

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #180 - Sides A/B

Subject: George Hibbard

Place: Hibbard Home - Burns, Oregon

Date:

Interviewer:

GEORGE HIBBARD: This is, I'm going to try to bring the --- I can't figure out which was the last tape, and so I'm going to try and bring it on up --- well the, more or less to the early '30's. But in 1913, I was born, July 16th. And then in November --- on November 16, 1915, I believe, my sister Virginia was born. Then

Next I want to talk about is when it came along into the '30's, during the depression when the --- my father and brother were both practicing, and I worked in the dental office. And I learned so many lessons from my father at that time. Since I had got through high school and --- in 1930.

And we would go on trips, oh, fishing trips or hunting trips. I recall one trip when my father and my brother Llewellyn, and brother-in-law Polenan Skiens, that's P O L E N A N S K I E N S

--- went up to the Blitzen. That's what they would call, or still do I guess, the burnt car, which is up out of Catlow Valley a little ways, on the side of the canyon, of the Blitzen Canyon. We went down, walked down to the river, left our car there at the burnt car --- with our camp outfit, went down to the Blitzen. And as I recall my father and I went down the stream, and brother-in-law and brother went up the stream. Well we fished all day in this, bottom of this, in this rocky canyon. It's about a three-mile walk down into the

canyon, maybe not quite that far. And really we hadn't gone very far, actually down stream, with the twists and turns. The canyon is so rocky we --- many places you have to wade the stream to fish it. And we were having real success --- the number of fish we were catching. Well it began to --- shadows fall, and so we decided it was time to climb out of the canyon and head back to camp. Llewellyn and Polenan were also heading.

This takes quite a climb up the canyon walls, and then you get up over the first bench, and then you site on the sun and decide where your car is, and try to strike an angle with the distance you have gone down stream, and back up to where the car is. It sounds simple, but it wasn't. We walked, and we walked, and my dad said, "Well, it can't be much further." And it got darker, and darker, and finally we hadn't come to the car, and we had this heavy load of fish, each of us had either a basket or a bag. And so we saw a tree ahead of us, it was a juniper, with the lower limbs cut off around it, of the big juniper. And the limbs had been cut off the year before, and were nice and dry. And they had been made into a circular corral where a sheep man, the year before, had brought his flock into a little corral for overnight, so that he could protect them from the coyotes, and anything else that came along, I guess. So we decided to make camp there. My father told me, he said, "As near as I can recall, this is the only time I have laid out because I got lost and couldn't get back to camp."

Well, it wasn't such a bad night either. It was not too cold, and we had plenty of dead firewood. We built a big fire and laid up against the trees --- the tree between us and the fire. And we just stayed perfectly comfortable all night. And we didn't have any mosquitoes even I don't think, that high. So when the next morning came why we took a new angle and we arrived in camp just in time for breakfast with Llewellyn and Polenan. Hotcakes and fish ready, which was mighty welcome since we had only carried lunch going down the day before. The water was the main thing that was welcome because it

had been a long time since we had any to drink after leaving the Blitzen, and the climb out. And then the walk, and walk, and then finally get in the next morning. I even drank water before I drank coffee that morning. I got warmed up walking. So that was a worthwhile trip, because I learned always to look back when you're going somewhere to see what it looks like when you want to go back the same way.

I recall hunting up north of town with my father, and it was the first time that I had been allowed to take a big gun, a deer gun, a 30-30 carbine it was. And so that evening, my dad and I were making camp. He said, "Before it gets dark, maybe we had better target our guns to be sure that they are on sight." Well he put up a target on the tree, a white chip I think it was. And then he had a long barrel 30-30 and peep site, and was such a good shot. And he tried once and split the chip. So then I tried. Well, I didn't do so good, and the chip didn't fall. And he was going to shift it a little, and I didn't realize that he was, so I just pumped out the empty shell, and pumped another one in, and had the gun up sighting towards this chip, when all of a sudden I saw his head and shoulders come into my sights. Well, it frightened me so that I never came close to shooting anyone, although I did have a gun go off in the house once that shot through the ceiling with a 22. I guess it went through.

But he had always taught us very carefully, gun safety. And I certainly think it is worthwhile. But anyway, when I saw his head and shoulders in the sights, even the next day when I saw a deer I couldn't be so sure enough of its horns, and whether it had horns, and whether it was a deer. So when I did shoot at it, I missed. But then along came a big buck, and I was so sure that I had just knocked it over, and I just pumped about four shots real quick. And I went over to the rim and looked down, and I couldn't see any deer, and I was just certain I couldn't miss, but I had. And it was a beautiful big buck.

But then along about 1931, my father was appointed to the Oregon State Game

Commission, by Governor Meiers of Oregon. And he, as a commissioner, had to go once a month to Portland. And this helped in --- the things he liked to do. The outdoors, the wildlife, and he was able to have a permit to take specimens of birds, or bird eggs at the refuge. And he even got arrested.

He had a nice Labrador dog given to him as a pup in that first summer by the Sauvies Island Gun Club. And it was a shiny black pup when Dad brought it home. And he said, "I thought we'd call it Seal, it looks like a little seal." And so we did. And this dog developed into one of the smartest dogs my father ever had.

Well my father wore rimless half-moon glasses at his dental work. And through the game commission he got some pheasant eggs and set them out here in a brooder on the lawn, under a banty hen. And the little pheasants hatched. Then he, you know, broke boiled eggs and a little bit of grit and food put in. And in leaning over this brood pen, his glasses slipped out onto the lawn. Well, at about that time, the local --- well Isaac Walton League or game organization had built a bunch of what were called pheasant pens along the west of the house here. Six lots covered with first fencing up --- board fencing up a ways, and then netting on the sides, oh, up the, fencing was up about three feet, and the netting was on the sides and over the top. And the game commission would send out six-week-old Chinese pheasants, ring-neck pheasants, and they would be held in the pens and fed until after the pheasant season in the fall. And then they would be released out in the fields so that there would be enough food stock to survive the winter, and replenish the birds in this valley. And the game commission no longer does this as far as I know, anywhere.

Well, this dog --- Dad was up in the pens one morning when he saw the dog come up to the gate, and stand with his paws up against the gate. He went over to see what was the matter. Well, the dog had his half-rimmed --- I mean his half-moon rimless

glasses in his mouth, he had that soft a mouth, and had found them beside the pheasant brood, and picked them up and brought them up to Dad.

And these pens were --- they later discontinued shipping out these young pheasants. And so Dad used the pens to have all kinds of birds. He had some very exotic pheasants, golden pheasants, reise pheasants, silver pheasants, as well as the Mongolians, and ring necks. And then, well if they didn't reproduce --- why he eventually turned them loose. Oh, I remember a silver pheasant, and the males --- the females had died off, so he just turned the males loose. And people around town reported about that big gray bird hitting my hat. Well I mean, not just drops on it, but these males would see a woman with a fancy hat, and they'd just attack it. I don't think those silvers lasted over a winter. They weren't adapted for this high an altitude.

But then he began to collect not only bird's eggs in his office collection --- the old timers will remember, but live birds of all varieties. Sometimes it would be a wounded goose that was brought in, or wing tipped, or you would get a setting of duck eggs, and hatch them. And I recall we had mallards, and both --- all three kinds of geese we have here, the white, and the white fronted, and the Canadian. And there was water in the pens, and the feed bill got terrific. Because not only were we feeding a lot of grain eating birds, but then too the sparrows increased so. And they could go through the top netting which was an inch and a half mesh, and they would go down into the pens, and they would just eat in such great amounts. And so my father took some bran and put strychnine in it, and just set it in a big flat pan on top of the pens. Opening of the pen along one end, that the sparrows would think this was an easier dish to clean, and maybe clean out some of the sparrows.

Well one day a couple of boys came walking along the railing of the neighbor's fence, where they could look down into the pens, and they saw this pan sitting on top of

the netting. And so they reached over and just put it down on the ground. Well my father's Seal was a couple years old by then, and found that pan of strychnine bran, and ate a quantity of it evidently. And one morning just as Dad got up, he heard something at the door, and he opened the front door and there was the dog with his head on the step, just breathing his last. Well, needless to say my father had to have another Labrador. But that was the end of Seal, who was just so very smart.

Well I was telling you that --- while he was on the game commission, he wasn't above the law, and he went hunting one fall with this dog, which was --- the dog wasn't on leash, but if the game warden had found him so, he wouldn't have arrested him. But he was under perfect control, and his nose was so sensitive that he could detect when they were close to deer, or if tracks were fresh or not. Needless to say, with the new game warden, the first state police game warden that I recall here, found him hunting with this dog, and gave him a ticket. Well, my father went to court before the justice of peace. And he should have know better, the cop should have, because the justice of peace was a friend of my fathers, and he just dismissed the case, didn't fine him anything. But it was -- - well I don't think my father ever hunted with a dog again.

But referring to that dog, we had Indians coming in the yard. And at that time had Indian women, well we still do, but to do the washing, and the men work in the yard. But there was one old Indian, old Blind Jim was all I know him by. Although his daughter was Bertha Hoodie, so evidently his name was Hoodie also --- especially used to come up along in the fall because he knew my father or some of us would have likely got some deer, and he wanted the head and neck especially. And lots of times he would sit in the doorway of our woodshed. My mother could look right out the back door to the woodshed door. And he would see if there was any old overshoes, or an old coat inside the door that might help him through the winter.

Well, this dog Seal didn't particularly like Indians, but he knew better than to --- he might bark at some of them but he would never bark at Jim. And he would let him come in and set on the doorstep, but he didn't like him taking things. So this one day Jim was there, he was feeling around and found an overshoe. And my mother saw the dog go up to the Indian and just gently take the overshoe out of his hand. And Dad was up in the pens and he saw the dog stand up to the gate again. So he went over to see what was the matter, and here he had this overshoe in his hand. So Dad knew something was wrong, so he came down, and here was old Jim--- found his other overshoe, and he was sitting there cussing the blankety blank dog, because he had taken the other overshoe. But of course Dad gave him the overshoes anyway. Well I tell you this just to show the keen mind of this dog.

Then to carry on with this, the birds in these pens back here. As I said they were a lot of area under cover, and the water in each pen --- and so Dad began to collect these birds. And of course when he was gone, why it was up to one of us at home to feed them. Well you can imagine what it took, especially for some of these birds from the lake, like the egret or the big blue heron, or the wading birds. Of course most of them just depended on what they could pick out of the grass and that, but --- like the avocet or something. But these bigger birds had to be hand fed. Well the only way I could find to feed the egret or great blue heron, we didn't have frogs, which they normally eat, or little minnows. So we would take bread and milk, I would, and catch one of them, open his beak, and poke it, the soft bread and milk down his throat, and then I would rub his throat to get it to go down a ways. But if I didn't hold on to them, I knew what they would do, so I would get what I assumed was enough down their gullet, and then I would take a rubber band and fasten their beaks together so they couldn't regurgitate the good breakfast I had given them, I guess.

But this was a chore whenever my father was gone. Oh, we would feed them anything, cottage cheese or whatever we happened to have, corn bread. It was quite a different diet for them. But usually they were turned loose, if they could fly, in the fall just to migrate south as they do. And I never remember having any sandhill crane. And I often wondered why we didn't. I know the crane eggs, I have seen them, I can identify now in the museum. But they are such a beautiful graceful bird, and are such an interest in the way they dance when they mate. Of course they wouldn't have mated in the conditions here. But I just have often wondered about that.

But of course with my father's connection with the refuge, we had privileges to go out on the lake in the boats at times. I recall one time --- oh, I can't remember who all was along, but George Benson was the warden there. And we went in the boat out onto Malheur Lake, and quite a storm came up. In fact we had a boat with a canoe towing behind it, a motorboat. And so we decided it might be the better part of valor to get ashore while the wind was so high and the water became so rough. So we went ashore on Pelican Island. And it was just a few inches above the water. And there was, needless to say, pelican eggs, both hatched and unhatched, and broken. And dead fish that the pelicans had been catching and feeding their young. And all sorts of smells from dead birds to the dead fish ---

SIDE B

... Benson, saw a big tule coming up through the muck in the island, and he just reached down, gripped around it, and pulled it out of its root. Well, it came out just perfectly white and clean. Because one grows into a sheath of the next --- that's the way tules grow. And he just handed the end of it over towards Hazel, said, "Take a bite off it," which she did. And I presume it wasn't very good tasting. She didn't chew it up and swallow it. He

said, "Now look where it came from." Well, needless --- she about up-chucked her dinner. I think we had just had lunch in the boat. But --- my dad was always trying --- whatever, whether it was a rattlesnake he might cut into little steaks, and try frying it, or boiling it, whatever. They are very bony.

But to get on with this --- about the bird pens up here. This yard became a regular zoo for the people of the community. People would come every day --- particularly on Sundays, up to look at the birds in the pens. And to see the antelope. This was of course a bit later than --- well some before I was injured, and some after, so it was in '31, and '32.

And I don't know whether I told you about this antelope --- this last antelope that Dad had captured, what happened to it. But it got to roaming all over town, and people would call up and say your antelope is eating our flowers. And of course it liked to have the dogs to chase it because it could outrun it, and come up in our yard and be safe from the dogs, or so it thought. So finally my father took it out to the ranch, out at section nine east of town a couple of miles, and put it out with the dairy herd. But his antelope had been raised with an English pointer that we had. He --- the antelope didn't stay with that herd very long, and it went over to another dairy herd, and on and on. The next we'd heard of it, it was up north of town by the slaughterhouse. And about that time, our dog disappeared.

Well he had been in the habit of going off for a morning hunt before my father got up, and evidently had stumbled on this antelope up by the mill dam, in that area. And so they just took up with each other, living out in that part of the valley, up in that part of the valley. And this antelope evidently tried to jump out of the barrow pit, over a barbed wire fence --- this is just north of the Indian Camp, and around the corner a little. And it hung up on its flanks, on the top strand of wire. And one of the pioneer ranchers, Ted Hayes, coming to town, saw the antelope there on the wire. So he stopped and got the antelope

off, but it had been there long enough that it --- and had been hung up, it didn't survive. So that was the end of Baby. But then our dog came home, decided to live with us again.

I recall on these trips to the game commission meetings, sometimes he would go alone. He would drive over to Bend, or take the bus to Bend, and ride with a member from Bend, named Dr. Vandevire. But other times he would --- some of us would get to go along with him. One time I --- whole family we were going to go, and then go on down to the coast where my aunt, and uncle, and daughter were to be.

Well, this time we started out, it seems to me 1930, and as you know that was another depression. There was a "king of the road" standing along side the Warm Springs out past the mill. And my sister Virginia saw Dad starting, he told me to slow down, I was driving, and Ginny said, "Dad, if you get that stinking old man in here, I won't stay in the car." He said, "It's all right with me." And sure enough, why he told the man to get in. And Ginny got out on the running board.

Oh, I have forgotten, previous to this we had started out on this trip and tipped over just out about fifteen miles. I was driving then also, and hit a big rock and the back wheel had broken and we had tipped over and had to have the car brought back in and repaired. And so we were starting out again, and this time we had stopped to get the old stumblebum in the car. And so Virginia got out on the running board, and she was riding out on the right hand side, on the running board. You couldn't go very fast in those days on that old road. There wasn't any highway; it was just corrugated gravel road. And we had got almost out toward Silver Creek when, I guess we had got past Silver Creek, but anyway, Virginia was riding out on the side, and all of a sudden she yelled, "Daddy, the wheel is coming off." And just jumped off backwards into the sagebrush. She wasn't going very fast, but it sure turned her end over end. And it was lucky she didn't land on a rock or anything, but she didn't. And I got stopped and this wheel was out about a foot

from under the fender. And what had occurred, the lock washer on the axle hadn't been set properly, and the axle came unscrewed, and started coming out of the side of the car. Well it meant another trip back into --- my brother-in-law I think came out with mechanic tools and fixed the lock washer and put it back together, and we went on our way.

Nobody was better than my father as far as, in human kindness, as far as whether it was Indian or stumblebum, or whoever. So it was quite a lesson. I know the next time we started out; I let somebody else do the driving. I didn't have enough nerve to try again. It was an incident that was so typical of Dad.

This yard, like I told you, was quite a show attraction. But you never knew what was going to happen. Sometimes the gate would get unlatched, and half the birds would get away, and then we would have to go try to gather them up or --- sometimes a dog would get in there --- not our own dog, but stray dogs would get through the gate. And we thought we had it latched well enough too, but dogs get pretty smart on gates. They would get in and they would kill --- they just seemed to go crazy in killing these captive birds. I can remember a time or two what a tragedy it was to my father when this would happen. And we were always cautioned to be careful.

The last year my father practiced was about 1937, and he was appointed by the federal government to act as --- well conservator of the estate, the federal land claim on the Malheur Lake. And all those that wanted to graze cattle on the shoreline had to --- just like now, had to pay grazing fees. Needless to say the riparian owners, or those that owned the ranches around the lake didn't take very kindly to this. But my father was made the conservator, or there is another term, but he didn't have much trouble with the people, because they knew he was honest. And all the money they paid in was held in escrow until it was decided anyway. And this was during hard times, but they paid their fees, even though they kind of grumbled at times to my father. And so when he --- then

when it was decided in favor of the riparian owners, all this money was turned back to the ranchers. Then of course this gave him much more opportunity though, as he quit dentistry to do the things he loved, which he would rather do than anything.

And I recall long about 1939, he bought an Oldsmobile. He had always had Chevys or Pontiacs, or something like that before, after the first Ford. And then to have that Oldsmobile, and the reason he bought it was because the horn would play the tune, "Come Away With Me Lucille, In My Merry Oldsmobile". And I really think that was the only reason he bought it. Because he couldn't afford it at that time, because he was not practicing dentistry anymore, and his little amount that he got from the government didn't amount to very much. But he really loved that car. But it never kept him from getting it stuck here or there, or anywhere.

I remember he was driving through a meadow down in the Bell A one time, and run the front end of it into a sunken well, an old well. Had to walk and get somebody to pull him out. He never damaged it much. This was after I was injured; of course, I didn't get to drive the Merry Oldsmobile. But I can remember being up in Wenatchee, Washington, about 1939, when they drove up to get me, Dad and my brother-in-law. They came in this car, and drove up in front of the house with this horn playing this tune. I didn't know who had arrived.

But, I want to tell you on this, about the last deer my father killed. And if I recall right, he was 79 years old. And he got up early one morning and went up the road towards John Day, to where the railroad track first crosses. And he left the car there and went up on a couple of benches above the highway to the highest level, and walked over to a point, and looked over --- and the wind was blowing quite strong, and there was a deer under a rim, under a juniper tree. And he was standing by a juniper, and he laid the gun over the tree limb, and sighted, and then the deer jumped up, why one shot and he

killed it. Well, it was in a place where it was obvious at his age, 79; he wasn't going to be able to get it out. So he just came back down to the deer and cut its throat, and I presume dressed it too. But came back to town and told my brother and brother-in-law where the deer was, and would they please go get it. And it was an enormous deer because we have the head of it stuffed, and it is in the entrance hall here.

Although the biggest deer he ever killed was up on Steens Mountain, and it was a forked-horn, but it had been castrated evidently years before by some cowboys. It was a steer, and it weighed 285 pounds when they got it back here to town. Well, they don't come like that anymore, I don't think. They call them elk now. But he himself stuffed the head of it, and used to be in the dental office along with mountain sheep, and other things. He tried stuffing anything, from skunk, to porcupine, to mounting an eagle. This eagle I hung on our porch for years. He made a papier-mâché rock for it to perch on, a gray rock and white. And this eagle is pulling an arrow out of this --- with his claw, out of its breast, and red paint on the feathers and all. I wish he had preserved these things, but with the moths what they were and all, they became moth eaten, and they went the way of everything. But we still retained a lot of the horns. As you know they are in our front yard here, in this mulberry tree.

By the way, that's another thing my father was interested in, was planting any and every kind of tree you can imagine. And I have often offered the yard to the teachers at school to bring kids, because we have such a variety of trees in this yard. There is several fruit trees, apple, and plums, and peach, and there used to be pears, and apricots. But then, as far as I know, there may be one or two others. But he has the horse chestnut, or the buckeye as it's known. It's a great big tree in our driveway. Carolina poplar, Lombardy poplar, and lodge pole pine, and juniper, and ash, and elm, and thorn trees. I think it's called

--- well we have two kinds of thorn trees, I don't know.

But he was always experimenting --- and with the wild flowers. Always in the spring we loved to get out and look for the pansies, especially on the way to school in the little rocky washes on the hill back of the --- between here and what is now Slater School.

But it was --- certain blocks, well I won't try to tell, but where the little waterways in the bottom of these, the pansies would grow. Of course there were lot more than just pansies, but they were the prize. There were yellow bells, and buttercups, and wild onions, and wild potatoes.

Early in the --- well before we even had the dairy; everybody in town had a cow in the barn. And in the summer, some of the boys would take on the job of gathering the town herd and taking them to graze out west of town up back where, back of the grade schools, and out towards Hines on the hillsides, on the new grass that was coming. And needless to say, everybody's milk began to taste like wild onions. And this was an annual spring thing, because you could tell by the taste --- change in the taste of the milk. I remember one time my dad's cow got into the grain and about foundered, and he gave her linseed oil to get rid of the excessive grain. Our milk tasted like linseed oil for a week or two.

But he was quite a veterinarian. He had a kit, a suitcase full of tools and implements for taking care of animals. Rasps for filing horse's feet, and, or cows either. And trocar, which is an instrument used to --- when a cow is bloated, to release the gas. Although you can't expect her to give milk for quite awhile if you have to do that. And various other implements.

And we even had a shoe last for our own family for putting nails and shoe buttons on with. Well I don't mean the last was for that, but a kit so we could fix up the high button shoes, and nail the soles back on. We didn't have any stitching material, but that was part

of our growing up.

I remember we had a fruit parer. And you stick an apple or a pear on the end of the prongs, and twist the crank, and it would peel it. Oh, you had to clean the blossom and stem end out, but other than that, it would peel the fruit just as nice as you could do it, and a lot thinner skin than what you do ordinarily.

But in the fall, if our trees hadn't produced good, a man named Mr. Benson from John Day would come over with a wagon load of apples, and a barrel of cider. And we would buy from him the Jonathans and the bellflowers. Well, they were winter apples, and they were fall apples, and of course the transparents. If they missed the frost, why we always had lots of transparents ourselves. But we would buy our fruit and just put it in bins in the basement, along with the potatoes, and cabbage, and anything else we had raised. And so our eating was pretty much out of the cellar.

I can remember seeing a big --- well it was a 50-gallon barrel of cider on the back porch. And as it got later in the fall, it got a little nipier. I can remember sitting down beside it with a rubber tube and sucking and drinking till I --- probably got it pretty well inebriated under --- from hard cider. But about that time why it would turn to vinegar, and then we would have plenty of vinegar left for the year. We always made kraut, the same way. We just put a board on it with a rock, and as it made liquid with the salt, it really was better than what you buy now.

I don't know whether I have reached the end of this or not, but I have about run out. ...

(END OF TAPE)

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