

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #24 - Side A

Subject: Eldon Sitz (Harney County Sheriff)

Place: Sitz Home - Burns, Oregon

Date: June 7, 1972

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

Release Form: No

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen, and I'm at the home of Eldon Sitz on June 7th, 1972. ... You were born in Harney County, weren't you?

ELDON SITZ: Uh huh. 26th day of August 1905.

PAULINE: Was this down around Lawen, or ---

ELDON: Right here in Burns.

PAULINE: Here in Burns.

ELDON: I've lived here all my life, with the exception of going to high school. I went over to Emmett, Idaho. In fact I graduated at the same time that Goldie Racine did. She went to high school at Emmett, Idaho, and graduated in 1925.

PAULINE: And what was your parent's names?

ELDON: My dad and mother were, are R. R. and Blanche Sitz. When I was at Emmett, Idaho, I stayed with my grandparents down there, P. H. Grey and his wife.

PAULINE: Do you know how they happened to come to Harney County? Did they ever say why they came here?

ELDON: The Greys, or my folks?

PAULINE: Your folks.

ELDON: Well of course Dad came here, when the heck was that?

LELA SITZ: Well I don't know, do you want to get into dates really, Pauline?

PAULINE: Well not so much --- well about, maybe about when they came. But I'd like to find out is, you know, why they happened to come, why did they happen to pick out Harney County?

ELDON: Well Dad and his brother was the one that came here together. Lew, J. L. Sitz from Drewsey, and Dad came here, in fact they were partners down at Lawen there, on some of the old properties we used to live on. And Dad bought Lew out, and Lew went over to Drewsey, and that's where he settled over there. I think in the '80's sometimes, wasn't it?

LELA: '87 they came to Lawen here. They took up these preemption land claims. I think that was one thing that --- I don't know.

ELDON: They came from Southern Oregon up here. They had --- Dad used to, I don't know whether he had his own team, or just what, he hauled stuff into Virginia City, down there when Virginia City was really operating with a freight wagon. Of course that was before my time.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Did he do freighting in Harney County after he came here?

ELDON: No, not after he come here.

PAULINE: He just mostly run cattle?

ELDON: Well he bought that place down there, and in fact when we were on the ranch, was all we had was cattle.

PAULINE: Well I know that, I talked to Amy Catterson here not too long ago, and she was telling me about a swamp gas well that her father drilled. But she didn't really remember really too awful much about it. Do you remember anything about that? It must have ---

ELDON: Gas well, you mean?

PAULINE: A gas well, uh huh.

ELDON: Well the only one I know of used to be --- I suppose it is probably gone now, was down south of Lawen. That's what we used to call it when I was down there, was the Ll Johnson place.

After you go down the slough there, well you hit the first slough, and this place is the first one on your right hand side. It sets out in the field there a ways. But they had a well that you could pump, and you ... to pumping you could throw a match in there and it would keep burning all the time that you pumped. But other than that, that's the only one. The one that burned --- I don't know whether it was an outfit --- Swan Lake, do you remember, I don't think there was?

PAULINE: Yeah, this is where --- well she said it burned for a couple of years, or for a period of time. And people came around and looked at it so they filled it up because it was kind of a nuisance. This would have been the Leake place.

ELDON: I lived down there, I don't remember ever hearing of it happening, but of course it could have.

PAULINE: I was wondering if you could tell me more about the warm springs there, down by Crane, where Dr. Iland had her health spa.

ELDON: Uh huh. Well I swam in that thing for years, before they ever had any construction at all down there. We used to --- we was riding for cattle out there in the valley, or messing around, why we'd stick a shovel on the back of the saddle and go out there and spend probably a good part of the day shoveling the ditch full so we could get the water backed up, then we'd go out there and swim and play around. There was three holes out there that the water used to come up in, that I know. I don't know how many there are now. They weren't too far apart. There was three places that water come up. And some days you just couldn't stay in there, and other days it wasn't quite so bad.

PAULINE: Then it was hotter sometimes than it was others. I didn't know that.

ELDON: Now I don't know whether --- of course the water would never change as far as the depth, once we got the thing dammed up there, it held just equal level there all the time. You'd think it would stay, temperature one-way or the other, but, or it would stay even. But heck, I've been out there and let ourselves down a little ways, as far as you get in that hot water, and you come up and your feet and legs were red, didn't stay in very long.

PAULINE: Well she, they built, she married Ralph Catterson.

ELDON: Catterson.

PAULINE: And they built kind of a swimming pool, and ---

ELDON: They had a swimming pool, it's still part of the pool, you can go down there and see it yet. And then down a ways they had, oh I don't know how big that hole was, it wasn't too awful big. Had a dance floor in there, used to dance. I don't recall just how big it was, do you remember ...

LELA: Oh no, it was just --- no I wouldn't know for size.

ELDON: Used to have quite a crowd.

LELA: Used to have large crowds there, though.

ELDON: Now that place, heck, when we were kids, old Lloyd Johnson's kids --- oh the ones around Lawen there we used to go out there and swim quite often. Go out horseback, that was the only way to travel then, in those days. But we never lost anybody out there. Later, when Crane got to going, why they had several fellows drown in there.

PAULINE: Well did people come in from outside Harney County to go there?

ELDON: To the springs, you mean?

PAULINE: Yeah, to the springs, or ---

ELDON: Well not to my knowledge, unless it was just somebody going through or something like that. The ordinary people, oh they might go down there, just look the thing over, go down for a day of swimming or something like that. But they never, they never did have such big crowds or anything. They would at a dance or some-thing like that. But ordinarily they weren't overly crowded.

PAULINE: Well did you go to school at Lawen, or here in Burns, grade school?

ELDON: I went through grade school at Lawen, and I went through high school at Emmett, Idaho. I went two years down there. Beginning my junior year, I started up here. I don't know if you ever heard of a D. M. McDade, used to be principal here, he was the principal. I forget what year that was. But anyway, he and I didn't get along, so I went back to my brother Allen, had just one year to go to

school. So, I went down to the ranch and worked, and Allen came up, and finished out his year of school. Then the following year I went back to Emmett, the next two years, and finished up down there.

PAULINE: Were there just the three of you boys then, Allen and Earl, and you?

ELDON: No, they had, there was a boy, I had a brother younger, Leland was his name.

PAULINE: Was Earl the oldest?

ELDON: Earl, Allen, myself, and Leland. I'm the only one left, I guess.

PAULINE: Was it you or Earl that drove the delivery wagon for one of the stores here in town? Someone was telling me, I --- maybe

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ELDON: I worked for Burns Bakery for, I don't know how long it was, better than a year, wasn't it? Better than a year I worked there. And I delivered to all the places in town, even made the, occasionally made the run to Crane.

LELA: Well Allen used to work at one of the grocery stores down here ---

ELDON: Well Allen worked for Weinstein's, that was before I was in the bakery, ever worked out of the bakery.

LELA: Can't think who had that store then.

ELDON: That Allen worked in? Weinstein, I'm pretty sure.

LELA: Yeah, that's right.

PAULINE: What kind of rig did you use to deliver with?

ELDON: Oh, we had a, oh what I used --- in fact they had two Fords, they were panels, they was what we called them, Ford panels. One of them was a little different. One of them was a little bit bigger than the other, a little different construction. But it, well the back end, well the whole thing was closed. You could open the back end. I used that hauling from here to Crane, and we had to stop at Lawen.

PAULINE: What kind of a road did they have from Burns to Crane then?

ELDON: Just about as rough as it is --- there was no pavement on it. But I guess it was graveled all the way. But after it dried out a little bit, and get washboardy you couldn't hardly stay on it. In those days they didn't have this equipment now that laid that stuff down or anything. It would get pretty rough.

PAULINE: Was the highway and the road about in the same place as it is now? Or did they move it when they changed ---

ELDON: No, it's all in the --- of course the other side of your place, a little change in that curve there. But your main outline of the road, all the way through, it's the same as it was.

PAULINE: I can remember that when it went up there and turned a square corner. That was ---

ELDON: Yeah. We picked up quite a few wrecks out there. Over 31 years of policing, you pick up quite a few of those things.

PAULINE: Well you went into the sheriff's department as a deputy, didn't you, first?

ELDON: Yeah. I started, I was trying to think a little while ago, it was sometime, about, around about the middle of February 1942, when I started to work for Charlie Frazier. This February it will be 31 years, won't it? That's too darn long, in a place like this!

PAULINE: And then when did you become sheriff, how long were you a deputy?

ELDON: Well I figured three of them, three and a half years; I was elected in '44, wasn't it? Yes.

LELA: Well you took office in '45.

ELDON: Well I took office January 1st, 1945. I was elected in '44, but I took the office in '45.

PAULINE: What happened to Charlie Frazier?

ELDON: But he was there. When I went in, I went into ... Bill Gould would have been Charlie's deputy, and Bill killed himself over there, and Charlie hired me to finish out his term. Then he decided he wasn't going to run for it, and had me start to run. In fact I run in the primary, and then later in the summer he decided that he wanted it again. Well he filed as an independent, and we had a three-way

race, the first year. Of course I come out on top. And then is where --- I guess it was about five different terms. And then I never had any competition at all on either side.

PAULINE: I can never remember of you ever having any.

ELDON: No, not until --- well last time I ran I did have. But I had two, and when the primaries was over, ... I didn't beat both of them. I got more write-ins than they got all together, and they ended up right in the primary. So I never had any run-off in the fall. It's a hard old game; don't let anybody tell you that it isn't.

PAULINE: Well law enforcement has to be. I mean it just ---

ELDON: And it's getting worse all the time, as far as that goes. There are so many more laws and stuff that they have changing and enacting. It could take one man here just enough, but study to keep up with it and know what is going on.

PAULINE: Well this is one thing I was going to ask you, you know, if things were less complicated in 1945.

ELDON: If we were to go back to 1945, I could have --- well just the same amount of help that I've got right now, and at those times we had about two, I think, and the state police. We could go back and do this job just as well as it's being done right now, and a hell of a lot less money than it is costing people now. But you can't make anybody see it. So --- I think it is a good time to get out of it, and let somebody else worry about it.

I've had lots of interesting things, some good and some not. It's just like panning for gold, it gets under your skin and you can't help but keep a digging. But I'll say this; there is a heck of a lot of darn nice people in Harney County. And there is some that are not so good. But right here in Burns and Harney County, there is just a lot of people. And I can go out here and tell somebody, the judge will be in a certain --- and he wants to talk to him, wants him as a witness, or this or that. And I've never had, a lot of times even give them a subpoena. If I tell them to come, well they'll come. They tell me they're going to be here, I recognize it. A lot of places you can't get that too. Right here, some

of the people don't too, but I know the folks that will come in of course. I don't know if --- oh as I say, it gets under your skin all right.

LELA: Why don't you mention some of the changes you have seen, like in roads, and communications, and those things?

PAULINE: Oh yes, this would be interesting.

LELA: Over the years ---

PAULINE: Twenty years ago if you needed to get a hold of --- down in the south end, how would that compare to today?

ELDON: When I first started in, it was, if the roads were wet or sloppy, when I left here nobody knew when I'd get back. I had no communications whatever. I'd go down and do the best I could, and come back. Sometimes maybe we'd be gone for a day or two, some-times maybe just a day. I left here one time, went to Catlow Valley, picked up a man. Went out through Catlow Valley to Guano Valley, met a fellow there, went to Lakeview, ate, got a warrant. Alturas, so we came with extradition papers, or voluntarily come back with us. "Well," he said, "hell, I'll go back to Lakeview with you." So we brought him back there, had him in court that morning. I left there as soon as we got out of court, came back and went up into Catlow Valley again and served jury summonses. I don't know, it was about 10 or 11 o'clock that night when I got back home, the following night. I never even stopped all day, all night, and all the next day.

PAULINE: All the next day.

ELDON: I was just starving too. But the roads are --- I'd like to plan to make a trip down to the South End now from out to Folly Farm and down that way, there is a good road. And pretty near all the communities now, there is a passable road. And if it is wet weather, they might have trouble coming from their place out to the main road and all, but ordinarily they can get by.

But that was one of the things years ago, we just didn't have the --- And the radio, it took years and years before I --- That's the thing that burns me up, the City they take all the --- all that



damn stuff they got down there belongs to the county. They take this outfit, take all the credit. It burns you up.

PAULINE: Well about when did the county get the radio? They've had it ever since I can remember, I think.

ELDON: Oh gee, I'll tell you. What was my call number that --- was it 56-1?

LELA: I don't remember. I thought you had it before that. That was your year, that was your license.

ELDON: Well yeah.

LELA: The year of your car.

ELDON: Yeah.

LELA: Seems like it was, but I --- it probably wasn't any earlier than that. I believe it was.

ELDON: No, I think it was 51, I'm just pretty sure that that's--- We had ... we had two for the sheriff's office, and Herb Fawcett had one, and had some in those days. And in those days we had a station at Diamond, one at Drewsey, and one down to Fields. And they were all hooked into the main station over here. Now a lot of times from car to car, all we could talk into was Burns, or if we were over around Drewsey someplace there, we could talk to the Drewsey station. But ---

PAULINE: Did this change the way you were able to do your job a lot, when you could ---

ELDON: Yeah, it made an awful lot, just an awful lot of difference. Now, in those days, if I had to call somebody to check on brands, or license, or taxes, or stuff like that I'd have to go to a telephone, and generally to --- Well in those days, I guess the Roaring Springs had a phone.

LELA: There was nothing in the South End though, that radio down in Fields was the only communications.

ELDON: Well yeah, that was the only communication. But your telephone, that was Roaring Springs, and that was before we had the radio, and that was not satisfactory. But as soon as we got the radio, oh there has been a number of times I've been down there and if I wanted to contact Burns, there was never a time but what I could get into the Fields Station.

PAULINE: Well if you needed to check on, like a license number why you could do it without having to come clear back to Burns.

ELDON: Yeah. But of course in those days we didn't have near the damn car thieves we have now either, as far as that goes.

PAULINE: Well what about cattle rustling?

ELDON: Well, we never had too many of them. There is cattle that has been taken, or missing. Probably somebody got them, but a lot of times we've never found out who.

LELA: You've worked on a lot of those things, haven't you?

ELDON: Well I know, but how many have we got?

LELA: Well I don't think that's what Pauline asked. There was quite a bit, it seemed like, and you worked on a lot of it. I can remember you going to the South End and around.

PAULINE: Well it is kind of a big place to try to catch ---

ELDON: You've got 10,132 square miles; it's pretty easy for them to go in any direction. But there are times that you line up some-thing.

PAULINE: Well I don't suppose that maybe this was as true by the time that you became sheriff as it maybe was in the earlier days, but I was talking to someone today that, and they were telling me a story. It sounded to me like some of these communities, especially far out in the country, took the law into their own hands. I mean if something come up that happened, that they felt was better left un-investigated, why they just took care of it themselves, and that was that.

ELDON: Well that probably was, probably some of that going on all right, no question. There is times now I think a little of that going might help some of these buzzards that kind of like to break the law. I can't ---

PAULINE: It used to be that they used to have like a marshal out at Drewsey, and ---

ELDON: Well, I don't know -- At Harney I'm sure at one time they had a marshal there, of course years and years ago. Of course Drewsey could have had, but I'm not too familiar with it over there.

But I don't, I just don't recall it. I know Harney had at one time, but I don't know of any of the others. But I don't know, it's --- Of course I realize I'm getting old and cranky, and that's all the matter I guess. Get kicked around, and cuffed around, and I've fought the day until ... fighting to collect taxes --- Sometimes you just wonder if it is worth it. Like in the, I asked for it, and I want to do it as long as I can.

PAULINE: Well there is, well this would be with any job there is an unpleasant part of the job.

ELDON: Oh yeah.

PAULINE: Well what are some of the good things that you, I mean the things that you really enjoy about your job?

ELDON: Well I like to get along with people, and work with people. And some of these youngsters that happen to come in, of course I've got clear away from that anymore. They've got other men that handle that, take care of that stuff. There is nothing in the world that, it's just like these guys that have been taken in and tried, and even been convicted, and I've delivered them to the penitentiary. Nothing pleased me more than to have them come back and come up and say, "Well I made a mistake." And for me to be able to help them and get themselves straightened out. Now that to me means more than anything else in that damned office. I don't know, I'm funny I guess. That means more to me than --  
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PAULINE: Well it has gotten to the point now that actually a position of sheriff you have a lot of paper work to do, and a lot of ---

ELDON: There is a lot of that. It isn't so much, just a lot of people think that the sheriff's office is, there is nothing much to be done. But I'd just like to have anybody to go in there and go through this thing, and work it like it should be worked. And at the end of the day if they're not ready to come home, why they have some reason for ---

PAULINE: Well then at one time, before Burns had a juvenile officer, then you worked with the juveniles.

ELDON: I worked with the juveniles for, well Mac Lowe, when he was, when Mac was deputy --- If Mac even took that, he was juvenile man for quite a while. And I had it for quite awhile. Then they finally, I don't know if they hired, I guess, an outside man, or somebody else to take it.

LELA: Well you used to be the parole officer for the county too.

ELDON: Well the state parole man there, I say state, that was Harney County --- in those days again you get back, these parole officers that work out of the Salem penitentiary or headquarters down there. They'd have though, the man that had it, the whole eastern part of the state to check on. He'd come in here and people that we'd had in court, and the judge had sentenced them and been convicted and all, or sentenced and placed on probation, they would have to make a report, file a written report to me every month. Not only one, but we were given two, two reports, the same form. Send them into the office, and I would co-sign one of them, read it over, and co-sign it and send it on into Salem, but I'd keep one copy. And when the parole officer came through, if he was short a parole report that these fellows hadn't mailed in, he could always look at my copy there.

It was, it used to be, oh sometimes three months before a fellow ever come in, and they were supposed to be in every month. And I did that for, oh heck, I don't know how many years. That must have gone for 8 or 10 years or better.

LELA: But you used to make trips out in the country, contacting these fellows sometimes too. It was just that much more work, you know.

ELDON: It was just --- but nobody thought anything about it then. They don't even believe now, you go over there, figuring out some-thing that he did, but --- And another thing that, about the whole thing, I don't give a damn what anybody else says, but that jail we've got over there is a good part of my thinking. I fought for years to get something better for the damn jail. ... That old jail we had, I don't know how the county --- well they're just darned fortunate that we didn't have somebody killed, or injured, or some darn thing in that old type jail.

PAULINE: Well it was pretty gruesome too, wasn't it?

ELDON: Oh brother, I'll tell the world. And I don't care how many men you'd put in there, in fact I've got some Indians out here, they're old friends of mine, they've spent months and months in that darn jail. I'd get them in there, and they'd say, "Well we've got to clean the old place up." They'd paint it up, straighten it up, clean it all up. But it --- We got started; when they had to move out, supposedly to strengthen this other buildings we've got there now. I kept a hollering and a yakking, and I got, of course Chet Craddock was in there, and Chet worked for it too. And I got a lot of other people around town here, civic organizations and all behind it. And we got enough votes to get some money to build it.

PAULINE: To build it. Well I can't remember, it hasn't been so very long ago, but I can't remember the date.

ELDON: No, it hasn't been so, it hasn't --- I don't remember now just what year it was.

PAULINE: I'll have to check on that.

ELDON: Because we were ---

LELA: It was when John was with us. It was when John was little.

ELDON: Well yes, because we used to go over there, you know.

PAULINE: Well I graduated in '56, and you still had the old jail then.

LELA: Yes. Well it must have been probably, well around the early '60's or something.

PAULINE: I'll have to go down and look through the old papers and find out when that was built.

ELDON: Well I sure don't remember now. Because I was talking to somebody over there the other day, something was mentioned about it. ...

LELA: ... but ... will reach over here and swat me beside the head pretty soon. I can run pretty fast, so I'll take off. But another thing, you worked by yourself on, real hard was to get the Teletype in here. ... through the Oregon State Sheriff's Association. And I know at your meetings you'd teach -- well the other sheriffs were working together too. But Eldon really was the instigator of getting the Teletype set up. And that's something, you've been a member, and a past president of the Oregon

State Sheriff's Association, as well as a member of the National Sheriff's Association.

PAULINE: When did you get the Teletype, do you remember?

ELDON: Well we had that ---

LELA: Did you have that before the jail? Yes, I believe you did. It's quite a ways back. But my that was a help on communications since they've had that. Because they can --- like on stolen cars or something they can Teletype Salem and in just a few minutes have an answer back. There are lots of things, you know, that ---

ELDON: Of course the service in that has improved. You used to Teletype in for a motor numbers and stuff like that, license sometimes took quite a while. Now it's pretty near as fast as you get away from the keyboard, they've got an answer for you anymore. It is more mechanized. But I've forgotten ---

LELA: It seems to me like Lloyd Larsen was the chief here at the time that you got that, and you decided ---

ELDON: Well Lloyd, he was chief, and it was down, it was down in the old jail, downstairs in the city. Downstairs before they moved to the current location.

LELA: Where they are now, that's right. And he put it there because it was always open through the night, you see. Well let's see ---

ELDON: Well, I got that thing started on my own for a year, as far as that goes.

LELA: Worked hard on that through the sheriff's association. There were other sheriff's working to get it in their counties, you know, and they all kind of worked together on it.

ELDON: That's quite a rig anymore. It pretty near takes somebody that works it all the time to keep up with it. You notice the NIC, stolen property; you've got to have it just, periods just right. But when you get it in there, you've got something.

PAULINE: You get the data right back.

ELDON: If a car is ever stopped anyplace you're notified.

PAULINE: Right now. Well I know, I know I hear, you know, through the news, a lot of cars and runaways and one thing and another are picked up here, because the officers know about them.

ELDON: Well that's something about the, a lot of people wonder why we have such a large jail population. And a lot of it is a home to these characters, of course. Anymore they don't run them through court near as fast as they used to either, as far as that goes.

PAULINE: Well does this, this law, you know, is being sure that you have notified the prisoners of their rights. Is that causing much problem here in Harney County? Have you had ---

ELDON: Oh, to me it's a damn pain in the neck. But it is one of the things we have to learn to accept, the same as we do some of the other things. You don't just --- You mention, made me think, friend John McKelvey, I've worked an awful lot with John McKelvey over the years ... in the office over there. And up until the deal come through here, you got to advise them of everything. John and I could take a fellow and take them in the back office and sit down and visit with him, talk with him, and there wouldn't be maybe one out of ten that we couldn't get them to tell us the whole damn story, right back there. Maybe they wouldn't want to talk to me, and they liked the way John talked. Or maybe they didn't like John, get him out of here, and I'll tell you. And that's the way we worked it, and --- darn it, those fellows, they took them in, they'd make a statement, sign an oath or statement that they made it, and admit the whole cockeyed thing. But now, oh no, if you don't even ---

PAULINE: You can't even say, hello how are, until you ---

ELDON: You can't say anything. Just excuse yourself, and this is it. I don't know, it may be all right. I think that sooner or later they'll wake up to the fact that they are going to have to back up on some of that stuff. Somebody ... some of these days. A change on that kind of a grouping. To me it's silly, but ---

PAULINE: Well of course it was, it come up because there were people in authority who weren't, perhaps as honest ---

ELDON: Well that's the whole darn thing, it --- Oh, I don't know. I was talking to John McKelvey

this afternoon, we were visiting about, spoke of some of these darns things, different ones he and I'd had brought in and talked to. But it is just surprising. And nine out of ten people will, if they are charged with some kind of crime or something, they don't appreciate you telling them that they are no damn good, that they are a damn bum, and stink and all this. You talk to them the same as you would if you was just visiting with them. And the next thing you know you've got the whole cockeyed story. But it takes an awful lot of patience too. And anymore I don't have --- I just don't. That's one thing about John, he got more patience. But he's just like I am, I guess we've seen our day, let somebody else take it. John is a good man, that's all I can say about him. I worked with him long enough.

PAULINE: Well I don't think there is anyone that doesn't think very highly of him. I have always just liked him a whole lot.

ELDON: He's --- If John catches you violating the law, you're going to get it the same as the next one. But one thing about it, John McKelvey will never lie to you. You get anything; it's the way it should be. And if it isn't he finds out about it, he goes to you and tells you that he was wrong. Not all of them are that way. John, to me, is a very likeable fellow, and darned good friend of mine.

PAULINE: How big was the old jail? I can see it in my mind's eye, but I couldn't guess.

ELDON: They had, we had two cells that they could lock men into. I think we could --- there weren't any bunks in them, like the ones we have over here now. We have cells over here, and each cell has two bunks in it. But this one had two bunks, or two cells. I don't think you could have got more than one bunk in each cell. And then on the outside of the cell block, out a ways, was a little room there that you could put in a bed. I suppose by squeezing them, you could probably put in possibly four in there together behind those locked doors.

And then of course the outside, outside of the steel caging there was quite a little bit of room there. But of course that was just --- the space there they could ramble around in. They had their beds out there all right, that's where we kept them, with the exception of the ones that we had to hold



secure, tight.

LELA: Don't forget the old wooden stove that you used to, they had to take wood in there for it, you know, and you never could be too sure whether somebody would lambaste you with a stick of wood.

ELDON: Yeah, that's when I was working for Frazier. They picked up a guy, and I went out, Charlie was downtown I guess. Oh, he went downtown to get something for this fellow to eat, I guess. And I went out for some darn thing, I had to go out there, and I don't know I just felt that I had better watch the old door. You'd open it, and it hinged back and you didn't have to look to your right, but it left the left side wide open. This old boy was standing back there with a stick of stove wood just waiting for me to stick my head in the door. If I'd have gone in I would have got conked just sure as the devil. He was a, that poor devil was, well he had just slipped, he had lost his marbles. He was just nuts.

LELA: Didn't they do their own cooking? You'd get groceries for them, and they would ---

ELDON: But this was a mental case. And Charlie went down, that's how it was, he went down to -- - I know when he came back he had, he got some ham and eggs I believe. I told him, watch for him, I didn't want him walking in the damn door there, without some help. So I went out and met him, and we finally got the old boy located and he was still back in the corner there. However he --- I don't know whether he got rid of his stick of wood there, I think he still had it. But anyway, he didn't like me because I had some shaking up putting him in there, and he just didn't like me. But Charlie was okay, so he loved up to Charlie, which was all right with me, as far as that goes.

PAULINE: Well the next time it would have been the other way.

ELDON: Would have been the other way, it don't make any difference. But anyway, Charlie had took him over to the table, set this stuff on the table, and I says come on and eat. They had these two fried eggs, and I think they were on hash brown potatoes. And this old boy stood and looked at those a little bit, and he just reached down with a hand and just picked up those eggs and shoved them in his mouth. And he had whiskers all over his face, and if he wasn't a mess. And we finally got him halfway cleaned up.

That was the day, I guess, that was the day that Pendleton came, they came over and got him. But god, he was a bad one to take care of. And we've had a few over here that haven't been the easiest in the world to get along with.

LELA: Can I make you a cup of tea, Pauline?

PAULINE: Oh, I'd love some, yes, thank you.

ELDON: But that's just one thing or two. I haven't worked with it ... trying to get along with those prisoners out there, try to keep peace there. God you can ---

PAULINE: That can be quite a job. Especially if a couple of them didn't like each other.

ELDON: And there is always somebody, there is always ... Pretty near impossible to ---

PAULINE: Well what do you think about this, well I don't know whether it has gone into effect now yet, or whether they are just talking about it. But where being drunk isn't going to be an offense where you have to put them in jail anymore.

ELDON: Personally I don't like that kind of a setup at all.

PAULINE: You don't like that.

ELDON: I don't like it a damn bit. I don't know what they are going to do about it. You can take right here, well we've got dozens of fellows that have got no home to take them to. And where are we going to, what are we going to do with them?

PAULINE: Well you're going to end up with them back in jail.

ELDON: Yeah, and just what are we going to do with them. That's the thing ---

LELA: You want some tea Eldon?

ELDON: Oh, I might. You want some?

LELA: Well I see, I might too.

ELDON: But I realize, but ---

PAULINE: Well it seems to me like, with this law will have to come facilities then. You'll have to have another facility to take care of the people that have to be taken care of.

ELDON: Well, and there is just a lot of these guys, maybe it is, I don't know. But these drunks, it is a sickness. We have them in over here, and you talk with them, and they know that they've been on a drunk. And they say, well it don't bother me at all, hell I can work around the damn stuff and all that. Now is it a sickness, or is it just their own damn thinking, their head? As far as I'm concerned there is a lot of them --- some of them of course will always be drunks. I can't, I can't go along with --- there are some yes, there have been times ... They've made it pretty damn rough for us, and no doubt needed some help. In fact they had a fellow not too long ago, he really needed some help. But we sent him to Pendleton, be over there just long enough for him to dry him up, and he's back, they send him right back.

PAULINE: And he's right back where he started.

ELDON: He's right back where he started. So, I don't know, I don't know what the answer is. But there is always something.

-pb-

bl

## MR. &amp; MRS. ELDON SITZ

## JIM BAKER'S NOTES - BURNS, OREGON - 2-19-72

The Lawen School is the only one in this area operating each year continuously, in the same place and building. At least since 1905.

Rube Sitz (called R. R.) came out from Wisconsin, to California, to Oregon. In 1860 to Canyonville. In 1887 to Lawen, and took up preemption rights. His wife was a Gray from Oregon City. The Gray family came to Crane Creek Gap area. In 1896 this family went to Lawen and built a hotel, livery stable and store. R. R. ran registered shorthorn cattle. Kept bulls and sold them to others for breeding. Also had horses.

Lawen had a store, hotel, with dining room, livery barn, school, blacksmith shop, some 5-6 houses. Even had a woman doctor. Once Eldon got kicked in the face --- she cleared off the kitchen table and went to work. Her name was Dr. Iland (later married Catterson). She came from San Francisco and was well trained. She had no relatives here. But had a house and drug supplies out of her home. She served the Crane area too.

In Lawen, they had an epidemic of black leg with the cattle. Nothing much could be done. Hit some people pretty heavy. Once Eldon and another moved a herd to south of Crane and didn't lose any then.

Eldon can remember freighting wagons of 12-16 horses on a jerk line pulling 3 wagons. "Those old jerk line horses --- you could whistle and they'd know just what to do."

Once a guy got stuck in the sand. The boss man pulled the boy off and told him to sit in the shade of some sage. The boss got under the wagon and hooked up a chain that would let one wagon go before the others. He hooked it, set the brake and started up. He stopped the horse (he had a different approach for each horse) and pulled the wagons right out. The boy could have cried. It was easy if you knew how.

Those old horses really knew what was going on, and the driver would say this or that and the

horses would do it right.

Rustling cattle was common crime. Sometimes you'd find a fellow in a tree.

These cattle on Pelican Island were branded over the original brand. They were found out there where cattle weren't normally.

For Christmas, especially, people would start working. The teacher would get kids to canvass the neighborhood for money for candy and nuts. "It was a community thing. It'll never be done again." Relative would come. Load up the kids on a sled --- they'd get to fighting on the way --- maybe fall off.

Several there were good singers. The people there had a good amount of talent. This was true of these small communities. And each one knew what the other community had. What killed was the people moving away; e.g. school dropped from 35 to 18 in Lawen. Though recently grew back up.

P. H. Gray built the store in Lawen, which is now out on the highway.

"What we had down there we had to provide ourselves."

There is less closeness now because people can get around so much better with good transportation.

This is the same in Harney, Drewsey, etc. It was a community thing because of the isolation.

One winter R. R. was breaking horses and got a busted hip. Was wintertime and everyone was feeding the cattle. The neighbors alternated the feeding. You'd pay back with exchange, not wages. "People leaned on the next one."

But trouble could be caused. The weatherman didn't provide enough water. If you have plenty of snow, you'd have plenty of water.

Grandma Gray raised chickens. One lady wanted 4 fryers. Grandma caught 4 and put them in a slat box. The lady picked up the box --- and the slat came off. She shot the heads off the 4 with a 22. The lady said, "How the hell did you learn to do that?"

## MRS. LELA (ELDON) SITZ

In 1876 A. W. and Anna Howser came from California to Burns. Mother was born in the northern area of Burns in a log cabin. Family moved to Coffee Pot area later. Mother was Ella Howser, born in 1879. There was 5 other families --- including Whitings. Were farmers. They had a creek with good water. Would bring eggs to Burns. And if a hen didn't lay, it'd lose her head. The garden would include potatoes, beets, turnips, and leaf lettuce. Also had pigs and a few cattle. Also some fruit trees --- apple. Did much canning and had large cellar for storing. They'd boil their jars, then the food. Make their own bread.

And always had company --- with 8-10 kids. And they'd stay overnight. Grandma Howser helped an awful lot at births, etc. She used to count up the kids she'd helped bring into the world. Also for injuries, she helped.

Her father (Lela's) was John E. Loggan (brother was Charles). John H. Loggan was his father. He crossed the plains and stopped in La Grande. They were ranchers from 1885 here east of Harney. In 1888 they moved to Harney and worked in the store. Granddad had store and postmaster.

John E. Loggan worked in Harney area. Went to college at Philomath until 1891. Returned to work in store, then worked for P.L.S. at White Horse Ranch. In 1898, he entered in Spanish-American war out of Reno with the cavalry. He used to tell a lot of stories about the war. The horses they had were so small that some fellow's feet dragged. Once these horses got loose, they were all stallions and 40-50 started fighting. In 1901 he married Ella Howser.

Dad and his uncle were the only 2 fellows from Harney County to be in that same war.