

## **Grant Edwin Barney and the Buck Creek Ranch**

By Thomas G. Barney (Grant's Nephew) March 2022

Grant Edwin Barney was born on August 4, 1904 at Henry, Idaho, the sixth child of Grant Edwin Sr. and Matilda Barney. They had a homestead on some Blackfoot River bottom land. As the dam was built downstream they were relocated to Grays Lake, higher elevation and harsher winters. The family moved to Portland, Oregon in 1909, where Grant received his education.

The 14th Census of the United States, 1920, listed Grant, age 15 as a boarder at the Vernon Hall family residence in Portland, Oregon. Grant's occupation was listed as a laborer, dairy farmer.

I have not been able to discover the name of Grant's first wife. They had one daughter, Lois. When Grant bought the Buck Creek Ranch, she did not approve of the isolated location, and so left Grant. In 1922 Grant was working at the Hammond Lumber Company in Mill City, Oregon. Grant told me that he thought he may have to help fight the Breitenbush Fire near Detroit. Evidently he managed to not have to go on that fire.

In 1928 Grant was listed on the Bill Brown payroll as a hired hand and by 1937 he had bought the Henry Street Ranch on Buck Creek. I once was told that Grant had some money, bought the ranch, got the cattle on shares and had \$500.00 left, but I cannot verify this story.

Sometime after WWII broke out Grant received a draft notice. He made arrangements to have his brother George, my father, take care of the ranch while he was away. By the time George's family could make arrangements and get to Buck Creek, the Cattlemen's Association had gotten Grant's draft deferred. Our family spent about six months on the ranch helping Grant out.

Grant always welcomed company, and many family members visited Grant as often as they could manage. Help most often appeared when Grant needed it, branding time and during the haying season. Grant stacked loose hay and for many years did all of the harvest with a team of horses. After WWII, when they came available as surplus, Grant bought a military Jeep, which he used for transportation as well as a substitute for the team of horses. In the winter he would hitch his hay wagon to the Jeep, fill the wagon with loose hay, drive to his fields in the flats, tie the steering wheel, set the throttle and climb on the wagon and start pitching hay. This worked as well as the team, and he did not have to harness the Jeep. There were times when it got so cold that the Jeep would not start. A video taken by my cousin Kenneth Harris shows attempts to start the Jeep by pulling it with the horse team, to no avail. The Jeep just skidded along without turning a wheel. That same visit by my Uncle Milo (Bill) Harris and cousin Kenneth, the temperature dropped to about minus 32° degrees F. They were at Grant's, rabbit hunting. The trip was cut short however because Milo accidentally shot himself in the leg and had to go to Bend for medical aid.

In the spring, if the family visited Grant, my mother and I would walk the field just west of the buildings looking for arrowheads. Over the years we found many perfect arrow points. The rim rock just northwest of the main ranch appeared to be a spot where natives knapped arrow points, as the ground

was littered with obsidian flakes. There were also some good areas to look up Buck Creek from the main place and around Grant's upper place, at the head of Long Hollow. Grant used to refer to the hollow as "Long Holler". One of his visitors attempted to correct Grant on his grammar, pointing out his pronunciation error. To this Grant replied, "If you break down out there it is a long holler"

According to the book "Pioneer Roads in Central Oregon" Grant's upper place was on the route of the Willamette Valley & Cascade Mountain Military Road, established in the 1860s. It provided an improved route from the Willamette Valley to Fort Harney, near Burns.

On one occasion when my folks were at Grant's to help with the haying, Dad and Grant started talking about how good a fresh chicken dinner sounded. Grant mentioned seeing "some" near the head of the river (South Fork Crooked River) a few days back. Off they went with .22 rifles in hand. After about an hour they came back with a couple of Sage Hens. Chicken was on the dinner menu.

Grant conducted almost all of his business in Burns. For a while there was a mail route contract that provided the ranches between Bend and Burns with mail service. One of the drivers of that route told me that they also provided a service not approved by the US Post Office. They would pick up a grocery list provided by a rancher, Grant in this case, from the mail box and drop it off at Tiller's Market in Burns. On the return to Bend they would pick up the order from Tiller's and leave it in the large mail box for Grant to pick up later. I know Grant had very good credit in Burns, from personal experience; just telling a store proprietor my last name made a pronounced difference in attitude.

I suspect that Grant was not a great cook, because whenever my family visited, my mother did all of the cooking. One time she stoked up the fire to heat the coffee for lunch. When the first cup was poured everyone realized that was all there was. Mom had thought the pot was full and it was but with coffee grounds that had accumulated for months. About that same time Grant said there was a part on the stove that needed replaced but he could not read the long name on the back of the stove. They had me crawl to the back of the stove. It turned out that the long, unrecognizable name was Sears Roebuck and Company.

At least one Barney Family reunion was held at Grant's ranch in the late 40s or early 50s and it had a very good turnout, considering most of the relatives came from the Portland area and they did come. Trestle tables were set up for the main meal. Where all of the relatives slept I cannot remember, but I recall the tables and bench seating. My brother, George Jr. and another cousin contrived to "Hot Seat" a spot on the bench seating. They drove a nail up through the underside of the bench, so that it would just make contact with skin, wired the nail to a "ford coil" so whoever the unlucky person was who sat at that spot would get a substantial shock. And they did! Also the same perpetrators placed a cow head in a gunny sack in the trunk of Uncle Dean and Aunt Hazel Kepcha's car. They evidently noticed the smell before they reached Bend, but decided to wait till they got home to Portland to unload the trunk of their car and find the source of the odor.

Grant did occasionally harvest some venison and one time a game officer found a deer carcass hanging in one of his sheds. A ticket was written and Grant had to appear in court in Prineville. As Grant told the

story, the judge gave Grant a minimum fine, then began to lecture the officer. The judge did not think it so wrong for a rancher to harvest some game now and then as it did not go to waste and besides the ranchers fed those deer much of the year. Grant was never bothered again as far as I am aware.

Anyone who became acquainted with Grant might show up to visit. One time while I was there, a small plane landed in Grant's rye field just west of the house. It was two brothers, who along with their sister owned the Buster Brown Shoe store franchise for Oregon. They just decided to rent a plane and fly out for an afternoon visit. One visitor that stopped by one time I was there was Wesley Street. Wesley was born on the ranch. He pointed out a very large poplar tree and said that it had been planted the year he was born, so that would make it 75 years old. He also remembered, as a kid seeing natives camped up the creek.

Hunting season always brought a lot of company to the Buck Creek Ranch. Many of the relatives came from Portland to hunt and most did very well. Also for several years during branding and hunting season Grant had the company of Oren Brownson, a Division Manager for Portland General Electric, Al Neimi, a Certified Public Accountant, and Wendell Gray, a Lawyer, all from Portland.

In 1952 or 1953 Oren talked Grant into selling the ranch to him. Having sold the ranch, and with time on his hands, Grant decided to travel. He spent some time in San Francisco, California as well as visiting relatives in Portland. Evidently after several months of being idle, he realized that he missed the ranch and talked Oren into selling the ranch back. Price adjustments had to be made, as Oren had done a bit of upgrading mainly by adding a tractor to the place. Grant kept the tractor but it seemed to get little use. In 1954 Grant met, courted and married Doris Ness. She was a great helper for Grant. They soon began to plan a new house as the old homesteader house was poorly insulated heated by wood stoves and in poor shape. The new house was to be in the same location as the old, so a temporary dwelling across the lane was renovated to serve while the new house was being built. Grant had also piped in a fresh water spring from up Buck Creek Canyon for domestic water, as the old well had been hand dug and was quite alkaline in the summer months. About the same time Harney Electric Co-op brought electricity to the Buck Creek Ranch. Goodbye Colman and Kerosene lamps and lanterns.

Over the years Grant had accumulated a fairly large collection of comic books that the family had brought to him. There also were some old pull toys and other things that had been planned for Grant's daughter Lois. Grant told the family if there was anything that they wanted, to take it as anything left was to be burned. Probably no one at the time was aware of the value of some of those old comic books. There had to be several first editions of Walter Lantz and Disney comics. Sadly all were destroyed.

Grant enjoyed playing Pinochle and often would get together with neighbors from the Swamp Creek Ranch or visiting relatives for a long evening of the game. As a Pinochle player, Doris fit right in. In 1969 or 1970 Grant sold the Buck Creek Ranch to the neighboring GI Ranch. He and Doris moved to the Bend area and for several years had a small acreage near Tumalo. Later they sold that and bought a house on a city sized lot near the Bend airport. At some point Doris wanted to be near her family so they moved to Dufur, Oregon, where Doris passed away on 11/18/1991.

Grant and Doris would often take the senior bus to Reno for some entertainment. Grant continued to do this after Doris' death and after he moved back to Bend. One time my sister Eleanor was on her way to a bowling tournament in Reno. She saw Grant at the bus terminal getting ready to go home. He said he had just hit a \$600.00 jackpot and was in very good spirits.

Grant told me he moved back to Bend because that is where all of his friends were, though many were residing in the cemetery. Grant was very active in the Bend Senior Center as he still loved to dance. And play cards.

Not many months after Grant's good luck in Reno, he had a severe stroke and had to move into a facility that could care for him better.

Grant passed away August 29, 1996. He was interred in the River View Cemetery in Portland, Oregon. There was a good turnout for the graveside service held there with a reception at a local restaurant following the service.

I have heard Grant referred to as "Everyone's Favorite Uncle". He was my favorite!