

PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a tape-recorded interview conducted by Rosalyn L. Bone for the Oral History Office on July 20, 1975. Rosalyn Bone transcribed the tapes and edited the transcript. Hal Ringland reviewed the transcript.

Hal Ringland was born on February 25, 1896 at Forest City, Illinois. In his memoir Mr. Ringland recalls attending an one-room rural school, farm life, various jobs, the Depression and many other interesting topics. He has been a farmer for most of his life and also held the job of substitute rural mail carrier for many years. Mr. Ringland has also farmed with, raised, and traded horses. Today Mr. Ringland is retired and enjoying life with his wife Leatha, whom he married in 1919. He also enjoys playing golf, and doing many other activities on their farm.

Readers of this oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Hal Ringland, July 20, 1975, Kilbourne, Illinois.
Rosalyn L. Bone, Interviewer.

A. My name is Hal Ringland. I was born February 25, 1896. I grew up on a farm. I was one of six children. I started to school, a country school, when I was six years old. It was a large country school with only one teacher and 64 students. We had what was considered one of the best schools, one of the best teachers in the county. They received the largest salary. It was known that they received the largest salary of any of the teachers.

Q. Where was this school?

A. This school was Sherman Valley. That's two miles west of Easton, Illinois. When I went to school I started when I was six years old. I never was too much interested in school, however. I went through the eighth grade and my teacher--who I thought a lot of--advised me to take the seventh and eighth grades over again. That I would learn more [by taking the grades over again] than what I would by going to high school. That's really what the teacher advised. Said if you want to go as a teacher, why, in the colleges, of course, you have to have more education but for the common person he said, "I imagine that you'll probably be that type of person. You don't seem to be too much interested in schooling." Which I wasn't. I had more good times. I was more interested in a good time than I was in school. I'd rather get out and get into a bumblebee's nest and get the bumblebees after the other kid and do those kind of things than I would to sit and study.

I remember so distinctly one time when I was in school. I had a neighbor friend that, oh, he wanted to sit close to me. He was a little bit shorter in height than me and he would sit behind me. The teacher couldn't see him as well as she could me, and we would whisper a lot. One time the teacher wrote, "Hal and Carl"--the other fellow's name was Carl--and said for us--this happened about three-thirty in the afternoon--and the teacher wrote our names on the board and told us to remain in our seats when the other children went home. And the teacher went outdoors after the kids had gone down the road a little ways and stayed out quite a little while. Carl told me, "I bet she went after a whip." We laughed and was having a good time there by ourselves and pretty soon she came adragging a couple of limbs of a tree in on the floor and started to trim them. I'll tell you the fun was over for us right at that time. And she trimmed those two clubs--and it looked like ball bats to me--and she came up and laid them across her desk and said, "Hal, do you have anything to say?" And I said, "No, ma'am." I was just so scared and Carl--the fellow that really was the fellow why we'd done so much whispering--and he was the one that would make me laugh and he said, "Well, it's Hal's fault."

He keeps awwhispering to me and saying things that makes me laugh." Well, that wasn't true at all but I wasn't smart enough when I had the chance to put the blame where the blame belonged. Anyway, the teacher, I think, she could see that I was about to pass out. I was scared to death. Because with those clubs, why, she could have killed us. And finally after talking to us quite a little bit, why, she wanted to know if we thought we could behave ourselves, and I said, "Oh yes, ma'am." And I meant every word of it. And we sure was. I'll tell you she just put the fear in us. (tape turned off and on)

I was a lover of horses and while we just had work horses--some of the neighbors had ponies for their children but my father never saw fit to get a pony for me--but when the horses wasn't being worked, why, I could ride them. But the kids from town would come out and we would ride the calves. I had one calf really broke to where I could say "get-up" and it would go and when I'd say "whoa," why, it would stop. That was quite unusual.

But one of our horses was, oh, gentle, but I would tease her. I would try to go buzzzzzzzzzzzz and then punch her in the side. She'd snap her head around and snap her teeth together and try to bite me. But I never paid much attention to that. But one time just a little bit later than this, why, my sister said, "Oh, Hal, I wish you would get this horse for me." She wanted to go someplace in a hurry on the horse. And I went out to the barn and got the horse and was leading her through a gate and I got in a position where this horse could kick me and man, she really let me have it! And it was my fault because I'd been ateasing her. She thought, well, that was her chance to get even with me. But that stopped the buzzing like a bumblebee.

Q. Did you get hurt?

A. No, it didn't hurt me seriously at all but it taught me to not do those kind of things. (tape turned off and on)

Q. Was the school you mentioned a one-room school?

A. It was a one-room school. It was, as I mentioned before that, there were 64 children at one time there, enrollment.

Q. What subjects did you take?

A. Well, in those days, I think that the common subjects was and what I took was: history, spelling, geography, arithmetic and grammar. Spelling was much the easier subject for me. It wasn't hard for me to learn to spell. But I still say I wasn't too much interested in school.

But I always liked girls and still do. When I was growing up after going with girls for quite some time, different girls, my sister had a party in the front yard. And there was some twenty couples I would say. And there was one girl there that was especially attractive to me and I didn't know how I was going to get to talk to this girl. Finally, I decided. Well,

she was talking with another boy and I told my sister, "Grace, would you go over and tell this Leatha Field that there's some girls over here that wants to talk to her?" And my sister said, "Yes, I'll go tell her." So to get her away from this other boy, that's what we did and I got her to come over. I started talking to her and she said, "Oh, Hal, listen, there's some girls over here that want to talk to me. I'll have to come back and talk to you a little bit later." And I said, "No, I'm the girls. I sent my sister over to get you as I just wanted to talk to you." I talked to her a little bit and finally talked her into letting me take her home. So I took her home and I liked her real well. Later I decided that I'd like to go with her some more and I went with her. Come to find out her name was Field and her great-grandfather had owned several thousand acres here in this territory. However, I was fortunate enough to marry her.

My wife's--Leatha--great-grandfather Field was one of the first settlers in Kilbourne, Illinois, or around Kilbourne. This was around 1836. He owned a plantation in Tennessee which was farmed by numerous slaves. When he migrated to Kilbourne he brought one slave, one woman, which they had for years with them. He settled nineteen thousand acres of land called Field's Prairie. He was the first to have window glass in his home. Once he traded 360 acres of land for the first threshing machine. My wife's grandfather wanted to trade another 360 acres of land for a historical house in Bath, Illinois [the 1850 House] that had seven fireplaces but his wife didn't want it and wouldn't sign the papers.

Going back to myself, in May 1918 I entered in World War I. My salary was \$30 with \$6.50 taken out for insurance. For 43 years I was substitute mail carrier. I farmed 560 acres of land. I've been justice of the peace, married three couples, and I've been commissioner of highways. I did a lot of work for the ASC [Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service] for the government and a lot of it was, well, part of it was field work and part of it was office work; a lot of it was office work, in fact.

Q. What is ASC?

A. That's Agricultural . . . I can't think of what it is but it's a farm program for farmers that the government is putting out.

Q. How did you become the justice of the peace?

A. Well, I was elected by the people. They needed a justice of the peace in Kilbourne, Illinois and they put my name up and I was elected.

Q. Oh, you were just elected into it.

A. Right.

Q. How long were you justice of the peace?

A. I don't know, I'd say three or four years. I didn't like it because

different companies would want me to collect money that people was slow about paying and it put me into kind of a position where I'd make enemies when I'd force payment. So when the first term went out, I went out. I was glad to get out.

Q. Tell me some about your mail carrying days.

A. Oh, well, I started back, oh, I don't know when. Of course, part-time it was with horses and on good roads, why, we could drive a car. But a lot of the time we had to take horses, and we'd go through snowdrifts, sometimes it was just bad going. The pay was, oh, just a little bit compared to the pay today. But I was thankful for the job and have been all through the 43 years.

There's something about being a mail carrier I liked. This I did along with other work, it was just something different and I didn't work steady enough that it would get tiresome to me. And without the assistance of the regular carrier, I don't think that I could have held a job, because I've been going to Florida for fifteen years, at least, and staying during the winter months when, really, I should be here to help the regular carrier and take some of the bad roads. I'd say he has really taken the hard part. He allowed me to go and I appreciate it so much. But I feel like it was really unreasonable and unfair to him. But I wanted to go to Florida and of course, if he had asked me to stay here and take care of the job, why, I'd either had to give up the job or given up going to Florida, which I would have hated to do either one.

Q. What year did you start being a substitute carrier?

A. I believe it was 1929.

Q. And then you retired . . .

A. 1972. See if that's 43 [years].

Q. When you had horses in the winter how long was your route?

A. Well, I think our route was about twenty-five miles at that time. Since then, they kept increasing the length of the route and of course, as the length of the route was longer then to was the roads, but the mail was heavier. Years ago when I started on Saturday there was hardly any mail at all and now we have heavy mail. You take a paper like the Chicago Tribune paper, this one paper will fill in all the space that we have in the little box for mail. So the mail is a lot heavier, much heavier, than it was then. The roads are better but the mail work is heavier, too.

Q. When you used your horses to carry the mail, did you have certain places to stop and water them, and rest them?

A. No, I went all the way. We'd change horses; we would drive one team of horses one day and another team another day. I was well fixed for horses.

Q. Did they have mail boxes back then?

A. Yes. Yes, we was using mail boxes. A lot of them wasn't as good a mail box as they are today, but they had some kind of box that would hold the mail.

Q. What kind of car did you have?

A. I started with a Model T and later got a Model A, then a Ford and Chevrolets. These I had practically all of my life.

Q. What was the first car you had like?

A. Well, the first car that I ever owned, I think, was about 1918 and as far as first car I ever drove, it was a 1912. My father was one of the early users of the Fords in our community.

Q. Did you have to crank it to start it?

A. Oh yes. Yes, we'd have to crank it and then in cold weather it would be hard to crank and it wouldn't start. And you could jack up the back wheels, one back wheel, and then crank it and it would start. But that was just a lot of times; that's what we had to do. We'd just jack up one wheel and . . . oh, sometimes we'd pour hot water if we were where we could. We'd put hot water on the manifold to start it. They didn't start themselves in those days.

Q. They were quite a bit different from now?

A. That's a lot different that's all there is to it. They just had two gears—low and high—and of course, reverse but they're nothing like they are now. Sometimes we'd start to Springfield, Leatha and I, and on our way to Springfield maybe we'd have two flat tires. It was just common that we'd have tire trouble. But in those days we'd have to pump up the tires with a hand pump. And we didn't realize that it was so necessary to have full amount of pressure in the tire and we'd run them about half flat and it would rim cut the sides and then your tire would blow out. But I don't know why we didn't catch on to it but we sure were ignorant there for a long time and we . . . the life of the tire was short. We didn't run them many miles and it was dirt roads. They shouldn't have given out so soon but it was simply because we didn't keep air in the tires. (tapes turned off and on)

Q. What were the tires like? Were they different than they are today?

A. Not a lot different actually but they wasn't as good. I don't know, of course, I think the companies learned they had to have better tires because everybody was driving faster and there'd be all kinds of accidents with those thin tires that we used to have, a weak tire.

Q. Do you remember how much your first car cost?

A. I think that our first car was six hundred and some dollars. That was my father's car and that was a 1912. But the first car that I bought was a used car and I would say that I paid about three hundred sixty dollars for it. I think that's pretty nearly accurate.

Q. When you were road commissioner what type of things did you do?

A. Well, I don't know. I would watch over the roads and the places where it'd need filling in. Maybe there's be a little washout, and we'd haul dirt in and fill it. In the worst sand we'd put straw in the summertime on the roads. I don't know whether you've ever seen that done or not, but we put straw on the road and when that'd get packed down, it'd make it pretty good going for a little while. But it got to where people that didn't like it so well, they'd burn it off. And of course, I tried to control the weeds as much as I could along the roadsides. A lot of times we would drag the road to fill holes.

Q. How long were you a road commissioner?

A. I was commissioner of highways for three years.

Q. What years?

A. I can't remember what years it was.

Q. Did you have any problem in the winter with the snow?

A. Oh, yes. A lot of trouble. The roads would drift with snow and of course, we were anxious and it was very important for the mail to go through. We would have to take scoop shovels and a bunch of men and go out and open up the road. That happened it seemed like very winter which took a lot of money.

Q. You just went out there and scooped the snow off the road?

A. Yes, yes. There was nothing else to do. We didn't have the machinery that we have today by any means and all we could do was go out with scoop shovels. The mail carrier at all times had to carry a scoop--that is in the wintertime--because they'd think they could get through the snowdrifts--and I was one of them--thinking that it was possible for us if I'd make a run I'd get through that snowdrift but I wouldn't get through the drift and I couldn't back up and then I'd have to start digging.

Q. How much equipment did you have, road equipment?

A. You mean as I was carrying mail or to work with on the highways?

Q. Yes, to work with on the highways.

A. We didn't have much material at all. A tractor and I bought a new road grader but a lot of the time, we didn't have power enough to pull

the grader and we'd hitch a team of horses on to help. I've done that many times. So we didn't have much to work with.

Q. You mentioned that you were a farmer. Did you farm with horses?

A. Yes. I farmed with horses and I hated to see the horses taken out. I think I kept horses longer than most anybody, I mean, farmed with horses. Up to the last I kept four horses and even though I had two tractors I had four horses and for a lot of the work, I'd use horses because I like horses. By the way, I used to buy horses that was real wild; they'd never had a rope on them or anything. They'd bring them in and put them in a big fenced-in place and sell them and then it was your job to get them and get them home. I bought, I don't know how many, I'd say, oh, eight horses that never had a rope on them and brought them home and broke them with good results. They turned out to be real nice gentle horses.

At a sale I had a man come to me and say, "Hal, would you be interested in a young unbroken mule?" And I said, "Well, I don't know. I might be. What age and what size?" He told me and I said, "Well, I don't know if I'd be interested or not but I'll come and take a look." I went and looked at the mule and asked him what he asked for it and he told me. Well, I knew that I was going to buy it and I said, "Well, Florent, that's a good looking mule but it's just more money than I want to put into it." And I tried to jew him down and I couldn't do much with him and finally I told him, "I'll tell you what I'll do." I made him an offer and he wouldn't take it and I told him, "I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll split the difference with you." And he studied a little bit and he said, "All right, I'm going to sell it." Well, I couldn't help but think that there was something wrong with this mule because it was just an awfully nice looking mule, and the age was right, but it wasn't broke. I paid him for it and told him I'd be after it the next day. I hired a truck--I had to go twenty-five miles after it--but anyway, when I got there and we loaded the mule in the truck I said, "Now, Florent, what's the matter with that mule?" I thought there had to be something wrong with it. Well, he said, "Not a thing in the world, Hal." He said, "Of course, you want a good set of harness when you're breaking it." Well, I'd broken lots of horses and I thought that was kind of funny advice for me to have a good set of harness.

I came home and the next morning I hitched this mule up with another mule and tied them together and started up--I had them hitched to a wagon--and I started up and that mule just simply just had fits, that's all. Just as nervous as could be and they took me down the road a ways. But finally I got it stopped and I dragged the back two wheels on the wagon so the wagon wouldn't roll along so easy and started up again. As quick as there's just a little bit of noise, it started jumping and rearing. And I got the thing stopped and dragged all four wheels. And I worked it all right.

But come to find out a year or two later, something was said about that mule. About a mule that somebody had that run away and tore things up

I asked who it was or what happened and he said, "Well, this neighbor had a young mule and he hitched it up; he was going to break it." He said, "They went over close to the hard road and a motorcycle come along and scared the mule and that mule they said just simply went wild and tore everything up and they never hitched it up since." Come to find out that was the mule that I'd bought. Well, if the man had only told me that the mule had been spoiled or had been scared from excitement by a motorcycle, it might have saved me from getting killed, because that mule could have hurt me badly by being spoiled. But I never thought of such a thing but it was worse than any bronco that had never been worked. That's one experience that I had that took me by surprise. That was an experience that I had.

Q. Did you finally get it broke, though?

A. Yes. Really, yes, it just broke out as a real good mule. I sold it and made a little money on it later on, a couple of years later.

Q. How did you break your horses?

A. I would put the horse that I was breaking between two gentle horses and I'd tie it to both horses and of course, it was nervous but I was real fortunate breaking them. I had them run and kick. One time I went out in a forty-acre field to hitch this horse up because I knew it was going to be ugly and, oh, just as quick as we started up, why, it began to kicking and, oh, it went for quite a ways just kicking hard. Finally I got it stopped but it had one leg across the tongue. So just as quick as it stopped I just said "get-up," again. The fellow that was with me was just so disgusted because he thought, "For heaven's sake, let's get that horse unhitched and let's don't think about starting up again." I let it kick itself out. I told him afterwards we got it straightened out—or it straightened itself out.

When times was hard we always managed to meet our obligations. I finally got ahead enough that I bought twenty acres of land and that was back during the Depression. After I got that twenty acres of land, then it seemed like that money began coming in. But before that in the wintertime, I'd haul coal. They would call me from Kilbourne and tell me that some woman wanted fifteen bushel of coal. I'd hitch up the horses in zero weather and go up to Kilbourne and go to the coal shed and load up fifteen bushel of coal and haul it to whoever the individual happened to be and unload it. I'd get fifty cents for it. It was a lot of work and a lot of time in bad weather for fifty cents, but I was thankful for it. I did that for two or three winters.

And I had a job hauling bales for a fellow named Dloomingore and loaded them into grain cars and they'd ship them to the mill where they ground up the straw. At one time I was loading up at Long Branch, [at a] station along the railroad, and I understood that you had two days to get these cars loaded and ready to take out. If you didn't get them loaded out in two days, why, you had to pay the railroad company. [They] made you pay for the time that the car was being set on the track. So I don't know, there for a few days, why, I was getting along pretty good and they kept sending in more cars.

So finally there were seven cars sent in. And I went to the man that I was

working for and told him, I said, "I'm working as hard as I can," and I said, "and I'm just getting behind farther and farther because you keep bringing in more cars faster than I could possibly load them out." And he said, "Hal," he says, "you're doing a wonderful job." He says, "You're loading out a car a day. And they're averaging this thing up and, my land," he said, "You could not load out a car for a week now and then still we wouldn't have to pay for the extra time; because when you load out one car in a day, why, we've got three days for the next car." So he said, "So things are going fine. You just keep up the good work." It made me feel real good but one of the times like when things were hard I hauled bales for three cents a bale. I didn't make much money but I was glad to make any money. It was a wintertime job.

Q. Tell me about the threshing days.

A. Well, back when we threshed we started in with steam engines--back in my day--and we cut the wheat with binders and then, of course, we shocked the wheat in shocks and then hauled them in on wagons and fed them into this threshing machine. We'd have about eight different farmers [who] would go together and have a crew and then they'd help each other go through the run. One time they'd start at one end of the run and then the next year they'd start at the other end of the run. So everybody was kind of treated kind of equal; tried as near as they could. That's when we'd have our big dinners. I'll tell you right now the women'd go all out to have . . . everything was good and lots of it.

Of course, we had trouble in those days with horses going up to the machinery. The machinery would be running and making a lot of noise and we'd have trouble keeping them even when we did get them up along side the machine where we had to throw the bundles of wheat into the machine. The horse teams would run out with us and we'd have to turn them around and bring them back in again. Those were the good old days. We had to work hard but I feel that we're getting paid for it now. We're sort of living a retired life today and we enjoy it a lot.

Q. What were the main crops that you raised?

A. Well, in those days my main crop was wheat. I had a little better luck with wheat. But I'll tell you, if I had fifteen bushel of wheat, that was pretty fair average and that was with acres compared to other farmers. More of the time--I think as a rule--I had the best average of the eight farmers. Not every year but on an average I did have. But of course as time went on, why, people began to build up this soil to where we would raise much, much better now. But back in those days, why, all they would do is just farm it. That's all; take it off. Today in comparison, we put a lot of money into fertilizer but if we have a good season, we have thirty-five, forty bushel average. But of course, we have to have a bigger yield because our expense is much greater than it was in those days. But my main crop was wheat. I had a lesser amount of corn.

Today, corn and beans is our main crop but we still raise wheat. Our average on corn those days was, oh, I'd say thirty-five bushel to the acre. Today we're very much disappointed if we don't get a hundred bushel. Here three or four years ago on a hundred acres of land I had an average of one hundred fifty bushel to the acre, which is real good. It kind of shows a comparison

but we put on lots of fertilizer and our expense is quite a lot, but then it pays off well.

Q. How did you pick your corn back then?

A. In those days we had to go out there and shuck every ear.

Q. By hand?

A. By hand. Yes. We'd go out and that was one of the jobs that I disliked the most of anything about farming. Altho, I think that I could take the lead in most of the things in farming. I could get in some corn all right but then when they'd be shucking a hundred bushel, I'd get seventy. And I had to work hard to do that. So there's a little bit slight to that, something, I don't know what it is, to shucking corn. I sure worked at it but didn't accomplish too much.

Q. What did you do with the corn after you had picked and shucked it?

END OF SIDE ONE

A. We'd put it in cribs, corn cribs. We'd build them of rails, altogether out of rails. We'd put in boards on the ground and then build with rails up and we'd have to scoop every bit of the corn—it was ear corn—and we'd just round up. The top of the crib we'd try to make as sloping as we could so that it would run the water off instead of going down through the middle of the corn.

Q. How did you shell it?

A. Well, at home we had a sheller and it was run with horsepower. We had horsepower and we put eight head of horses around it and that was the power. And then we had to scoop every grain of it with the scoop, of course, into the hopper and then grind it up, put it into a wagon and take it to the elevator.

Q. Did you take most of your corn to the elevator?

A. No.

Q. When did you change to tractors? You said earlier that you kept your horses longer.

A. Well, I think that I had my first tractor in 1936. And I don't know when. I expect it was 1950 when I gave up horses. I kept horses a long time, but I was always proud of horses and I think that I had real good ones. When I see a horse anywhere I take a second look at it. [I have] just a thing for horses, I guess.

Q. How do you tell when a horse is a good horse?

A. Well, you can't tell for sure but you look them over. One of the main things to do is to look in their eyes and at their teeth.

Q. In their eyes?

A. Eyes, yes. Because they could be blind and you not know it. They called them mooneyed, but you can't tell. Then they could have blemishes. They could have a swollen place on their leg that spoils the value of them if it is something that they allowed to grow. I know that I have a neighbor that said, "Hal, you're a good judge of horses. I want a team of mules and I'd like to get you to go with me and help me find a good team of young mules." So we went out and spent the day and as we were coming back in I told him, "There's a fellow out here that has mules and I know he'll sell anything he's got." But I said, "I don't know whether he'd have anything you'd want or not."

So we stopped at this place and he had a lot of mules. He fed the mules and I told him that this man was looking--this neighbor of mine--was looking for a good team of young mules and I wanted to know what he had for sale. We looked around and he was pointing out to different ones and what the price was on them. And I said, "What about that mule there." He said, "Well, I'll guarantee him to be sound." And I said, "You don't mean to tell me that you're selling that for sound!" And he says, "I certainly am." I said, "Well, look at that knee." I said, "Why my land, a blind man could feel that and tell that there was something wrong there." And he laughed and he told me many times since then, that about me--how quick I noticed that there was a swelling there in that knee and he was trying to sell it as being sound.

So that's just one of the things that you got to look out for or that they can have blemishes, oh, like cut hoof and split-like and a lot of little blemishes. You got to watch for them when you're buying because you can buy them and even though they may not hurt them any as far as we're concerned but when you go to get rid of them, why, it lowers the value of them.

Q. You talked about a Leatha Field. Did you marry her?

A. (laughter) Yes, I married her. I married this Leatha Field that I met at the party. I think we've had a very happy life. Still wouldn't trade her for anybody else.

Mrs. Ringland: Good! (laughter)

A. We have one daughter married to a radiologist. She lives in Quincy, Illinois and she has three children. Today we're great-grandparents to one child. We had one child that died--crib death. Is that what you call it? . . . But our daughter is so good and so considerate of us and they go on trips. A year ago or two or three years ago, they called us in Florida--and I'd been afraid to ride on an airplane--and they called us from Quincy, Illinois and wanted to know if we'd be interested in going to Spain. They were going and there was a group from the hospital and

the people at the hospital could invite other members of the family to go on this tour and wanted to know if we would like to go. So as much afraid of a plane as I am, I asked Leatha and Leatha said, "Let's go." So that was my answer, "Let's go." So we went on this trip and had a wonderful time. I don't think that a lot of the younger generation would take their parents along like our daughter invites us to go.

Also, a few years ago she invited us, or her and her husband invited us, to take a trip up into Maine East and we made a long trip there. My son-in-law wanted to go to a convention at Washington, D.C. and we stayed in Washington, D.C. for three days. While we was there he did something that seemed to me kind of nice to be able to do while he was there. While this convention was going on, somebody called Ralph, my son-in-law, in the night and asked him, he said, "I'm suppose to be master of ceremony tomorrow night," and he says, "Dr. Theobald, would you take my place?" And Ralph said, "Well, I sure will." He said, "I'll do the best that I can." But Ralph did this and it seemed to be so easy for him. Just seemed like that he could do it and they say he did a real good job.

Then we went from there [Washington, D.C.] to New York City and we spent two days in New York City. Then we went to Boston and stayed one day, then we went on up in Maine; we took a different route back. But we appreciate so much this daughter and her husband taking us on these trips and being so good to us.

Q. What year was it that you married Leatha Field?

A. 1919.

Q. What was the month and the date?

A. We were married July 27, 1919.

Q. Have you always lived in the same house?

A. We have always lived in this same house. In fact, after I was married we always lived in this same house.

Q. Okay, I want to go back to your school days a little bit.

A. (laughs) Okay. The good old days.

Q. Do you remember what time school took up and when it let out?

A. Well, it took up at eight o'clock and let out at four o'clock.

Q. Did you ever go to high school?

A. No. No.

Q. Were all of your teachers men or women or did you have a mixture?

A. We had . . . most of the time, oh, I don't know, maybe there was more women teachers than there was men teachers. There was one teacher that I like especially well--the one that was there in later years was a man and a real good teacher. Well, they was all good teachers. I'll tell you we had good teachers but they really kept order and there was no trouble about it and it was a large school. And in those days men would go to school when they was eighteen years old--to grade school--but when the springtime would come, why, they'd quit school and start working on a farm. And then in the fall maybe they'd start the first of September or maybe they wouldn't start until bad weather started in, in the winter; then they'd have a short time.

Q. How many months was the school year?

A. I think it was eight months.

Q. Like September . . .

A. Oh, September to about the first of May.

Q. Do you remember any mischievous things you did in school?

A. Well, I did so many mischievous things that I hate to start in on them. I don't know, just right now I can't think of all of the things that I did in school. I was an awful tease, I know that. I had a fellow the other night at the supper that we was to and he said that he was mad at me when he was a little kid--and I was older--and that guy, I invited him to ride the sled with me down a hill and when we was halfway down the hill I pushed him off. And he made up his mind that if he was ever mad enough that he was going to give me a licking. And he's telling me about it now. So that was one of the things, kind of thing, that I did, I guess; I don't know.

Q. Did you ever have spelling bees?

A. Yes. And I would stand high in them but that was the only thing. But in spelling, why, it was just really pretty easy for me. In fact, we had some pretty big spelling bees. I don't know, my mother was a pretty good speller--my dad wasn't bad--but my mother was an especially good speller. And it seemed like in our family, I think, that spelling just kind of come easy, I don't know why.

Q. Did you have spelling bees with other schools?

A. No.

Q. Just within?

A. Just there. But there'd be other schools come in and join in on the thing. They'd choose sides and they had some good spellers there I'll tell you. One lawyer there was good, too.

Q. Are you still farming?

A. No. About 1960, I think, I decided that I'd quit farming; I was a little bit afraid that I might not be happy without having something that I had to do but I'm just as happy as can be and have been ever since. Of course, I had a public sale. I think it was 1962. Sold all my implements and things that I had. Well, I say I sold all of them, I kept a tractor and a tandem disk and just a little bit of stuff. But most of my stuff . . . but I've been real happy with retired life. I can always find plenty to do. On a farm if a person is looking for something to do, they can find it.

Q. What kinds of things do you do?

A. Well, don't ask me that question. (laughter)

Q. Okay.

A. Well, no, that's all right. I spend a lot of time just going out in the field and looking and I think almost every day during the time when grain is being formed. I'd go out and open up a ear of corn and see whether it's filling good and go to soybeans and pull up a stock of soybeans and count and see how many pods there are coming on the stock and see how many beans are in the pod. Just things like that.

And I'm a great hand to mow. I don't like weeds and I spend an awful amount of time mowing. I have a pretty big place here, lawn, and I have a little golf course here. And I spend a lot of time with that but then I have to help my wife at times; she's showing age. (laughter)

Mrs. Ringland: Oh. (laughter) He loves to play golf.

A. Yes, I love to play golf and have a hard time getting that job done-- getting to the place to play.

Q. Did you make your own golf course?

A. Yes. I really think that I have a pretty nice place here for a person to practice. I spend a lot of time out here practicing. I think that it's good for me and I went to a doctor here just recently and talked to him and asked him about playing golf and he says, "Well, golf is a game where you spend most of your time walking." He says, "Really walking." . . . I have a little bit of a heart condition, I think, and he said with the condition that I have that's one of the best things that I could do. Which makes me feel pretty good.

Q. Would you like to add anything?

A. I can't think of anything else at this time.

Q. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Ringland.

END OF TAPE