

FSA Photograph by Arthur Rothstein

Missoula (vicinity), Montana
July [18], 1936



From Rothstein's original caption –
“Vernon Evans with his family of Lemmon, South Dakota, on Highway 10, left the grasshopper-ridden and drought stricken area for a new start in Oregon or Washington. They expect to arrive at Yakima, Washington, in time for hop-picking. They live in a tent and make about 200 miles a day in a Model-T Ford.”

Modern Photograph by Bill Ganzel

Vernon Evans on the farm his father homesteaded and to which Vernon returned after nine years in Oregon.

Lemmon, South Dakota
July 18, 1977

“Well, we was all without jobs here. And the jobs was so few and far between at the time we left that you couldn’t even *buy* a job. We decided we had friends that we knew out in Oregon, and we decided we was going to go out there and see if we could find some work. We had \$54 between the five of us when we started out from here to go to Oregon. And when we got to Oregon, I think we had about \$16 left. We had absolutely no idea what we was going to do.

“We all got in an old Model-T and started for Oregon. We started out, and, I don’t know, we got out six miles and broke the crankshaft. This old rancher, he had some old Model-T motors laying around. He said we was welcome to a crankshaft if we wanted one. So, we went back and proceeded to tear the motor out of the old Model-T and put the crankshaft in. And that night we made Baker [laughs] which is a matter of 24 miles from the night before.

“Well, then we had pretty good luck all the rest of the way. But we got around Missoula, [Montana] and we was having a good time. See somebody along the road or something. And here was this car sitting alongside the road, and a guy sleeping in it. So, we honked and hollared at him, having a good time. Pretty soon, this car was after us. We’d heard they was sending them back [police sending migrants back at state borders], wasn’t letting ‘em go on through. So, we thought, ‘Well, here’s where we go back home.’ He motioned for us to pull over to the side of the road. Anyhow, he come up and introduced himself [as Arthur Roth-



stein] and said he was with the Resettlement Administration [the precursor of the FSA] and asked us questions about the conditions here and one thing or another. Where we was headed for. This ‘Oregon or Bust’ on the back end was what took his eye. Then, he asked us if we cared if he took some pictures of us. Oh, we said, ‘I guess not.’ I think he took eight different poses. And then after we was out there [in Oregon] I guess probably it was that fall or winter, why these pictures started showing up in the different magazines and papers. Anyhow, we got out there and I went to work on the railroad.

“In the winter of ‘45, my father passed away. And then I quit working on the railroad to get ready to come back here. And been here ever since. [Laughs.] Oh, we’ve had our ups and downs. I think I’ve been hailed out probably five, six times, and dried out three, four years. And one year we rusted out [from a plant disease called ‘rust’].”

– Vernon Evans