

LARRY: When you and your mother moved up to that homestead up by Portal, Doc, what kind of a house did you build?

CHARLES: We had a shack! It wasn't a house! We all had shacks! Our shack was 10--let's see, ~~was~~ ^{we had one} a little bigger than most of ~~em.~~ ^{'em.} It was 10 by 12. It had a slanting roof and they had what they call a stove jack. Everybody had those; the hardware ^{store} sold 'em. They were big pieces of flat tin with a hole in and the thing came up, you know, where you run the stove-pipe over that and that was put on the roof, you know, so that it wouldn't catch fire around ~~it.~~ ^{it.} And these shacks they were nothing but just plain board with tarpaper over 'em, and to keep 'em from blowing away we'd put sod all around 'em, w-way up. See, way up ~~about that~~ high otherwise, my God, the wind would--a lot of 'em didn't do that and the wind would just take and tumble them and smash them all to pieces. ~~And we had to put that sod all around,~~ ^B but you'd be amazed how warm we kept in those things because they're nothin' but a shell! And our bed was hinged up there at the back, you see, and it come down. We had powder cans. They had mines up there, ~~you know,~~ and they had this powder in the cans, ~~like that,~~ ^{and} we'd get the empty powder cans and they ~~were~~ ^{were} just right! We'd stick 'em over the ends like that to keep 'em up, to keep 'em level; but in the daytime we'd take and put that back up, fold it right back against the wall and hook it and that gave us all that space, see? ^{But} all those shacks were made that way! Some were only about 8 by 10. Gee, I know there was a fella by the name of ^{Melvin} Hull there. He was only about 21 or 22 years old and he had a homestead that joined ours on the west. I used to go over there quite a lot. He had a stove or a bed ~~that way,~~ ^{that way,} I remember, and he was one of the few fellas I can remember. Now he done the same thing! He came and he filed on that and he was there just that one summer and he sold his relinquishment and that was the last we ever heard of him. And if you look at the plaque there of the county of the original homesteaders, his name is on there and so is my mothers. He was right west of us. ~~His name was Hull and somebody took the pains to put~~ ~~the name in where that u was, see? What was his name? I think~~

~~Melvin, Melvin Hull. Somebody put a e in there instead of a u; I can see~~
~~that ^{thing} yet!~~ Everytime I'd go over there, why, the guy lived on beans, beans
 and salt pork. I ~~had~~ ^{had} a little rifle, I have a bin down here. A little
~~rifle I bought that~~ It's an antique now! One of my aunts sent me ~~five~~ ^{\$5.00}
~~dollars~~ for my--let's see, I think I was ¹⁰ years old, ~~ten~~ ¹⁰ or ~~eleven~~ ¹¹. I
 guess about 11. I bought this little--it's a Stevens, ~~Stevens~~ ^{little} Stevens
 rifle, just a little single shot ~~Stevens~~ Stevens Favorite. I bought that for
~~three dollars and a half~~ ^{\$3.50} and, boy, the game that I killed with that thing.
 There was a few ~~snowshoe~~ ^{snowshoe} Rabbits up there. This ~~creek~~ ^{creek} we had had trees all
 along south there and they ran on up into Canada. I would go up into
 Canada there 'cause there's more snowshoes. I'd always bring back three,
 four snowshoes 'cause in those days there's no cattle there, no meat of any
 kind, and it wasn't shipped in in those days! If it was shipped ~~in~~, it
 was salt pork, somethin' like that, and, oh, god, you'd get sick o' that!
 And when I'd shoot a rabbit, boy, that was something! When they ~~break up~~ ^{broke up} the
 land there, there first crop was always flax. ~~And~~ ^A that flax--those darn
 prairie chickens would eat that! They were so fishy we couldn't eat 'em!
 They'd drive you out of the shack when you cook 'em from eating those flax
~~balls!~~ ~~balls!~~ ^{balls!} They'd eat that. But in the summer when they wouldn't
~~eat that~~ ~~eat that~~ ^{eat that} ~~you know~~ ^{stuff,} and they'd eat other things, ~~you know~~ ^W We had a
 wild raspberry patch on one hillside there. I remember my mother canned 30
 quarts of raspberries ^{one} time, wild raspberries ^{one} out there. I'd lay in there
 and those chickens would come in there in the evening--whole flocks of 'em!
 They'd come in there ~~you know~~ and eat those berries and I'd lay there and
 I'd pick 'em through the head--just young ones. Oh, golly, we lived high
 there for awhile when we had that! I gotta tell you ~~On~~ ^{On} my mother's home-
 stead--it wasn't a road. There was a road came off down there and it
 crossed the ~~creek~~ ^{creek--} there was a gravel place there--and the ~~creek~~ ^{creek} made a bend
 like this, ~~see~~ ^{peninsula.} and it made a ~~peninsula.~~ Well, the Indians back in those
 days--the Sioux Indians are related to the ~~Assinboines~~ ^{Assinboines}. They speak the
 same language; ~~maybe you know that?~~

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~~LARRY: No, I didn't~~

~~CHARLES: Well, they do and they call them their cousins, see, but hell~~
~~there the same tribe, but they're their cousins. In those days they didn't~~
~~pay!~~ Those Indians used to come in there sometimes; ~~there'd~~ there'd be as high
 as 200 of 'em at a crack, ~~the~~ the kids, and the dogs and ~~the~~ the Indians! They'd come
 in there with their horses, ~~you know~~ and wagons and there was flowing
 water there and they always camped there. Some mornings, you know, I'd
 wake up early and, oh, God, I'd hear the darnest racket and I knew, by
 golly, ^{that} my Indian friends were down there! I'd get up and dress and I was
 just a kid. I was about ~~12~~ 12, 13 years old then. Down I'd go! And
 they'd come there; generally the same tribe would come up, back and forth.
 I got to know a lot of 'em and I'd play with these kids. They were the only
 kids I had to play with! I got so I could speak Sioux pretty well in those
 days, ~~you know~~ 'cause I was playing with these kids! They couldn't speak
 English and I'd eat with 'em. I'd always wonder; I'd wonder what the heck
 they was gonna eat! You'd never see 'em--and, boy, they got this stuff!
 They'd bring out this pemmican, ~~you know~~ and stuff like that and they
 always had corn and they'd pound that corn up ~~and mix~~ and mix this hash
 up and we'd eat it. ~~And another thing~~ ^{one} one day I was there alone and it was
 in the early spring and I looked down the ^{creek} ~~where~~ where our shack was. It was
 about 50-^{foot} ~~feet~~ down toward ^{where} the ^{creek} ~~creek~~ come around. ~~I~~ I looked down and
 there was an old Indian down there! He had long braids and he was digging
 in the mud! And I says, "Hikuta!" He looked up and he smiled at me and he
 talked ~~a~~ little bit. So I went down around where he was and I asked him
 what he was doing. And he said that years ago he had killed a moose right
 there, ~~so~~ And he says, "Even then it was against the law!" So he says,
 "They took the meat and I took the head and wrapped the hide all around the
 head and sunk it in there." He says, "I'm trying to find it!" He says,
 "I'm trying to find the horns." Gee, I took my pants off and I get in, got
 digging, and, you know, we found it!

~~LARRY: Oh?~~

~~CHARLES~~: By God, we found it! Oh, God, was that a nice one! Everything was gone; meat and everything you know. It was just the skull and its great big horns and that's what he was after. And his name was Walking Cow and everybody called him Bill. And I found out that he lived up in Canada only about six miles and he became one of the best friends I ever had. He taught me more about the love of nature and the wildlife than any person I've ever met! He really adopted me when I was a kid. He'd come down, you know, and mother would come out every once in awhile and she'd bake bread, ~~you know?~~ It seemed like he could smell that six miles away! By God, he'd come down, ~~you know~~, and we'd give him bread. Oh, he'd like that! And when I'd go up there, why, he'd always go with me. See, he had an old muzzle loader! I can see that old muzzle loader, ^{yet,} you know, with black powder and he'd go with me on up to Canada and we'd shoot rabbits together. When he passed away, by gosh, I figured I lost one of the best friends I'd ever had! He died when I was about 18 years old. Course he was quite an old man when I met him; he must have been in his 70's. But, as I say, I learned an awful lot!

P [I remember one day I was trying to pick these darn bull berries, you know, ^{with} ~~and these~~ thorns. I had a cup and I was trying to pick ~~them~~ off and all at once I heard somebody kind of laugh behind me. I looked around, and here was a young sqaw about 18, 19, 20, ~~wasn't she~~ ^{you know.} ~~wasn't she~~ And she laughed at me and she took her blanket off and laid it down there and got a stick and, my God, in two minutes we had a whole pail full, ~~you know.~~ So I learned how to pick bull berries and get 'em fast, see?

~~LARRY~~: Ya.

P ~~CHARLES~~: Things like that! Ya, by golly, when I think back to those days! But, you know, we had a lot of freedom back there that's been taken ^e away from us. ~~man~~ We didn't have much money. We were poor as all get out! We didn't know where our next meal was comin' from, but, by heck, I'm tellin' tellin' you we were contented and we were happy. We didn't have this ~~strain~~ strain, you know, they put on ya ~~there is~~ today! When I stop to think about it, you know--gosh! ~~man~~ I'll tell you another funny thing that happened. I was telling you about these restau-

rants where we'd go in ~~now~~ and get a meal for a quarter. I went into the restaurant; I had to go town. A neighbor come down. His name was Abbott, Frank Abbott, and he wanted to know if I would go to town. He said he couldn't go. He had somethin' to do. So I says, "Sure I'll go." And I had to go in; I had to get some feed ~~I think it was~~ at the elevator. He gave me the team and I drove the team in and I got that. And I remember he gave me a quarter so ~~that~~ I could go in and get my meal. Well, I went into this little restaurant. There was a long building, you know, and they served it ~~lumberjack~~ style, ~~you know?~~ There was a long table and ~~put~~ ^{they} ~~the food~~ ^{Ev all} on and you could help yourself. I ~~sat~~ ^{from me,} right here and right across ~~right~~ ^{from me,} right above, there was a parakeet. That was the first parakeet I'd ever seen in my life! And, oh, that thing! ~~How~~ ^{young,} it hollered and screeched and yelled! And all at once there's a ~~big~~ ^{young,} guy and he come in there. He had a black moustache and a slouchy hat and he had a gun on his side. A lot of 'em wore guns then. He had one, but he was a mean looking cuss--big guy! He ~~sat~~ ^{scat} down and right across from ~~me,~~ ^{me,} see, ~~and~~ ^{with} ~~the~~ ^{bird} thing right over his head hollerin' its head off! And, geez, he looked up at that thing, ~~and~~ ^{and} he couldn't stand it anymore! ~~He~~ ^{me,} got up and he opened the cage and he grabbed that thing. He pulled its head off and threw it down on the floor and said, "There, by God," he says, "maybe we'll have a little piece and quiet around here!" And, you know, I just giggled; that tickled me! My God, how I laughed, but it ~~tickled~~ ^{tickled} everybody ~~too,~~ ^{else,} 'cause ~~it~~ ^{it stopped} that darn yelling, ~~you~~ ^{the cafe,} know? And this guy that owned ~~it~~ he was up there watching and he never said a word! That guy looked so mean! He never opened up his yap at all-- the guy that owned the place! Oh, man! Oh, when I think about the things the happened!

~~now~~ ...

LARRY: Doc, did you spend a lot of time out on the homestead shack by yourself?

CHARLES: Oh, ya! I did; I spent my summers there.

LARRY: Didn't you get kind of lonesome?

CHARLES: No, no, I'm a loner! No, I never get lonesome, no! I'm living

alone now! I lost my wife here from a stroke five years ago and I'm perfectly content. I sit here just day in and day out. They asked me why I don't come down to this Elderly Citizens Club; I've never been there. I have no desire to go there for some reason or another. I'm perfectly contented here. I do spend quite a lot of time East with my ^{other} boy. I went there; I was there most of the summer. He's got a big fishing boat, you know, and he's got government planes and things that his position ^{there} ~~is~~ ~~you~~ know--he can take it around all the time and I go with him.

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LARRY: Did your mother ^{grow to} like that country, Doc? ~~or~~ ~~if~~ ~~she~~ had the money, do you think she ^{would} have gone back to the East?

CHARLES: ^{I don't know;} ~~Well~~ she always seemed to be contented there, I don't know. Gee, when she'd get a little breathing spell, she'd come out to homestead. Now that was the closest running water of any kind and the business people of Portal used to come out there. They'd come out there when I was ~~little~~ there in the summer, you know. They'd come out there on a Sunday. Oh, God, sometimes there'd be ^{25 - 30} ~~men~~ of 'em come out there for a picnic! And they'd bathe because there was good swimming there. There was running water and, God, they'd have picnics and things. That was one place in the whole country that they could do that!

LARRY: That was 13 miles from Portal?

CHARLES: Ya, right straight west.

LARRY: And yet it was still the closest running water?

CHARLES: Ya.

LARRY: I haven't been up there, Doc. Is that barren country? ~~or what?~~

CHARLES: Well, when we was there, it was just barren prairie, you know, but it was all settled up. Now after I came down here we had the ^[to Hazen] ~~depression~~ depression, you know, and we also had a drought through this whole state. It lasted for ¹⁰ ~~ten~~ years! Up at Portal it lasted for 20 years; they didn't even get their seed back. I hadn't been up there for 16 years and when I went up there, I was amazed! That drought ~~ht~~ and the conditions up there had

driven all those people I knew--driven them out of there! There was nobody lived there! It looked like No Man's Land. It had been taken over by the gophers again; there was thousands of gophers! Nobody lived there! Buildings crumbled down and everything. I brought my mother down here, you know, after I came here and I'd been paying taxes on this darn thing. I think it was ~~fifty two~~ ^{\$52.00} dollars a year. It wasn't much; but, my God, ~~fifty two~~ ^{\$52.00} dollars ~~during~~ ^{during} the depression was a lot of money. When I come back, I told mother, "By God, Mother," I says, "I'm not paying taxes on that anymore! You oughta see that country." It was just terrible!

LARRY: When was this that you had gone back up there, Doc?

CHARLES: Well, let's see; the depression was through the '30's. It must have been--I think it was just about after the Second World War that I went up there. ~~and now, I tell you~~ And, man, I tell ~~you~~ ^{ya}! I understand now though that the people have come back in there and resettled that. I 'spose they bought this stuff up for back taxes, you know.