

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #182 - Sides A/B

Subject: George Hibbard

Place: Hibbard Home - Burns, Oregon

Date: January 31, 1975

Interviewer:

GEORGE HIBBARD: Well Pauline, this is Monday, and I thought I would tell a couple of incidents that I found in looking through a scrapbook. In 1920, well I should go before that --- in 1908, Teddy Roosevelt established the Malheur Wildlife Refuge along with a lot of others. He was quite a wildlife man. And then in 1920, there was a concerted effort, here locally, and in the state legislature to send a resolution to Congress. I think that was what they --- all they could do by the state, to try and revoke the Refuge Act so that it could be opened up for general farming around the shores. But, there were only two in the Burns area, that I can gather, who took a stand against this. And one was my father, and the other was Mr. Hanley. Well, the democrats, including Julian Byrd and the paper, and Jimmy Donegan, and C. B. McConnell, and various others here were trying to get the legislature to send this proposal to the government to open it. And it was termed as a "Birds versus Babies" argument. This caused quite a lot of friction here in town.

There was no Chamber of Commerce then, it was called the Burns Commercial Club. And of course my father, and Mr. Hanley, and Jimmy Donegan and all of these were members of that and it was hotly debated.

And then I found a letter that my father wrote to a Mr. Price, who was evidently the editor of the Oregon Journal, and told him what my father thought. Mr. Finley, the grandfather of the Baker girl, of course was opposed to it, and his voice was heard from

Western Oregon. But it was very controversial here, and I know caused more than just --- it almost caused a breakup of friendships. But, nevertheless, it stayed a Refuge, for which my father was most happy, because as always he was on the side of the wildlife. And I don't mean that literally.

But then I thought I would narrate on this the account of my injury, as you thought it should be included.

In 1932, I had been working for three months for the U. S. Geological and Geodetic Survey on the underground water survey of this Harney Valley. In which two days a month we took measurements all the way around, not only of stream flows, but of well measurements of existing wells, and wells that we had dug or drilled, like with a post hole auger. And these --- this survey was, I believe, started in 1930, and I helped the boy that --- Mervin King that had --- running it, and then I took it over for June, July and August.

It was shortly after I had concluded my last report and sent it in on the 17th of August, that I was working in the dental office at \$50 a month, trying to figure out ways to spend all that money during the depression, which wasn't hard to do. And then I was in the dental office, as I said, and there was no appointments the rest of the afternoon, it was along about 3 o'clock. And a young man named Vic Benow, that my sister Virginia had been going with, was working at Safeway. And he was off and he come over to the office and I said, "What about going swimming?" And he said, "Fine, let's go." And I took the car and Vic and, we went --- or we got our bathing suits and --- or maybe they were already in the car, I don't know.

But, we went out to a Gravel Pit, which is in Urizar's field, a quarter of a mile inland off of the --- I mean in from the Hanley Lane. A quarter south of the Grange Hall. And this was a pit that was made by a dragline, and was from anywhere to forty feet to a foot and a half deep on the shore. And very cold in the bottom naturally. They had bunkers there,

but unless there was activity going on like road surfacing, there was no real --- which there wasn't at that time.

And there was Blanche McWilliams, she was Robinson then, and her son John, and Bill Byrd, and quite a few other little five and six year old kids with them on the other side of the pond. And she had taken them out swimming, and on --- with me of course it was just Vic and I.

They had a loading device, called a trap. It's like a bridge with a hole in the center. Gravel could be frescoed with a team up on top of that and then dropped in this hole to a truck that would be parked underneath. And we had a diving board staked into the ground, and Charlie Schroeder and Mike Salow were out there that afternoon. And Charlie was with the meat market at the time, and they had a pickup.

And so I had been lying up on this loading platform. And this Gravel Pit at that time was owned by Mr. Earl Brian. And he happened to be out there that day. And I had been swimming and I had crawled up on this sunny loading dock, or trap, and was letting the suit dry out and get a suntan. And I had stood up and was measuring the distance to the water. And Mr. Brian came walking on by there, and he said, "Oh, I wouldn't try it if I were you sonny." He said, "You might get hurt." And I went diagonally back across this and I said, "Oh, I don't think I will." I said, "I'll make a long shallow dive and take a run at it." Which I did, but my legs flopped over, and I didn't keep my posture very well. And then in that, why then my hand hit the bank, and it brought me down head foremost into the water. But I hit a ledge about eighteen inches under the water with the top of my head, and it dislocated my neck at the --- between the fifth and sixth cervical vertebrae.

And I didn't lose consciousness, it didn't knock me out. I was lying face down in the water at the surface, in what's called a "dead-man's float". And I could see my arms out in front of me, but they would not do anything, and I couldn't seem to make them

move. And I wondered why. I had no pain. So, I heard Vic step into the water beside me, and he put his arm under my chest, and pulled me out of the water. And immediately when he laid me on my back, then the pain started in my neck. And I couldn't breathe, just very little. I was breathing with my diaphragm since my chest was paralyzed. But I didn't know how to breathe with a diaphragm at that time. And I could only get enough air for about one word at a time.

So Mike Salow and Charlie Schroeder came running over and they carefully lifted me into the back seat of the car. Laid me diagonally across it with my feet on the floor, and my back on it, and then my head dropped down in the corner so to speak. Because the further back I could let my head lie, the more comfortable it was, and the better my breathing was. And then Vic got in to drive, and Charlie stood up in between the seats by me.

And Vic got out onto the highway, and then he began to really rip along. And those bridges from the Grange Hall to the river were --- had --- were higher than the grade at that time. The grade had settled and they hadn't built it up yet. And every time we'd go over, why I'd about go flying up to the ceiling, and I told him --- Charlie, to tell Vic to slow down, I wanted to get to the doctor's office.

And we drove up in front of Dr. Smith's office, which was on the side street above where the power office is now. And he came out to the car and he said, "What's the matter with you?" And I said, "I'm paralyzed." He said, "What makes you think so?" And I said, "Well, I can't move, and I can't, barely breathe." And he says, "Don't you feel that?" And I said, "No." Well, I didn't know what he was doing, but he was sticking a pin in my shoulder. And I couldn't see him; I was laying with my head back. And he said, "Well, take him up to the hospital, and I'll be right up there." It took about, oh, three different tries, and each time they would have to carry me by stretcher upstairs --- and I was

upstairs in a room. And then they would carry me back downstairs to the X-ray. And finally the third try they tipped me on my side and got a shot vertically down through my neck, which finally showed the dislocation.

Well then Dr. Smith called this Dr. Akin in Portland, and he said, "Well, he would come up in the morning, the next morning." This had been about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when it occurred. And he would fly up the next morning from Portland, and do what he could.

Well, my father was in Medford with my sister Eugenia and her husband. And they, with a Dr. Standard friend of the family, started from there and they got out between Bend and Burns sometime along about midnight, and their car broke down or something. And my brother-in-law from town went out and got Dad, and they got to the hospital a little before nine. The doctor had got in about eight, and was impatiently waiting. So, he told me, he said, "Well, I'll give you a very light anesthetic and then just twist your neck back into place." And he said, "It's not going to do much good." He said, "You're going to have bladder infection, and bed sores, and you're not going to live over a year anyway." Good psychology it was, because it just made me fighting mad, and I was determined to do something about it. So, I woke up and they had me in traction with a bucket of bricks on my neck.

And this occurred on --- the accident occurred on Wednesday, they put my neck back in on Thursday, and I came home from the hospital Saturday. And they carried me just straight down from the hospital to my home here. And the --- they had given me a drink of soda water just before I left the hospital because I was nauseated. And they carried me --- I could feel that --- they were six men in step. And they would swing along, you know, and it just made me get sicker and sicker. And finally when I got home here, and Dr. Smith was here, he finally decided well of course, he's paralyzed, he can't vomit.

And my stomach was a regular balloon. So he opens his little case and gets out a stomach pump. And of all the experiences I think, swallowing that stomach pump was about the most difficult of all that I went through. And needless to say when it hit my stomach, there was a great release of gas and ---

#### SIDE B

... about when my father first saw this Eastern Oregon, it was in either 1879, or '80. He and his father, and maybe a brother came on a site seeing tour to Eastern Oregon, and came down through Harney Valley. That was before Burns had been started, I believe, so they must have stopped at Egan. Because they camped that night down by the Warm Springs below the mill. My father found a mallard duck's nest and took the eggs, a dozen I believe, and put them in a bucket of grain and hung it on the reach of the spring wagon. And took them back to the Willamette Valley to their farm, and there he hatched the mallards under a chicken. Also on this same trip he --- evidently the next night they camped out on, at a spring, which is --- it run for a time, did at that time, in Silver Creek --- I mean in Sagehen. Just near the upper end of Sagehen Valley. And that evening he went up on that juniper knoll that the highway passes as it goes up the Sagehen Hill, and shot a deer among the junipers there. It was also on this trip that he saw the wolf out at -- - near Buck Mountain, I believe.

Now I want to tell about an incident when he was game commissioner. As you know, the deer in the winter tend to move down from the higher mountains and to congregate in areas where there is good feed. Such a place is over on Murderers Creek, west of Seneca. And there was a great concentration of deer there one winter, after I was injured. And Dad --- and I don't know whether one of the other game commissioners decided to go in and investigate where the deer had corralled, as it was an unusually

severe winter. And the reports coming out that the deer were starving, having eaten out all the shrub and food material. Well, they will eat on juniper even when there is nothing else available. But they like bitter brush and that type of --- or hay, grass, if they can find it.

But anyway, he and --- accompanied by a couple of ranchers, one of them named Hyde, and I believe the other was Hampofficer, and a cook by the name of Savage, went in by horseback. First they stopped by a little log cabin, and there was --- out of Seneca. And I remember him telling me he went to the window of this cabin to peek in, and he thought it was a --- there was a skull of a man that had been killed in a sheep, cattleman -- - shepherders, cattleman's war. He had been a shepherd, years before. And someone had hung this skull and two bear paws that were --- had lost the flesh, and they looked like hands on each side of this skull. The bones of the bear paws, without the claws, and it was a pretty good discouragement for breaking into the cabin, I guess. That is what it was hung there for.

Then they made their camp down further on Murderers Creek, to be close to where the deer were concentrated. And it's fairly low, being on the drainage of the south fork of the John Day, compared to up in Silvies Valley. Or I should say where Seneca is, is not even Silvies Valley, it's beyond.

Anyway, they made their camp and the cook wanted to know if they couldn't get a deer for camp meat. And Dad said no, because being a game commissioner he wasn't allowed to poach anymore than anybody else was. And he kept complaining, well they needed some camp meat. So this man, Perry Hyde, said, "I'll get you some camp meat." And they were riding one day and there was a band of horses in this area, and he saw a young two-year-old horse in the group, a black one. And he said, "Oh, there is so and so's horse." Said, "I'll --- in that bunch." He said, "I'll get us some camp meat." So he

pulled his rifle out and fired and broke the horse down in the back, and rode up and shot him in the head. And then he saw the brand on it, and it was his son's horse. And he was --- need-less to say pretty disgruntled that he had shot one of his son's horses. But he just took his knife and skinned out the rump and cut a great big chunk of horsemeat out of the ham of that horse and took it back to camp with him. And gave it to the cook, and said, "Here's some camp meat for us." And they had steaks off of it that evening. Well, after they had finished eating, and the cook had enjoyed a good meal along with the rest of them, they told them that this was horsemeat. And he just about vomited because it was not considered by people in the stock country very good meat, to eat horsemeat.

The French did, especially during the war when there were so many --- the First World War, during the shortage of food. And there were lots of horses available with the artillery and the cavalry. But they named it Chevalier or something like that. Cheval steaks, so that it didn't sound quite so bad. But I've never eaten it that I know of, but my father said it has a little, more sweet flavor than the beef does. But it was a humorous antidote of their soldiering in there.

There were some deer died, and about that time there had been an area set-aside in Myrtle Creek as a game refuge for deer. But they found that when they did this, then the deer congregated more so in these areas, and all restricted areas were done away with.

The deer were much more plentiful in the '30's when they were --- at this time. Personally I hope that the game commission will close the deer season for a year or two until they, the deer herds begin to increase again. They go through cycles, because back in 1918, the deer were very scarce. And then they build up till they're --- there was one year in Oregon, a 160,000 deer were taken in the hunting season. It was a little over a 160,000. And now they do good if they get a 100,000 in all of Oregon. ...

Next I thought I would tell you about an incident that occurred in about 1915. My dad, and Roberta, and Eugenia and --- well I can't remember who was all in the party, but they started to Nampa to a church assembly. And this was over what was called the "Hole in the Ground Road". It went out through Crane, and up on top, and then wandered over the hills down toward Juntura and Vale. And they got --- course they filled up in Crane when they left there, but you know, Fords didn't hold --- Model-T's didn't hold too much. And they got over there on that road, a long, long ways from anywhere, and ran out of gas.

Well Dad told them --- he and Llewellyn would go to where --- they could see a farmer plowing or disking in his field, and see if they could loan them any kerosene, or any gasoline, or if he could buy any. And he told them they had better get out and pray. And this was about a half-mile or mile over to where the farmer was working, rancher I should call him.

And they got over and he told them, he said, "The freight team coming through here last week lost a five gallon can of gasoline, and it is in the corner of the fence right there under some weeds, right next to where your car is stalled." Well, needless to say, that five gallons of gas got them on into Vale, and they made it to Nampa to the assembly.

But it showed them that sometimes the Lord has mysterious ways in providing for our needs. And I think that was one of the most divine examples of --- I mean it was undoubtedly divine example of providing.

But another time, Dad and well --- Berta and Genia, and Llewellyn, and Hal had gone to the coast and they had stopped at the --- at my father's old home and picked up a nephew, and they had gone to the coast. And when they were coming back, and the--- they were coming from Prineville ---

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