONNER: Yeah, it's a bigger spot...

DS: So, what was your school like?

MONNER: Well, it was a collection of kids from all around. One was the Telleson's kids that grew up on...

DS: So, were they Scandinavian?

MONNER: I never did know what. I suppose they were, but I remember he was blond. Later on, he died, and I lost all track of them.

DS: Was this one of those one-room schools, where everybody was in the...

MONNER: Yeah, one-room school.

DS: How many kids in all, do you think?

MONNER: Well, one time I think we had about 12 [or] 15; somewhere around there.

DS: Do you remember your first teacher's name?

MONNER: Hmm. My mother was one of my first teachers!

DS: Really? She taught you at home?

MONNER: No, she taught us at school.

DS: At the school!

MONNER: Yeah. She walked to school with us, down to the schoolhouse at Jersey Station. Jersey Station, at that time, didn't have a – there wasn't a schoolhouse; there was an extra building they had built for workers to live in, so it had a large, I recall, it had a large open space in it, which they would fill up with kids.

DS: And how far from your house was it to school, do you think?

MONNER: Oh, heck. I think we used to figure it about three-and-half miles.

DS: Wow. And how'd that go in the winter?

MONNER: Kind of rough. I remember walking down there in 12 inches of snow one time, from our homestead cabin. That was, 12 inches of snow was when they moved the school up to another place, it was called Jersey School #55. It later on burned in one of those range fires they had out there, and so the building was gone. I missed a chance there. I should have picked up – I went out there to visit the school one time, and there was a book laying there on her desk, with my name on it, and grades that I'd gotten and everything, and I missed that chance to pick up that book, 'cause I could have picked it up then. Nobody would've known the difference.

DS: It was abandoned by then, huh? The school?

MONNER: It was abandoned. Yeah. When I quit school there, there were four kids. I was the whole grade. I was the one person in the eighth grade graduating class.

DS: Oh, for heaven's sake. So you went to one or the other of those schools for eight years. Is that right?

MONNER: I didn't go to school. I skipped a couple of grades. I went to school out – because my mother always – I've always been rather puzzled about that one in that book I had over there, or that one.

DS: Or this one here, that *Some Bright Morning*?¹

MONNER: Yeah, yeah.

DS: By Bess Raber?

MONNER: Bessie Stangland. But Schruhs was not her name then. Bessie ...

DS: Raber.

MONNER: Raber. That was her name.

DS: Bessie Stangland Raber. This is about that part of the country?

MONNER: It's about that...

DS: Here's the name: Stangland.

MONNER: It mentions my name in there.

DS: Alright. Well, I'll take a look at that.

¹ Raber, Elizabeth F. *Some Bright Morning*. Corvallis, Or. : E.F. Raber, c1983. In Oregon Historical Society Collections, call number 979.585 R115s.

MONNER: You could. Take it home and read it some night.

DS: If I may. Before we talk again, I'll take a look at it.

MONNER: Well, I'd like to have it back.

DS: Oh, certainly.

MONNER: She sent a letter to me. I never did answer her letter.

DS: So, I suppose your sister went to the same school.

MONNER: Yes, she did. She graduated from there. No, wait a minute. No, she didn't, 'cause the folks, when I graduated from school out there, decided to send me to high school in Portland, so they moved back to Portland then. They didn't sell the homestead property until later on. She sold it all for, I remember – I think for three dollars an acre for the land; 640 acres, yeah. [Laughs]

DS: Gosh. So when your father took up the – your father homesteaded that land and took it up under the Homestead Act?

MONNER: Yes. He did.

DS: Is that right? I suppose your mother and your father each could have claimed half or something.

MONNER: I suppose. I don't know. I never did hear, get them to go into details about how they owned the property or anything. Later on they bought a piece of property at 51st

and – let’s see. It’s Broadway, down here. Two long blocks. I think the house was two long blocks north of there.

They bought this place, and my dad – it was funny. I remember they moved in there, and about a month later, my mother called up and said, “You know, something’s happened to your dad. He doesn’t move anymore.” So I went over there, and he was dead.

DS: No kidding!

MONNER: He died. He didn’t – gradually getting worse, I guess, and I didn’t know it until then, so.

DS: Well, let’s – I need to know when that was. You moved back to Portland when you started high school. Is that right?

MONNER: When I started high school. I moved back to Portland.

DS: So that would have been in what? About 1920?

MONNER: 1923, I think it, because I graduated in 1927.

DS: And when did your father die?

MONNER: Let’s see. He died, well, right after World War II.

DS: So what you mean is they moved in, and they took this house on 51st?

MONNER: They moved, and later they moved into a better place. They were both – kind of jogging their history there.

My sister died in the town of Monmouth. Of course, she – I went down to see her about a week before she died, and she was lying in bed then. She couldn't get up and walk around. Well, she's buried in an old cemetery south of Monmouth, I guess.

DS: Had she married?

MONNER: Yes. She had married and had two daughters.

DS: What was her married name?

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

Tape 1, Side 2
1993 February 25

DS: Talking about your sister, I guess we ought to finish up on that. She married and moved to Monmouth?

MONNER: Yeah, I'm trying to think what her – so this has gotten out of hand now.
[Shuffles papers]

DS: Well, I'll tell you what...

MONNER: Virgil and Joanne Minor. Here we are.

DS: Those are – who are they?

MONNER: That's one of the twins.

DS: One of their children? One of her...

MONNER: My sister had.

DS: Which was the child? Joanne or what did you say? Virgil?

MONNER: No, two girls, Joanne and Trudy. Those are the two children she had.

DS: Joanne and Trudy? And they were twins?

MONNER: No, Joanne and whatever her name was, that I can't — the one that I can't get off my tongue right now.

DS: And you can't remember your sister's married name at the moment?

MONNER: No, that's the trouble, that's bothering me.

DS: Tell you what, Al...

MONNER: Should be in here somewhere, but I still send cards to his wife.

DS: I want to get to that and your other photographer friends, too. If you don't mind, I don't want to leave Kaskela too soon. What was it like living on the farm? Did you do a lot of farm work?

MONNER: No, I mostly was growing up then, going to grade school. I went to grade school from that farm. I remember how old I was when I started there, in the second building they put up.

DS: And what was school like? How did the day go at school?

MONNER: Well, it was a one-room schoolhouse; one big school. I remember one year – what was the teacher's name I had then? One teacher hired me for five dollars a month to come down in the morning and clean up the building and sweep it out and get the furnace going, so the place would be...

DS: What did it have? When you say a furnace, did it have a wood stove or what?

MONNER: It was a wood furnace, yeah. I don't remember where they got them. The farmers go down, and then they go around there and chop down some Juniper trees on their land; about all they had to chop down.

DS: But it was a real furnace, not a stove in one corner of the room.

MONNER: Well, it was a stove in one corner, but it had a casing on it which both the end area from below and brought up around the furnace, then shot up towards the ceiling, so it would spit out over the whole room.

DS: Did you like school?

MONNER: Yeah, I liked it. I enjoyed school.

DS: So you must've had to do a lot of your work independently while somebody else was reciting or being taught.

MONNER: I guess so. I don't know. I don't remember. I learned it anyway, one way or another.

DS: Did you like to read?

MONNER: Yes, I did. Always. In fact, that's one of the problems I had there, was getting – the teachers used to send in to the state library and get a bunch of books out there, and they were limited then to what they could send out there. I wanted some books on – I remember I wanted one on astronomy and science and something like that. Teachers couldn't give them to me because they didn't have anything like that for that age.

DS: That's a good part of the world to study astronomy in. The stars are so bright.

MONNER: It was wonderful. I remember, I still remember the skies we used to have out there. They're just – I look out here in my bedroom when it's quiet, look out through

windows toward the northeast part. I – you actually look out towards the northeast corner of the house. This house doesn't sit north and south directly. It's at an angle, like this, so north is out here at this corner of the house.

DS: AI, were there any books that you particularly remember enjoying when you were a child?

MONNER: Oh, I remember being disgusted with some of the books they sent me to read. I read books that just talked about life that was just barred from ranchers or somebody.

DS: They weren't – it sounds like you were more interested in the factual books than story books. Is that so or am I just guessing?

MONNER: Yeah. I think I did probably go in more for factual books.

DS: One thing I should be sure to ask, were your parents religious people?

MONNER: No, they were not.

DS: They didn't go to church.

MONNER: My mother belonged to a Presbyterian church. She was raised as a Presbyterian. And my wife later joined Rose City Presbyterian Church and joined that church, but I never did join it.

DS: What did you do for fun when you were in school? Did you play games or?

MONNER: Well, just played games, mostly, and I played a lot of baseball there, with homemade bats and rubber balls. I don't know where it came from. Anyway, it was handed down from class to class.

DS: And so you skipped a couple of grades.

MONNER: Yeah, I skipped a couple. About the second or third grade, I skipped and started in the new school, which was starting with the fourth grade. I skipped that, and I took all the required courses. What did I have to study? A couple of the courses in agriculture that I had to take then that were required by the state. The state told you which books you were supposed to read, so I got those. Do I have the book here anymore? I might have it. It might be in the collection in here.

DS: So, anyway, then you got through grade school over there.

MONNER: Yes.

DS: Or around Kaskela, and then your parents decided that you should go to high school so they moved back to Portland. Is that what you said?

MONNER: Well, my dad decided that I had to have a high school education now, at that time. My sister was still – she came here. I remember she was in the eighth grade. She went to Stephens School, which doesn't exist anymore, I don't think, and got her eighth grade graduation. Then she went to Washington High School, where I went. I started Washington High School when it had been burned down. They just had the school in an old Hawthorne building.

DS: Oh, really? It wasn't the building that I think of as Washington High School.

MONNER: It was the building – the present Washington High School wasn't being built at that time.

DS: How many high schools were there in Portland in that time? We're talking about 1923, huh?

MONNER: Yeah. It was about 1923.

DS: Lincoln on the west side.

MONNER: Lincoln on the west side. I remember that. It was the old building for Lincoln, not the new building. And I think Lincoln, or Roosevelt High School, I think, was in existence, and Jefferson, of course.

DS: But where were – when you first came back to Portland from Kaskela, where did your family live?

MONNER: They lived in the house on 327 Southeast 7th, I think is the number – one of the old numbers. It's hard to locate nowadays. I know where the house...

DS: That must have been fairly close to Washington High School.

MONNER: Well, about a quarter mile walk, something that way. I had to walk up Hawthorne Avenue to 12th, then over to the few blocks to the Washington High School.

DS: Did your father then go back to work in the awning business?

MONNER: He went to work in the – well, I think the first job he had here, I think, was in the metalworking business. He got a job in that. Then he later on switched over to the

awning business. By that time he was getting old enough, so it was hard to get a job in a metalworking shop anymore.

DS: “Metalworking” meaning what? Forging? Blacksmithing? That kind of thing?

MONNER: No. It was putting in furnaces and things.

DS: Oh, yeah. Sheet metal.

MONNER: Yeah, sheet metal work. He’d do – for instance, I have a furnace in the corner there. He looked that over and made sure it was alright before I’d go buy this house. [Both laugh]

DS: Good. Well, did you like Washington High School?

MONNER: Yes, I did.

DS: What kinds of things did you do there? Would you have any extracurricular activities?

MONNER: Well, I didn’t go in for athletics, because I didn’t – well, I tried out for basketball one year. I flunked that out. I just didn’t have the knack to do the team sports. The football team would be out there practicing, and I’d be watching them, but I couldn’t ever do it.

DS: So did you do any clubs? Anything at all?

MONNER: No, not that I remember.

DS Were you a good student?

MONNER: Well, I think as far as I remember, I was.

DS: By this time, had you developed any idea of what you wanted to do in life?

MONNER: No. Well, I got interested in photography about that time, you know. The thing is, I got a job working nights in the East Portland Branch Library, which no longer exists, I discovered, when I went out there recently to look at the whole situation over. Several years ago now, I've looked that over.

DS: What were you doing? Shelving books? That kind of thing?

MONNER: Well, let's see. Who was – yeah, I was shelving books. I worked there in the evenings, from about 6:30 'til 9:30, shelving books and sorting them out according to where they went in the children's department or the grown-up's department.

DS: And what caught your interest in photography?

MONNER: I don't know, really, it just – the thing that caught on first, I think, was the fact that one of the teachers came out there to present the – well, there was almost a part of a ritual of every farmer that had a teacher over there for dinner one evening or one weekend of the month, and so they got my teacher over there, and she decided I should be able to take a picture of her saddle horses she rode up there. So she took a picture, and I took a picture, and she showed me the prints, and I got so excited about those, I decided I wanted to be a photographer.

DS: Now, this was still when you were still over in Central Oregon.

MONNER: Still Central Oregon, yeah.

DS: And so, when you got back to Portland and to Washington High School, did you do anything about it? Did you pursue photography?

MONNER: I didn't have any money to spend on photography. I waited 'til I got through high school and got some work on my own. Then I bought a camera from the old Eastman Kodak store over on Washington Street, off Broadway.

DS: What kind of camera was it?

MONNER: It was a roll-film camera, one of their best ones.

DS: A box camera?

MONNER: No, it was a folding camera.

DS: Yeah, one those kind with the bellows on the front.

MONNER: Yeah, and I bought that. I used that for – where did I? I don't think I have any negatives taken with that one now.

DS: Did you do your own processing then or did you give it back to them to process?

MONNER: I started doing my own processing somewhere about then. I don't remember exactly when.

DS: How'd you learn the darkroom end of the business enough to do that?

MONNER: Just by learning around. Then I went to work. How'd I do that, anyway? I went to work – I got interested in college again, and I went down to Linfield College in McMinnville for about half a year.

DS: So, yeah, that's on this biography that I have from the Historical Society. Well, you attended Washington High School. Did you go through Washington in four years? The regular four-year course?

MONNER: Yes.

DS: And then did you go straight to Linfield?

MONNER: No, I went someplace else. I went to work – how'd I do that, anyway? I don't remember exactly how things went together there. 'Cause at that time I got interested in photography, I remember.

DS: Well, when you got out of Washington High School, did you take a job for a while?

MONNER: Yeah, I took a job.

DS: Do you remember what it was?

MONNER: It was working at the public library.

DS: Oh, the main branch? Downtown?

MONNER: Yeah, in the branch downtown. Went to work there, and I went to work right away on the bookmobile that traveled around. The first bookmobile they had, you know, a

great big thing. Looks like a sort of like an advanced type; tall, double rows of shelves in it, a seat up behind the driver's seat that I could sit in. [Laughs]

DS: And what did you do with it?

MONNER: We went all around the country, stopped at farm houses. In fact, we used to stop at some farm houses right out here, where these houses are all built now. That was all farmland then, and there was a farm for the mentally retarded from Alaska, over where the...

DS: Oh, that was Henry Waldo Coe's place, wasn't it? Didn't he have a mental institution for people from Alaska?

MONNER: It could've been. Probably was. I don't remember any of...

DS: I don't know, but I remember he had one, and it was out in this general area.

MONNER: Well, that was it, then, because that was where it was, out there where the hospital is built now, where the – you can drive down the street right out here, down there. You go right past a new hospital. It took the place of the one over on 60th and Belmont, which is now used as an outpatient home for the sick people there.

DS: I see. So anyway, there you were, driving around in the bookmobile. How long did you do that?

MONNER: I did that for three years.

DS: Three years, and then you went to Linfield. Then you went to college?

MONNER: Then I decided to go to Linfield College.

DS: How did you happen to pick Linfield?

MONNER: Well, I guess maybe because a girl who was working in the library there as a page got admitted to college, and I decided to go to college there. [Laughs]

DS: Were you interested in the girl, too?

MONNER: Well I was at the time. [Laughs]

DS: And did you have to pay your own way to college? How did you get into...

MONNER: Oh, yeah, I saved up money, because it cost me – what was it now? I had a bank account, I remember. Saved up money. I had about \$125 in the bank account, and I cashed that in and got – I think they gave me five one dollar gold pieces, or five dollar gold pieces, whatever it was. Ten dollar gold pieces, I guess it must have been. I took those down to school and cashed them all in for a year of school. [Laughs]

DS: A year of school. [Laughs] But you said you only went there a half-a-year?

MONNER: As I remember, it was only about a half-year I went there, yeah.

DS: What happened?

MONNER: Well, things began to get – that was in the mid-1930s, actually, when the recession began to end.

DS: Yeah, it says here that you entered Linfield in 1930. Does that sound right? You graduated from high school about 1927, I guess, if you...

MONNER; Yeah, I guess that's about right. Huh. Doesn't figure out right, does it? Yeah, I did, 'cause I remember I came back from Linfield. Then that's when I went on to work for Brubaker Aerial Surveys as a darkroom man.

DS: Oh. So, you said things got tough. It says on this biography sheet of yours that the bank where your money was closed down. I take it that meant that whatever you had in the bank was lost? Where'd it say that? "The bank closed on my savings account."

MONNER: Well, it must've been when the bank closed, yeah. I think that's correct. I don't remember the bank closing about that time, but I guess the banks were having a bad time at that...

DS: Oh, yeah. Well, there was a bank holiday in the – but that was after Roosevelt came in, in 1933. Where was the bank? Was it one of the Portland banks?

MONNER: It was a Portland First National Bank. It was a much bigger building than they're in now.

DS: In other words, you lost something because the bank closed, and you couldn't get to...

MONNER: I suppose I must have. Yeah, I remember.

DS: Your money? So then you went to work for Brubaker Surveys.

MONNER: Yeah. 1930. Worked for studios. Yeah, I was doing – I went to work for Photo Art Studio for, I think I worked there about a month or two, something around that, as a general printer, just running one of those, a Pako printer where you stepped on the pedals, exposed the negative, then took it out and developed a whole bunch of them at one time.

DS: Yeah. Is that...

MONNER: The printer in the back there is a Pako printer. It's the only kind they had at that time.

DS: Did they hire you because you knew something about photography or were they...

MONNER: Yeah, I knew something about how to make prints.

DS: Who was running photo art in those days?

MONNER: Claude Palmer.

DS: Still. He was then.

MONNER: Yeah. And Ray Atkeson was working there as a beginning photographer.

DS: Is that right? Are you older or younger than Atkeson?

MONNER: Well, I'm not quite sure. I think I was about two years older than he was, as I remember.

DS: Did he become a friend of yours then?

MONNER: Oh, yeah. He's been my oldest friend in the city of Portland.

DS: I want to get into that a little bit.

MONNER: I've got another fact sheet up there and a collection of books on that upper shelf there that gives a — instead, I'll give you a picture of me at the...

DS: Alright.

[Tape stops]

You've handed me, Al, a picture of...

MONNER: [Fumbles with mic] Get this thing attached again.

DS: You've handed me, Al, a picture from the *Friends of the Columbia Gorge Bulletin* for spring 1992 that shows you and Ray Atkeson on top of Munra Point in the Gorge. Do you remember that trip?

MONNER: I remember the trip, but I don't remember who was on the trip. I remember Ray and I being up there together.

DS: So, did you start out climbing with him right away? Did you...

MONNER: When he and I met — I don't remember how we met, really. I started climbing. He was interested in climbing around the Gorge, and we started doing that, and then it developed into the Wy'east Climbers. Seven of us got together one time.

DS: Oh, really? You were one of the founders of the Wy'east Club?

MONNER: I'm the last remaining one.

DS: Is that right? Who else was in it besides you and Atkeson?

MONNER: There was Ray Atkeson and Barry James and, let's see, Ralph Calkin, I guess, was one of the early ones. He's now gone, too. And later on, let's see. [Inaudible] Who are they? I can't remember all of the names of the people now. Jim Harlow was one of them.

DS: Harlow?

MONNER: Harlow. He's now a good dead. He went down to Sacramento, California, and died down there later.

DS: When you did this climbing in the early 1930s, was it – were you doing it for the sake of taking pictures or was it just for fun, going out in the mountains?

MONNER: Well, I just liked the thrill of climbing a mountain, being up above everything. Yeah.

DS: Well, let's pursue this a little bit. You told me on the telephone when I talked to you that you really weren't a mountain climber, but I wonder if that's so. Did you...

MONNER: Well, not in the true sense of the word. I wasn't a mountain climber. Fellows like Everett Garr, for instance, and some of those fellows, they climbed. I don't know how many times Everett climbed Mount Hood. He must have climbed it dozens of times. There were a lot of others like – I can't say any of their names now.

DS: Did you ever know Ray Conway?

MONNER: Oh, yes!

DS: Did you climb with him?

MONNER: I didn't climb with him, but I knew him. In fact, he was an honorary member of the Wy'east Climbers.

DS: Was he? How did you happen to form the Wy'east club? What was the idea?

MONNER: Because at the time the Mazamas weren't doing anything. They were just sort of going on weekend hikes, and that's about all they were doing. They weren't climbing mountains at all.

In fact, this trip was part of a trip that we made. I don't remember how. I guess this was probably taken before that. I don't remember when that picture was taken...

DS: This trip to Munra Point. The picture says 1932. It's from the Oregon Historical Society collection.

MONNER: Well, see. 1932. Well. Hmm. Now that'd be about the right date for it, because after that happened. Ray and a lot of the fellows got interested in building a cabin up on Mount Hood. They got a permit from the Forest Service to build it.

DS: Oh. Where was that? On the south side?

MONNER: On the south side. Below [Coalman?]. It's still there now.

DS: Is it? Is that the Phlox Point cabin? Which cabin is that one?

MONNER: Well, it's near there, but not right in, it wasn't in the Phlox. It's over in another. Let's see. It's in a canyon, to the east of Phlox Point.

DS: Well, how did the – in the early days of the Wy'east club, how did it work? Did you just decide that this weekend we're going to go somewhere and go, or what?

MONNER: Oh, all the different fellas had friends that they were quite active climbers, and a lot of them went to Lincoln High School, believe it or not, in those days.

DS: So these were pretty young fellas.

MONNER: Oh, yeah. They were, all like, Jim Hall, for instance, was about 21 years old then, and I was about the same age.

DS: How did you get where you were going? Were you able to drive automobile? Did you have automobiles that you could use?

MONNER: Yeah, we had automobiles of some kind or other. We'd get together and, between the bunch of us, we'd get together and go on a trip.

DS: Where'd you do most of your climbing?

MONNER: Oh, Mount Hood was the chief one. We really went around, climbed St. Helens. All of us climbed Mount St. Helens before it was [at] its present low cap. I climbed it when there was still a peak up there. There's still a – in fact, I have a picture. Let's see. Did I have a picture of that?

DS: Did you try different routes on Mount Hood? Did you, or did you do mostly?

MONNER: A few of the fellows did. I didn't.

DS: You did mostly the south side?

MONNER: I did mostly the south side, and then I climbed the Cooper Spur route once.

DS: And you told me that you had climbed Mount Hood 12 times, altogether.

MONNER: I did, mostly on the south side.

DS: Did you ever meet Lige Coalman² up there?

MONNER: Oh, yeah.

DS: Was he up on the top? In the – I can't remember what period he was the lookout.

MONNER: I don't remember exactly what. I don't remember when I met him there. I remember I – well, I met him somewhere. I don't remember when it was now. He was still leading the trips up to St. Helens.

DS: He ran the Y camp up at the Spirit Lake for a while.

MONNER: Oh, he was still running that at that time.

DS: Do you remember, are there any particular mountaineering experiences that you especially remember?

² Elijah Coalman (1881-1970), known as "Lige," was an Oregon mountaineer who ascended Mount Hood over 500 times. Coalman Glacier is named for him.

MONNER: Oh, some up on the south side of Mount Hood, after we built our cabin up there. We, all of us got lost one time or another trying to find the place. We were going to take the old – we would take the old cabin post Timberline trail up, and then at a certain place where we'd turn off and go through the canyons, and go up on a couple of canyons like that, and then we'd come to the Wy'east cabin.

DS: So, you helped, when Atkeson got the permit to build the cabin, you helped build it, is that right?

MONNER: No, I didn't. At that time, I was working for Brubaker, and we went up to Pendleton to take pictures of wheat fields, and I spent most of my summer up there. So I didn't – I think Ray had something to do with building it, I think, but I didn't.

DS: But you got the benefit of it later.

MONNER: I put my bunk in there, and I did all that part of it.

DS: You mentioned that you worked for Photo Art for only a month. Is that right? And then...

MONNER: A month or something that way.

DS: And then what happened?

MONNER: I guess I got – I don't remember what happened after that.

DS: But did you then, is that when you went to work for Brubaker Surveys?

MONNER: About that time, I guess.

DS: Who was running Brubaker?

MONNER: Brubaker was running it then.

DS: And what was his name, his first name?

MONNER: William C. Brubaker, I believe it was. I never did know what his middle name was.

DS: And this was aerial photography?

MONNER: He was an aerial – he was, I think, the first aerial photographer in Portland, from what I’ve heard from Bob [Rubach?]. I met him later on. Two years ago, I had a call from a fellow that I had just barely met, says, “You want us to go out and see Brubaker next day? We’re going out.” So we went out there to see him, and he’s – they’re giving these, oh, I don’t know, some ungodly number, like 95th birthday cake, or that way, and he died shortly after that. I didn’t see him again, but I went out there and took some pictures of him, out there in a place in Canby, where he was still living then.

DS: What kind of planes did you fly in for this stuff?

MONNER: Oh, we were good at digging out money from people. Jim [Mough?] was a member then. He belonged to the association of young Cape Cod or young climbers, you know, and so he said he could dig up a fellow to give us some lumber and somebody else to give us something else. We got, managed to get most of our stuff by gifts from various people.

DS: Oh, this was for the cabin you’re talking about.

MONNER: For the cabin. Yeah.

DS: Well, I was asking you about the airplanes when you did the aerial surveys. What kind of airplanes did you fly in?

MONNER: Oh, we flew in an OX.

DS: OX-5? I've seen that name.

MONNER: It probably was. I don't know.

DS: Was it a bi-plane or what kind of...

MONNER: It was a bi-plane, yeah.

DS: Whose plane was it?

MONNER: I think most of them belonged to people that had their hangars out on Swan Island at that time.

DS: So you'd fly out of Swan Island?

MONNER; We flew out of Swan Island most of the time.

DS: And when you were taking the pictures, where did you sit? In the front or the back? It was a two-seater?

MONNER: I sat in the back

DS: What kind of camera did you use?

MONNER: Well, later on I ended up using the [Inaudible], big camera. An old-fashioned [Fairchild] F-1, I think they called it. The first – one of the first aerial cameras they built for World War I, and it was about that wide and, oh, had a...

DS: Battery?

MONNER: A battery, a case, almost to the tip of the lens, which kind of...

DS: It was – you showed me about – you indicated about eight inches wide and about a foot-and-a-half deep, is that...

MONNER: Yeah, it was about that. Yeah.

DS: And so, it was a vertical kind of a thing, and you looked down through it. Is that it?

MONNER: You looked through it, down through it. You couldn't look through it. No. I had to use a finder alongside the main cameras here. Over here was a finder, and I'd look through the finder...

DS: Over to the right.

MONNER: And get the camera in the right position.

DS: Do you have to have a fast lens to do that?

MONNER: We had a fairly fast lens that Brubaker had picked up somewhere. I don't know where he got it.

DS: Did you have to take your pictures at high speed, like a 500th?

MONNER: 125th or 150th or up to about 500 was about as high as you could go.

DS: Did you just teach yourself how to do this?

MONNER: Oh, Brubaker gave me a lot of instructions on how to do it.

DS: And what kind of work were you doing, who were you working for?

MONNER: Brubaker.

DS: Yeah, but I mean who were your clients?

MONNER: Oh, a lot of big lumber companies, a big group; big group for those days from Portland. He did some for Inman-Poulsen over there on the east side, or used to be over there. And Jones Lumber Company was one of them we went and did some for.

DS: In effect, this was cruising timber from the air? Taking a look and see what kind of timber was there?

MONNER: He'd do that. He used to do that. Yeah. He used to go there, and, say, Brubaker started taking his camera up and taking pictures of farms, showing the farmhouse and all the fields around it. That's the way he started his...

DS: And then see if he could sell the picture to the farmer? Is that it?

MONNER: Yeah. Then he goes back and shows it to the farmer, and the farmer's "Great!"
And he'd sell them on taking some big prints of it, like that.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

Tape 2, Side 1
1993 March 4

DS: This is interview number two with Alfred A. Monner, made March 4th, 1993, at his home at 11403 Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard, Portland, Oregon, 97216. The interviewer is Donald J. Sterling, Jr.

[Tape stops]

I got so interested about asking you about your middle name last time that I didn't ask you about the Alfred part. Where did that come from?

MONNER: Well, Alfred was my grandfather's first name.

DS: I see. Is this the same grandfather, the Monner grandfather, or some other grandfather?

MONNER: No, that was my mother's grandfather and the Anthony part was my grandfather...

DS: Was your mother's father.

MONNER: Her father's.

DS: What did your parents call you when you were little?

MONNER: Oh, just Al-ferd. [Laughs]

DS: Most of your friends call you Al, I think.

MONNER: I think most of them do, yeah

DS: Did you ever have any other nicknames? That really stuck?

MONNER: Not that I can remember.

DS: The article that you gave me out of the *Umpqua Trapper* about the Stephens family...

MONNER: I haven't really read that. Do you know that? What was it that you wanted to know about it?

DS: Well, I wanted to ask this, this man here on the cover is apparently the first Stephens who settled down there in Douglas County, and his name was Ebenezer. Was he your wife's...

MONNER: My wife's grandfather.

DS: Grandfather. Okay, that explains that. Did you ever happen to think of your sister's married name?

MONNER: Yeah. It's Goodwin.

DS: Goodwin? Okay. And she's buried somewhere down around Monmouth, did you say?

MONNER: Oh, the one that's buried – oh, that sister. Oh, wait a minute. Now I'm thinking of my granddaughter now. Yes. She's buried in this old cemetery in Monmouth.

DS: Yeah, and do you remember what her married name was? [MONNER sighs] Well, don't let's get hung up on it. I – that was who...

MONNER: I should remember that. I can't say it right now.

DS: I want to ask you a couple of things about this, I think, interesting book by Bess Raber called *Some Bright Morning* about settling over there in the Agency Plains. There are several references to the Monner family in it. Apparently there were more Monners over there than just your father.

MONNER: Oh yes, there were.

DS: Was your grandfather over there? Anthony?

MONNER: My grandfather, he partly owned the ranch that my uncle Tony was on.

DS: I see. So you had an uncle named Tony, right? 'Cause there's a reference to an Anthony Monner in this book.

MONNER: Yeah, that's my uncle.

DS: That's your uncle, yes. John Monner was another uncle?

MONNER: He was another one of the boys.

DS: And they were over there too, apparently.

MONNER: Hmm, yeah, I guess John was, now that I think about it. I hadn't thought about that for a long time, but I'm sure that's right.

DS: There's a picture in here of what's called the Monner Homestead but without saying what Monner. Do you recognize that house?

MONNER: Yeah, that's my grandfather's house out there, where Tony Monner and his family lived. They rented it. They rented the place from my grandfather. I don't know. I don't know what kind of deal they had. They had quite a – when my grandfather finally died, my dad was the executor for the estate. He had quite a time getting it straightened out. It had been divided up so that different portions of it would go to different parts of the family. At that time, it was such a mess that I never did get it straight in my mind as how he had to divide it up.

DS: But anyway, there were several branches of your family over there around Madras at one time, I think.

MONNER: Yeah, there was – well, let's see. Nick, he was my uncle.

DS: Did you have an Uncle George?

MONNER: Yeah, he was there.

DS: He was there. He's referred to in the book. And later, George and Frank, another brother, had the tent and awning company in Portland, according to the book. Is that right?

MONNER: I think that is right.

DS: So your father went to work with his brothers.

MONNER: Well, when he came here, when he first moved here from the homestead, he went to work for a company, but that didn't last very long. He couldn't get along with his brother, I guess. But Frank Monner finally got a shop in Salem, Oregon, which is now run by his surviving boys.

DS: Oh. So there's still some more Monners around here besides you still.

MONNER: Well, some. Not many. Most of them are members of the family, one way or another.

DS: Okay. The last time we talked, we got up about to the time when you were doing aerial photography in the early 1930s. One thing I thought of to ask you was where were you living at that time? Did you live at home or with your parents? Or did you have a...

MONNER: I lived at home with my parents when I first started working there.

DS: Did you eventually move out of your parent's house?

MONNER: After I married, why – well, Katherine and I lived for a year in the house up here at 73rd and Yamhill for about a year, and then we decided we'd better buy a place. So I talked – Catherine had about \$500 worth of Commonwealth Edison stock at that time, which her dad had talked her into buying. Her dad was one of these guys that was always seeing ways to make money, you know. He was an old insurance man from – he had been in the insurance business all his life.

DS: You weren't married though, until, I think, 1939. Is that correct?

MONNER: 1939. Yeah.

DS: So until then, did you live with your parents?

MONNER: Yes, most of the time. Except I did go work for Brubaker in aerial surveying in between times, and we went out and visited Pendleton and a place in, stayed at a hotel in Great Falls, Montana for a short time.

DS: Tell me something about Brubaker. What kind of a person was he?

MONNER: Well, he was really a clever fellow. He didn't have a lot of education, but he joined the Navy when he was just old enough to get in, and that's about all. He worked on the battleship *Oregon*, of all things.

DS: Was he on it during the Spanish-American War?

MONNER: No, he wasn't on it then.

DS: It would've been later.

MONNER: Would've been a little bit later, I think, because he missed the Spanish-American War.

DS: Was he a nice guy to work with?

MONNER: Yeah, he was, oh, nice, even if – you could make mistakes and he could still forgive you for them. [Both laugh]

DS: Okay, well, so you were doing the aerial survey work. Were you doing – did you do other photography at the same time?

MONNER: No, mostly aerial survey work.

DS: Then, in 1936, you went to work for *The Oregonian*?

MONNER: No, it would be later than that.

DS: I'm working off this biographical sheet that comes out of the photographic files. It says here, "Worked from 1931-1936 for studios doing aerial, commercial, and portrait photography."

MONNER: Yes, well that would be Photo Art and Brubaker. Two hours, both places. In between the jobs were hard to come by then. If you got a job of any kind, why, [Laughs] you'd grab them.

DS: So, how did you happen to go to work for *The Oregonian*?

MONNER: I wanted to get into the newspaper work, and I decided I wanted that. So I talked to Milton [Werskil?] up there at *The Oregonian*.

DS: He was a photographer?

MONNER: He was the head artist. He was also a photographer. He'd take his pictures if he had to, but he didn't do it as a regular thing. He spent most of his time keeping up with all the reporters and their demands for artwork of various kind; little head sketches and things of that sort.

DS: So you talked to him and what happened?

MONNER: Well, first he was, sort of shook his head about it, and he said, “Well, wait. Just wait. Go away and wait awhile.” Then one day he called me on the phone and said “You want to come to work on *The Oregonian*?” [Laughs], and I said, “Sure!” [Both laugh] So I came down then. I forget what kind of job I had. I was working in Brubaker’s darkroom. He and Frank Sterett shared two darkrooms that were open there. Frank had one that was the best equipped. [Laughs]

DS: And you said you were working in Brubaker’s darkroom? Was Brubaker working there too?

MONNER: No. Did I say Brubaker?

DS: You did. Who were the other photographers at *The Oregonian* at the time?

MONNER: Well, myself and...

DS: And Sterett?

MONNER: Yeah, he was Bill Brubaker. That’s the fellow I worked with. His name I gave got mixed.

DS: And this would have still been in the building at 6th and Alder. Is that right?

MONNER: Yes, 6th and Alder.

DS: Where in the building was your darkroom?

MONNER: Up on the seventh floor.

DS: Where was the newsroom?

MONNER: It was right next door.

DS: So you had to go up an elevator, I guess, to get to the...

MONNER: Had to go up an elevator to get on – we had quite a time down in the studios for KGW-TV, was it?

DS: Well, radio, I suppose, in those days.

MONNER: Radio in those days, yeah. They didn't have any T.V. [Television] at that time. We were in the same as a section of the same floor as the news. The editorial writers' rooms were another section of that same area.

DS: What kind of photo equipment were you using in those days? What kind of camera?

MONNER: Speed Graphic cameras, four-by-five.

DS: Tell me a little bit about what it took to operate a Speed Graphic. I've worked with photographers who used them. You had to load your own film, isn't that right?

MONNER: Oh yeah, we had to. We reloaded our film as soon as we shot it, we reloaded the holders.

DS: In other words, you had a wooden frame with cut four-by-five film that slid into it. Is that right?

MONNER: Yeah, that's right.

DS: And a slide that went covered the film.

MONNER: Each slide took two films, one on each side, and the slide you could pull out of either side to expose that film.

DS: Why – you'd mentioned earlier that your first camera was a roll-film camera. Why did news photographers use cut film like that?

MONNER: Because it was the thing to do then. You'd go to – I went to several photographic conventions. In fact, I was – oh, I had a sort of an appointee job as a representative of the areas 'cause I was one of the oldest ones around. In fact, I was the first one who joined the National Press Photographers Association in Portland outside of Ralph Vincent. Ralph took me into it.

DS: So you went to the conventions and what? Talked about what kind of cameras you should use?

MONNER: No. I didn't talk about it. I just talked to the fellows and met a lot of the famous photographers like, oh...

DS: Ever meet Ansel Adams?

MONNER: Adams?

DS: Yeah, the scenic photographer from California?

MONNER: Well, I met him later in the year, not at that time. No. He was way above me. Later on I did meet him.

DS: Of course, this was all black and white film in those days.

MONNER: Oh, yeah.

DS: How fast – was it fast film?

MONNER: No, it's slow by present-day standards; runs about a 50 film speed, I guess.

DS Is that right? So what did you use for light with it?

MONNER: We used flash bulbs, but at that time flash bulbs were just beginning to get to the point where you would stick – they were all great big things, like having a bulb about so big. You could get about three of them in your coat pocket. [Laughs] If you're lucky.

DS: But you never had to use flash powder.

MONNER: I used it once or twice, just helping out. Frank Sterett was still using flash powder. I remember he had a wedding he had to do one time, and he was worrying about shooting with flash powder on that, wondering what picture he'd get before he got it right – kicked out. [Laughs]

DS: Because of the smoke?

MONNER: Because of the smoke, yeah. [Laughs]

DS: Do you remember any early assignments that you had with *The Oregonian*?

MONNER: I remember one. When I was just sort of a plaything. Since I was the youngest one on the staff, I got all the things that nobody else wanted to do, like, this was taking a series of pictures of houses, which nobody else wanted to monkey with, so I went. They were scattered all over town. They were way down, some in St. Johns and some on in-between all various places. I don't remember how I was photographing some house in St. Johns, and I don't even remember which one it was now. [Laughs]

DS: So these were for interior or sort of architectural stories or historic house stories?

MONNER: They were more just to illustrate a story on real estate sales, was what they were for mostly.

DS: Did you have to do some police work? Police stories?

MONNER: Oh, yes. You know, that was a curious thing, and I think about it now, the difference. We would go down to a, like a – who is – were you talking about that..

DS: In the recent art museum show, there's a picture taken...

MONNER: Yeah, someone laying on the floor...

DS: Of someone lying on the floor, with their arms spread out.

MONNER: With the arms spread out. His body was still there when I got there, and I asked the detectives (who were just good friends of ours then) and asked them about a picture, and they said, "Sure. Take an extra one for me, or two." So we get an extra shot or two for them and give them the negatives for whatever way they wanted to use them. We didn't have any of the back and forth talk that goes between the police department and reporters now.

DS: How did you get around town in those days?

MONNER: In cars.

DS: Did the photographer always drive?

MONNER: Well, except this one thing where I did this thing all over, which I took all day to do, is photographing these houses in various parts of Portland. I took the bus down there on that, carrying a 5x7 huge graphic camera. I had 5x7 holders. I had a huge case of equipment. About so big. [Laughs]

DS: About two feet by one foot.

MONNER: Yeah, something else. I had to carry it around.

DS: When you were in the cars – in my working lifetime, the photographers almost always drove. Was that true?

MONNER: Well, we drove then, too. When we took a car, we did. More often than we would take either go by cabs – cabs, quite a bit in those days.

DS: Of course, the town was somewhat smaller in those days, too.

MONNER: Everything was smaller, yes. St. Johns, for instance, was way out that end of town. That was way down there, and these houses were ones that were just getting ready to sell.

DS: Where did *The Oregonian* keep its news cars?

MONNER: I'm trying to remember where in the world they did keep them.

DS: They didn't have them in the building...

MONNER: I think we took them up – no, they had to – they were in that building up there at – what would it be? Broadway and...

DS: Oh, about Taylor?

MONNER: It'd be this side of there, I'd guess. Maybe...

DS: Some kind of garage?

MONNER: It was a garage, yes. It had a section they rented through *The Oregonian* exclusively, where we'd get a place to park if we were lucky. [Laughs] Most of the time.

DS: How long – it indicates in this sheet that you stayed with *The Oregonian* about two years, 1937 and 1938. Does that sound about right?

MONNER: Yeah, that's about it. Then I got laid off there. Then I went over and saw Ralph Vincent first, and he said, "Well, just wait a minute, and we'll see what we can do." So he called me back later, and I got the job.

DS: At *The Oregon Journal*?

MONNER: Yeah, *The Oregon Journal*.

DS: And *The Oregon Journal*, of course then, was at Broadway and Yamhill Street.

MONNER: Yeah, Broadway and Yamhill, and the press room is down there where all the cars are parked now.

DS: Yeah, in the basement.

MONNER: In the basement.

DS: Right. And the newsroom was on the mezzanine floor.

MONNER: That's right.

DS: You and I have talked off the microphone that the darkroom was towards the back on the mezzanine.

MONNER: In the back corner, what would be the northeast corner of the building, I guess.

DS: And the photographers there when you arrived were Ralph Vincent and who else?

MONNER: Les Ordeman. I think that's all there were.

DS: Were you the third man? Had they had a third photographer before?

MONNER: No. Well, they had. They used to use Roy [Knorr?] when he was sober and able to take pictures. [Both laugh]

DS: When do you suppose newspapers in Portland began using photographs? To the point when they had their own photographers?

MONNER: Oh, I can't tell you exactly. It was somewhere in the early 1900s or 1910s on.

DS: Really? That early?

MONNER: Almost that early.

DS: The working routine – let's move to *the Journal* now. The working routine in the newsroom, how did you get an assignment as a photographer? Who gave it to you?

MONNER: Arthur Crookham assigned them.

DS: The City Editor?

MONNER: The head of the – he'd say, "Take care of this one, back to Al Monner or Ralph," depending upon who they happened to have available.

DS: Did you usually go out with a reporter or did you often go out by yourself?

MONNER: Usually went out with a reporter, most of the stories.

DS: You know, I – this is your interview, not mine, but my experience is that photographers did a lot of the educating of reporters because they knew the town.

MONNER: Well, you do. You sit there and you have to keep your mouth shut. You can't interfere with the reporter while he's doing an interview of any kind. You have to keep your – but you can sit there and listen to it and kind of see the story that's going along, and then sometimes you can give a reporter a hint of what something he should have asked the fella.

DS: Yes. And you also knew the town pretty well, maybe better than this newer reporter would.

MONNER: I think probably better. I get lost when I go downtown now.

DS: So, we've covered most of the 1930s now. Can you think of things that we should talk about in the 1930s before we get to World War II?

MONNER: Well, in the early 1930s, I was sort of freelancing and taking, before I went to work on the papers. I took a lot of those early pictures, which I – well, I don't see any of them hanging up here. This is my collection of personal photographs here, which I've...

DS: The ones you really like.

MONNER: Now I'm going to give to the art museum. I'm going to give them – I'm saving those for my daughter and my son-in-law. David has already asked me for some pictures, and I gave him a bunch of them when he was here the last time visiting. Why, I gave him a bunch of – I took them out of the frames and just gave him the mounted prints, and he stuck them in one of his – he had two bags along. He had one bag he would stick some of those big mounted prints in there.

DS: Most of the pictures I'm looking at are scenic. You particularly like taking pictures of scenery, I think. Is that right?

MONNER: Well, I did more of that than any other kind of thing.

DS: When you were taking your own, for your own purposes, did you set out some day, knowing what you wanted to take, or did you just drive around, looking for things that looked good to you?

MONNER: Well, I just did it both ways. I would have some place in mind I wanted to visit. Like, I'd do a lot of things up in the Columbia Gorge, oh, shots of flowers blooming up there and things of that sort, which I didn't ordinarily take. I knew where there were certain flowers blooming in certain times of the year, so I'd go to that area to try to get mass pictures of blossoms.

DS: Would you do that so you could sell them or just for your own satisfaction?

MONNER: Mostly just for my own satisfaction. Oh, I had an idea that I'd sell some, but I never tried to compete with Ray Atkeson, for instance. He was way ahead of me. He was out trying to sell pictures before I even thought of taking them for that purpose.

DS: Yes. He did a lot of his work with the national magazines, I believe. Is that right?

MONNER: Oh, yeah. He used to make a trip back East once a year and visit some of the editors in New York and around there; talk to them about his pictures. He'd take along a bunch of prints he had. He had his color slides, mostly. Most of his were color work, and he'd take those along and show them to the fellows. He had an idea of what he was doing and what he had available.

DS: You said that you did some freelancing. Who did you freelance for?

MONNER: Oh, I made some for *The National Geographic*, I remember and, oh, what were some of the others? I know a number of magazines.

DS: Do you happen to remember what your early *National Geographic* pictures were about?

MONNER: Yeah, *The National Geographic* was doing a thing on Oregon then. I can't remember what it was all about.

DS: Did this involve going around the state, or was it mostly in the Portland area?

MONNER: Mostly – well, things were mostly in the state, yeah. I did a special trip down to the Steens Mountain country and spent a week there with Henry Corbett, Jr.

DS: Oh, did you? Did he have a house there?

MONNER: No. His dad had owned the P Ranch at one time.

DS: Oh, I didn't know that.

MONNER: And yeah. So he had quite a – Henry's still living in part of the old family home up there on Palatine Hill. I discovered, when I when up there looking for it, he had – oh, who was that famous painter that worked from Portland for so many years?

DS: Childe Hassam?

MONNER: Yeah, Hassam.

DS: Friend of Erskine Wood's.

MONNER: Yes, that's right.

DS: They painted over in the desert some. Did he – you started to say he had a Childe Hassam painting?

MONNER: Well, this was what he had in his dining room, over the fireplace, is a picture that was taken somewhere in the valley over where the bird refuge is now.

DS: Oh, yeah, Malheur.

MONNER: But he'd taken it some distance away. It was sort of a long view looking across the valley with these clumps of trees here and there, in that [queer?] style he had.

DS: This was a painting? Or a photograph?

MONNER: It was a painting.

DS: I should ask you about some of the photographers that you studied with, for example, according to this information sheet, you did some work with Minor White, is that right?

MONNER: Yes, I did that. That was his second trip here, I think.

DS: When would that be, about?

MONNER: Oh, it'd be hard to say now, isn't it?

DS: Was it before World War II?

MONNER: No, it was after World War II. In the 1950s, I'd say.

DS: How did you happen to do that? Did he invite you to do it, or did he have a class he was...

MONNER: Well, I met Minor White when he was just a freelancer, just running around town taking pictures, one of these artist things. I discovered a lot of them up in the art museum files, in fact, when I went digging around in there looking for his pictures. Why, there was a bunch of his prints; prints that he had made, I guess, at one time. And, well, I don't know.

DS: So he came back to Portland and what? Offered a master class of some kind?

MONNER: Well, by that time, he had become famous. He was editor of *Aperture* magazine and he went down to San Francisco from Portland and he taught in one of the Ansel Adams schools there in San Francisco for a while. Ansel Adams promoted him. And then he had a chance to go to work – he went back to Eastman Kodak in Rochester – I don't know just how that worked. Anyway, he worked for the museum of Eastman Kodak.

DS: Eastman Museum?

MONNER: They had it then. I understand they've given it up now, they're not going to have it anymore.

DS: What did you do in Minor White's class? What was it like working with him?

MONNER: Well, he would give you an assignment. First of all, he always made you bring some of your regular prints up for him to see. He'd see those and then he'd think of some project for you to work on, and then you work on that. And then you're supposed to develop them and print them right away; quick! He didn't give you any time to think about it, you weren't supposed to think about them at all; just do them right now.

DS: Why was that, do you suppose?

MONNER: Well, I figured that that gave you more of a direct connection between your mind and what you were doing. That was his idea. He did everything that way. Then he had one trip he made to the coast down by Coos Bay.

DS: Was that Cape Kiwanda?

MONNER: Cape Kiwanda, not Cape Kiwanda. That wasn't...

DS: Cape Lookout? Well, I shouldn't be telling you. Somewhere near Coos Bay.

MONNER: Well, it's where they have that State Park where that former Highway Patrolman gave it to the state.

DS: Oh, yes, I know the one you mean. Near Shore Acres State Park.

MONNER: Shore Acres, that's the one. Shore Acres State Park. Well, Minor White liked that place because it had lots of these rocks with cavities washed out in them, and they were showing up in odd places. He had us take a whole series of photos of those...

DS: It sounds as if he liked texture.

MONNER: He did. He was an expert at taking – in fact, I was kind of curious when his books came out (I have one copy of his book up here) how many of them were pictures of rocks that he just found somewhere.

DS: Well, we may be getting ahead of our story here a little bit. Another person that you studied with, it says here, was Imogen Cunningham.

MONNER: Oh, yeah.

DS: When was that?

MONNER: Well, that was in between the time that Minor White was coming out here. See, he stayed with Dr. Rustin.

DS: You don't happen to remember Dr. Rustin's first name?

MONNER: Arnold. He's since retired. He's living in a house down at the coast at the, oh, what's that river that goes down to the coast?

DS: The Nehalem?

MONNER: Not Nehalem. That doesn't seem to be it.

DS: Well, anyway, he lives on the coast.

MONNER: Lives on the coast in a place – oh, he mentioned the name. I think that he has a place that's across from where the Campfire Girls camp is.

DS: Oh. Near the Salmon River?

MONNER: Yeah, the Salmon River, that's the one.

DS: Oh, Cascade Head, maybe. Does he live over in that development on Cascade Head?

MONNER: He lives on this side of Cascade Head. See, Cascade Head, itself, is partly set aside by the Forest Service as a nature preserve...

DS: Harold [Kirsch?] got interested in that and helped bring that about.

MONNER: Oh, is that what he did?

DS: Well, anyway, Dr. Rustin was a friend of Minor White's?

MONNER: Yeah, they became quite good friends. And Minor White – I don't know how this all came about, anyway, but Minor White would stay with – well, Arnold Rustin had quite a large house with a lot of extra rooms in it, so he had a lot of space to provide a work and then he also had a darkroom downstairs in the basement where Minor White could work if he wanted to. So that was a quite convenient arrangement. [Laughs]

DS: So how does Imogen Cunningham fit into this?

MONNER: Well, she – how did she get mixed? She got mixed up in because of Dr. Rustin. Dr. Rustin used to go on vacations. He made trips down to San Francisco where Imogen Cunningham used to hang out all the time.

DS: I must admit that I don't know anything about her. Tell me about Imogen Cunningham.

MONNER: Oh. Well, I don't know much about her, except that I understand that she's one of these queer people that they have in San Francisco. I made the mistake on time of

taking my wife along one time when I went down to see her, and – who was the other one who was famous?

DS: A woman?

MONNER: A woman, yeah.

DS: Well, there's a name here, Ruth Bernhard.

MONNER: Ruth Bernhard, yeah that's it. I was supposed to see her and Cunningham the same trip. But I got in to see Ruth Bernhard, but Cunningham, Bernhard wouldn't let me into her house.

DS: Were Cunningham and Bernhard friends?

MONNER: They were friends, but they were vastly different when it came to working. Because Bernhard, Ruth Bernhard is...

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

Tape 2, Side 2
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DS: Her and the way they worked.

MONNER: Well, Ruth Bernhard was – oh my goodness. The name is mixed up. Yeah. Bernhard. That was her name, wasn't it? Or was it? I'd have to get here and look in the book to...

[Tape stops]

DS: These women. Did they come to Portland to give classes? Or did you go meet them somewhere?

MONNER: They both came here to give classes, and what they did was they'd just hold a short session. It seems to me that, I get the people mixed up.

DS: Well, would that, again, be after World War II?

MONNER: Yes, that was in the 1950s when most of this was going on.

DS: Did you go to those classes on your own initiative, or did the *Journal* pay your way?

MONNER: No, on my own. I paid my way; had to pay extra for those classes.

DS: Why?

MONNER: Well, I guess that's one way the fellows could make some, Minor White could make some money. He made money on those, I think, really, although he spent a lot of

money. He drove out here all the way and took pictures. He would bring somebody along with him to carry his cameras and stuff, and he would just stop when he'd say he saw something he wanted a photograph, he'd say, "Why, you wait here for me, and I'll go over and get the picture."

DS: Was he the kind of person that would wait all day 'til the sun got just right for his...

MONNER: Oh, he would, if he had to.

DS: Al, we've gotten a little ahead of the story. Let's go back to – you've gone to work for the *Journal*, and apparently about that same time you got married. Is that right?

MONNER: Yes. In 1939, I got married.

DS: How did you meet your wife?

MONNER: [Laughs] That was a joke of Mazamas Club. I used to go to the Mazamas Club meetings, and they met on the top floor of the Pacific Building in those days and you had to go through double swinging doors. And I came through there, and I don't know why. Anyway, she started to follow me through. My wife was behind me...

DS: Not your wife then, but some woman whom, at that time, you didn't know.

MONNER: Yeah, I didn't know her. I'd never met her before. But I said, "Excuse me," and I walked through and held the door open for her, and she went up in the elevator with me, and from then on we just maybe one thing turned into another.

DS: [Laughs] Is that right? How long was the courtship, shall we say? How long did it take you to marry after you first met her?

MONNER: About a year, I think; if I remember it right.

DS: And her name was Catherine Elizabeth Gnadinger...

MONNER: That was it.

DS: How should that last name be pronounced?

MONNER: [gʌ·ne·dʌ·gər]³

DS: And she was from Evanston?

MONNER: Yeah, that's right.

DS: How did she get to Portland?

MONNER: She came here because her friend – what was her name? Well, she had a girlfriend that she'd grown up with. Catherine was kind of one of these girls, when she was growing up, was sensitive to a lot of things and couldn't eat this and couldn't eat that and couldn't do all sorts of funny things. So, anyway – oh, what was I...

DS: I was asking how she got to Portland from Evanston, Illinois.

MONNER: Oh, it was this friend of hers that was there.

DS: Just came out to visit?

³ Transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet.

MONNER: She came out to visit. She had some relatives who lived up in the West Side. He was a, I think he was a sort of a would-be lawyer. He had legal training, anyway. And they lived on the west side of the hills there, and she came up there and stayed with them, and she was so taken with this country that she wrote Catherine all these glowing letters about it. And she yearns. And she, in the meanwhile, is signed up to go out with the Mazamas to...

DS: This was not Catherine; this was the friend.

MONNER: This was the friend that signed up to go out with the Mazamas to – what's that place in eastern Wyoming where they have all the big mountains?

DS: The Tetons?

MONNER: Tetons. And got out here, and this fellow, I can't remember his name now, famous mountain climber in the Tetons. He was the one guide who was...

DS: I think I've met him, and I'll think, maybe...

MONNER: You probably had. I never did. I never met him. I was...

DS: I met him once when I was assigned to cover a plane crash up there...

MONNER: [Laughs] He did all that...

DS: but I can't remember his name. And since we're on this historical tape here, we probably shouldn't mess around with it. [Laughs] We'll think of it.

MONNER: I'll tell you another funny story about him when he was....

DS: Well, anyway, so this friend was going to the Tetons.

MONNER: Yes. She was going to the Tetons, and they were picking a group to climb the Grand Teton. And this friend of hers was turned down for the trip, and Catherine got the chance of going up there and climbing behind, right on the heel of the site. I don't know how many people they had in the party, but whatever it was, well...

DS: So Catherine was out here in Portland by that time, is that right? Or did she get the chance...

MONNER: She'd come out here in Portland. In fact she quit a job. She was working for a woman in Evanston who had an agency for hired help, and Catherine was working in her office as sort of a helper. Anyway, Catherine came out here and told this girl she'd be back, she thought. [Laughs] Well, anyway, she got out here, and Faith, or whoever she was talking to, and she decided not to go back. Well, by that time it was too late, anyways. She had two weeks' vacation, something like that.

DS: Faith was the name of her friend, did you say?

MONNER: Faith was the name of the friend, yeah.

DS: Do you remember Faith's last name?

MONNER: Well at that time she was – hmm, what was her last name?

DS: Well, did Catherine have a job out here?

MONNER: No, she hadn't, but she got well acquainted with Everett Darr and Ida Darr and all that bunch down there.

DS: At Government Camp?

MONNER: Yeah. They had a store here on East Broadway at that time. That's where Everett started. In fact, I helped him get started on that. I bought one of the sleeping bags he was having a fellow make for him down in Medford, or somewhere down there. He was an expert at stuffing sleeping bags with wool, and I bought one of those sleeping bags for \$25. Now you couldn't get one for under a hundred. [Laughs]

DS: Did he have the Mountain Shop?

MONNER: The Mountain Shop it was called, yes; and later he sold it and moved up to Government Camp.

DS: So Catherine became acquainted with the Darrs.

MONNER: Yes, she got a job there.

DS: Oh, she worked there.

MONNER: She worked there for a while.

DS: As a sales clerk?

MONNER: Sales clerk, a salesman. She was a good sales talker, because she'd been a – she'd hiked. She'd climbed the Grand Teton by that time; could talk about that and [Laughs] that made her just the fitting, best kind of a sales clerk for Everett Darr.

DS: Let's see, in 1939 you would've been 30 years old, is that right? You were born in 1909?

MONNER: Yeah.

DS: How old do you think Catherine was when you were married?

MONNER: She was about – let's see. She was two years younger than I was, I think.

DS: How many children did you have?

MONNER: Two.

DS: And one of them is, your daughter is Catherine E. Goodwin. Is that right?

MONNER: Yes, that's right. She's the one who lives out here. The other is Kirk David something-or-other.

DS: David. It says here "David Anthony Monner" is the son of...

MONNER: Yes, that would be it, yes.

DS: And where is he now?

MONNER: He lives in – oh, that place. East Germany

DS: The address, the information sheet I have here says Wolfenbüttel, West Germany. Does that sound right? Or maybe that's a street address.

MONNER: That's a street address.

DS: Oh, is this the town? Grosse Breite?

MONNER: No, that's the name of the street. Wolfenbüttel. That's the town. That's the town, right. He bought a property and had a house built in Wolfenbüttel.

DS: How did he get to Germany in the first place?

MONNER: He got to Germany in the first place because he'd been hearing about jobs in – he had a doctor's degree in microbiology by that time, and he had got acquainted with some of the people in Norway, near where Britt, his wife, lived and they steered him onto this job of going to the University of Sweden as head of X-ray satellites.

DS: In West Germany.

MONNER: In northern Sweden. So he got a job there for two years, with a two-year contract. You know, he had to learn Swedish so he could teach it well enough to teach his craft in Swedish to a new class at the university. [Laughs] He learned all this stuff in just a short time.

DS: That would be hard. Well, we're getting ahead of this subject a little bit. You were married in 1939, and where did you say you lived? 73rd and what?

MONNER: 73rd and Yamhill.

DS: In a rented house or what?

MONNER: In a rented house. In fact, I had a chance to buy that for \$2,500, and I turned it down [Laughs]. I'm kicking myself. You know what we paid for this one? Twenty-two hundred and something.

DS: Twenty-two hundred for this house?! Goodness! Did you move here from 73rd and Yamhill?

MONNER: Yeah. No, we moved to a rented – I know we had a house that we had paid for. We bought it from – who was the real estate man? I know Catherine was – this house was advertised in the paper, and we went over to look at it, and [were] kind of taken with it.

DS: What part of town?

MONNER: On 50th and Broadway. That's where it was. Anyway, we lived there for 25 years, or better than 25 years, I figured up later, 'cause both our kids went to Grant High School and graduated from there. And then they went on to – the girl was – how'd she get ahead of David?

DS: Was she the older of...

MONNER: No, the girl was not. She was the younger one of the two. Anyway, she decided to go to college out in Walla Walla.

DS: Whitman?

MONNER: Whitman. And she went there for about two years and belonged to the – and of all people, one of the people who belonged to the sorority that she belonged to was the county commissioner.

DS: Pauline Anderson?

MONNER: No, that's not her name.

DS: Carey Miller? I'm trying to think of women who've been the county commissioners.

MONNER: Well, she's another one.

DS: Well. So she went to Whitman for two years. Did she graduate from some other college?

MONNER: No, she got tired of going up there, or rather Catherine ran out of money. She was trying to make enough money to keep them going to college, and Whitman was kind of an expensive place to go. David graduated from there, as a matter of fact. Then he went to Oregon State and got his doctorate degree there. He got a – had a running scholarship of some kind, where he got a scholarship that paid for part of his – he spent four years at Whitman. But Oregon State when we were talking about his micro-biology degree.

DS: I got the impression the other day that you don't hear from him very often.

MONNER: I don't. He writes once in a while, and his wife writes once in a while. That's about it.

DS: Does he ever come back here?

MONNER: He's been back here twice. Once, the first time I got that stroke was when I was working at *The Journal* then. I remember Ed O'Meara came up to see me in the nursing

home where I was going at that time. I graduated from the hospital to the nursing home. I spent a year in this nursing home.

DS: Is that right? I didn't remember that.

MONNER: No, I don't think it was – it wasn't noticed in *The Oregonian*, 'cause I was working at *The Journal* then.

DS: But, I mean, so was I, but I didn't recall that.

MONNER: Didn't remember that. I guess I didn't make much noise about it.

DS: Well, you don't make much noise ever.

MONNER: I didn't at that time, I know! [Laughs]

DS: Let me talk about that. How would you describe your own personality?

MONNER: Oh, boy. [Laughs] Sort of quiet, I guess.

DS: People sometimes think of newspaper people as being kind of pushy and intrusive.

MONNER: No, I never was that way.

DS: Do you think that was a handicap or a help in doing your newspaper work?

MONNER: It helped in some ways 'cause I became a good friend of Gene Collins, who was another loner. And he used to take me out to his place. When he had special blossoms coming up, why, he'd let me know so I could come out and takes pictures of them.

DS: You like flowers.

MONNER: I like flowers, yes.

DS: I think we should get back to the chronology a little bit here. You were married in 1939, and so the World War II started. But we got into war in 1941. You never went into the service.

MONNER: I remember a big to-do we had about that, when your dad helped me out a lot. He was on the draft board here, I understand.

DS: I don't recall that, but it may be so.

MONNER: Well, I understood he was. Maybe he just had an in on it, I don't know; maybe he knew the right people. Anyway he would come back and say, "Well, I got you another deferment." [Both laugh]

But after about, oh, three or four times of that, why I said, "Well, I think I'd better just go and get it over with." By that time, the war was getting to the end, and looked like it was going to come to the end in the Pacific, anyway. And so I went up and took my exam and passed it with flying colors. [Laughs]

[Tape stops]

DS: Alright. You took your exam and passed it?

MONNER: Oh, I passed it, and I was told to come back in a month, and they'd let me know where I'd go. By that time, the war had ended in Germany. And so in a month I came back, and they said, "Well," this fellow said, "Oh, let it go. It's all over, I think." So by that

time we were wiping up. They hadn't dropped the atomic bomb on Japan yet. Remember, that took place later. I don't remember the sequence of events there very well.

DS: What was it like working on the newspaper during the war?

MONNER: Well, it was sort of bad in some respects. You could only photograph certain officers as they came through, and they had certain things they could tell you and certain things they couldn't. So you had to sort of sort out what you could do. And we did a lot of the work in the shipyards, taking pictures of ship launchings and all that sort of thing. We'd go to all three of the ones at Swan Island, and then St. Johns, and then over to Vancouver. I took, one or two I took at Vancouver.

DS: Was Jean Muir the reporter who worked on that?

MONNER: Yes, she did. She was given a job as a special kind of reporter. She went down there and to talk to, oh, like a group of women we would talk with at Oregon State...

DS: Oregon Ship?

MONNER: Oregon Ship. Anyway, they'd taken on the job as being welders, and she got the group of them together, and we took a picture of them sitting on the steel plates they were working on. [Laughs] Stuff like that.

I remember the other time, I took, when the war was over, and the Oregon Shipyard was about to be dismantled, I hiked up on the hills above it where you could look down and see the whole shipyard spread out below you. Took a bunch of pictures there, and we ran those later on. And the thing was, it was decided would we – that was when we just destroyed it; just eliminate those. It was funny how we ran according to what we could get permission to use.

DS: Where did you have to get the permission? In other words, did you have to get permission to take the pictures or did you have to get permission to use them after they'd been taken?

MONNER: We had to have permission to take the pictures in the first place, especially a shipyard picture like that one I took of the Oregon Shipyards. Why, I couldn't have taken that during the war.

DS: *The Journal* staff during the war was very largely women in the newsroom, wasn't that right. Reporting staff? Did that make any difference in the way you worked?

MONNER: No, they did the same thing that everybody else did.

DS: Who were the other photographers during the war?

MONNER: Ralph Vincent, and then in the latter part of the, why, then Jim Vincent, Ralph's son went to work there.

DS: Did he? Did Les Ordeman leave during the war?

MONNER: No, he stayed on. He was working at the – let's see, where did he? He retired just about the time...

DS: No, he didn't. I remember when he retired. That was in the late 1950s, I think, or early 1960s. I'd have to check my records. He was there in the 1950s. I know, because I worked with him.

MONNER: Yeah, he was in there then, I know.

DS: Well, did you have any trouble getting photographic materials during...

MONNER: Yes, we did. [Laughs] We had to take substitutes: film and everything. We were buying some of the Ansco film from – that was – what was that called? Let's turn off this thing again.

[Tape stops]

DS: So, was it inferior?

MONNER: Well, it seemed to be about the same kind of film, really. You couldn't hardly tell the difference using them, but except that we had all kinds of film in our – you go through our films and there would be, some is notched one way and some another, depending on which film you're using.

DS: And that was notched so that you could tell in the dark what it was?

MONNER: You could tell by the – you'd know which box you're in.

DS: Yeah. [Laughs] What about gasoline? Was it hard to get gasoline to cover a story?

MONNER: Oh we managed to get gasoline. We got enough to get by on. That's about all I can say.

DS: Did you happen to cover Franklin Roosevelt when he came here to the shipyards in the – whenever that was

MONNER: No, I didn't, I didn't cover that. Ralph Vincent covered that, got that assignment.

DS: Do you remember any particular assignments during the war that were interesting?

MONNER: Well, I photographed – what was the – during the war, no, I didn't. I can't – you know, it's a funny thing. I can't remember hardly any of that space during the war or what I did. I know I went down to the shipyards a lot, but Jean Muir – was it Jean Muir? That was her name, yeah.

DS: Yeah, the red-headed reporter.

MONNER: Yeah. She was with me most of the time, and she got into that job. The regular reporter was Ralph Vincent. He was on the biggest assignments, like ship launches or something. He'd usually do that. I did cover – what was the one I did? I covered the launching of the [battleship], the *Oregon*.

DS: The merchant ship *Oregon*. The big – the first one, wasn't it? Wasn't that, that was the first merchant...

MONNER: The first one, yes.

DS: The first, was it the first Liberty ship? Or anyway, was the first one that was launched here.

MONNER: I remember that one now, because I did – what did I do? Oh, I took all the extra pictures that Ralph Vincent couldn't handle. He was taking the pictures of the big shots doing it.

DS: Speaking of your work, your newspaper work in general. What did you like doing the most?

MONNER: I enjoyed the gardening, that sort of thing, the most.

DS: You also developed an interest in covering art.

MONNER: Well, yes. That's how I got that picture I have upstairs on the wall.

DS: The Amanda Snyder picture?

MONNER: No, the other one, the picture that I just bought.

DS: What was the name of that painter?

MONNER: That was Peter Sheffers, and he took the one that was over the dining room table in the dining room, too.

DS: Do you happen to remember when it was that you started taking pictures of pictures? Pictures of art. Or had you always done that?

MONNER: No, I did that because I got along fine with – what's her name?

DS: Louise Aaron?

MONNER: Louise Aaron. Yes.

DS: And she was the art reporter or editor of the *Journal*?

MONNER: She was the art reporter. She would always visit this Peter Sheffers, and he was living in a house over near Montgomery Ward then. So we went over there and visited him and that's when I got acquainted with him and began taking pictures of his work.

DS: At some stage, I have the impression that you used to take pictures for the Portland Art Museum, of...

MONNER: Oh yeah, I did that for years.

DS: How did that come about?

MONNER: I suppose probably through Louise Aaron. Or maybe – I don't remember that.

DS: So, what – when they were putting on a show, would they call you up and ask you to come over and record it?

MONNER: They would ask — no, they would have Louise Aaron come over to do the reporting for the paper, and I would take pictures for her, and then I'd — they'd let me know when I was doing something that they wanted the pictures of, so I would take extra pictures for them of that.

DS: Is there a special technique for taking photographs of art?

MONNER: Yes, there is. You have to learn a lot about reflection of light and what it does to a painting when you're getting the painting up there and the light's coming through the three different corners of the painting. You have to have a keen eye for what you're getting in the picture.

DS: And you also have to know how to set up your lights for it, I suppose.

MONNER: Yes, you need to do that.

DS: Did you use flash for that, or did you use floodlights?

MONNER: No, I used floodlights for that.

DS: You must have sometimes had to have them take pictures out of their frames for you, didn't you?

MONNER: No, not usually. That was one of my troubles. I had trouble getting them, sometimes keeping the shadows from showing along the edge.

DS: Another – well, you said that your favorite subject with pictures was flowers. How did you feel about portraits?

MONNER: Well, I enjoy taking portraits, too.

DS: Did you ever take, as opposed to the kind of picture you take for a newspaper, which is, we call them head-shots, just having somebody sitting there, and you snap his picture; did you ever really take studio portraits?

MONNER: Somehow or other, I got on the good side of Larry, a fellow on the *Journal Juniors*.

DS: Oh, Larry McClung?

MONNER: Larry McClung. And then there was another one, a woman that helped him a lot.

DS: Cleo Daniel? I remember she was a woman who worked for *Journal Juniors*. Big woman. Tall woman.

MONNER: Yeah. She was a big woman. Large-boned.

DS: Yes, I think that might be Cleo Daniel.

MONNER: I kind of lost her name now.

DS: Well, anyway, what's that got to do with portrait photography?

MONNER: Well, I was the one man who worked on Saturdays, so they'd always have a group of kids they were going to photograph for their birthdays on Saturdays, so they'd get them all up there in the studio, and I'd bang away. I had to – you can only take one picture of each kid, so you had to judge what kind of lighting you were getting on his face. So I did a lot of that. Then finally they shut it down, so I didn't take any pictures anymore. By the time I got to working at *The Oregonian*, I don't think I took any pictures for *The Journal*.

DS: You mean by the time *The Journal* and *The Oregonian* were consolidated.

MONNER: Yes, by the time they got...

DS: Yeah. Before we get to that, another thing we want to be sure to talk about is the Gypsies. How did you – I understand you were friendly with the Gypsies. How'd that come about?

MONNER: I can't really remember exactly how it came about. It came about because there were a lot of them living around *The Journal* and down, just above Burnside.

DS: On about 2nd and 3rd Avenue, along in there

MONNER: 2nd and 3rd, along in there. And the Cooks – was it Cooks? That wasn't their name. Came in with the two of – both of them are in the Rose City Cemetery now. Anyway, I got to taking them, and they were – they knew all of the Gypsies in town. He was at one time King of the Gypsies, so to speak, and so I learned then. And then, later on, they knew other Gypsies around here. They had relatives all over town. I never knew them. He would – had more relatives or half-relatives of some kind.

DS: I remember there was one big family, I think named George. Were some of these people named George?

MONNER: George. Yes, that's the one I was trying to think of. Jim George.

DS: Jim George. Did *The Journal* assign you to cover Gypsies?

MONNER: No. I did that on my own.

DS: But some of your pictures ran in the paper, didn't they?

MONNER: Yes, they did.

DS: How did the Gypsies feel about having their pictures taken?

MONNER: Oh, they were great, as long as they got copies of the pictures. [Laughs]

DS: Can you remember any of the things that you did particularly with the Gypsies, like weddings or funerals?

MONNER: Well. I did one. I never did do a complete wedding. I did funerals out here, this...

DS: At Rose City?

MONNER: I didn't go out to Rose City Park with them. I went out and took pictures at this Russian...

DS: Or the Greek Orthodox – the Russian Orthodox or Greek Orthodox?

MONNER: The Russian one.

DS: Isn't it the Greek Orthodox Church?

MONNER: I think it was called – I think it was...

DS: Holy Trinity? That's the name of the church.

MONNER: Holy Trinity.

DS: I think that's Greek Orthodox.

MONNER: Anyway, I took pictures there of some of the Gypsies in the – they just go walking in and out; like they can just do anything they wanted to around there, as long as they didn't interfere with the service, that's all the...

DS: Did they invite you to come, or did you just kind of show up and do it?

MONNER: Oh, I just showed up and when I was there, well they welcomed me with open arms.

DS: I remembered, by the way, that the recent show at the Portland Art Museum, your pictures included, I think, two pictures of Gypsies.

MONNER: Some of those, you know, were taken – later, I got to taking pictures of other Gypsy families, and some of those were taken up around where all those buildings are torn down. They're all up there on 2nd and 3rd and Hawthorne.

DS: On the East Side.

MONNER: On the East – no, on the West Side.

DS: On the West Side. Well, Hawthorne doesn't go on the West Side.

MONNER: Well, anyway, I went up there. They were living in those old hotels where things were torn down later in – at the city...

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]

Tape 3, Side 1
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DS: Something is – there we go. Now we're on. Some of those Gypsies lived in storefronts, as I recall, right off the street.

MONNER: Yeah, the first Gypsies I photographed for *The Journal* were some that lived in the storefront up on – oh, what would it be across the street now? Right across – no, it wasn't that far up. On this building – I can't remember where it was exactly, now. They lived inside of the buildings. Anyway, it was up towards the direction of the county courthouse, and they lived in one of the buildings there. It had been converted into a dual dwelling for them. And I went in there, and there was this woman wanted me to come up if I had some time to take a picture. I said, "Well, I'll try to get up there after work, then" or something that way. So I went up there after work, and got in there and here they were, all dressed up in their fancy clothes, all waiting to be taking pictures. So I took a lot of pictures of them sitting around the table and all that sort of thing, you know, which they had, I guess, the last I heard of.

DS: Describe the women's clothes to me.

MONNER: Well, when they were Gypsy-style clothes, they had a long skirt that came way down round their ankles and it was all gathered in together.

DS: But pretty full skirt, wasn't it?

MONNER: It was a full skirt, yeah. In fact, I finally got a picture of one of them. I don't think any of those pictures are in – that one, that might be up in with some of those up there. The woman with this skirt spread out on the floor around her, just a complete circle,

and stitching all the way around, so when she got it around her waist, why, it would just hang, all the folds around her ankle.

DS: And what did they wear on top of the skirt, the upper half?

MONNER: A blouse of some kind, usually.

DS: I remember some of those blouses as being very colorful.

MONNER: Well, they did. They went in for colorful. They'd buy it. In fact, I used to see them in the stores, occasionally, in a place like, oh, Woolworth's was one of the places I caught them in. They'd be looking at some of the goods for blouses that were real colorful, flowered and...

DS: Yard goods?

MONNER: [Yes].

DS: And how did the men dress?

MONNER: They mostly wore just suits.

DS: I've often seen pictures of Gypsy men wearing hats. Do you think they wore hats more than other people did?

MONNER: I think they do more. They used to wear hats when they were – they'd sit at the table with a hat on and eat a fancy dinner.

DS: Did they speak English at home?

MONNER: Oh yeah. Well, they'd speak Gypsy.

DS: Romani?

MONNER: Romani.

DS: Do you see any Gypsies anymore? Are you in touch with them at all?

MONNER: No, I don't.

DS: Where do you think they've gone?

MONNER: Well, I scouted all around. I think there's a family, I believe, over on Powell, a place where they tell – have a sign out there: "Fortunes Told Here." And there was another woman living down here, let's see, down on the street here, right straight down the street. I don't think she's there anymore though.

DS: They had a reputation, in the 1930s, of being not very honest. Do you think that was fair?

MONNER: Well. I'm of course – I'm sort of prejudiced in favor of the Gypsies, I think.
[Laughs]

DS: What do you...

MONNER: You can tell them this, that they never stole anything from me. And in fact, when I had to park the car out there and put nickels in the meter, they'd go out and put nickels in the meter for me. I'd say, "Oh, I've got to go and put a" – "Oh, we got it. We've taken care of it." [Laughs]

DS: Well, they obviously liked you.

MONNER: Well, they did like me, and I got to know a lot of the important peoples, like the Georges, Jim George's family. So, and there was another family on 3rd Avenue I photographed. I think she was some relation to the Georges. I don't know which one, where it stopped.

DS: Another Gypsy name I remember hearing is Ristick. Did you know any Risticks?

MONNER: Yes, Risticks. That's one of the King of the Gypsies' family.

DS: Did you do any work with any other ethnic minorities, like the Chinese that used to live around...

MONNER: No, I never did anything with the Chinese.

DS: Or Japanese?

MONNER: No. I did the pictures of Chinese people and pictures in the newspaper, but...

DS: Yeah, but you didn't get into their ceremonies or...

MONNER: Not to ceremonies or anything of that sort.

DS: What about Indians? Did you ever deal with the Indians?

MONNER: Yes, Indians I did much more for. In fact, I didn't take as many pictures of them as I should have, I discovered later. We used to go out to the Warm Springs Reservation out here and take pictures of them out there, and they also used to come across the river to visit some of the people we went out there to see. John Farre was one of them we went to...

DS: Farre? He was an Indian?

MONNER: No, he was a Dane. He was graduated from a Danish school...

DS: What was his connection with the Indians?

MONNER: Just liked them.

DS: Did you ever got to Celilo?

MONNER: Oh yeah.

DS: Take pictures of them dipnetting at the falls before the dam went in?

MONNER: Yes, I did. I took pictures of the last dirt being dumped on the falls. It's just a suggestion of water going over the falls.

DS: Did you ever know Chief Tommy Thompson?

MONNER: Oh, yes. In fact, I have a picture of him. Oh, no, I gave that to the Indians. He took a bunch of pictures I had here in that stack in the corner. I had about a dozen pictures I made there where the Indians were a show they were having at Kah-Nee-Ta and they were all mounted and – yeah, they were all mounted, I think.

DS: How did you happen to go to Warm Springs? Would they invite the newspaper up there, or did you just go?

MONNER: No, they invited me up. Well, I went up there once with Louise Aaron. She had something special she was doing up there. Louise Aaron was quite a friend to the Indians, you know.

DS: Was she?

MONNER: Oh, yeah. She used to go up and visit with Tommy Thompson up at the Celilo before he moved. The last pictures I took of Tommy Thompson were taken at Celilo.

DS: I remember when his wife, Flora Thompson, used to come into the newsroom of *The Journal* in her buckskin dress and her moccasins.

MONNER: I remember that.

DS: I always wished that I'd been smart enough to cultivate her a little bit. She seemed like a very nice person.

MONNER: She's, in fact, I think she's still living out there on the reservation, I think.

DS: Huh, she must be very old by now.

MONNER: She probably is, because I know Tommy's been dead for several years now. But she was a lot younger than he was, you know. That was a second or third marriage for Tommy. Indians aren't particular about how many times they get married. [Laughs] Or how they get married.

DS: Were there any other Indians that you particularly knew?

MONNER: Oh, there were some that I knew, but I didn't know their names or anything. They used to come up to our homestead and ask my dad if they could sleep in his haystack. So they would tie their horses to the fence railing, or anyplace they could find to tie them up, and sleep out there. They'd get up in the early dawn, before the sun even got up, [and] head off for the hills.

DS: Yeah, apparently, they came across to the east side of the Deschutes more in those days than I'm aware of they're doing now.

MONNER: I think so. Well, for instance, one of those who used to come up to see John Farre, they used to come in a boat down to the river and stop the boat across the river, then they'd come through – I don't know how they got across the river. They come across in the boat, I guess? I don't remember how they got across. Anyway, they'd come across the Deschutes River there at his place, and come up to the house, and give him a bunch of fruit or something like that.

DS: Walking. They'd be walking.

MONNER: They walked, oh, yeah. They walked everywhere.

DS: Do you – maybe this is a highfalutin question, but did you have a philosophy of photography? What you were – with your own pictures, as opposed to what you were assigned to take for the paper? What were you trying to do?

MONNER: Well, I don't know. I guess I had a sort of philosophy about my pictures, like the one of the house where the windows are broken out over there. I took that one with an old [Rokia?]. I saved a 35 millimeter negative I shot on that. And then, the juniper tree, I got on that on top of that ridge above the Kah-Nee-Tah Lodge. That juniper tree was a dead one. The sun was shining right through. You can see if you look at it closely. I was right behind the trunk.

DS: Right. Well, you're interested in patterns? What would you look for in a picture?

MONNER: Oh, I just look for any interesting pattern in it. Like the, well, the one over there with the bird. That was taken when Catherine was still sick. Over right on that corner. That was taken of a dead finch that died right out here in our garden, when I had more trees out there then. It sort of crawled under a bush and died there, so I took that as a

memorial to Catherine. I have it dated on the back. And then this one down below was taken on a trip I made out – oh, where was I?

DS: It's a long, horizontal landscape of a hill behind a mountain.

MONNER: I understand that that's all built up to houses now.

DS: That's somewhere, where? In the Tualatin Valley?

MONNER: Tualatin Valley, yeah.

DS: Would these be pictures that you would just, you might say, targets of opportunity? You'd be driving by and see something?

MONNER: That was, yeah. I was out there on a *Journal* assignment. I had to go out to – what's the town that was out there?

DS: Hillsboro? Forest Grove?

MONNER: Not that far.

DS: Beaverton? West Union?

MONNER: No, that isn't the name of it either. Anyway, it's just a couple stores and a house there. About all it is to mark the place as a town, and yet It has a name along the highway and everything.

DS: It probably is all built up. There's a picture of a bunch of people standing together inside some kind of frame off to the right.

MONNER: This picture?

DS: Are those Gypsies?

MONNER: Those are all Gypsies. In fact, that has a mixture. The fellow on the far right is the – his name was George, but he’s a Gypsy – some of the Ristick family.

DS: What are they doing? Are they barbequing? I can’t see from here.

MONNER: They’re barbequing chickens. That was for Saint Mary’s Day. That was always a Gypsy holiday. And then the two fellas, the fella wearing the straw hat and the one in the back, they were some of – I don’t know where they came from, but they were...

DS: Would those Gypsies come in from all over for...

MONNER: They’d come all around. The Gypsy, the one woman in the – looks like the – I can’t see very well.

DS: Standing in the middle.

MONNER: Yeah, standing in the middle. She was Mrs. Ristick.

DS: What would you like to be remembered for as a photographer?

MONNER: Boy, that’s a hard question to answer. [Laughs]

DS: Well, would it be, let’s say, your newspaper photography? Or this artistic photography that I’m looking at on your wall? Or?

MONNER: Well, I think that kind of photography is what I’d be most concerned about, yes.

DS: Did you enjoy taking newspaper pictures?

MONNER: I did, yeah. Uh-oh. [Inaudible].

DS: You're alright, I think. [Microphone disruption] It's still there. It's alright. It's okay. I think we're still recording here.

Why did you enjoy newspaper photography?

MONNER: Oh, 'cause it gave me a chance to meet a lot of different people and talk with them.

DS: Did you ever have any bad experiences?

MONNER: Oh, I had some nasty experiences where people didn't want me to take pictures, and I sneaked a picture anyway. [Laughs]

DS: Before, I suppose we should get you out of the Speed Graphic and onto the 35 millimeter era. When did that happen?

MONNER: It happened, oh, latter part of my session at *The Journal*. You know, Herb Alden, he was kind of an unusual guy. He was...

DS: Another *Journal* photographer, Herb Alden, right?

MONNER: Herb Alden, yeah. He got together with me and decided we should use 35 millimeter cameras instead of these Graphics we were lugging around still. So we got – we actually sneaked in some 35 millimeter cameras [Laughs] and took some pictures with them to show the editors what we could do with those 35 millimeter cameras, and they were just sold. So they decided the next cameras we got would be all 35 millimeters.

And I remember, Les Ordeman was really upset with me. Took him in there when I got a new camera. Here it was, a 35 millimeter camera. [Laughs] It was a Nikon, is what it was, at the time. He says, "Now, what am I supposed to do with this?"

I said, "You're supposed to take pictures with it." [Laughs] [Inaudible]

So he went out took pictures with it. He said, "My gosh, they take good pictures, don't they?" [Both laugh] He was sold on it from then on.

DS: That just about the way Les would put it. What was the advantage of the 35 millimeter camera over the four by five Graphic?

MONNER: Well, you could take pictures under difficult light conditions and places where you couldn't get a picture otherwise. The Graphic was always such a big monster of a camera. When you got that out, why, everybody knew you were taking pictures.

DS: I suppose, also, you didn't have to fuss around with loading plates and changing...

MONNER: No. We loaded our own film for quite a while. We bought our film on big rolls, oh, about that big around.

DS: Oh, about three inches around?

MONNER: And we could – we'd get a bunch of films and put tapes on them so we could roll it up in the darkroom and get it all ready to put in the camera.

DS: Did you supply your own cameras or did *The Journal* buy them for you?

MONNER: *The Journal* bought ours, 35 millimeter cameras...

DS: What about the Graphics? Before that, the Speed Graphics. Were they your own cameras?

MONNER: No, *The Journal* bought the Speed Graphics for us too.

DS: Did they provide you with good equipment? Was it good stuff?

MONNER: Yes, they bought good equipment, except we used it too long. We used it until it began to fall apart.

DS: I have the impression that a four by five negative, in some ways, is better to work with than a 35. Is that right? For enlargements?

MONNER: Well, you can get a lot better enlargements out of it. The big prints.

DS: Do you still have four by fives in your file of negatives?

MONNER: No, most of those already went to the Oregon Historical Society.

DS: Good. [Laughs]

MONNER: And my 35 millimeter I've taken for *The Oregonian* are all there.

DS: I should ask you a little bit more about your wife. Now, she died when?

MONNER: She died in 1961.

DS: Had she been sick?

MONNER: Yeah, she'd been sick for, oh, about a year and a half I'd been taking care of her; taking all her meals in to her. She was in a spare bedroom with two beds back in here, and Catherine was sleeping in the one and spending all her time – she didn't get out of – she finally got out of bed and came up on the stairway and looked at me sitting in a chair.

We had a different arrangement in the living room than we have there now. [Sharon?] arranged it all differently. And the television set was all different too.

Anyway, she came up there and looked at me there, sitting there. I said, "Well, come on in, Catherine." She just shook her head and walked back to the bedroom again.

DS: What kind of person was she? Was she easy to live with?

MONNER: Oh, yeah, she was easy to live with. I got along alright with her.

DS: So, what did she die of?

MONNER: Well, an interesting thing happened. When she died, the doctor called, a man called me up on the phone, wanted to know if I could give written permission to use her body. See, she was cremated. Actually, she was in a vault in the mausoleum.

DS: Portland Memorial?

MONNER: Portland Memorial, yeah, that's the one. Anyway, we're on the fifth floor, I think it is.

She died of – well, what the doctor called – they now call it – what is it? When you eat, the food bothers you.

DS: Well, you mean she stopped eating?

MONNER: She wouldn't stop eating. She'd eat a little bit, but she wouldn't eat enough. She wouldn't...

DS: Anorexia?

MONNER: Anorexia. That was it. I think so, yeah.

DS: And when did she die?

MONNER: 1961. She'd been suffering from this ailment for years. She'd been going to the doctor for ailments when you eat certain foods.

DS: An allergy?

MONNER: Allergies, she had, yeah.

DS: So you lived alone since 1961?

MONNER: Yeah.

DS: You must be used to it by this time.

MONNER: I'm used to it. I know where everything is in every room. [Laughs]

DS: And you're still taking care of your own house.

MONNER: Not sure why. I don't mop this; I do this maybe once a year.

DS: Well, you mentioned that you had a stroke. When was your first stroke?

MONNER: The first one was when I was working at *The Journal*. I don't remember what year it was now. It'd be in those books.

DS: Some of the dates in there were 1970. Does that sound right?

MONNER: Yeah, that's about when it was...

DS: *The Oregonian* and *The Journal* were combined in 1963.

MONNER: The [books] on the far end are all...

DS: Well, we'll check that.

MONNER: The [Caughlin?] book I know was taken later.

DS: You were laid up for a year with that stroke, is that right?

MONNER: A year, I spent.

DS: And then you went back to work at *The Journal*?

MONNER: I went back to work.

DS: And you remained there until you retired, is that right?

MONNER: Until I retired, that's right.

DS: And you retired when?

MONNER: I can't remember the exact date, now.

DS: Well, maybe it's on here. Would it have been when you were 65?

MONNER: It'd be when I was 65, yeah.

DS: It says, on this sheet, it says your retirement in January 1975. You'd have been a little more than 65. As I recall, *The Journal* rule, if you turned 65, you worked until the end of that year.

MONNER: Yeah, that's right.

DS: After you retired, what'd you do? Did you have some projects that you wanted to do that you finally got...

MONNER: I took pictures for the Art Museum fulltime by then. I'd go down there any time and do them. I don't see any pictures, except that one of [Lewis?] over there. That was taken while I was still working for *The Journal*.

DS: That landscape.

MONNER: [Yes]. And, of course, the bird was taken in 1961.

DS: When did you have your other two strokes?

MONNER: I had one about three years ago. I can't – anyway, I was – I don't remember anything about it, that's the funny part. I just woke up in the hospital. Catherine came in to see me and...

DS: And found you.

MONNER: Found me. But the fellow who got me in there – of course, Catherine got me into the hospital, probably. She watches out for me at all times, she still does. She comes out here about once a week. She'll probably call this afternoon or tomorrow afternoon.

DS: She's your daughter, Catherine Goodwin.

MONNER: Yeah, Catherine Goodwin.

DS: Mrs. Ronald Goodwin. What do you think about the newspaper business? Was it a good business to be in?

MONNER: Oh, I thought it was a – it's the only business I ever been in.

DS: Were you ever tempted to go anywhere else beside Portland?

MONNER: No, I never did. I lived for 27 years in the house over on 50th and Broadway.

DS: But you weren't the kind of person who thought that you should move on to New York or San Francisco.

MONNER: No.

DS: How long did you keep up your mountain climbing?

MONNER: 'Til about, oh, must've been sometime in the 1950s or 1960s, I guess, I gave up mountain climbing.

DS: Who would you say were the photographers that had the most influence on your work?

MONNER: Well, I think Ralph Vincent had about as much.

DS: Really? What was it about him that...

MONNER: Well, he had an eye for seeing people and things and situations, which kind of attracted mine.

DS: How did you learn from him? Did you have bull sessions in the darkroom, or how'd it go?

MONNER: Well, no, when I worked at *The Journal*, I had a separate darkroom, finally. Ralph had his own darkroom, and Les had his own darkroom there, too. We had one – how'd they have that...

DS: Did you have a common room of some kind, a little office?

MONNER: Well, we had one building there where we had an office where the artists worked and Paul Keller and – what was his name?

DS: Was [Slaymaker?] still there?

MONNER: [Slaymaker?] was still there. I learned mostly from watching them.

DS: Would anybody critique your work?

MONNER: No.

DS: That's the way I would expect it. [MONNER laughs]

I guess I should ask about this. At some point, you moved from *The Journal* building at Broadway and Yamhill down to *The Journal* building on the waterfront. That would have been 1948, I suppose.

MONNER: Yeah. That was largely due to the pushing, I think, of young Sam Jackson, who was killed later in the helicopter crash. Remember?

DS: Yeah. Was it any different, as far as you were concerned, working on the waterfront than working at Broadway?

MONNER: Well, we liked it because you could get out a lot faster to get to places. We had a group of stalls upstairs where we parked our cars. We could just go up there and just drive right out.

DS: Did you ever fly in the helicopter yourself?

MONNER: Oh, yes, a lot.

DS: Well, you got back to your old tricks there, taking aerial pictures, I guess, huh?

MONNER: Well, that's when – I'd already got through with aerial pictures by that time.

DS: So you didn't take pictures from the helicopter?

MONNER: Oh, yes, I did.

DS: Yeah. By that time, what were you using? A Speed Graphic?

MONNER: Yeah, I was still using the Speed Graphic around then.

DS: So, what would you do? Would these be spot news assignments, or would they be feature news assignments mostly?

MONNER: No, we'd use the – oh, it was various things. One I remember particularly we did with the helicopter, that was the longest trip I ever made in it. We went down to the Rogue River. And there was a fellow shot a man through the screen door of his cabin. Shot him and dead. Just dead, that's all. Sheriff called over. It was on the south side of the Rogue River, so we went over there to get – and we flew down there in the helicopter, Joe and I.

DS: Joe Stein.

MONNER: Joe Stein was flying it, and he also mailed a letter, airmail; first airmail letter out of [Marial].

DS: Ariel, Washington?

MONNER: No, [Marial] on the Rogue River. There's a place there – I can't get all the names straight in my mind, now.

DS: What was the point of mailing the letter out there? First one from a new post office?

MONNER: First one. All the mail there had been going out by mule-back. [DS laughs] And the fellows who checked the mail in and out of there, for mule-back, was a fellow, he was a bachelor who lived down by the river, farther, and ate his meals at one of the houses where they kept rooms for people. I remember he was there at that time and he could tell more stories about the Rogue River country than any man I've ever met. He told about some of these just wild stories of his, about finding – I can't remember all the details now.

The thing is I made two trips down there. The second trip was down the Rogue River by foot and partly by horseback.

DS: Really? The whole length of the road? From Grants Pass down to the coast?

MONNER: From where the road took off. The road took off someplace down the Rogue River, oh, what's it called now? Anyway, there was a bridge across the river there.

DS: How did you happen to do that?

MONNER: That was done on an assignment. I kept some of the pictures. I don't remember, how did I do that, now? I've got some of the negatives here, I'm sure.

DS: Were you going downstream?

MONNER: Yeah, we were going downstream.

DS: Did you come out at Agness?

MONNER: We came out at Agness and rode a boat from there and on down. There was one of the Indians piloting in. They were wild. [Laughs] They'd run the river over any old way, as long as the thing would float.

DS: Gosh. But that didn't have anything particular to do with the helicopter.

MONNER: No, it didn't have anything to do with the helicopter there, no. It was later I went down with Joe Stein and do this thing on the helicopter.

DS: Thinking of the Rogue makes me think of famous people who've lived down there. What are some of the famous people whose pictures you've taken?

MONNER: Well, Zane Grey was one. We went down and looked at his cabin when he stayed there. We stopped once at that place where Joe and I later landed the helicopter, down at a flat place there where you could stop it [Laughs] and took a letter in to mail by mail it back to *The Journal*.

DS: This was the one you were talking about where they'd previously gotten the mail in by mule?

MONNER: Yeah.

DS: Well, I didn't mean to limit it to Zane Grey or the Rogue River. Can you remember some other celebrities that you've taken pictures of? Maybe there are too many.

MONNER: Well, I heard a lot about newspaper stars that used to come down there and spend their extra time on vacation there, because they'd get on the Rogue River and they'd be so far from people nobody'd come see them.

DS: Well, that isn't the question I meant to ask, though, Al. Just in your general newspaper work, here in Portland or anywhere, what are some of the famous people you've taken pictures of?

MONNER: Oh, General Eisenhower when he was President. I took a picture of him.

DS: In Portland?

MONNER: Yeah, going into Multnomah, of all places. [Laughs]

[End of Tape 3, Side 1]

Tape 3, Side 2
1993 March 4

MONNER: When he went through there to – he was on his way up to – all places go up to Timberline Lodge to dedicate that.

DS: So you took the picture. I've seen a picture of Roosevelt at Bonneville Dam.

MONNER: Well, I took it.

DS: In those days, it wasn't hard to get near a president, was it?

MONNER: No, I just climbed up the bank above him and shot it [Laughs] down across the car.

DS: How about Harry Truman. Did you ever take pictures of Truman?

MONNER: I don't think I ever did.

DS: Movie stars? Did you ever shoot any movie stars?

MONNER: Oh, yeah. I did Marilyn Monroe, for one.

DS: How did you do her?

MONNER: At the airport. She came out of – she had to get dressed up in a special outfit and come out. She stood on the stairway of the plane, and I shot a picture of her, close up.

DS: You know, having watched newspaper photographers work, I've often thought it must be a nervous kind of job, because you have to make people do, you know, hold still while you take their picture, and even though they're a little antsy. Either that or you're going to snap one...

MONNER: Oh, that was the easy thing about movie stars. They were glad to pose for pictures.

DS: But people in general, captains of industry, that sort of thing, sometimes you have to – and first of all you have to ask them for “one more picture.” Was that difficult to do?

MONNER: Not usually. They don't.

DS: Did you find that most people liked to have their pictures taken?

MONNER: I find that most of them enjoy it, yes.

DS: Who were the reporters that you most remember working with?

MONNER: I remember Larry Smyth, for one.

DS: He was *The Journal's* political editor.

MONNER: The political editor. I took a lot of pictures with him.

DS: What do you remember about him?

MONNER: Oh, I don't remember much about him, actually. Except he was always so busy, he never had time to pose for a picture. I don't think I ever took a picture of him.
[Laughs]

DS: Well, I don't really want to, need to press that on. How many sports pictures did you take? Did you take a lot of sports pictures?

MONNER: I took a lot of pictures of Oregon State and Oregon football games.

DS: In Multnomah Stadium?

MONNER: Down in the Valley.

DS: In those earlier days, with Speed Graphics, was that any more difficult than it is now, do you think?

MONNER: Well, it was more difficult when you had to figure out your depth of field and how much you're getting in the picture.

DS: And that would involve choosing the right aperture for the...

MONNER: You had to make sure you had the right exposure, yes. You had to always – well, there was this one thing. Like when we went down to Eugene, we had to go back, come rushing back, all the way back to *The Journal* building down on the waterfront, and develop our film right away, and print it while it was still wet.

DS: Really?

MONNER: Yeah.

MONNER: Why was that?

MONNER: Because that was the one way to get them out in time.

DS: You were in a hurry.

MONNER: Yeah, we were in a hurry.

DS: I remember the Rose Festival was always a big push for *The Journal*, too.

MONNER: Oh, yeah. The same thing. We had to get everything out and print off of wet negatives.

DS: Did you use exposure meters? Or did you just guess the range?

MONNER: I usually had an exposure meter with me.

DS: Because I've seen a lot of newspaper photographers who didn't. They'd just snap away.

MONNER: Well, I don't know. I still use it. I have an exposure meter, fancy one in there, in my dark room, which I've used taking pictures myself. Now which one did I – oh, that one with the clouds. I took that with an exposure meter, I remember.

DS: But I was thinking more about news shots. Did you find that you threw very many pictures away in the darkroom? Or did you generally get what you went after?

MONNER: I usually get what I was after, or something reasonably close to it.

DS: Can you think of anything else we should be talking about?

MONNER: Oh, I can't think of anything now, no.

[Tape stops]

DS: This concludes the interview of Alfred A. Monner, conducted March 4th, 1993 at Mr. Monner's home, 11403 Southeast Hawthorne Boulevard, Portland, Oregon 97216.

After the interview was over, Mr. Monner recalled that the famous climbing guide in the Teton Mountains, with whom his future wife went climbing, was Paul Petzold. He also recalled that for about two years after they were married, Mrs. Monner worked in the purchasing department of the Portland Public Schools.

This is the end of the interview, conducted by Donald J. Sterling, Jr.

[End of Tape 3, Side 2]

[End of Interview]