

ARLENE ROSELIND BECKON REID

**Wife of former Skamania County Sheriff
Amos Reid**

Interviewed by Pat Hanson — Jan. 15, 1992

Transcribed by Rich Curran

This is Tape One, Side One of an Interview with Arlene Roselind Beckon Reid, of Carson, Washington. This is part of an oral history project conducted by the Skamania County Historical Society. My name is Pat Hanson, and the date is Jan. 8, 1992.

Pat: Well, Arlene, here we are. Could you give you name, where you were born, your birthdate to start with.

Arlene: My name is Arlene Beckon Reid. I was born Jan. 26, 1911, at Carson, Washington.

Pat: Arlene, could you tell me about your mother and father? Could you give me their names and where they were they born and when and how they met?

Arlene: My dad's name was Jay William Beckon and he was born in Marqouket, Iowa, Jan. 13, 1880. My mother is Elsie May Tripplett and she was born in Cowrie, Iowa, Jan. 1, 1883. But my dad's folks evidently lived in Cowrie because that's where they met and went to school.

Pat: So, they both went to school together?

Arlene: Yes.

Pat: You said that your parents met when they were going to school. What did your mother do after she finished school?

Arlene: Momma taught school so she could go to Drake University, and then my dad was a telegraph operator, so he must have went to some college, which one I don't know. All I know is that they came west on their honeymoon. He had a job at Lynn, Washington (*near Seattle*). He was a railroad man, and he brought Momma west on the train, that's how they spent their honeymoon.

Pat: On the train! Did they ever tell you what their home was like in Lynn, and how long they stayed there?

Arlene: No. I do know, I saw a picture of it and Momma and Daddy had their first child there. She lived just two months, and is buried at Lynn.

Pat: After the first child, did they move here?

Arlene: No, they, they moved to Bellingham and that is where is where my brother Harold was born. Then they moved to Portland. But they had been to a little town that I don't think even exists now, Alfalfa. It's up in eastern Washington, (*southeast of Toppenish*). They lived in several little . . . Condon, Oregon . . . and then they moved to Portland, and that is where Helen was born.

Pat: Did you say Condon?

Arlene: Yeah. Condon, Oregon.

Pat: I've worked there. I know it is a small community.

Arlene: There were several of them. Then they moved to Portland and Helen was born. That's when they, ah, moved to Carson. And they had two other children.

Pat: And who were the two other children?

Arlene: Myself, and Jay, my brother, and my younger sister Gladys.

Pat: Then there actually were five children who survived to adulthood?

Arlene: Yes.

Pat: Arlene, you said your father was a telegrapher, worked for the railroad, could you tell us his job, and where he worked here in Carson.

Arlene: Well, it was pretty small, but he worked at the Carson Depot. And, ah, rode horseback back and forth. And I remember, as kids, walking to the depot and playing on the track. Then we had ten acres, had chickens, cows and garden, fruit trees; worked hard. And after my dad dad got sick, he had to quit the railroad, then he did odd jobs. He worked for the Carson Mercantile Store for awhile, and then . . .

Pat: Tell me a little bit more about your home. How many acres were involved?

Arlene: We had ten acres, and when they moved there it was a forest, and my dad

cleared it all by hand, a hand-saw.

Pat: We are talking about large full-growth trees?

Arlene: Yes. It must have taken years, but he just grew up there and he never thought a thing about it.

Pat: You say, you grew up there. Could you give us the location there in Carson?

Arlene: Well, my house was tore down last summer, that would have been 1991, and it was on the Smith-Beckon road (*south of Hot Springs Ave.*). It was named after us. I don't know where the Smith came from. Anyhow, it was just like a little cracker box. We slept three in a bed as kids. I remember the boys had a room off the woodshed. Sometimes we would wake up in the morning and snow would be on our bed . . . no electric blankets or electric heat. But, we were always happy, and had enough clothes to keep us, not like the kids have now-a-days, warm and the kind we had on the farm.

Pat: Your folks had a garden?

Arlene: Oh, yes! And my mother canned.

Pat: Did you ever get to help with the canning?

Arlene: No.

Pat: Oh, he didn't get to?

Arlene: No, no, I never even know how to cook when I got married. Momma did it all.

Pat: You were spoiled!! (laughter).

Arlene: And we had a lot of fun. I remember, ah, for recreation we would play cards games, and, ah, and I remember learning how to dance by mother playing organ church music. That was the way we had . . . that was our recreation on Sundays.

Pat: Arlene, you said your house was sort of like a cracker box, could you describe how it was built, how many rooms, what were in the rooms? Can you remember that as a youngster?

Arlene: As close as I can remember, it was just square, it had a kitchen, and a living room, and Momma and Daddy had a bedroom. Then they built on a porch, and on that porch they enclosed part of it for us three girls. Then they built a woodshed, and they built a bedroom in there. You had to walk out to it on a

sidewalk. for the boys.

Pat: How about running water, and all that?

Arlene: We had an outside toilet, but we had running in the house, just in the kitchen sink. We never had a bathtub, we bathed in a round galvanized tub. I can remember Momma, on a Saturday, bathe, one, two, three, four, five, and just added a little water. But we survived.

Pat: In other words, you took a bath and . . .

Arlene: When we got low on water . . . no we survived, we were happy.

Pat: How about lighting in your home?

Arlene: We had a kerosene lamp. We never had electricity until after I got out of high school, and went to work at the post office in the confectionery store. And I had the electricity put in . . . the lights. But those days, your friends helped you. I can remember I had about four or five boy friends, and they put up the poles and strung the lines, and did the wiring inside.

Pat: Did you say you put in the electricity?

Arlene: I paid for it. I was making \$50.00 a month, I was practically a millionaire.

Pat: Could you tell me a little bit about your sisters and brothers. You did mention some names. Are there any stories that you remember about them in your life?

Arlene: Well, I always remember that I was a headache to my oldest brother, Harold, because I was two years younger than Helen, and when they went to school and I remember my mother making them kiss me goodbye every morning, and they weren't happy. And I, I think I cried so much my mother started me (school) when I was five, which was a mistake. You know, I had to keep up with the older ones. But, ah, we always played together and got along. You know, we had our own fun and games.

Pat: Could you tell me about some of these games and things you did for recreation?

Arlene: I don't know if it was a game, or if we made it up, we had to (inaudible) the alphabet, like a wheel and we had a stick and a cross piece, and we would go along and push that wheel, go over logs — why we could do that for hours, it was more fun. And I can remember playing marbles. and (inaudible) . . .

Pat: Now, you had better tell me about that one. That's a new game to me.

Arlene: Well, we had little holes in the ground, little like that, and, ah, and you tried to get in those holes. We played hours with our marbles, and like that.

Pat: Did you make the holes in the ground like that, and they were spaced a certain intervals?

Arlene: Yes.

Pat: So, it was a skill game of flipping them, or pushing them . . .

Arlene: Huh, huh. With your thumb.

Pat: With your thumb. And who was the winner of that?

Arlene: Well, I . . . but, anyhow, there was lots of games, card games, like flinch.

Pat: What was flinch? That's a new one.

Arlene: Well, you played with a lot of cards and you turned over cards, to match. When I grew up that was a very popular thing.

Pat: You said you played games with your sisters and brothers in order to pass the time, did your parents play games with you, too.

Arlene: My mother always played card games with us. It was games that we sat around the table with kerosene lamps.

Pat: You told me about your mother going and getting dolls for you and your sister, could you tell us that one?

Arlene: I wish I could remember my age, but I must have been pretty small, maybe six or seven, we had a snow storm and it came up above the fence post, which were high. And Momma walked to town, through the fields and over the fence posts, and bought Helen and I a doll, and brought it home. And that was our Christmas present.

Pat: You lived about a mile from town?

Arlene: Yes. It was a long mile.

Pat: A long mile.

Arlene: Yes.

Pat: Well, that was quite a trek for you mother.

Arlene: Yes, it was.

Pat: You told me a little bit about your mother when we had the tape turned off. Could you describe what she looked like specifically?

Arlene: Very . . . I don't think my mother ever weighed over 90 pounds, just a real cute little doll, about five feet. But, she could out-work anybody.

Pat: You also told me another story about, there were always kids around. She took in children and fed them.

Arlene: This was, of course, when we were young, and I remember girls coming in and we always played house with my dolls. After we got older and we went out at night, mom would never know how many she would have to feed Friday morning breakfast. Harold would bring friends home, and we would bring girl friends home. And my mother used to bring our breakfast to bed on Sunday morning, after we had been to a dance. She tried to make up to us by doing things like that, for the material things we couldn't have because we didn't have the money.

Pat: But she showed with her love.

Arlene: With her love, yes. We never forgot.

Pat: You said you brought home your playmates. Could you tell me about your playmates, and maybe tell me the names of some of your playmates?

Arlene: Well, Mildred Larson. We were practically raised like sisters. She had lost her mother when she was seven years old, and whenever she was in Carson she came to our house, and, you know, talk things over with my mother. We were very close, very close. Oh, we had our disagreements, just like sisters, but, no, we, ah, she was a true friend. A true friend.

Pat: Was there any others?

Arlene: Well, I can remember Pam and Mabel Rowe. Now, the Rowes were old-timers and they lived upon the hill back of Zurchers, up of that hill. We used to, well, it must have been a good mile, and we used to go up there and play. One of the highlights of our neighbors growing up, was Mrs. Rowe. They would also have a big dinner once a year and have all of us girls come. And, oh, she was a wonderful cook. I remember one time . . . my mother instilled manners in us . . . and I remember we came home, and Momma said, first thing she said was, "Did you thank Mrs. Rowe?" We said yes, but down deep we knew we had forgotten. So we walked back up and thanked her. It was that important.

We knew we lied to our mother.

Pat: That's a good story.

Arlene: Huh, huh. And the Montchalins lived down in the, ah, we called it, they had great, great goats and they made goat cheese, down where Joan Mason lives down there (*Sprague Landing road, near the Columbia*). But anyhow, they had a girl and she was one of my best friends, Kathryn Montchalin, and Leon was Harold's. I remember when everything had a first (inaudible) the Montchalins would come up and get the Beckons kids, in a little wagon, one seat, or two seats, a little horse, and take us down for a birthday party, and then they bring us home. And that was always special.

Pat: When you went to the Montchalins for the birthday party, was there special games, special food they prepared for the celebration?

Arlene: Yeah, we had cake, but that is all that I can remember. I don't remember playing games. Isn't that stange?

Pat: Was there ice cream then?

Arlene: There must of been, oh yeah. People made it, you didn't buy it.

Pat: How did they make the ice cream, Arlene?

Arlene: Well, I'm sure they had the tub and crank, and cranked around it.

Pat: Oh, it wasn't something that you went to the store and bought?

Arlene: No, no. But that is the way we might ice cream. But it was a treat, we didn't have it all the time.

Pat: The town of Carson, you've been here a number of years now, since you were born here, things have changes, places have been torn down. Could you just kinda take me on a walk through town and describe what it used to be like workings were, and what buildings are still in the area?

Arlene: Well, where Evelyn Hutchings lived, that was, I'm sure, a saloon in those days. There were seven saloons when my folks moved to Carson. Then on the corner over here, there was a building, we used to go to motion pictures there, it was a theatre, sat on the corner.

Pat: You said on the corner. That would be at Fourth Street and Hot Springs Road. What kind of a building was it that they had the movies in? Was it a regular building or was it built to be a theatre?

Arlene: Because of the front of it, it must have built to be a theatre. Now, that's where we went to when we were a little child. Then, you go down the street and the Gregorius place, you know, that looks like a store down there.

Pat: Oh, on Hot Springs?

Arlene: Huh, huh. I'm sure that they had a bakery, because I remember going by and, ohhhhhh, it smelled so good.

Pat: Would that be Nick Gregorius?

Arlene: It was his dad. No, I really think it would be his grandparents.

Pat: Grandparents.

Arlene: Yes. And, the, we had a confectionery and drug store where the restaurant is, Elsie Hamblen.

Pat: Which we still refer to as the Carson Confectionery.

Arlene: Yes. But, they did have a druggist, a licensed druggist. It started just as a confectionery store, and then they had part of it as a post office, and that's where I worked. Bill Meneice had it, bought it, and he had the confectionery store and the post office.

Pat: So, the post office was actually in the building with the confectionery.

Arlene: Well, between walls. And that's where I used to work. And all the girls in Carson worked at the post office until they got a man to get married. That was Bessie Miller, Mildred Larson and myself.

Pat: And Arlene Beckon Reid.

Arlene: Oh, I have to tell you a true story. I had two of the St. Martin girls, they lost their mother, and when they were in high school they used my home as their home. They were asking Jim (Arlene's husband Jim Reid), one time; "Where did you propose to Arlene?" And he said, "I proposed to her through the bars." And they about died. But there used to be a little window with bars, and that's where you put your money to buy stuff.

Pat: How romantic! Right across from the confectionery, the flower shop, was there a building there, but it burned down. But it was a grocery store when it burned down. I can't remember what was there before the grocery store. I remember a family living there, and I . . . they had four or five boys and I ironed shirts,

and it was white shirts, and I had to iron it on the stove, big basket full. But I don't remember what was there before. And then where the second-hand store is, that was kinda of hardware store, and they sold caskets. And I remember my dad working there and telling about these caskets and how they put the people in the caskets.

Pat: Did they make them there, or did they . . . ?

Arlene: I, I couldn't say, I just don't know.

Pat: But, they were available?

Arlene: Yes. And then, oh, I don't know where all these saloons were. Now there used to be a saw shop downtown. Now, that's where my mother went to buy the dolls.

Pat: Where the Masonic Lodge is located now? (*Between Scenic Auto and the church*).

Arlene: And then I remember a blacksmith shop. And if I remember right, it was down about where the Legion Hall is. His name was Sharkey. We called him "Ol' Sharkey." I was just a little girl, and the reason I can remember him, he got magazines and he would always cut the dolls for me. Isn't it strange how things impress you.

Pat: He was a nice person.

Arlene: Huh, huh. And then, there was a laundry where, well, ah, well, you know where Elsie lives . . .

Pat: Elsie Bloomquist?

Arlene: Yeah. But it's just across the street, not in front of her, on the side, Mulvania's live there. The Smiley's lived there, and I remember she did washing, because Helen made money to go to high school there doing ironing and helping doing the washing.

Pat: Would that be right near Hubert Smith's Carson Builders?

Arlene: No. It's down towards the Legion Hall.

Pat: Towards the Legion Hall, ok, in that area. Arlene, there were several hotels in the area. Could you tell me about the one that burned down, and where it was located?

Arlene: Well, I was a little child, but I can remember the night it burned down. I was excitement, we could see the flames. But it was located on Hot Springs Avenue, across from Ohnemus' (*First Street*). The **Surpees(???)** had a hotel, I remember that one.

Pat: Where was that located?

Arlene: Ah, on the Wind River Highway, right down town.

Pat: And across from the tavern?

Arlene: Yes.

Pat: And does Anna (Zurcher) still live there? It was their home.

Arlene: Yes. And she cooked with wood, no TV.

Pat: This hotel belonged to her parents?

Arlene: Yes.

Pat: There was a little house right next to the hotel, and it's still there, it's vacant right now. Did you tell me earlier something about your family living in it?

Arlene: We moved in from the farm in the winter time. I was too young to remember this, but, ah, anyhow, could remember. Then, I remember playing in that little house where we used to live, because I had a girl friend that lived there. We were very close. Her dad had a Ford garage, just about where Mildred Larson lived.

Pat: And that is on Wind River Highway?

Arlene: Yes. And she was a very good friend. And that's about all I can remember.

Pat: You said you moved in from the ranch. You're are talking about your home on Smith-Beckon Road and that was over a mile?

Arlene: Yes. And we had a wagon and horse.

Pat: And it would be a lot easier to be right in down town Carson, in the winter , to get around.

Arlene: Yes. And we might not have had water then, I don't know. They were probably working on the house. And then, there was the St. Martin's Spring, and there was a Shipherd's Springs.

Pat: Would that have been a little upriver from St. Martin's?

Arlene: Yes. There was a building there and they had an open-air dance pavillion. They used to have girl orchestras come out from Portland and play, and we would go to the dances. I was only 14, but I got to go because my sister was 16 and my brother was 17 or 18. But they always had to take . . . oh, and then there was the Government Springs, out past the fish hatchery. It had a dance hall outside, and we danced in there. It was beautiful, it really was.

Pat: That burned down in the '30s?

Arlene: Yes, it would have been in the early '30s, I'm sure. (*Editor: 1934*).

Pat: We haven't mentioned where school was located.

Arlene: The Grade School was located up by the Grand Hall, across from the store.

Pat: Was it in the Grange, or . . . ?

Arlene: No, that was the gym. There was a school there. I remember walking to school one day, and in the snow, and I had a pair of rubbers that was too large for me, and I would go a little ways and I would loose the rubbers, and I had to go back and find them. I thought I would catch heck when I got home. Anyhow, by the time I reached the school, my feet were frozen, and I fell, I couldn't walk. Oh, it was the most painful thing. They had to get my dad, and he came for me with a horse. That was a painful experience.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

START OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

Pat: Arlene, you were talking about where the school was located, the grade school. Could you go from there?

Arlene: That was really downstairs. and then you went upstairs to the high up, in fact we had two rooms and high school there. And I might mention, the kids were always been mischievous. I remember my brother, and about three other boys . . . the teacher was an old maid, and when the girls would go outside, the boys would grab their leg and they would take their garter and shoot it up to the ceiling, which would shock this old maid school teacher. And she probably wasn't old either, just thought she was old.

Pat: I don't know if we have this on tape or not, the school was located across from the current Carson Grocery. And the building that the Grange uses, what was that?

Arlene: That was the gymnasium.

Pat: What did the other children do about their eleventh and twelfth grades. Where did they go to finish high school?

Arlene: They went to Stevenson or dropped out. There was two Nelsons, Bessie Miller, and her brother, they walked to Stevenson and home to get their high school education.

Pat: This was Bessie Nelson Miller?

Arlene: Yes. They walked back and forth. Then they quite having ninth and tenth grade up there, and then you had to go to Stevenson.

Pat: Did you have to walk to school?

Arlene: No, we rode in cars and old rickety buses.

Pat: Did the school district pay for your transportation, or did you have to find your own?

Arlene: No. The school district paid for it.

Pat: Was it on Highway 14.

Arlene: Yes, but it wasn't like it is now. We went up hills like this. I'm trying to think of where that bridge was between here and Stevenson. No, it wasn't like it is now.

Pat: Wintertimes?

Arlene: We had to walk in and take the bus, and the buses didn't come door to door.

Pat: Where did the buses pic up the kids?

Arlene: Downtown. In the wintertime we had lots of fun coasting. I really never enjoyed it, but I wasn't about to be left out so I went. We walked clear in from our farm and then after we coasted and got so cold, we had to walk clear home. Which wasn't fun. But that was a lot of fun in the wintertime.

Pat: Where was your coating areas?

Arlene: Well, we used Wind River, and over on the hill, was that Frederick Hill.

Pat: OK. Behind your home.

Arlene: Huh, huh. We coasted over there.

Pat: Do you remember any of the kids that was involved in that activity?

Arlene: No, I don't. It was just all kids.

Pat: Did you have your own sleds.

Arlene: Yes, we all had sleds.

Pat: What other winter activities were there around here?

Arlene: Well, as I grew up there wasn't any. When I was grown up I remember skating on the lakes over at St. Martin's place.

Pat: They had a lake over there?

Arlene: Yes. And it kinda disappeared in that big earthquake.

Pat: Are we talking about 1920-30?

Arlene: Oh, it was long before that. But I remember going over there, but I was grown then.

Pat: We started talking about the hot springs, St. Martin's and, ah, what was the other one?

Arlene: Shipherd's.

Pat: Shipherd's.

Arlene: And the Government Springs.

Pat: And the Government Springs. Who usually came to those hot springs?

Arlene: Ah, people from Portland. The one, ah, Shipherd's Springs, they had a doctor there, Mr. McNary, and he is the one that brought me into the world, and he used to come back and visit my folks. He wanted to see his little girl. Dr. McNary.

Pat: You were born at home instead of a hospital, and he was there to help.

Arlene: Yes. And a friend.

Pat: One of the things, too, that I was interested in learning about: holidays. The different holidays, how did you celebrate them. For instance, was there special things that you did at Christmas with your family or community?

Arlene: The main thing that I remember when I was a little girl, was the Christmas program at school. And I can remember my dad carrying me, walking clear to school, carrying a lantern. I remember I had a Little Red Riding Hood outfit. But, the basic excitement was getting a bag of candy. And my dad was very generous donating, you know, they took up a collection. But, you didn't have candy, you didn't have oranges. That was the biggest excitement. But we always had a tree, not a lot of presents, maybe one or two. But the main thing I can remember is going to the program and the tree at school, with the candy and orange.

Pat: Your tree at home, how did you decorate it, light it and decorate it?

Arlene: Ah, we didn't have lights, because my dad was scared of fire, and we didn't have electricity. But our house was (inaudible), we had a tree every year.

Pat: Did you buy your decorations?

Arlene: No, I remember, oh, no, you stringed some popcorn and you made chains out of colorful paper.

Pat: So you children helped make them?

Arlene: Yes. I don't remember ornaments, but I do remember the chain and popcorn.

Pat: You could eat part of it when you were working on it.

Arlene: Yes. (laughter).

Pat: We haven't mentioned any churches in the area.

Arlene: There was only one, and I, ah, it was the Methodist and it was where the church by the store is. All of kids went there, and my mother and dad sang in the choir, church, my mother had a beautiful voice. And, ah, we were all raised in that church. My mother sang for every funeral, in fact, she sang for the dead person buried in the cemetery down here, the old one, and it was Mildred Larson's mother.

Pat: And she died when Mildred was seven.

Arlene: Seven years old. So, anyhow, Momma sang for all of the funerals. She had a

deep, big voice, alto.

Pat: And she was such a little lady.

Arlene: Yeah.

Pat: The other holidays. I understand that the 4th of July was quite a big event in this area. Tell me all about what happened?

Arlene: Yes. I can remember the 4th of July. I'm glad you asked me that because I had forgotten. We used to all, the community used to have it some place up there on the creek,

Pat: Carson Creek?

Arlene: Yes. And everybody would go, the Nelsons, the Beckons, and then one year, we had just had a new barn built on our farm, and it rained on the 4th of July. And I remember having the picnic in there.

Pat: This was a family-type picnic.

Arlene: May I say like the Acker picnics now, everybody, huh huh.

Pat: Everybody brings potluck. Did you have games, or certain activities did: visiting, enjoying?

Arlene: Women didn't go lots of time. I'm sure they had lots to catch up.

Pat: They were housebound, so this was their social . . .

Arlene: My mother was kind of a party giver. I remember her having card parties when we little. She always went to ladies and said, "This is for ladies." And people still talk about how Momma had five kids and she would line us up, (inaudible) and we sat there.

Pat: Like good children, while she attended to the ladies. Did your mother ever do any quilting?

Arlene: Not quilting, ah, no. She made quilts, just pieces, and tied.

Pat: How about her, ah, as a seamstress?

Arlene: She couldn't sew. It was hard. It was real hard for my mother to sew. I was making my clothes myself, like when I as a freshman in high school.

Pat: So you made your own school clothes?

Arlene: Yes. I remember making this coat, I was about a freshman. Somebody gave us an old coat, and I turned that coat to the bright side, and made a coat. well, it wasn't fur, it was that freres stuff, I was so proud, I was so dressed up.

Pat: Well, actually, you were the seamstress?

Arlene: Yes. I really sewed. I sewed all the time when we had the St. Martin girls. I used to make their clothes.

Pat: I guess this is when you were married?

Arlene: It was when I was married, huh, huh.

Pat: Did you have a yardage, fabric shop in this area?

Arlene: Everything was made over. People would give you old clothes, and you would make something out of it. You even had padding. This was, maybe you don't want this, this was interesting: when the girls were in high school, I was married, and, ah, evidently made the older one a plush jacket.

Pat: This is the St. Martin girls that were living with you?

Arlene: Yes. Well, they stayed a short time, you know. But, anyhow, I went down to Norma Acker's Craft Supply, and she had the cutest plush jacket on. And I said, "Oh, that's a pretty coat. Where did you get it?" She said she made it from my mother when she was in high school. And her mother kept it all these years, she loved it.

Pat: But you made that out of . . . ?

Arlene: Nothing. I'm sure somebody gave me something, and, ah . . .

Pat: Well, this is interesting, because what you were doing was recycling things into totally new.

Arlene: Oh, yeah.

Pat: I'm sure, as a mother, you made things out of . . .

Arlene: I always remember, I made (inaudible) when he was in grade school, a jacket out of his dad's overcoat. He was so proud of it, and they had show-and-tell, and the teacher said he got and showed this coat, and said his mother made it.

Pat: Well, that kind of explains why there wasn't many yardage shops, or ready made clothes.

Arlene: Where we got our yardage, my mother's sister in Iowa had a, sold yardage at a store that they owned, and at Christmas she'd send like a half a dozen pieces.

Pat: We were talking about different holidays. I remember I heard from someone else, there was some kind of a contest for the 4th of July parade princess, or king. Could you tell me that one?

Arlene: Oh, that was, they always had a celebration in Stevenson, now this was 1929 or 1930, and they had a queen that reigned, she picked up the most money, you know, but I had an advantage because I worked at the confectionery store, and I remember that Greyhound bus drivers all liked me, and they gave me \$10.00, and that's like a \$100.00 now, you know. It really wasn't fair, but at the time I thought it was.

Pat: So they would donate and this money would go towards the celebration, but you got the credit for the most.

Arlene: Yes. Like I say, I had the advantage because I worked in a public place.

Pat: Do you remember who else?

Arlene: Yes. There was Lois Warren, Donna Koch and Angela Warfield.

Pat: And they each worked in a different establishment.

Arlene: Yes, but one of them didn't even work. That wasn't fair, you know, but, of course, you could get out. That was fun.

Pat: What was your duties of queen at the celebration?

Arlene: Nothing, just, only ride in the parade.

Pat: Do you remember any activities that went on at that celebration?

Arlene: I really don't. I had a boy friend, and I was more interested in him than the celebration.

Pat: Ok. Do we know his name?

Arlene: Well, it was Pete Cooper.

Pat: And this was after you were out of high school.

Arlene: Yes.

Pat: It's been a week since I was here visiting you Arlene, and you touched briefly on some of the things, impressions, and some of the things your mother did. Could you go back and talk about where she came from, how she got here, what her impressions were, how she helped supplement the family income while you were growing up, and any other stories you might have about your mom?

Arlene: Well, she and my dad were married in Cowrie, Iowa, and they came west on the train. This was their honeymoon, and I believe the first place they went was Lynn, Washington. He was a telegraph operator, But they lived in several different little places, like Condon, Oregon, and a little town by the name of Alphafa, which is long gone. Then they settled in Bellingham for awhile, and then Portland, and then they moved to Carson and had a little 10-acre farm, which was all timber then. My dad had to clear it by hand with a hand-saw, I'm sure it took many years. And he worked as a telegraph operator for many years while we were growing up. And then my mother hadn't been back to Iowa for 13 years, and so after daddy worked long enough to get a pack for her and her five children. We had tickets all the way back to Cowrie. I remember Momma putting up lunch and we ate on the train, and my brother, my oldest brother Harold, he didn't sleep all the way, he was so afraid he was going to miss something. Anyhow, we arrived there . . .

Pat: Could I ask you one question? The other day you mentioned about some naughty children on the train . . .

Arlene: Well, we had friends going as far as Minnesota. The man was a railroad man, and he'd gone to school with my father, and they settled in Vancouver. Anyway, they had two boys, and they were terrible. They rushed, raced up and down the aisle, and bothered people, and so we only got as far as Spokane and some strange lady came up gave my mother \$5.00, which was like a million to us poor little kids, but it was in those days. So, anyhow, when we visited my mother in Cowrie, the only grandmother we had in contact with was a little old lady in Carson, and I can remember her sitting in a rocking chair smoking a corn-cob pipe. Well, of course, that's what we expected. And the time my grandmother and grandfather met us, why, there was this cute, little pretty woman, and she didn't look like a grandma. We were really surprised. But we stayed three months, and we had a lot of experiences. We went out to see my aunt one day, it would be my mother's aunt, and we were told that she lived on a hill, and I didn't even know her last name, just her first name. So we took turns going to doors, knocking. We couldn't find a hill in Iowa. No, we didn't know the last name, just **Irene(??)**. I was the last one and

they made me go and knock on the door and it was **Aunt Irene(??)**.

Pat: And she didn't live on a hill?

Arlene: Well, yes, but not like here.

Pat; Not like you were used to.

Arlene: We didn't consider it a hill. (laughter).

Pat: Could you tell us a little bit about how your mom used to help support the family?

Arlene: Yes. Well, my dad had a nervous breakdown and wasn't able to work. So my mother had to help. I remember her taking and washing, washing on the board for 14 people. She would be washing in the morning when we left, and still washing when we came home. Now, you want to remember that she weighed only 90 pounds. And then she would cook at the little Carson grade school, and I remember she had a great big container, and she would make soup, probably beans, and put in a little wagon and pull it to the school.

Pat: So, she cooked at home and hauled it the mile to the school.

Arlene: That's right. After my dad died, I was . . . I had just graduated from high school, I still had a picture in high school, but my mother went to work at the St. Martin's Springs, and did chambermaid work, until she had a chance to work at the post office, Carson Post Office. She worked for the Carson Post Office for several years before she retired.

Pat; Did you also work there when she worked there?

Arlene: No. I, I was there first, because I worked there when I first got married, because my younger sister was still in high school, and I had to help get her through high school, get her clothes and things like that.

Pat: So, when you got out of high school, you went to work at the Carson Post Office, and then, now we are getting to the good part: when did you meet your husband, and where?

Arlene: Well, I knew him before I ever started there. I knew him in high school, but when I was working in the post office he started courting. I think I told the story about the girls, that I helped raise, and wanted to know where Jim proposed to me, and he always said, "Through the bars!" because at the post office they had a little window with bars, that's where you bought your stamps.

Pat: So, you were proposed through the bars.

Arlene: Through the bars. And then we were married in 1934, and then I worked for awhile until my sister got through school, then I quit and became a housewife.

Pat: Where did you get married, Arlene?

Arlene: At the Catholic Church in Stevenson. We didn't have a wedding, just at the church. Then, ah, we moved into the garage in February.

Pat: The Garage, Where was that located?

Arlene: Right back of us.

Pat: It's no longer there.

Arlene: No, they tore it down after the house was torn down. And we lived in the house from February to the end of September. It was cozy, I had a rug on the floor, curtains in the window, it was home. But, my husband and I lived there, plus his father lived with us, Grandpa Reid. But he was a dear old man, and he lived with us many years, well, until he died.

Pat: Are we talking 5-6 years?

Arlene: Oh, let's see now. He, ah, all of six or seven years.

Pat: So you started married life with a husband and a father-in-law.

Arlene: That's right. That's right. He was good, he always washed the dishes. He was a very clean man to have around. Well, anyhow, we lived in the garage, and my husband Jim and his father started the house.

Pat: This is the house we are in right now? *(on Fourth Street)*.

Arlene: Yes. And, ah, times were tough, the depression. We borrowed \$100.00 from grandpa, started the house, paid it back \$5.00 a month, and we call it home.

Pat: It sure all these years, from 1934 when it started. Can you describe how rooms there were in the original?

Arlene: There was a bedroom, a living room, a kitchen, and another little bedroom. And later we changed the little bedroom into the kitchen, and made a dining room. And we had an upstairs, and, ah, and the boys had their beds and

dressers up there. We didn't have any heat up there.

Pat: How did you heat your home?

Arlene: At first we had wood heaters, and we cooked over there. And then, later, we had oil heat, and we had oil heat until after my husband passed away, and then we had electric heat put in.

Pat: So, you were married in what was really the depth of the Depression, and you started your family during the Depression.

Arlene: And my husband worked on the dam, but anyhow, the dam froze over and he was off work. And I remember his mother gave us a case of Franco spaghetti, and a case of sauerkraut, and that is all we had to eat all week. But we had lots of (inaudible) (laughter). And then we got Jim.

Pat: And he was your first born.

Arlene: Huh, huh, I thought I was terribly tied down, we didn't have two cars, you stayed home.

Pat: You said your husband worked at the dam. What other jobs did he have.

Arlene: Well, really, he did a little construction work before he went to work on the dam, and then he went to work on the dam until he became a deputy sheriff for Sheriff Borden in 1938. And he had that job until two years before he died.

Pat: So he pretty much had worked all through the Depression.

Arlene: Yes. I can remember that the sheriff lived next door, over on the corner, and, ah, and he came one day and asked me where Jim was, and I said, well he wasn't home right now. I asked what he wanted and he said, "I wanted to know if Jim would like to be my deputy." And I said, "How much does it pay?" And he said, "\$100.00 a month." And I said, "Yeh, he'll take it." (chuckles). And that's how it started.

Pat: And that's how he started . . .

Arlene: He was deputy for Mr. Borden, I can't remember how long (*Editor: Mr. Borden died in 1938*). But, anyhow, Mr. Borden dropped dead and his wife, Irene, took the job. So Jim worked for Irene Borden, and then she finished out his term, and then she run again and got it. And then the next time, 1946, Jim ran and he had it every year after that.

Pat: So, he was the sheriff of Skamania County for . . .

Arlene: That's all my kids knew of him.

Pat: Pretty much since Rich was born he was involved in law enforcement.

Arlene: Oh, yes. That's all the kids ever knew.

Pat: Tell us a little bit about what it was like being a wife of a sheriff? Describe the hours and duties . . .

Arlene: Well, it was a 24-hour job then. And at first you used your own car. He didn't have a sheriff's car for quite a few years. And he would call many of times, two or three times a night. He always said that I raised the kids.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

START OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE

Pat: Arlene, on the last tape we were talking about your husband's job and responsibilities as the Sheriff of Skamania County. Tell me about the hours that he worked and some of the things that happened during his years of being sheriff.

Arlene: Well, it was a 24-hour a day job in those days. He only had one deputy. Some nights he would be called out two or three times, and, ah, he didn't have a car in those days, a sheriff's car, he used his own car. And, ah, I asked my boys what they remembered about it and they both said the same: he was very prompt. He went to work every morning, right on the dot. And there was another gentleman that lived in Stevenson, up close to Esson Smith, and he worked at the courthouse, and when he saw Jim go by, he said he didn't need a car. When he saw Jim Reid go by, it was time to go to work. And both of my boys, remember this, how prompt he was. He never took a day off, seldom, he was very conscientious. But he liked his work, it was in his blood.

Pat: Did he take training after he was elected.

Arlene: Yes. You go to a school every so often. But he started out just under Sheriff Borden and learned the hard way. Made mistakes.

Pat: Are there any special cases that you remember through the years?

Arlene: Well, he had two cases. One of them was, ah, Joanne Dewey from out back of Vancouver, that was murdered and they found her in Wind River over by the bridge, I think, over there. And that was written up in an official detective magazine. And then there was another one, *Hollywood and Vine*, they found a

man murdered down in Skamania. And that was written up in a detective magazine.

Pat: Was it because of the way he handled it?

Arlene: Yeah. You have to be careful of what you say about the sheriff's office.

Pat: Yeah, I was just thinking of cases that might have affected your family, but in general he was on duty . . .

Arlene: He had the patience of . . . with young folks. And when he passed away I received so many letters from young boys that have grown up and said they never would have made it if it hadn't been for Jim. So, he did a lot of good. He had a lot of criticism because it was war time (*World War II*), and kids will always be kids, but he would try to help them and keep them out of jail, because they might be drafted in the service and wouldn't have a record, which some people criticized. But, most of them all turned out to be good citizens. No, he was awful good to them. I had one young man say that, about a month ago, said, "Oh, Jim was good to us. I can remember him taking us to the show, and coming to get us so we wouldn't have to hitch-hike."

Pat: Arlene, you and Jim had two sons, Jim and Richard (Rich), tell me about where they were born, and a little bit about them.

Arlene: Well, at the **Doufer Barn**, in Camas, it wasn't a hospital, it was a maternity home in Camas, and, ah . . .

Pat: Tell me about it because that is not an option in this day and age, most people go to a hospital. What was it like?

Arlene: Oh, it was just a private home, and she was an elderly woman, and I was very ill when I carried Rich, so I had spent time there during my pregnancy. She was a wonderful person. But, you went there and had your child and stayed fourteen days.

Pat: Oh. Why did they keep you fourteen days?

Arlene: Well, that's the way things were.

Pat: Your doctor, then, would come to the house, and he would officiate at the delivery. And they would take care of you.

Arlene: Yes, for fourteen days, and you always had special care. She was a nice person.

Pat: I'm curious. You said 14 days, now a days they have you up and running around. What . . . did they keep you in bed? What did you do? What did you do with yourself?

Arlene: Well, ah, I don't remembered. I just laid for 14 days, and then the day before you went home they got you up and you watched them bath the baby, you know.

Pat: So you didn't take care of the baby at all?

Arlene: No, didn't do a thing. But, anyhow, my mother lived across the street, so I had help. I taught me mom to (inaudible) and she was good. She was good.

(Inaudible).

Pat: You just told me a story a second ago, when we had the machine off, about having been in bed for 14 days after the birth of your child, and then you got up and watched how to bath the baby. Tell me what happened to you then.

Arlene: Well, I was standing there watching, and all of a sudden I was on the floor, you are so weak, and, ah, oh, I think they found out that that was the wrong thing to do. But, that was the way it was.

Pat: That's how they operated back then. And the house, the home, the lady that ran the home was Mrs. . . .?

Arlene: **Belch.(???)**

Pat: **Belch(???)**

Arlene: Lovely person. During the war, the boys were pretty small and we had to have black-out curtains, I remember that, because we had to do things on account of being the sheriff. Then they rationed sugar and coffee. Well, Jimmy must have been in school, because we had to be very careful with the sugar, and he went to school one day, and told that we couldn't have cake on account of the sugar rationing. But my mother could make a cake to give away. And he told this at school. And then one time we didn't realize, we had a man come around, Caswell Coffee he sold, and then he told us he was threatening to have gas rationing. So we stocked up. not hoard, but we liked that kind of coffee. And one time, my son Jimmy got mad at us and he said, "Well, I'm going to tell how you had all that coffee." (laughter). But we had not bought it to hoard it, and be illegal, but it was because we liked that kind of coffee. But you never know what your kids, what goes through their mind.



Pat: Were there other things that were rationed that made it hard for you to be a homemaker.

Arlene: Silk stockings (chuckle).

Pat: How did you cope without silk stockings?

Arlene: I remember sewing one runs, you sewed that run up and wore it. You'd never do that now. And, ah, I think Kleenex and paper . . . I remember Kleenex, you didn't, ah, of course, those days you used handkerchiefs, it wasn't that bad.

Pat: Was meat rationed also? Or hard to come by?

Arlene: If I remember right, it was. I don't remember much about that.

Pat: Of course, you had access to people who would sell you produce and meat?

Arlene: Yes. And we had a **team(??)** and we killed it and had it put away for the winter. And, ah, chickens, we had chickens in the back yard, and we always had a big garden. I remember (inaudible) sad story, it was interesting. We had a big garden and Jim went to work at the dam at four o'clock in the morning, but he went out and picked the peas for me, and it was pouring down rain. Grandpa and I canned those peas. We had 34 pints. I had a new pressure cooker, but I didn't know how to use it. But, anyhow, one day I went upstairs for my fruit (inaudible), and I smelled that awesome odor, and I opened the door and all those peas were (inaudible). I lost every one of those peas. Well, times was tough those days. I was reading . . . shed some tears, then my husband said, "Forget it," we'll go get a case.

Pat: That is the frustration and the waste. Did you learn to use your pressure cooker?

Arlene: Yes, and I never did like it, I was always afraid of it. That is one of the first things, I think, that I gave away when Jim died.

Pat: I can remember as a youngster that we had stamps, OPA stamps. It seems like we used those to purchase things . . .

Arlene: Meat and sugar . . .

Pat: So you had so many stamps . . .

Arlene: That's right, and, ah, we didn't worry about the gas because Jim was still using our car, and he got gas on account of him being the sheriff, but we didn't do a lot of going. Now, Sundays we went to . . . took the kids to the show, down

to Stevenson . . . no, after I think of it . . .

Pat: Where was the theatre?

Arlene: Right on the corner there of . . . (*Second Street and Russell, Stevenson*)

Pat: Oh, at the Skamania Inn, used to be called . . .

Arlene: The **Woodlawn**(??) Theatre.

Pat: The **Woodlawn**(??) Theatre, and it was upstairs in that building?

Arlene: Yes. And that was about all the recreation we had.

Pat: Was there a swimming pool also in . . . ?

Arlene: Yes, and that was over at Shipherd's Springs. I remember swimming over there when I was a kid, and it seems like it was gone before my kids came along. But they used to have, I don't know, ah, by the county over at Home Valley, place to swim, but that was before the dam went in, because they had places where you could walk around and the kids could swim in there.

Pat: Was it a man-made swimming pool, or . . . ?

Arlene: Oh, it was in the river, but it was roped off and they made a walk around it, and you could walk around it. Because I remember one time, oh Rich was a little kid, and he walked around and he just walked off into the water, went down (chuckle). So he was little.

Pat: Then once the dam was completed then it was flooded.

Arlene: Huh huh. Well, we had things to do, and, ah, there were always some kid having a birthday and we all made a big fun about that, we had little parties. Visited, we took our children and we visited.

Pat: And the children . . .

Arlene: Would play. We visit for about an hour and then go home.

Pat: Did you ever go out in the woods and do activities out there?

Arlene: Picnic.

Pat: Berries?

Arlene: Berries, oh, yeah.

Pat: Tell me about the berry picking?

Arlene: Oh. Well, we picked blackberries, and they had a real good patch over by the Shipherd's Springs. Of course, the hotel was burned, and that went on for years, they last only so many years. We picked blackberries there. And huckleberring. My kids weren't berry pickers like their mother, I'm the berry picker.

Pat: Where did you go to get your huckleberries? Did you have a special place you used to go?

Arlene: Out to Molly's, and the (inaudible). And I was out for the first time this year.

Pat: Well, good for you. You got your gallon, or was you a fast picker?

Arlene: Yes, I'm a fast picker. I'm a berry doll.

Pat: I'm going to go with you, then. (chuckle).

Arlene: Oh, and drive out in the woods. That is what Jim and I used to liked to do, go out and drive all the roads in the mountains and hills, on Sundays, and take our lunch and if we come to a creek, take the newspaper and eat our lunch. It was fun, relaxing, very.

Pat: Did you ever go mushroom hunting?

Arlene: No.

Pat: You concentrated on berries.

Arlene: I, I don't like mushrooms.

Pat: Tell me now, your sons both graduated from Stevenson High School, and then what happened to them?

Arlene: Well, Jim graduated from high school and went for two years at Washington State, and I remember he came home on spring vacation, and sat down on the davenport and he said to his mother and dad: "I made my first big decision all by myself!" Oh, I thought he was going to be a doctor. He said, "I'm quitting college at the end of this semester and going into the Air Force." I always said that I didn't say a word, but he said he always wanted to have a talking record of it. But he didn't know what he wanted to be, so, anyhow, he went into the

Air Force and it was the best thing that he ever did. He wasn't in for six months until he decided he wanted to be in the FBI. So he served his time in Japan, came home, and, ah, then he came home and to the university . . .

Pat: The University of Washington?

Arlene: Yes. And, ah, finally, he become, I think he was with the CIA in Vietnam, and then he became a FBI. And, Rich went to, ah, he went up to the university, but he graduated from Oregon State. He had five children when he got his master's. I could write a book on that, but we won't (chuckle).

Pat: Yes, that would be quite a challenge, wouldn't it?

Arlene: I'll tell you.

Pat: After both your sons went off to college and careers, how did you life change? With an empty nest, so to speak. What kept you occupied?

Arlene: It hurt. I was in the post office, but I did miss them. I hated to give my boys up, it was awful hard for me.

Pat: Well, you have one living very close, and the other has moved back into the area, so . . . Arlene did you work while you were raising your family?

Arlene: No. I didn't work until, I don't think I went to work steady, to begin with, until, ah, Jim was in college and Rich was in high school, and the postmaster (*Lester Ott*) died. Anyhow, I went back to work, then I worked steady until after . . . I retired when I was 62.

Pat: So, you retired . . .

Arlene: But I could always just been a clerk, which was, really in those days, was kinda of a social life, everybody knew each other, and people would come and get all the tidbits, and then come home.

Pat: You knew all the . . .

Arlene: Yes, between the sheriff and the post office (chuckle). And, ah, anyhow, it's different now, it's a different world. Oh, anyhow, I worked two hours and the postmaster was killed, on a Sunday. And I went to work, they called and I opened up Monday morning, and there were people at the door wanting to know if I was going to take the job. I was in a state of shock, I had worked at the post office for 15 years.

Pat: So you knew him.

Arlene: We were very close. And, ah, I came home at noon, and I said to Jim that people weren't even letting him get cold, and they were talking about the job. He said, "You are going to take it, aren't you?" And I said, "No! I don't want it. I'm happy with the way it is." And he said, "Take it." Anyhow, I decided to take it and it was a blessing in disguise, because six months later my husband was dead. Who knew at the time he wasn't going to live long.

Pat: So, he advised you to take the job knowing you might need it.

Arlene: I knew his days were numbered.

Pat: You didn't know he was ill?

Arlene: Not that ill. He never told me, never complained, and Dr. Rehal didn't tell me. No, he never would complain, and six months later he was gone. I had a chance to work right through, like nine years. And it has been a blessing because I've been able to on trips, and things like that. Otherwise I would have had to get two jobs.

Pat: Well, you enjoyed your family.

Arlene: Yeah.

Pat: Just tell us a little bit about the trips that you enjoyed the most.

Arlene: Well, ah, the first one was a surprise, to Africa. Oh, I loved it, I just loved Africa. And I'm glad I went to China before it go Americanized, and I've been to the Holy Land, and to South America, and British Isles, and Ireland, Scotland, England, and Ilaman off the coast of Ireland. It might (best) be the first one, oh, the animals.

Pat: Something you have to see.

Arlene: Oh, yeah, they were right with us.

Pat: I assume these are the things that you shared with your family, these experiences.

Arlene: Yes, well, they never seemed to be excited. I was so happy to show this man Robert, he would sit down and look at my map and things.

Pat: But, you have had a very full life in you retirement.

Arlene: Oh, yeah. Quite often after I retired I kept thinking, oh, those days ahead of

me just loomed, what am I going to do? (inaudible). Isn't that wonderful?

Pat: I think it was terrific. What other things have you done besides travel to keep you occupied, and interesting?

Arlene: Well, we have a nice group in Carson. We have a birthday group and we meet once a month to do that. It benefits from 15 to 20. And then we have a pinochle club, and we play bunco, we have luncheons, and, and sometime just quit and fold your hands once in a while. But, no we keep busy, never bored.

Pat: Are you involved at your church?

Arlene: Just a little. I go to church and belong to the Altar Society.

Pat: You are a member of the Catholic Church?

Arlene: And I do what I can. Oh, I did my share. But, anyhow, no you don't by shares, but yes, feel like I do what I can.

Pat: Well, you've been a member of the Catholic church then for . . .

Arlene: 1934.

Pat: Since 1934? 58 years worth. Ah, have you noticed any changes in the church?

Arlene: Oh, yeah.

Pat: What kind of things that have happened?

Arlene: Well, it used to be all in Latin, now it's in English. The priest used to stand with his back to you, and now he faces and gives the sermon. Not no Negros. I don't . . . ah, it was hard on the kids. But I don't think it hurt them, but all the games were on Friday night and they couldn't eat meat on Friday. I heard Rich say one time that he'd sit with his hamburger in his hand and, and then at midnight he's gulp the hamburger. And now it doesn't matter, changes long over-due. I can remember when you would go straight to hell if you went to a Christian church, and now they have them together. It's long over-due.

Pat: So, you have witnessed many, many changes?

Arlene: Oh, yes.

Pat: A few minutes ago you were telling me about attending a funeral and a person came up, and told you something. Could you tell that story?

Arlene: Well, I went to a funeral one time, and I met a young girl that was about my oldest son's age, and we embraced, and she said, "Oh, Arlene you look so happy." And then she looked at me, and then she said, "But, you've always been a happy person." And I thought that was a wonderful compliment. And I really think that I have.

Pat: Does that sort of sums up your life?

Arlene: Yes. I think life is what you make of it. You can sit and feel sorry for yourself, or you can pick up the pieces and go on and do something.

Pat: And you obviously have.

Arlene: Yes.

Pat: I've enjoyed this thoroughly.

Arlene: Well, thank you, Pat.