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He would come into the store once a week. Once in a great while he'd come in twice, but mostly once a week. We couldn't get this special bread that he liked. Wheatberry bread.

So I'd get it in town and bring it to the store, sometimes

I'd forget it and he'd just scold me a little bit. Of course

I know he didn't mean it. But he still didn't like to be

around people too much. If he got any mail or anything

he'd stop and tell Ronnie, the butcher, what he wanted, then

he'd walk on to the post office. He bought practically the

same thing every week. Stew meat, cheese, and liver. Then

when he started having a few problems, then he started getting

granola, but for some reason that didn't agree with him.

(I know. He told me that. He ended up giving it to the

thresh he called Hugo.) If we happened to be out of stew

meat he'd get gamburger. He'd just put it close to the

creek there, or else he'd go ahead and cook it. That way it

wouldn't spoil as fast. (I used to take canned meats to him

because I didn't know how he could keep fresh. . .) (So

how long did you know Bert?) I've worked in the store now

about five years. Before Bert lived there, there was another

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man who used to live down there. I was raised in Oceano.

I got married and moved away and we didn't move up here 'til 1960. After the store couldn't get the bread he wanted, I'd pick it up and bring it to the store and put it in the freezer for him. I was back and forth all the time and it wasn't out of my way. He was always nice to me. He was always going to do my horoscope. But since I didn't know the day and time, he was never able. He didn't seem to like the telephone very well. So I would dial for him, he couldn't hear too well, then he'd talk to one of his astronomy friends, there at the store. I'd get the number for him . . . what's that little boy's name, that had the problem with his growth? That played with Matthew? (Did Bert seem to want to talk and visit when he came to the store? Did he seem lonely to you?) No. He didn't like people when he was in the store. If somebody came in, he wanted to get out right away. When nobody was there he would talk to me for awhile, you know. But if he got a letter, he'd sit in the back and all, because already this past year, he'd get so tired just walking to the store, he had to stop coming twice, he'd only come once. He'd be so

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so sweaty and so he'd rest. Then he'd get his things. He always brought a string with him and we'd put it in a box just right - a long, narrow box, so he could slip it into his sack because he'd always stop at the sheds and get vegetables too. (Did he do his shopping very much toward the last?)

No. Harold, I think, got quite a bit toward the last for him.

After he had that fall in the creek it really got bad for him.

After that he kept getting more pain. And he would take

Tylenol because there were somethings he didn't want to take,

naturally. It was quite expensive, so I picked him some up

at the drugstore that was a larger bottle. But then he got

where it didn't do any good, I don't think, so he figured it

wasn't good for him and he quit taking it. He kept putting

off going to the doctor; he said it wasn't in his stars.

I'd say, "Now Bert. . ." I kind of argued with him one day

because I thought if they could help him at all he should go.

He'd say, "Do you think I should go?" And I'd say, "Yes,

Bert, I think you should." Harold was very good about taking

him around and everything. He just went so fast. (Did you

know anything about his childhood?) No. I don't know a thing.

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Dorothy Montgomery might be able to help you a little bit.

See, they used to take groceries down to him when he wouldn't

come out at all. They'd take sacks of potatoes and a bunch

of groceries down to him. She knows more about him a long

time ago. Dorothy has said that he came over and he had a

pretty tough time. (You mean when he came over from Holland?)

Yes. Bert often spoke of another man that used to live out

there somewhere. He's in a mental institution now. . .

(Did you get the impression that he was poor?) Yes. Very

definitely. His Social Security check was not very much and

I often wondered how he managed. But then his needs were so

small. I don't know if he did any~~XX~~ fishing or anything. .

I Just figured, well, he's just making do with what he's got.

Like most of us try to do anyway. As far as anything worldly,

he didn't seem interested in that. (Did you know about the

will?) I know now, but I never knew. Never in my life did

I imagine. . . I would even be mentioned. . .I learned about

it in a letter in the mail. I didn't get to see him as much

as I would have liked to. I went over to the Convalescent

Hospital -- I don't know why, but I thought that's where he

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was and they tried to find him and finally called the hospital.

But I had to get home because of the children so I went back

the next day. I saw him, but he was so much doped up that

-- he recognized me though -- I was real glad that he did.

He knew that I had been there. I went back one other time

and he was sleeping and I -- he would come and go -- and I

talked to one of the nurses and she said he would just go

back and forth like that so . . . then, before you know it,

he was gone. (Do you have any personal stories about things

that would happen in the store?) Oh gosh. He would come in

and tell Ronnie what he wanted. Then he'd say, "Did you hear

what I wanted? Did you write it down?" Ronnie would say,

"Yeah, I know, I know it," so he'd go up to the post office

because when he came back he wanted to have his stuff already

so he could leave. Soon as somebody would come into the store

he was ready to leave. Well maybe he never used to be quite

so bad, because I never -- I got the impression that he didn't

like to be around people at all, that yet when all those people

came to the service I was so surprised that he knew so many

people. Here all the time I thought he was such a recluse

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and all the time he wasn't. But then he was awfully interested in astrology and that made him a lot of friends, too.

(If you were to describe Bert as you saw him, how would you do that? As what kind of a man?) To me he was always friendly enough. But he would never ask about me or my life, you know.

(Did many people in the community know him?) I don't believe so unless they were interested in astrology. A lot of people didn't even know that place was down there. Unless you were raised in the community you wouldn't know those places were out there. (Were you ever at the shack before the service?)

No. That was the only time I was ever there. I know, he never invited me down, but there was another lady that was come into the store and she heard him talking about somebody SHE knew and she asked, "Oh, are you Bert?" And he said, "Yes." She was interested in astrology, too, so he asked if she could go see him and he was quite cordial to her and he told her to just come so far and then call and he would come. So he could be very congenial and friendly. When he came in the store it usually seemed like he was just in one big hurry to get out and be by himself. Up until those last

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He was in pain all the time then. He just couldn't get around at all. It was terrible. He THOUGHT he had just bruised his hip, you know. Then when he didn't get any better, he started losing weight. (Was he still coming to the store when he was losing weight?) Yes. He would still walk to the store. He'd be sopping wet with sweat though and he would be so pale. (What did you value most about Bert?) I don't know. I always looked forward to having him come in. I always worried about him, cause if he didn't show up I'd start worrying about him. I called Harold when I first found out he was so sick, and he went and checked on him. Idt was always just nice to have him come in and hear what he'd been doing. He didn't talk a heck of a lot; he just got what he wanted and out the door he went.

I remember Dorthy saying, whose that man, Angus Crites, well, HIS FATHER ksed to come up here and Bert took care of his place and he worked for him for years (Three generations) I think maybe Mr. Crites' father left him something. . .

(Did you know of his interest in the stock market?) Yes, I did.

(How?) Dorothy. She told me he was interested and that he used

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(And did she think he had good judgment?) Oh yes, Definitely.

He had stocks in the May Co or one of those big dept store chains.

I never dreamed he'd EVER do something like leave money to me.

And that much. . . I just never dreamed he would bother

inviting people in. I had just gotten a different impression

up until those last days when I'd hear him talking to people

and then I realized he wasn't as much of a hermit as I thought

he was. He just never talked about himself EVER. (Did he

often meet people he knew when he was in the store?) No,

and I was quite surprised when -- Lovern's they have a store

down on the beach there -- and they did not know him. He

would not go into any other store. He just came into ours.

Seems to me his Social Security was around \$87 -- between

\$70 and \$80. Maybe \$88. Then when groceries started going

up a lot he was always worried about his nutrition; it was

hard for him to choose. But he would get what he wanted and

then when he was having trouble with his bowels he would ask,

well what should I use? This, that, and the other, but

he couldn't see too well so he would always ask me to get

the change out. He would keep the least amount of change



he could. I guess he was afraid he'd lose it. I don't think it was ever over ten dollars. Then he'd tell me he wanted some seeds or something, herbs to try to grow. But they never seemed to do anything. (Did he buy lots of starchy things and canned goods?) No. Definitely not. Fresh meat, granola, eggs once in awhile, not every week, but once in awhile, cheese and the meat, (Did your kids know Bert?) No. they never met him. (Did he ever give you advice?) Never. He'd come in and say the moon was right, or Gemini was in the right spot, or whatever, but I didn't believe any of that, which didn't seem to bother Bert any, that I didn't. I always listened to him, whatever he had to say, you know. I'd joke around with him and all, but sometimes when he would come in I realized he was in a lot of pain. I didn't know very much about Bert. I just helped him with his groceries and that was about it. (Did he ever send you money for helping him?) No. He knew better. (Someone took him a transistor radio and he wrote him and told him he was pretty chesty to do that -- his way of saying he was puffed up with pride, I guess.)