CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE, BAKERSFIELD

CALIFORNIA ODYSSEY
The 1930s Migration to the Southern San Joaquin Valley

Oral History Program

Interview Between

INTERVIEWEE:	J. R. McClintock
PLACE OF BIRTH:	Winnett, Petroleum County, Montana
INTERVIEWER:	Judith Gannon
DATES OF INTERVIEWS:	March 4 and 5, 1981
PLACE OF INTERVIEWS:	Bakersfield, Kern County
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Preface

Mr. McClintock came to California in his early twenties. He was single and traveled with his brother to a relative in the central Valley area. His experience seems to have been far more positive than many. He left the fields shortly after coming to California to go into retail sales work and later into the defense industry. As a hobby, he continues to enjoy gardening and his yard is a tribute to his skill.

Judith Gannon
Interviewer

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INTERVIEWEE: J.R. McClintock (Age: 66)

INTERVIEWER: Judith Gannon

DATED: March 4, 1981

J.G.: This is an interview with Mr. J.R. McClintock for the California State College, Bakersfield CALIFORNIA ODYSSEY Project by Judith Gannon at 2324 Terrace Way, Bakersfield, California on March 4, 1981 at 9:30 a.m.

J.G.: You were talking about moving from Montana to Missouri to your grandparents' home.

McClintock: We moved to my grandparents' home in Missouri which my father and mother bought. I spent my childhood at that location. I went to a one-room schoolhouse where all the grades were taught in one room. I went to high school in Monroe City, Missouri, a town of under 2,000. The first two years of high school we had to pay tuition. There wasn't any free education until my junior year which was very fortunate for myself and other people in the neighborhood because of the Depression years.

J.G.: Can I interrupt you for one second to clarify something. You moved from Montana to Missouri and you stayed there until you graduated from high school?

McClintock: Right.

J.G.: Did your family live on the farm in Missouri?

McClintock: Yes, we lived on the farm, in fact, my mother still does. She is still living in the same general area. A lot of small farms have been swallowed up by large operations, you can't make it on a small farm any more.

During and after high school we'd work at whatever type of work was available for farm people, at the rate of ten cents an hour or ten hours for a dollar a day. Generally, the only work available was

hauling gravel to put on the clay roads. I graduated from high school at age eighteen and went down to St. Louis to try and find something. That was right in the middle of the Depression so there wasn't any work for young people. It was hard enough for adults to support their families in that day and time.

J.G.: Before we go on any further when you went to high school did you have to live away to go to high school or did you drive into town?

McClintock: To go to high school in that area you had to rent a room. You did your own cooking and you were entirely on your own from the age of fourteen. There were no buses. Sometimes you got home on the weekends, but it depended on the weather, because of the mud roads it depended on the conditions.

J.G.: You moved away from home at age fourteen and lived in a room.

McClintock: In a single room. Our ranch was about ten miles from town so I had to live in town. Anybody that lived over two or three miles out in the country had to move into town and rent a room. They were on their own.

J.G.: Tell me a little bit about what life was like for your family on the farm in Missouri at that time. What do you remember of the time before you went away to high school?

McClintock: Basically we were in general farming. We had cattle, sheep and hogs. We raised wheat, oats and corn. When I was in grade school we were milking quite a few head of cattle. We'd have to get up and before school we would milk about twelve cows. It would take us about two hours to do our chores and then we would come in and eat breakfast and then get ready and go to school. The same thing in the evening.

We would start school the first of September and school was out the 15th of April, a fairly short school term, but it was strictly the three R's. It was strictly learning and not very much play. There were no activities whatsoever other than recess and noon. You didn't have anything like recreation.

Summertime was spent harvesting the crops, putting up hay and thrashing. I worked on the old type thrashing machine which had a steam engine and the harvester was called a separator. The wheat would be cut and tied in bundles, then it would be hauled to the machine and thrashed. It depended on the age as to what kind of a job the farm boys would have.

J.G.: Your grandparents owned this farm, right, and your parents helped farm it?

McClintock: No, my father bought the farm from my grandparents, in fact,

my grandmother died when I was very young. I can hardly remember her. My grandfather died within a couple years after my grandmother. He died a couple of years after we came back so we bought the ranch after he passed away.

J.G.: What was your family doing in Montana? What kind of work were they doing?

McClintock: They homesteaded 160 acres out there, green, raw land. It was dry farming. The midwest or the northwest depends entirely on the weather. My father had cattle and built a barn and a house in the eastern part of Montana on the prairie. I remember my father talking about the blizzards. They had to have a wire connected from the house to the barn and the wind was blowing so hard you had to walk leaning against that wire all the time because you could be separated from it and in a blizzard you'd never find your way to the barn or back to the house and that would be fatal.

J.G.: Did times start to get hard in Montana that they decided to move back to Missouri?

McClintock: I don't really remember or know what made them decide to come back to Missouri unless it was the severe winters and the short summers there. My mother's folks were all in Montana, they all went up there together. Why they came back to Missouri I've never heard. They both grew up in that area that they came back to, maybe that is why they wanted to come back. Their memories were better there than what they had found on the homestead in Montana. They came back about 1921. The hard times hadn't started. I would say I was about eleven years old when the real hard times began. The drought, the stock market failing, and hard times which developed in the 1930s.

J.G.: What was your life like on the farm when hard times started? Did you get hit by the drought too or what was that time like?

McClintock: The area we were located in in Missouri is about 20 miles west of the Mississippi River so we were on the far extreme edge of the dust bowl area you might say. Our soil didn't blow away like it did farther west. We did have the drought. The rains stopped in March, maybe we got a few showers in April. I can remember so vividly the corn was about three feet high and by August the fields were absolutely bare. It had dried up and blown away or it fell over and the people had put their stock in there to salvage what little they could. With no rain the pasture land dried up to where it was just brown hills.

We rented whatever land or pasture or brush or whatever was available for our stock. We had a pretty good herd of cattle, but we had to finally sell them.That is when I decided I didn't want to be a farmer. Children are given a cow when they're

farm boys. I sent mine to St. Louis and got $6 for that cow; I decided I didn't want to be a farmer. Some of the neighbors were a little worse, they sent a shipment of hogs to St. Louis and they got a due bill for the freight bill. They didn't receive enough to pay for the freight down there.

J.G.: I've read that one of the things that contributed to many people losing their farms was the extremely high freight rates for shipping grain and cattle and other products. Do you remember your parents ever mentioning anything about that?

McClintock: I don't remember them saying whether they thought the freight rates were high or out of proportion. The freight rate was automatically taken out of your shipment. I just remember the comments, "Well, I didn't even get enough to pay for my freight let alone get anything out of my hogs." Instead of shipping our hogs at 200 pounds, which is normal butchering weight, we ate them when they were under 100 pounds. Living on a farm we were never hungry like the city people. We had all of our meat and vegetables. We were fortunate in that our ranch was well supplied with water. We had natural springs so we never had to import water. They ran all through the drought so our stock had open water both winter and summer. We were very fortunate.

J.G.: How far out in the country did you live?

McClintock: We were about ten miles from this little town where I went to high school and 25 miles from Hannibal, Missouri which is fairly well known because of Mark Twain. We were strictly country people. It was hill type farming. You farmed the creek bottoms and let the grass grow on top of the hills or the soil would wash away or ruin your land when the rains did come.

J.G.: What kind of social activities do you remember being involved in as a youngster?

McClintock: Mostly the social acitivity would start there in country schools. We would have what they would call a pie supper. The women and girls wouldbring either a pie or a box of candy and then the boys would bid on it. That's the way they made their school activity money.

Church was always a gathering point, the school and the church were the two social points. Incidently, the church was donated out of our property and the church is still active today. It is one of the few country churches that is still active today. Individuals were limited to the neighborhood because of the distance, the lack of transportation other than horse and buggy where I grew up.

When I went to high school we got our first car, an old Model T. We would gather in the neighborhood on Sundays, generally, we'd

maybe play cards. We kids all learned how to swim and skate in the wintertime on the ponds or creeks. As we grew a little older fishing in summer and in wintertime. We would hunt and trap. In fact, I made enough money to go through high school by trapping fur bearing animals.

J.G.: Was it unusual for a youngster to go away to high school like you did?

McClintock: No. That was the only way in that part of the country.

J.G.: If you've got a high school education were there more kids that stopped going to school as soon as they finished the grammar school or was it fairly common in the area for the kids to go on to high school?

McClintock: In the first years after I got out of grade school there were very few of them who went on to high school because they had to pay tuition and there just wasn't the money. In 1931, when I started my junior year, Missouri put in a free education and there was a lot of people who were in their twenties that came back to finish. They may have had one year of high school or something like that and dropped out and they came back and finished. There were segregated schools at that time the blacks, Catholics and the rest of the denominations in the three schools in that little town, so when I graduated we actually had the largest class by picking up all of these older children that wanted to finish up their high school.

J.G.: Did you live with another young man in a room or did you live with a family?

McClintock: No, we would just rent a room in an individual private home. I believe we lived in private homes my first two years and then there was kind of an apartment or a bunch of rooms over a commercial building downtown and my brother and I rented one room and three or four other boys rented the other rooms across the hall.

J.G.: How much studying did you get done and how much fooling around did you do with all those youngsters in one place?

McClintock: It was entirely up to the individual. You were on your own. You had nobody to push you so if you wanted an education you stayed with it. There wasn't any dating or social life because I didn't have the money. You had 50¢ a week spending money and that was for a loaf of bread and whatever else that you might want to indulge in with 50¢. I played football the last two years of high school.

J.G.: Did all of your brothers and sisters--I think you said you were a family of seven--did they all go away to high school like you did?

McClintock: My brother that was next to me dropped out in his junior year, the rest of them went through high school. Some of them took business courses or went to college for two years. Two of my brothers went on to become officers in the Air Force.

J.G.: Sounds like your family was pretty education oriented.

McClintock: My mother was the guiding hand there. My dad would have preferred the boys to have gone into farming but my mother sacrificed anything she had to to get us through high school. After high school it was entirely up to the individual. Later on the parents did have enough money to help them a little bit, but my two brothers that went through junior college stayed with my sister in Los Angeles. She was married and financially able to give them a place to stay while they went to college for two years. I expect she helped them monetarily too.

J.G.: In 1933 after you graduated from high school when you went to St. Louis to look for work, were times on the farm getting harder?

McClintock: Yes it was, the drought had been going on for quite some time and the economy was hitting bottom in 1934 when Roosevelt came in.

J.G.: Did your parents have any involvement that you remember with Roosevelt's policies?

McClintock: The WPA [Works Progress Administration]?

J.G.: Not necessarily the WPA, that too later, but the Roosevelt program where the farmers were paid for not raising a crop?

McClintock: They were paid not to produce crops or cut down on their herds of either hogs or cattle. We were in the production of hogs and we only had two or three sows for breeding purposes and, I think, we cut off one. That's kind of faint, but we didn't go into the land bank or anything like that because most of our land was in hay which we had to have for our livestock. We were using horses, we didn't have any tractors, so we had to have enough hay to carry all of our livestock through the winters.

J.G.: It sounds like when times were really bad in those years your family was a self-sufficient unit. They pretty much could raise what they needed, although they may not have had much actual cash money, as far as living they were able to pretty much live the same way that they'd always lived.

McClintock: Pretty well. Our mortgage wasn't held by the banks which had to foreclose on so many of the farms. It was held by a neighbor and he was very generous in that he just let things drift. The

fact that the children got to be fed and what would he do with all this land. This was true until his son got married. I didn't know it until years later, but when Dad bought another fifty acres the landlord said, "I want this for my son to farm." I didn't know it until I was in California for maybe ten years before I knew that he asked for it. My mother didn't even know it. She thought my dad had just decided to sell it back to him, but it was actually he wanted to voluntarily repossess it say or foreclose on it. I don't know any of the circumstances or the financial arrangements of it. For years I thought we came through it without any loss, but I found out later it was a different story.

In order to meet our financial arrangements, we would grow chickens and kill them or churn cream make butter, anything that we could take into Hannibal and sell house to house. We could make more that way than selling it to the produce houses and letting them process it.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

McClintock: In fact, for two years, 1934 and 1935, I made maple syrup. It is quite a process to make maple syrup. You have to have a hard maple tree and in January, before the snow is off the ground you drill holes into the trees and put in what you call a spiral to drain the water out of the tree into a bucket. Then you have to go from tree to tree generally on a north slope because the snow stays there longer. It's also icier so it's harder work to carry it. I would tap as many trees as there was available. It takes fifty gallons of water of maple water to make a gallon of maple syrup. So I carried all this water from these trees to where I had the kettles to boil it down. You had to cut the wood and haul it up there and keep the fire going and boil all this water down. The first year I made fifty gallons of syrup so I carried a few gallons of water around on the side of that hill. I sold that for 50¢ a quart. You can't even buy a little bottle of syrup for that these days. I did that two springs. One time when we took some of it to Hannibal we got caught in a snow storm coming back driving. You couldn't see. The only thing I could see was the trees on both sides of the highway so I put my car in the middle of that open space and you drove home. It was just a case of learning how to survive under most adverse conditions.

J.G.: About how old were you when you did this?

McClintock: I was nineteen and twenty the years I made the maple syrup, just before I started to California.

J.G.: You mentioned earlier that you went to St. Louis to look for work. How did you get enough money to make that trip?

McClintock: Well, I was never out of work. Some of the farmers around

there had to have some help. I put up hay or thrashed wheat, cultivated corn, general farm work.

I loved to hunt and trap varmints in the wintertime, coon and mink were good fur bearing animals and it was a challenge to be able to out smart these animals and make them step in a trap. So I'd saved enough to go to St. Louis. I had enough to last a year when we came to California.

J.G.: Sounds like you did okay with your trapping.

McClintock: It was a challenge between the different boys in the neighborhood who could develope this trapping sense. Some varmints are extremely intelligent. A fox, I never could outfox him.

J.G.: That must be where "smart as a fox" comes from, or "sly as a fox."

McClintock: That's very true. There were wolves coming into the neighborhood at that time and some of the older neighbor fellows would specialize in that end of it. It takes experience to learn how to get into these areas.

J.G.: What kinds of work did you look for when you went to St. Louis?

McClintock: Well, you looked for almost anything. Only things that turned out to be available was commissioned door-to-door selling. I was too young and had no experience for any other type of job. I went down to a Chevrolet factory one time and there were people lined up for I would say miles and they were hunting for some older people that had experience. A young person had no chance at all.

J.G.: That would have been in 1933, 1934 something like that?

McClintock: That would be 1934, if I remember right. I stayed around there, I believe, three months and was just using my cash so I decided that I might as well go back up to where I could pick up farm work. I tried to get on the Missouri Highway Patrol. I had good references, but I was too young. The superintendent of schools at the Missouri state capital, Jefferson City, was the principal of our high school but he said you're a year too young to be considered so I gave that up.

J.G.: So what made you decide, choose California of all places in the United States?

McClintock: That is a little bit funny. I decided in one hour to come to California. My brother who is a couple years younger than I am said, "I'm going to California." He'd bought an old 1928 Buick. I just came back from St. Louis and had a little bit of my wandering out of my system, but Mama said, "I want you to go

with him." That quick I decided to come to California. My brother had already made up his mind so that's the way we started for California.

J.G.: You went in the car that he had bought.

McClintock: Yes. We had an old 1928 Buick so we started out west on Highway 36. We were going to sleep in the car. We'd fixed a board which we could lay across and sleep right in the car, but we hadn't got a hundred miles from home when it started raining. It was equinox and the first three nights we drove in the rain heading toward the Rockies. We got into Denver about four o'clock in the afternoon. We'd counted on staying there but we decided it's no use wasting so many hours so we decided to drive on through Denver and hit the mountains. The storm was coming down off of the mountains. That was the first time I ever hit fog and it about scared us to death. We got up to Idaho Springs, we stopped for the night and the next morning there was about four inches of snow on the ground. We decided that night we'd better check some of our clothes in our suitcases and we found out they were wet so we had to dry all our clothes out that night. We got up the next morning and headed over Berthoud Pass and the old car didn't act too good so I set out on the fender going over this pass and kept jiggling the carburetor and the fuel line. The pass is 12,000 feet so it was kind of a joke to us that we goosed it over the Continental Divide. To save gas when we would go down an incline we would turn off the ignition put it in neutral and let 'er roll. We made pretty good mileage.

J.G.: You decided to stay in motels then?

McClintock: We had decided to stay in motels. It was just too wet until we got to the desert. We paid a dollar a night for a motel, but we decided to stay in motels from then on for sleeping on a straight board was not quite as soft as we'd been used to. Anyway we headed on across, the tires were fairly smooth so we thought we'd go as far as we could. Coming down into Salt Lake City off of the mountains, we blew our first tire so we went into Salt Lake and found a tire shop. There had been a wreck of this model and we were really fortunate to get two new tires from it for I believe, $10 or something like that. We headed out across the Great Salt Lake and decided we'd better fill up with gas before we started across there because that's over 100 miles and we didn't think there would be any filling stations. Our tank was fairly full and we pulled up to this gas station and they wanted 25¢ a gallon for gas and that's just too much. We only put in four gallons. We thought after we got across the desert gas would be cheaper. So we headed on across and we were looking at the map and decided we'd like to see Yosemite Park. So we went across on Highway 40 to Wendover and headed towards Ely, Nevada. We would take the shortest route. We hit a road that cut across from what is now

Highway 395, I'm not sure of that, but there was a road showing that we could save about 40 miles if we cut across this area. We got up in there in the mountains and there wasn't any road there, just pine needles in the trail where farmers or ranchers were cutting across so we came on down into Lee Vining on October 1. A storm was moving into California that night and it rained pretty hard there in the mountains.

We never went to a restaurant. We carried crackers, cheese, bread, that's what we ate all the way across. We were seven days coming across. We started over Tioga Pass and came down to the turnoff and there was a log laying across the road. It didn't look too big so I got out of the car and threw the log out of the way and started up climbing to the pass. Rocks had come down during the night so we stopped and threw the rocks out of the road and kept working our way across the top. We got up to the ranger station and that said, STOP so we stopped. We looked around, walked into the ranger station. There wasn't anybody there so we got back into the car and started down. We got a hundred yards down the road and heard somebody yelling from the side of the mountain. Here the ranger came running and said, "What are you guys doing up here?" "We're going across to Yosemite." He says, "Well, the road's closed." I said, "Well, I guess you're going to get business then because we opened it, threw the rocks and logs out of the road." We went on down into Yosemite and they had a really heavy storm that night we got up on top. There was construction of the new highway coming down into the valley and hail stones were all over, piled up against everything. We were talking to a foreman of the construction gang who said that the hail that night had beat the car roofs completely through. We got down into Yosemite and stayed around there as long as we could. We headed toward Merced and the old car konked out up there and we couldn't get it started again and a fellow stopped and pushed us all the way into Merced. I can't remember what it was, a condenser or something. The next morning we put it in ourselves and came on down to Fresno. I had an uncle in Layton which is outside of Hanford. That's where we first stopped when we got to California.

J.G.: You said your brother had decided that he wanted to come to California. What did he think if was going to be like? Why this desire for him to leave Missouri and go to California?

McClintock: I have no idea. We never discussed it. He just wanted to come. There was no reason or anything like that . We didn't write and tell our uncle that we were coming. In fact, we only wrote one letter the night we hit that fog and clouds in Denver. We just said, "We're someplace west of Denver and haven't got any idea where." That's the only card we sent back to our parents. About two or three weeks my aunt got a letter that two tender feet had headed towards California and we haven't heard from them and

we wonder if they got there."

J.G.: Had you heard in Missouri these glowing tales of how much money could be made in California or anything like that?

McClintock: No, nothing whatsoever. We had an uncle out here who had a boy and a girl. The boy was a couple years older than I am and the girl was a year younger. We just decided we wanted to come across the country, I guess.

J.G.: Just an adventuresome spirit.

McClintock: We had no fear of going anyplace or doing anything. We had lived on our own since we were fourteen and it didn't bother us whatsoever.

J.G.: So we've got you now to your uncle's place in Hanford. What happened after that? What was the first kind of work that you did?

McClintock: They had just picked their grapes. He had a general California small farm. He had his grapes on paper and wood trays and the rain had wrecked his paper trays so we helped him turn them. That was the first thing we started was in grapes. My cousin was over in Watsonville picking apples so my aunt wrote and told him we were here and he wrote back and said, "Come on over. They're picking apples. You can work along with us." We stayed at my uncle's about a week until we got the work that he had to do finished so he wouldn't have to hire anybody. We headed over to Watsonville. and got there in the afternoon and went over to Santa Cruz. It was the first time I'd ever been to an amusement park of anything like you have there on the boardwalk. On Monday morning we went back to Watsonville and the cousin went to the foreman and told him that we were from Missouri and that we were staying with him and we'd like to pick apples. He said, "Okay. You've never done this kind of work and very likely you won't make very much, we'll pay you by the box." I forgot what he told us he would pay us. We figured that sounds pretty good so my brother and I hit the ladders and we made more the first day than anybody else in the picking field because we worked. They set and smoked or ate an apple and we'd just be pulling apples off into these big bags and we thought that was wonderful. I think we made $6 or $7 that first day and that was a whole week's wages in one day. We picked till the apples were through and then we picked tomatoes two or three days. Everything was through and so we came back to my uncle's house. It was November so there wasn't much to do there until January. My uncle needed his orchard pruned. He had apricots and grapes so he taught us how to prune trees and particularly grapes. That's when we got our first job away from the ranch. At Hanford there was a vineyard of about 160 acres called American Investment Corporation. We didn't tell the foreman we were from Missouri, we told them we worked over in Hanford so he hired us to prune grapes. His name was Joe Miller and he was a real

good fellow. He didn't have to watch us for more than one day to know that we didn't know too much about pruning grapes. Most of the pruners were Chinese, a whole crew that they'd brought out. It really kept us going to keep up with them and prune them right because if you don't prune the grapevine right you cut the crop 50% so you had to learn real fast how to spot the ones that have fruit bearing canes instead of suckers. We worked there for I think it was either two or three years in the pruning and typing season.

That's where I learned how to drive a Caterpillar tractor. Midsummer when there wasn't anything to do we went out on the west side and hauled barley and wheat out of the fields. It was in sacks, and in Missouri we'd used all bulk. It was really a new experience. You had to learn how to load a truck from the ground piling a 100 pound sack five high on a truck. You had to learn the technique of it.

J.G.: In the middle of summer in Hanford I imagine that was not an easy job.

McClintock: We were used to working in the sun all day. It didn't bother us whatsoever, in fact, I'd worked in higher heat than what's here in California when we were in Missouri hauling gravel. I worked on a gravel bar in the summertime during drought where there wasn't any shade. We had the thermometer hanging under a little sycamore tree out on the gravel bar. The day before the drought broke it hit 130° out on that gravel bar that day and we worked right through it. Heat didn't bother us. We were used to it and we were young, strong and healthy, didn't bother at all. In fact, work habits proved very successful to us in later years with knowing how to work and get production or something accomplished.

J.G.: So during those couple of years after you first arrived your work kept you pretty much right around the Hanford area. You didn't go out and follow the crops elsewhere.

McClintock: No, we stayed right in that area. If we'd run out of work in the vineyards, there was a golf course right there we'd run up to and caddy. In Hanford my brother went to work in one of the dime stores. I worked at Montgomery Wards in the Christmas season. We always had work of some kind. We never ran out of money or had to write home or anything like that. We went on our own and we stayed on our own.

J.G.: Did you stay with your uncle during that time?

McClintock: No. Maybe two, three or four months between Watsonville and the American Investment Corporation. They had a big bunkhouse. We stayed there till I went to Fresno and worked for Montgomery Wards. I worked at Wards for two Christmas seasons and the second

one I went on steady and stayed there.

J.G.: What year would that have been?

McClintock: The first time was 1936 and in 1937 is when I started full-time.

J.G.: During this time when you were working in the fields, working in the grapes, do you remember anything about attempts to organize the workers?

McClintock: No, never approached for anything like that whatsoever. I just don't believe there were any attempts whatsoever at organizing. It was way into the future when that started. There just wasn't union activities whatsoever.

J.G.: It sounds like as far as your experience goes that you felt that you were treated pretty well by the grower. They gave you a place to live.

McClintock: Well, they offered us 25¢ an hour and we'd been working for 10¢ and they were working eight hours a day and we told him we'd been used to working ten if he didn't care we'd work ten for another 5¢ that day. We thought we had it made, that was two and a half times what we had been making back home. We were well satisfied with it.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

J.G.: The book, The Grapes of Wrath, was written right around this time, it showed the lives and the conditions under which the people that were working the fields lived and it was not very pretty. Did you ever see any of those kinds of conditions?

McClintock: No. Learning what happened later we were very fortunate. The ranch where we went to work, American Investment Corporation, had this big bunkhouse. We had to clean it up and scrub it down for it hadn't been used for quite some time, but they gave us this room. Joe Miller and his wife were a young couple. They were of German descent and there was no way that you could have found anybody that was any better. He bought a ranch in Dinuba and when I was working in the Fresno store he would come in and we always kept in touch. We saw none of this real hardship or living on a canal bank. I never even knew about anything like that until years later when I began to read about it.

J.G.: Did you ever hear about the government camps that the federal government built for the migrants to live in?

McClintock: Not until years later.

J.G.: It sounds like you had quite an experience.

McClintock: To me we didn't know anything different. We had been used to what we called hard times and hard work and knowing how to get something accomplished. To reminisce a little more, when we hauled gravel on those clay roads back home, there were four of us who would scoop this gravel by hand and there were five days one week where we loaded 25 tons of gravel per man a day. We knew how to work. We were paid by the yard we were scooping and we went to work before daylight and got home after dark so we were used to it.

J.G.: So as far as your experience is concerned, life doesn't sound like it was as hard in California as it was in Missouri.

McClintock: Not nearly as hard. We were making two and a half times as much wages and we had worked most all of the time. There might be a month or two in the dead of winter when it would rain that we wouldn't do anything, but we had enough money to go to the dances and shows, whatever we wanted to do. We saw what we would call no hardships whatsoever.

J.G.: What about your uncle and his vineyard at that time? Did he have any labor problems or any difficulties getting people to work for him? Do you remember him talking about that?

McClintock: No, he only had less than 100 acres so he could take care of it himself. He had a few cows that he milked, apricots, grapes, a little grain and a little cotton. It was a farm area and generally there was some neighborhood boy that he could get when he needed help. Basically, the only help that he needed, as I remember, was when he dried his apricots. He would have to have a crew when they were cutting the apricots, putting them on the trays and drying them and there were enough local boys and girls that they were glad to get a little summer work. He had no problem of getting the help that he wanted when he needed it.

J.G.: You mentioned earlier when I asked you about some of Roosevelt's policies the WPA, and you were kind of smiling when you said it. I wondered what you were thinking.

McClintock: Well, we had been graveling these roads. When the WPA came in they said they would figure out who got the jobs. They decided this would all be paid through the WPA. We used a number two scoop to scoop gravel, that's how we could load a three-yard truck in only five minutes. When the WPA came in they took what we call a number two shovel, not a scoop, and it would take them an hour to load the truck. The owner of the truck had to make so many trips a day to pay for his truck. He was using the scoop and he figured that he was loading seven-eighths of the load and getting nothing out of it. He finally just quit and let them

load the truck completely.

My dad never did go on the WPA, therefore, I couldn't work on a truck like that. But on a holiday, WPA would take every holiday off and weekends. This neighbor that owned the truck would come by and get us and we would work on Saturday, Sunday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years. He would make as much in those two days that he would make all week because we would get in and get the truck loaded. We understood his circumstances. He was supporting a family of seven or eight. Their mother and father had separated so we understood that he had to make enough or he couldn't keep the truck or make his payments. That's why WPA to me is a lot like the other government-type jobs, it's a waste of money. To me that's where a lot of the "give me" started right there. People just simply don't know how to do a day's work and get something done. In fact, they're saying now that the production of the American worker has dropped so that we're in the trouble we're in right now.

J.G.: This WPA experience would have been what, about 1934, before you came to California?

McClintock: Right, 1934, was the year and the first part of 1935.

J.G.: What did you think of Roosevelt and his policies to try to get the country out of the Depression?

McClintock: Well, he tried. Some of his policies I don't care for now. I thought they were good then. I thought the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] was one of the best things. I would have loved to have gotten into that and come to the mountains of the west Rockies or to the Sierra Nevadas and worked there. The CCC was in our neighborhood and was exactly what I was doing on the ranch, cutting our fence rows, the brush and stuff like that. I was already doing that on the farm, so it didn't have any enticement for me to go to somebody else's farm when our own needed that work. At that time I approved of everything Roosevelt did. My parents blamed Hoover for everything and, of course, I followed along in those areas, but even then, as young as I was, I could see some of it that I didn't like. For example, the work that was going on right there, they got nothing done. It was too much the handout.

To go back a little bit more, when I was in St. Louis, it really didn't hit me how bad times were until I went door-to-door selling. I knocked on this door and it happened to be at noon. The door opened and the family asked me to come in. They had boxes, orange crates, a loaf of bread and some cheese. That's all they had in the house to eat. It really came through to me having all we wanted to eat everyday on the ranch, that there were some people who were really desperate and programs that started did get these people back to work.

J.G.: So you didn't see this kind of desperation in your travels or in

the time that you were in California?

McClintock: We didn't get into any of these areas where it was so bad. I heard about it later. In the Hanford area it was good.

J.G.: No ditch camps around Hanford or government camps or anything like that?

McClintock: Not that I ever knew of.

J.G.: Tent cities?

McClintock: Not that I ever knew of.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1

Session Two March 5, 1981

J.G.: We had gotten as far as Hanford and you had started to work for Montgomery Wards. At that point I think you said you worked one season at Christmas time and then you went to work full-time.

McClintock: I started out part-time just to fill in in the dead winter months then the next Christmas season I decided I would rather work inside where it was warm and steady, but it took me a year or more until it was. During the slack periods I'd be laid off for a week or two which was unsettling. I finally went to work with Wards full-time in the Fresno store. I worked there five years until World War II.

I left Wards and went to Lockheed to work in the defense plants. I had tried to get in the Air Force, but there had been a mix-up at the draft board and I never did go check out to see what it was so I went with Lockheed and was with them until the end of the war.

J.G.: That would have been 1944, 1943 or something like that when you started with Lockheed?

McClintock: It was 1941 when they hit Pearl Harbor. I started in 1942 in the spring. My brother was already overseas and I got a letter telling me that this is going too long and it's not going to be pretty. I started at Lockheed. I was sent to different plants. I was actually away from home longer than my brother-in-law in the Air Force, he was in the training command. During the two and a half years I was at Lockheed I was gone a full year so I knew something of the separation of the family and what other boys were going through. I was a little older, married and had a daughter. The government was calling for planes as fast as we could put them out. We were putting out four B-17s a day and 21 P-38s a day. I was supervising and never did get in the service.

J.G.: What kind of work were you doing with them?

McClintock: All types of sub-assembly work, building on outlaying plants, sending the parts to Burbank to be assembled into the final complete planes. I worked on the B-17s, the P-38s and PV2. When we were called we never knew where we were going or how or when we would be gone. One experience was just before D-Day in Europe, we had transferred sub-assembly of the P-38 to Akron, Ohio to be assembled there in the Goodyear plant. The planes were then sent back to Burbank. A whole train load that was rejected by the Air Force, they didn't know what they were going to do to them so we were put on stand-by to maybe fly to Akron, but the planes were already on the west coast. So they brought them to Fresno and we worked as long as we could stay awake. I have seen boys sitting there and go to sleep and drill right through their hand. We were working such long hours. We didn't know it at the time but D-Day was approaching.

Another time they needed the patrol plane, PV2, in the Pacific. They had trouble at the Santa Barbara plant and told us to be ready to leave in half an hour, but we had to be there the next morning for they needed this equipment.

J.G.: So you were in charge of assembling or supervising part of the assembly of the airplane?

McClintock: We were called section supervisors. You had a crew working under you. This is why the plants were diversified. They couldn't get help. They had scraped the manpower barrel in the Los Angeles-San Diego area and had to go out into the San Joaquin Valley to get people to build the planes. The supervisory capacity was just like any other group. You had to keep your assembly line production going. Later on as we would consolidate with the experience I had and went into what we call salvage. We checked any plane or parts that were damaged but still could be salvaged. This would take more experienced people, people who were mechanically inclined to repair this plane, to have it ready to go back onto the assembly line.

J.G.: Where did you meet your wife during this time?

McClintock: I met my wife in Hanford. She is a native of the San Joaquin Valley. I don't remember what year it was, but I met her at a dance one night. We were married in Hanford and by the time that the war came we had a daughter about one year old. She had never been out of the Valley so it was quite an experience to take somebody out of the Valley and to the east. She didn't know that California had a desert on the other side of this mountain range.

J.G.: If you think back, do you remember your uncle or the local people in Hanford showing any concerns or apprehensions about the people that were migrating to California during that time?

McClintock: I don't remember any of that concern. I guess looking back on it and reminiscing that it wasn't a problem in that area. It was more of a new, raw land out there. There wasn't the crops and things. A lot of it was still green, dry farming. It just hadn't been developed at that time like the Arvin or land close to the Sierra Nevadas range. That land had already been developed because it was closer to the water supply. On the west side it had to be developed as canals brought water into the area so they could have other than dry farming.

J.G.: So when you married your wife you were still working for Montgomery Wards?

McClintock: I had been working for Montgomery Wards a year or so by that time and we went to Fresno.

J.G.: The Lockheed plant was in Fresno also?

McClintock: Lockheed plant that I was at was in Fresno. They had two plants there and I worked in both of them. Then I was in Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara. Generally, we would be going after a new assembly part. They would send the supervisors down to learn this new assembly part at that plant and bring back a crew or then train them when we got back to the other plants.

J.G.: So how long did you continue to work for Lockheed?

McClintock: I was two and a half years with Lockheed, till the end of the war.

J.G.: Then what happened?

McClintock: Then I went back to Montgomery Ward in Fresno. I worked in the hardware department and then I was made a department manager in the paint department in less than a year. Then I was transferred to Madera as assistant manager. I was there, I believe, nine months then transferred to Porterville for thirteen months and then was transferred to Visalia for about nine months, and San Jose and then to Bakersfield where I spent the rest of the time until I retired from Wards.

J.G.: Did you move your family with you each time you got transferred?

McClintock: The family was young. The daughter had just started school and this is why we quit. We just couldn't be moving every nine months. We thought it would be better to stabilize the residence in one place where they could have their schooling and friends and things like that. It would be better for them in the long run.

The management end of it was up and down for the Korean War, it was kind of a Recession, and things were on the rough side, you had to play too much politics.

J.G.: What made you choose Bakersfield after having lived in all those different towns?

McClintock: It was where there was an opening and I could get something that I could see a future in. Basically, that was what it was, a large enough store that you could build a future with.

J.G.: What made you decide to go back to Montgomery Wards after having worked in Lockheed for those two and a half years?

McClintock: Well, I had gotten into the electrical end of it before the war and I could have gone with Standard Oil but after the end of the war they offered several of us at the Lockheed plant to go with them but we would have had to have gone to Venezuela. Being young it just didn't appeal to me to be separated from the family for a long period of time. Also, we were guaranteed our jobs back after the war, if you were in a defense plant or in the military, so I just went back to it.

J.G.: You had three children?

McClintock: Two.

J.G.: Do they live here in Bakersfield?

McClintock: No, my daughter is in San Bernardino. She is an LVN and my son is in Stockton. He's a computer analyst with Diamond Sun Sweet. They both have pretty good jobs. My daughter wants to go on and get her RN but the inflation and things like that are making it rough for her too to keep her family going because she's separated.

J.G.: So you and your wife came to Bakersfield about the time your kids started school and settled.

McClintock: We came here in 1950. Come to think about it it was ten years before we got the new store for we moved over there in 1960 and then I moved into a building of my own in 1970. I had the garden shop, the only one in the country that was an individual building and store of its own. I was supposed to have retired in 1980, but some things have been developed in the company. Mobil had taken over Montgomery Ward and they had dropped the retirement age so you could retire at 62 with full benefits so I retired at 63. Now there have been a lot more restrictions put on which I figured so it turned out right.

J.G.: So now you keep yourself occupied with your beautiful backyard and garden.

McClintock: I worked the Census Bureau. They don't have an organization really to build from and I thought my experience of handling

people would be beneficial. I worked in the field and I got to travel. I drove about 10,000 miles in four or five months. It was interesting seeing what's going on on the byways and oil fields. I enjoyed it very much.

J.G.: And your wife, I think you said is working for CALCOT?

McClintock: She works for CALCOT. She is on her 25th year now. She is in the cotton export end of it. She's classified as a consultant of foreign documentation. Right now China is the big customer who's buying most of the cotton.

J.G.: It seems like we've kind of covered your life.

McClintock: We're up-to-date now.

J.G.: Is there anything that you have thought of while you were reminiscing or any area that I haven't covered that you would like to mention?

McClintock: I can't think of anything. We've jumped back and forth in several places, but nothing more comes to attention right now.

END OF INTERVIEW

INDEX