

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #261 - Sides A & B

Subject: Eugene Luckey (With Video)

Place: Harney County Library, Burns, Oregon

Date: December 20, 1989

Interviewers: Dorothea Purdy & Barbara Lofgren

DOROTHEA PURDY: This is Dorothea Purdy and we're at the library with Eugene Luckey. And Barbara Lofgren is helping me. And we will be doing a history on Eugene Luckey, asking him something about his family, where he came from, what he has done during his life, and some of the history maybe of Harney County. Gene, can you tell us your name?

EUGENE LUCKEY: Eugene Luckey, and I was born in Bend, Oregon, January 25th, 1926. And my father at that time was working as a mechanic for Eddy's Garage. And I was born in a little house behind Wagner's Grocery Store. And at that time it was clear out in the country. My mother was just a housewife, and her sister and her husband also lived there. That is Grace, which is now Grace Farster. And father worked there as a mechanic for several years. And then we moved over to Burns, and father started to build a building down there where the Powerhouse Restaurant is now. And he had the Essex Hudson Agency in that building. That was about 1930, '31.

BARBARA LOFGREN: And what was your father's name, and your mother's name?

EUGENE: My father's name was Norman W. Luckey. And he was the son of Clarence Luckey, and Ella Whiting. Dad was born September the 4th, 1898, here in Burns, Oregon. My mother Florence, whose maiden name was Lazarus was born in Hayden, Colorado, November the 7th, 1900. Mother's family come to Harney County in 1908. Her

father's name was Franklin Lazarus, and her mother's name was Carolyn Furrer whose parents came from New York City, and grandparents came from Switzerland. The Lazarus family come from Northern Michigan, to Colorado, then out here to Oregon.

But to get back to my story, after my father come over here and started this garage, it wasn't a very good time to get started, because the depression was pretty bad then. And he had to give up the garage and we moved to Seneca. And my dad was working on a big gasoline caterpillar in Seneca at the time. And there was no starting motors on those. They were started by putting a bar on a big flywheel and turning it. And even though I was pretty young, I could still remember him building fires under it, and there was caterpillars, to try to get them warm enough to start it. Because at 45 or 50 below, they didn't want to start.

BARBARA: And did they just let them keep running then after they once got them started?

EUGENE: No, they shut them off. I recall one instance, Dad was working there on the evening shift, and we lived a ways away from town. There was a porcupine that was scratching around on the road from tree to trees there where we lived, and scared my mother to death. So she didn't like that very well. So one day Dad caught the porcupine on the ground, and he was chasing the porcupine around with a double bitted axe and took a big swing at it and chopped his tire in half.

BARBARA: Oh, no.

EUGENE: So, he finally did away with the porcupine. Anyhow, after working up there for Hines for a while, he did come back and resume, picked up with the garage. But that didn't work out too well either. And so we all moved down to San Francisco, where he also started working as a mechanic. And he also got, he started a business of doing the

laundry, laundering all the mechanic's overalls. And the mechanics in those days wore overalls; generally down there they wore white overalls.

And he also had another interesting job, in those type days, not everybody knew how to drive. And he used to tell stories about driving the mayor, and all the city councilmen around occasionally. BARBARA: So he was an early day chauffeur.

EUGENE: Yes, a chauffeur. And I can remember that those steep hills down in San Francisco, not all the hills* (*corrected to cars) could go up over them. So Dad got a hold of a great big Marman car. That was the name of it, Marman.

BARBARA: Marman.

EUGENE: Marman. That was a little bit before your time.

BARBARA: Maybe.

EUGENE: And it was, had a great big powerful motor, about sixteen feet long. And he could go right up those hills, and he thought that was great sport.

We moved back to Oregon, and my mother's family --- I'll give a little bit more on them. Grandmother Lazarus, as I used to call her, had a campground down by Riverside Drive. And in the early days of motoring, there were no motels or anything. You would go from town to town and stay at campgrounds. There used to be one down there behind the Ford Garage. It had tin all the way around it; I don't know how long it had been here. But that was the place they drove in, get in under the roof and camp.

BARBARA: Did they put up tents and things like that, or just ---

EUGENE: Tents, sometimes, yeah if they were going to stay with their car.

BARBARA: --- or just stay in their car?

EUGENE: But anyhow the --- Lazarus, Carolyn Lazarus and her second husband, George Hibbard, had that campground down there by Riverside Drive. I can't hardly find

it anymore, but it's still there.

DOROTHEA: Now this is, Carolyn is your grandmother?

EUGENE: Grandmother on my mother's side.

DOROTHEA: On your mother's side.

EUGENE: Yeah, my maternal grandmother.

DOROTHEA: And she married George Hibbard.

EUGENE: Yeah. Her and Frank Lazarus divorced, and then she married George Hibbard. And George Hibbard was a mechanic --- a carpenter. And he built a lot of these houses around town.

DOROTHEA: Now what George Hibbard was this?

EUGENE: It was no relation to the George Hubbard's that lived here.

DOROTHEA: Not the --- Oh, a different ---

EUGENE: It was a different.

DOROTHEA: Different Hibbard.

EUGENE: Different Hibbard. I don't know exactly where he come from. And then he died, and she married Jack Williams. Grandmother Carolyn was a little small woman. She was less than five feet tall. And she was a kissing woman. And I was just a kid then, and boys don't like to be grabbed and kissed. But she was always grabbing me and kissing me.

BARBARA: She'd do it anyway, huh?

EUGENE: Me and my cousin, yeah. And she had an old player piano, and she loved to sing religious songs, and play on that piano.

BARBARA: In this campground, did they just have shelters, or did they have tents for people?

EUGENE: No, just ground, just ground.

BARBARA: Just the ground, just the ground for them to park there. I see.

EUGENE: Let's see, we --- Mother and Father divorced and separated. And Mother worked as a waitress at the Welcome Hotel. And finally ---

BARBARA: How old were you at that time?

EUGENE: I was about five years old. And she heard from a man called Duff Cushing, who was an old, old pioneer of Harney County that was born here in 1888, and had moved to Bellevue, Washington. And he wanted somebody to cook and keep house for him and his mother. So Mother and I moved to Bellevue, Washington, where I started grade school. And went several years to grade school up at Bellevue, Washington. And our schoolhouse had all eight grades in one room. And that place in Bellevue now has skyscrapers. So it's really incredible.

BARBARA: Progressed a little bit.

EUGENE: Progressed a little bit. But Mother and I --- or she left Duff and we returned to Harney County. And I went to school here, grade school, under our fabulous Mr. Sutton who was the principal.

BARBARA: We have heard stories about him.

DOROTHEA: Mr. Sutton is a familiar name. Can you tell us something about the school at that time?

EUGENE: The school, old school up there was two story, two or three stories; I can't remember whether it was three stories or what. And I remember we used to march in there, and up them stairs, and the whole building would shake when we all got in step. You just --- quivered.

BARBARA: Quivered.

EUGENE: And in addition to --- I never did run afoul of Mr. Sutton, but I kept, had a pretty good eagle eye on him. We had, for eighth grade teacher we had Mrs. Geer. And Mrs. Geer had a wooden leg. And I can remember when she come down the hall, she'd go clump, clump, clump. And we used to put away our spitballs, erasers, and things, and all sit down, calm down by the time she got to the last clump and up to the door. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: What Mrs. Geer was this, who was she?

EUGENE: Neva Geer, Neva Geer. Quite a gal.

DOROTHEA: Do you know who she was married to? Was she married to the hardware people or ---

EUGENE: And --- no, I don't. I don't know who ---

DOROTHEA: --- different.

EUGENE: I think her husband was dead by the time she was teaching school. She was the one that --- She has also taught my mother. And she used to grab my mother, if she didn't know something, if she would be at the blackboard she'd grab her by the hair and bang her head up against the blackboard. (Laughter)

BARBARA: Oh, no. She wanted to make sure it got into the head.

EUGENE: Make a statement there. But she'd kind of calmed down a little bit. But boy, you didn't want to run afoul of her. But in those days it seemed like that the biggest thing for recess was soccer. We didn't play too much ball up there. Pretty near always playing soccer.

DOROTHEA: Well where was the school at, where the ---

EUGENE: Where the Slater School is.

DOROTHEA: Slater School is yet.

EUGENE: In fact there is still part of it in the back end of it they used for the boiler room

or something like that.

DOROTHEA: I think they had three stories, didn't they? A basement and two stories up?

EUGENE: Well, I believe that's right. I can't really remember. This is the school that was brick. There was another school in the same location. Prior to this, it was wood. But this was the second one. And the playgrounds were all cinder. I remember playing out there, and if you fall down or something, you'd end up with cinders. So I went there and graduated eighth grade. And by that time my mother had remarried again to Mr. Fred Oltman, who was part of a big family that had a trucking firm here in Burns. And I attended high school where the present Lincoln School is. Freshmen, sophomore, and the middle of my junior year I enlisted in the navy, and went off to the war. My father also did the same thing. He went into the navy from here, in high school, when he was also seventeen. And ---

BARBARA: They allowed you to enlist at age seventeen?

EUGENE: Yeah. And in fact, I would think that pretty near half of the sailors then were about seventeen.

BARBARA: Oh.

DOROTHEA: Well what year was it when you entered the navy?

EUGENE: It was in 1943. Being young and foolish I was afraid that the war was going to be over before I got to it. (Laughter)

BARBARA: If only you knew, huh?

EUGENE: So I only like to say that I was born in Eastern Oregon, and raised in the South Pacific. I first went to Farragut, Idaho, for basic training, boot camp. Then after I got out of there I went to radio school at the University of Moscow, in Moscow, Idaho. And I went to the radio school, combination signalman school in U. S. Navy, Marine Armory at Lilac

Terrace in Los Angeles.

And after I got out of that school I was assigned to the Armed Guard Pacific. And the Armed Guard Pacific was those navy personnel that served aboard merchant vessels either in the capacity as gunners, to man the guns that had been put aboard merchant ships, or in my particular case I went aboard as a radio operator and signalman. And went aboard a liberty ship in San Francisco and shipped out of there in December of '43. Yeah, December of '43. And went down into the South Pacific for --- first trip we went to New Caledonia. Then we come back; all in all I was on two liberty ships, the Joshua Snelling and the Horace Greeley. I was on a converted luxury liner in Mat Sonia, the Antigua, which used to be a banana boat operating out of the east coast.

And I returned to the United States and was discharged in Shoemaker, California, on March 1st, 1946.

I come back to Burns and was here a short time, and I heard about a job for the Civil Aeronautics Administration in Alaska. I applied for that position, and went there in June of '46. I went to Kodiak, Alaska. And the Civil Aeronautics Administration, I was originally hired as a communication specialist, due to my training as a radio operator. And that was my principal profession most of my adult life, as the Civil Aeronautics Administration become the Federal Aviation Administration. And the communications become their traffic control. So that's what I did most of my life.

And when I was in --- shortly after I was up there I married a gal by the name of Mary Ellen Mahoney. And we had three children, two girls, Ann Elizabeth, and Mary Ellen, and a son Mark Patrick. The --- where do we want to go now?

BARBARA: And when did you leave Alaska then?

EUGENE: Oh, well I worked in different places for the government as an air traffic

controller. I worked in San Francisco, Seattle, Anchorage, Kotzebue, Battle Mountain, Guam. I worked in quite a few places, because you had to --- if you wanted to get promoted, you had to transfer.

BARBARA: That's with most government agencies.

EUGENE: So, I worked with the government until 1971.

BARBARA: Did you find it very stressful being an air traffic controller?

EUGENE: Yes. But I more or less grew up with it. And was able to assimilate it as you went along. And when I started, we were still flying DC-3's. Things were slower, but they was, somewhat more difficult because we didn't have radar and other things to assist us in that particular job. Yes, it was stressful, but not as bad as it would be now. I also became a commercial flight instructor and instrument ground instructor.

BARBARA: So where did you learn to fly then?

EUGENE: I learned to fly in Bend, Oregon, where I got my private license. And I got my commercial license in Everett, Washington, under the GI Bill. And then I picked up other ratings as I went along, different places where I worked.

BARBARA: So at what time was this that you learned to fly? Was it after you retired from the ---

EUGENE: No, I learned to fly in 1947.

BARBARA: I see.

EUGENE: On Tilse Bowman.

BARBARA: So that was just shortly after you got out of the service then that you learned to fly?

EUGENE: Yes, not too long after that. And I traveled quite a bit with the Federal Aviation Administration.

And shall we go back to the history of the thing now, or do you want to know some more about me?

DOROTHEA: You want to --- if you want to tell us some more, then we could ---

EUGENE: Well, I could --- that's about all that I can think of that might be interesting.

DOROTHEA: Okay. Your grandparents on the, let's see, on the Luckey side were Ella Luckey and ---

EUGENE: Clarence Luckey.

DOROTHEA: --- Clarence Luckey.

EUGENE: See the Luckey's --- Clarence's father, Warren Luckey, and his brother first come to Harney County with the army. In 1865, they were stationed out at Camp Currey for one year fighting Indians. Then Ella Luckey was the daughter of Thomas Whiting, and when she got to be seventeen and finished grade school --- in those days there was no high school. You went directly from grade school to college. And so we had, the Whitings had some relatives down to, in California, near Grass Valley. And so they shipped Ella off down there to go to school. She stayed just six months, and then she wanted to come back and go to school here in Oregon. So she come back and started at the University of Oregon to go to school. And while she was at the University of Oregon she met my grandfather, Clarence Luckey, who was also going to the University of Oregon. The Luckey family was originally, come to Oregon from back in Iowa in 1850, and settled in Eugene. So Clarence was going there and met Ella. And Ella quit school and come back here. And I think Clarence followed her. And they were married in, here in Harney County in 1897. I think it was 1897. And ---

DOROTHEA: Well now go back a little further. It's my under-standing that Ella was one of the, I should say the first girl baby born in Harney County. Was that out in Harney, or is

this a true fact, or do you know?

EUGENE: No, Ella used to talk to the woman that said she was born first. And I think Ella was the second one born in this --- But she was born at Fort Harney where all the settlers had been up --- during the Bannock uprising, Indian uprising. And she was delivered in the barracks there by an army surgeon. She was the last of five children.

DOROTHEA: Who were some of her brothers and sisters?

EUGENE: There was Suzie Whiting who married about three or four times. I can't remember right off --- one was Tom Baker, one of them was Hanley. And Frank Whiting who married Suzie Dixon. And Frank and Suzie had Delphine, Ellen, Ethel, that's all I can think of. And then there was "Skip" Whiting --- which one was the oldest? That's all the Whitings there was.

DOROTHEA: Just four, or five? There was Ella and Suzie and Frank and Skip.

EUGENE: Yeah. All I can think of. And they were, Skip was a horseman, raised horses. And George and Frank were cattlemen. And the Whitings first come here in 1874, in the fall, October. And it was starting to get cold so they dug a hole right out here, not far from where we live, and lived in a cave right out here by the rim rock during the winter. And later they built a house out here two miles, out there north of town. Tom Whiting was a cattleman, and they also did some house moving, and some freighting. And one time he was coming back from doing some house moving and come over this hill and the horses run away, and part of the wagon come up and tore off his heel. And he got blood poisoning and died within a few days. That was ---

BARBARA: I find it rather unusual, that I hear a lot of buildings were moved in the early days. They just didn't like them where they were, and they would move them someplace else?

EUGENE: Well, that's true, that's very true. Well, we had --- they built some buildings out to Egan first. And when Egan didn't go, and Burns started taking off, they moved some of those buildings from Egan into here. Now they had the county seat over in Harney City, and when Harney City moved the county seat over here in Burns all those buildings come into town.

DOROTHEA: Where was Egan?

EUGENE: Where the bar is.

DOROTHEA: Right out towards Hines?

EUGENE: Yeah, right there. Right there where the golf course is, right opposite there.

DOROTHEA: Was it spelled the same way?

EUGENE: Yeah, spelled the same way. That was the original town. There was quite a few buildings, but that's the reason there was a lot of houses being moved around.

BARBARA: But it just seems strange to me that they would move them a lot, you know, in the early days like that.

EUGENE: Yeah. This Pete Clemens first built a house out there on the ranch, and for some unknown reason they wanted to move it about a mile away, over a hill. And so they did. They told me that it took forty-seven head of horses to move that house.

BARBARA: Forty-seven.

EUGENE: Can you imagine forty-seven head of horses hooked up to that?

BARBARA: No, I certainly can't. How would you keep them under control?

DOROTHEA: How many drivers did they have to have?

EUGENE: I don't know how they did it. Can we stop just a minute while I make a phone call? --- After Ella and Clarence got married in 1908, they homesteaded up on the mouth of Lake Creek, near Skull Creek in the Upper Silvies. Like most of the homesteaders,

they soon discovered that you couldn't make a living out there. So they come back into town.

Clarence was a --- I know they had a ranch. He liked to buy and sell horses, and he did that. And he was also trained as a blacksmith. His grandfather was a blacksmith, and his father was a blacksmith, and he was a good blacksmith. I can remember when he lived up here in the early days; he had a forge up there with a hand crank on it. And I was always the one that did all the cranking to keep the air in the bellows. And he tried to teach me how to temper steel. He'd wait until it would get a certain temperature, and he'd stick it in a bucket of water, and he watched the color turn, and then you heat it some more. You could arrive at just any amount of temper that you wanted in this steel. But he made some money doing that.

And an interesting story is that in the early days a guy comes through town here and he had a 1912 Pierce Arrow. He got as far as Burns, and it wouldn't run anymore. Well, grandfather was pretty mechanically inclined, and he tinkered with it so he got it running again. And after he got it running again, he thought it would be a good idea for him and grandmother to go to Portland in it. So they took off for Portland.

BARBARA: You mean the man just left his rig here then?

EUGENE: Well granddad gave him something for it.

BARBARA: Oh, I see.

EUGENE: But --- so they took off for Portland in the Pierce Arrow. And what with breakdowns and flat tires, it took them a month to get there.

BARBARA: Oh, no. He'd have been better off in a horse and buggy.

EUGENE: So he got the thing to The Dalles, and he sold the Pierce Arrow and took the ferry to Portland. That was the end of that. (Laughter)

BARBARA: Oh, I can't imagine, can you?

EUGENE: Yeah. Well, I can remember those tires, you know. I used to have those, a lot of trouble. I used to do a lot of rabbit hunting out here in the sagebrush with my Model-A. We'd drive out there in the evening and shoot jack rabbits for the bounty and for the hides. And greasewood thorns would go through those early tires like nothing.

DOROTHEA: They still do.

EUGENE: Yeah, they still do. They really do if you get them on the side. That's why all these old tires --- old time cars you see them they had four or five spares. Because, man you was fixing tires all the time. And the road from here to Bend, you know, it wasn't, you were going through brush part of the time. There was no road in those early days.

DOROTHEA: Rabbit trails.

EUGENE: Yeah. They tell me when grandmother and grandfather would go to Eugene in the early days, before the car, they would go through Bend because --- not because there was anything there, there was nothing there, except they could get across the river there. And they would get up there on McKenzie Pass, and one time they got up there, a big snow up on top, but they couldn't get the horse to get up on top. They had to turn around and come all the way back.

BARBARA: Oh, no. They had some hardships in those days traveling, didn't they?

EUGENE: Yeah. One time they was coming back, this was in a car, they got into a snow storm out there at Riley, and ... they got into a building out there. But they liked to froze to death out there in the wintertime. The early days was pretty tough sledding. My grandfather was --- got a job as water master from J. C. Foley. And this is one of the things that early day ranchers fought about, was the water. And you had to be a pretty good diplomat to keep some semblance of peace. Because the water was scarce, and

every-body wanted it, and everybody thought they were entitled to more than they deserved.

DOROTHEA: I don't think that's ever changed.

EUGENE: No, it hasn't really. And after that job he was a good friend of John Bates, and he got a job as a road master for Harney County. And many of the roads, and especially in the South End of the county, were laid out and originally placed there by my granddad. He taught himself surveying, he didn't know how to survey when he got the job. And he surveyed a lot of those original roads. And he was the first one to put up signs. I still see, occasionally, one of his signs, black and white, wooden, hand painted. And sometimes in the early days you didn't know where you were going down there, the South End of the county, because there were no signs. And he was also the first one to use cinders in road construction. And he had that job for I think nine years, I forget exactly.

And along about that time my Grandmother Ella started her ladies ready to wear shop. And I think she said she, in the course of about forty years, she'd had nine different places, what with being burnt out and moving and things.

BARBARA: Did she just have strictly ladies wear, or clothing for the whole family?

EUGENE: Just ladies.

BARBARA: Just ladies.

EUGENE: I especially remember all those old hats, you know.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

EUGENE: Didn't go up town for anything unless you had a hat on, you know.

BARBARA: I see.

EUGENE: That was ---

BARBARA: Well in the early days ---

EUGENE: Not if you were a lady.

BARBARA: --- ladies wore hats and gloves. They wore gloves too.

EUGENE: Yeah, and gloves too.

BARBARA: Did they have some of the ranchers, or the ladies ---businesswomen have fancy dresses and things like that? Or were they pretty plain?

EUGENE: Oh, the only --- what is it the Rebekahs that wears formals? One of the lodges.

DOROTHEA: I think she was a Rebekah.

EUGENE: The woman's portion of the Masonic Lodge was ---

BARBARA: Eastern Star?

EUGENE: Easter Star, that's what it was, yeah. No, they didn't go in too much for that. Even the dances that we used to have out to the grange hall, they used to have some real good dances every Saturday night. Had to go to dances. And they dressed up to a certain extent, but not ---

BARBARA: They weren't fancy?

EUGENE: No. They used to have the PPP Ball here, where everybody would dress up.

DOROTHEA: Those were kind of fancy.

EUGENE: Yeah, they were fancy.

BARBARA: What was that called?

EUGENE: You even had to put on a suit. PPP --- don't ask me what they stand for, because I think its part of the Masonic deal.

BARBARA: I see.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

EUGENE: But those grange hall dances every Saturday night, the whole family came.

But --- babies, woman would sit around holding babies.

DOROTHEA: But the PPP Ball was only, invitation only.

EUGENE: Yeah, but everybody was invited.

DOROTHEA: Everybody was invited.

EUGENE: And ---

BARBARA: Did she have most of her business cash and carry, or did she charge, people charge things? Or did she have trouble ---

EUGENE: Well, those old timers, they believed that credit was a mortal sin more than anything else. They didn't believe in credit, everything was cash. But she would, if you'd lived here fifty years, and she knew you pretty well she might charge something.

BARBARA: She might charge.

EUGENE: Not much ---

BARBARA: Her supplier wanted the money, and so she did too, huh?

EUGENE: Yeah, yeah, she had a terrific credit rating too with Dunn and Bradstreet. But she never made a lot of money out of that store. But she didn't spend any money, you know. She was thrifty like most of the old timers. So they made a pretty good living out of it.

BARBARA: Do you remember where some of her shops were, that would be located on Main Street now, about where they would be?

EUGENE: Well one of them is in the Clemens' building, where the Body Wise is. And one of them is where Ruthie's was. And one of them is where the old drug store used to be. And I can't remember all the rest of them. But then in the later years my dad run a television repair shop in the back of her shop.

BARBARA: Is that right?

DOROTHEA: That was where the Body Wise is now, isn't it?

EUGENE: Yeah, in the Clemens' Building there. That was her last place there, where the, in the Clemens' Building. But ---

BARBARA: Do you remember going to some of the grange dances?

EUGENE: Oh yeah, yeah. It was great. They just had a wonderful time really. And everybody come.

BARBARA: Did young people have dates like high school age kids?

EUGENE: You bet.

BARBARA: You would make a date to take your girl to the grange dance too?

EUGENE: Well, you ---

BARBARA: Or did they just go, families?

EUGENE: You didn't take anybody until you was about junior or senior, you didn't take girls out.

BARBARA: I see.

EUGENE: You all went to the dance though, and they danced.

DOROTHEA: They didn't start when they were nine years old like they do today.

EUGENE: They had a good time. You know out there, there was generally two crowds. One crowd danced, and the other one outside drinking. (Laughter) And then they would alternate.

Another early day function that they used to have a lot of fun at is every year they'd have the lamb feed down at Crane. The Basque used to put on a big lamb feed, and the whole, everybody from the county would show up there. But we used to go to dances in Drewsey, The Narrows. And they would last all night, I mean all night.

DOROTHEA: And you'd get home in the wee hours of the morning when it was freezing

cold and ---

EUGENE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: --- snow pretty deep. I've got to pause here a little bit so we can turn this tape over.

SIDE B

EUGENE: ... depression, my grandmother and my grandfather, mostly my grandmother bought some houses on, from sheriff's sales. They didn't pay much for them. But in their latter years that provided a little rental income for them. And Grandmother was always there at that store, and people liked to drop in the store and visit with her, because nothing was, she was in no rush. She was just sitting there waiting for people to come in. So she always had time to talk to people. And very few people that didn't know her because of that store. Yeah.

BARBARA: Was she pretty active ---

EUGENE: And she helped out a lot of people too, with money, and free rent, and she was --- Before welfare, these people would come into town, and they'd be broke and couldn't even get enough gas to get through, and nobody would give them any money. Sometimes they would take up a collection and go around to the bars and take up a little money to get them to Bend, or get them someplace. But sometimes Grandmother would give them a house, and let them live in the house until they could get work or something. It was pretty tough for people that were just passing through.

BARBARA: What else did they do for entertainment other than dances? Did they play cards and things like that, do you know?

EUGENE: Well a friend of mine and I was talking about that the other day. To see this

town now, and to see what it was just forty years ago, it's just all together different. In those days you had about oh, four or five saloons. They played cards in the back of all of them. And in those days you had --- didn't cost you so much to live, there was nothing to spend money on like TV sets, and fancy automobiles, VCR's and all this stuff. So people had money. I mean this town had money. Because I can remember, you could go in the back of any of those bars and see some of those card games where there would be several thousand dollars on the table.

BARBARA: Goodness.

EUGENE: And sometimes they played all night. I've seen as much as ten, twelve thousand dollars on it. There was rich stockmen, livestock people would come in. Well even these people, business people in town, they played for big money. There was a lot of money in this town. And you could go down there at nine o'clock; ten o'clock at night you couldn't get a parking place on Main Street.

BARBARA: Is that right?

EUGENE: Now you can find one down there at three o'clock in the afternoon. Because there was just money.

DOROTHEA: That's one thing that I'm interested in, is finding the feelings of people in comparison with the day to day, and the day say forty years ago. How do you feel about the town?

EUGENE: Well, you see, I've given this some thought myself. And it seemed like in those days the community was extremely close to one another. They worked as a unit, seemed like. And somebody had a project they would get right on it and do it. And they were, just like these dances, everybody went. Everybody knew each other. Because all the men knew each other because they'd see them down there playing pool in the Palace,

or playing cards, or out to the dance, or someplace. Because people weren't huddled up in their houses watching TV. And there was inter-play between people.

BARBARA: People communicating with each other.

EUGENE: People communicating.

BARBARA: Did they ever have any trouble with being robbed? Someone come in and rob a game like that or something, someone passing through?

EUGENE: No. My grandmother lived right over there and she never locked her house in the ninety years that she lived here.

BARBARA: I just thought maybe some strangers might come through and pull a robbery.

EUGENE: No. Well, you've got to consider that even today you got a hundred and thirty-two miles of isolation, it's pretty tough to get out of here, unless you got an airplane out there.

BARBARA: Well yes. Yeah.

EUGENE: No, never had any trouble.

BARBARA: Or any big fights over cards or anything like that?

EUGENE: Oh, in the early days, yeah.

BARBARA: They would get mad and shoot one another over a card game.

EUGENE: Oh, you bet. One of my relatives, this Mace that was married to Susan Whiting. Susan, according to my grandmother, was kind of a flirt. And somehow during the dance, first old time dance, this niece and Bland got into a little argument about Suzie. And they met later in town and they both shot each other dead.

BARBARA: Oh, goodness.

EUGENE: Yeah, shot them dead. Somebody, I think it was, somebody told me they both died like that ---

BARBARA: So Suzie really was without a beau then. They were both dead.

EUGENE: No, she just went and got another husband. She got married about four times. No, there wasn't too much. Those dances where you got drinking, got fighting, and that was our entertainment out there at that grange hall. If you didn't like to drink, you could fight. (Laughter) There was plenty of that too. You could consider your Saturday night completely wasted unless you got drunk and in a fight. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: Well they used to have dances up where the Rebekah and the Odd Fellows Hall is now, didn't they?

EUGENE: Yes. The Tonawama, where that Burns --- you know where that Tonawama is?

DOROTHEA: Burns Apartments.

EUGENE: Yeah. Well they used to have dances up in there. And boy, you get up there and stomp around. I thought lots of times that building was coming down too. If the state inspectors would ever inspected one of those ---

BARBARA: They'd all be closed down.

EUGENE: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: They didn't have ---

EUGENE: But they had so many things. They'd have the Chautauqua plays. People in town would put on plays. And they'd have, well clear back in, just a few years after the town was established they had a skating rink here, roller skating rink. You wouldn't think they'd have anything like that so early. But they had all kinds of entertainment. All those places had pool tables, the snooker tables, and billiard tables. And they were all full; you'd have to wait for them lots of times. But they had bowling alleys. I recall working at the bowling alley down there where that second hand store is, down there by Copeland's.

They had a, where you set them by hand. Boy that was the hardest work I believe I ever had in my life. But they had so many things. Had two, two, and at one time they had three theaters here.

BARBARA: Is that right?

EUGENE: Yeah. And, but now you've got nothing, practically.

BARBARA: Hardly keep one going.

DOROTHEA: No, what were those, there was the Liberty, and the Tower?

EUGENE: Ideal.

DOROTHEA: And the Ideal.

EUGENE: Yeah. We used to --- every spring, first few warm days and the snow would start melting off, we'd all start going down to the, by the Ideal there and play marbles. That was the place to play marbles.

BARBARA: Oh, is that right?

EUGENE: All the kids in town would be down there playing marbles. But there was always lots to do. They had a --- spent a lot of time out at the swimming pool. The swimming pool was located out there in that grove of trees, just as you go out of Hines.

DOROTHEA: Just where the log decks are now?

EUGENE: Yeah, where the steam rise. It was a wooden swimming pool. But it was all naturally heated water, so you didn't have to pay anything to heat it. And the kids spent the summer out there. And I personally, like I say, I used to hunt, do a lot of hunting of jackrabbits. Because the county paid a bounty of five cents an ear. And you could kill a few hundred in a night. And then when the war started in '41, we got another nickel because they used the fur. So, and fishing, we always had plenty of fishing. And they didn't have so many; you didn't have to take along a lawyer to interpret the game laws.

BARBARA: You could hunt and fish when you wanted to?

EUGENE: Just --- well no, that was a little before my time. But we had a season open, you killed buck deer, and it was about a month long. And we had one game warden, now we got about fifteen. We had one cop here in town, just one. And that's all that was necessary, one state cop. Now we've got to have at least fifty.

DOROTHEA: Was the game warden, is that McKelvey at that time, or did ---

EUGENE: Yeah, one of them. Well ---

DOROTHEA: He came in later, or ---

EUGENE: Yeah, he was later. But I remember him, yeah. But things were so much simpler then. You didn't have game wardens, or game laws with a book that thick to try to interpret them. You just did your thing. So there has been a lot of changes throughout the years. Attitudes, and the way we live, the way we live. Well I'm running out ---

DOROTHEA: Okay, we can go back to some of your life then, and ask you where your children live now?

EUGENE: My son and daughter live in Prineville. I'm going to go and see them for Christmas. And then I've got another daughter in South Dakota. And three grandchildren in South Dakota, and one grandchild in Prineville. I got four grandchildren, two boys and two girls.

BARBARA: What do your children do for a living?

EUGENE: My son is a carpenter, and my daughter is a house painter. And the other daughter is in a small town in South Dakota, and she runs a store back there.

DOROTHEA: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

EUGENE: I've got a sister Lucille, who is eight years older than I. And she is married to a man by the name of Bob Hill, who is a retired orchardist from Hood River.

DOROTHEA: And did she go to school here in Burns?

EUGENE: Yes. She went to grade school and high school here. And she married Emmy Carlson, a family from Hines.

BARBARA: Did you get along as kids? Did you get along with your sister pretty much as children?

EUGENE: Oh, we fought like cats and dogs.

BARBARA: Like most brothers and sisters.

EUGENE: Well you see she had a difficult, being older than I she, of course she wanted to give me orders.

BARBARA: And you weren't about to take them.

EUGENE: I didn't sometimes like to take orders. We get along fine now. Yeah.

BARBARA: And I understand that you do some writing now. How did you happen to get into that?

EUGENE: Well, my original intentions from getting all the ratings and everything for my flying, that when I retired from the Federal Administration --- Aviation Administration, I was going to teach flying full time. But along about 1969, I had a heart attack. And when you have a heart attack, your flying days are over. So after I retired, I've always been interested in writing, and so I thought I would give it a whirl. I have a travel trailer. I used to go down to Yuma during the wintertime; I started taking writing courses down there. And I do quite a lot of historical writing, especially on this Harney County country because it is quite interesting. And we are blessed with the fact that we've got a lot of old newspapers here.

BARBARA: Right.

EUGENE: Plus the fact that this project that you're working on now has been extremely

helpful.

BARBARA: That's good to hear.

EUGENE: Well it is. I don't know how many people use it, but you can kind of use the newspaper and go through and see what the old timers got to say about it. And I dug up and clarified quite a bit of things that you can't get all out of the newspaper. But you can kind of glean it and put it all together from different sources.

BARBARA: Well some people remember it kind of one way, and others remember it a little bit different. But you can kind of put it all together and get a fairly good picture.

EUGENE: Yeah. Like this, kind of, also kind of interesting too

--- I don't remember if you heard that, read that article I wrote about the shooting of Sheriff Stroud out here at Harney City in 1912. In my mind there was a bunch of guys that just got together, and he wasn't too well liked anyhow, and they just executed him. They shot him down in the street. But I wrote that story, and it was printed in the Times Herald. And shortly after it come out, this woman called me. And she said, "Say, I read that story, and I was there." So, I'm going to catch it now. (Laughter) But she was there. But she was only about five years old when it happened.

BARBARA: So her remembrance may be, not be too clear.

EUGENE: Yeah. Oh, it's ---

BARBARA: Well in your research, do you have some other stories that you might share with us about some of the history?

EUGENE: Well, I could tell you a couple of stories that were told to my grandfather by his father, who was in the army out here. They're not, they're kind of gruesome, but they were factual stories. There was a squad of men, soldiers, camped out the end of Wright's Point, probably at Camp Wright. And in those days they used to pyramid their rifles by

hooking the swivels together on the four pieces, and kind of stack them like that ---

BARBARA: Tripod.

EUGENE: --- tripod. Well, they had done that for an overnight bivouac, and some Indians had jumped them. They couldn't get the damn rifles unhooked. And they was really getting overrun, so they took off running to Camp Currey, which is thirty miles from the end of Wright's Point. And the Indians chasing them. And one of the officers had a pistol, and when the Indians would get too close he would shoot at them and kind of slow them up a little bit. And one of the troopers had been shot in the belly. And they run all the way to Camp Harney. They lost a couple of them on the way, didn't make the run. But that trooper that had been shot in the belly ran that whole distance with a bullet in him.

BARBARA: Goodness.

EUGENE: And there were other troops there at Camp Currey. When they went out to go back and look for the guys that fell along the way, the Indians had disemboweled and strung their entrails along the top of the sagebrush.

BARBARA: Oh, goodness.

EUGENE: And another story he told that whenever they went out on bivouac they'd hobble their horses and then tie a rope to their, from the horse to their foot so that if the Indians come to steal their horse, they could feel that rope pull. And this happened to great-grandfather. He said he woke up in the middle of the night and that rope; somebody was pulling on that rope. It was pretty dark, and he looked down there, and the Indian is getting down that rope hand over hand. He got so far, and he jumped the Indian, and the Indian was naked from the waist up. He was slick, he couldn't hold on to him. Slipped off. (Laughter) And they had quite a tussle there for a while. Finally the

Indian broke and ran off. Great-grandfather said, "Boy I'm sure glad to see that Indian get away."

DOROTHEA: I bet.

BARBARA: He didn't want an encounter with him.

EUGENE: Yeah. Yeah, those early days, there was an account in the paper where they killed a nine-foot mountain lion right behind Burns here one time. That's a pretty good-sized cat.

DOROTHEA: You bet. Nine feet.

EUGENE: Yeah. So, no we ---

BARBARA: Did your grandparents have anything to say about the soldiers that were stationed at Camp Harney?

EUGENE: No, not really. The only one that they really knew was Morris Fitzgerald. Morris Fitzgerald was originally out at Camp Harney as a sergeant, and then he was commissioned out there as a first lieutenant. And after he got out of the army, he come to Burns to practice law. And they knew him quite well. In fact I give a picture of him to the library. But none of them --- they didn't know any of the other ones.

BARBARA: Were there not very many that ended up --- families staying here?

EUGENE: No, no.

BARBARA: Most of them went back to where they originally came from then?

EUGENE: No, no, that's --- The, I got the original census record to see who was out there at the Fort. When was that, 17 --- I for-get, 1880, 1880. There was a, pretty near all the officers had their wives out there. And there was lots of children out there, even before they had that Indian trouble. And I was surprised to see there was all those women and children out there. Because this was a pretty wild place at that time.

DOROTHEA: Well I understand that there is two cemeteries out at Harney. Did you know that there were two?

EUGENE: No, I didn't.

DOROTHEA: Well I understand that somewhere out there is the old army cemetery. And I was wondering if that's the one we see out on the hill. Or, if there is another one.

EUGENE: No, I don't think so. Because those soldiers that died there were buried there, and then they were reburied in the Presidio in San Francisco. So I don't think ---

DOROTHEA: There may not be another cemetery now.

EUGENE: I've seen that picture of that one place. And I don't know, it might have been some civilian employees that were working for the army. I think there may be two army soldiers buried out the end of Point Wright. But there is no marker or anything. But no, those were reburied at the Presidio. Because I looked that up, I studied that Fort Harney situation quite a lot, trying to find out. In fact I've got a story that I tried to peddle to different places without success. But there is so few general interest magazines anymore, it's difficult to sell them. But I've done a lot of research on that Fort Harney, and who was there. You know that one soldier was an ornithologist, or naturalist, and he became quite well known. He did a lot of his studying while he was in the army. I forget what his name was.

BARBARA: I'm trying to think too, he did a lot ---

EUGENE: Other than Fitzgerald, I don't know any of them that come to Burns.

BARBARA: Retired and stayed here. Is there any special person maybe that influenced you to want to do writing when you were in school? Or was this something that you decided after you became an adult?

EUGENE: Well, when I went to high school and studied English, I hated it. I didn't

understand it, I didn't like it, didn't draw those sentences up there, and diagram.

BARBARA: Diagram.

EUGENE: I didn't know what they were talking about. And I disliked it.

BARBARA: Pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and all that.

EUGENE: But for some reason or other, you know, even when I was eight years old, I wrote a story. And throughout the years I've tried to write. I don't know whether it is something in the blood, or what. I think it's a matter of trying to express yourself one way or another.

BARBARA: Uh huh. Do you discipline yourself to writing a certain amount every day?

Or ---

EUGENE: Yes, uh huh. Oh yeah, you got to. I've written two novels.

BARBARA: Is that right?

EUGENE: It's like a manuscript like that. I generally, like Hemingway; only I wrote more than Hemingway, principally because I've got a word processor. And I tried to stick to one thousand words a day, and every day. It --- the more you write it seems like to me the easier it is to write.

BARBARA: Is that right?

EUGENE: Yes.

BARBARA: You haven't hit that block there that some writers get?

EUGENE: No. You will if you don't write. That's why it is important to write every day. That's why they say it is always important for a writer to keep a diary. But I've never been able to do that.

DOROTHEA: You say you wrote two novels. Did you sell these novels?

EUGENE: No.

DOROTHEA: Just still have them yourself?

EUGENE: No, I've tried to sell them, yeah.

DOROTHEA: Oh, have you tried to?

EUGENE: It's ---

BARBARA: Tough business isn't it?

EUGENE: It's a tough business, yeah.

BARBARA: And what are they about?

EUGENE: You pretty near have to have an agent. And --- but unless you're an ax murderer --- (Laughter) depending on what you ---

DOROTHEA: Unless you've got something dirty in it.

BARBARA: What are your two books about?

EUGENE: One of them is about this Eastern Oregon country, and the conflict between the Indians and the White people as they moved into the country. We have, I don't know how much you've studied about the early acquisition of this country, but after we defeated the Indians in that Bannock War, and shipped them all off to the Yakima Reservation, that was the most act of cruelty I've ever seen in my life. They gathered all these Indians up at Fort Harney out there. It's the middle of January, and cold like you cannot believe, and they loaded them Indians in the open wagons, men, women, and children and took them to Yakima. There was no reason for that. If they hadn't of been Indians, and been so tough, they'd of all died. A lot of them did die, but --- Oh, that was bad. Some of them they had shackled too. It was terrible.

BARBARA: And what is your other book about then?

EUGENE: The other one is kind of a contemporary novel about a fellow that goes off and goes to war, and fights the European War in B-17's. And then comes back and goes into

the movie business as a, providing aerial stunt footage for the movie industry.

BARBARA: And then in your other writings then, like for magazines, or papers, do you do a variety of things, or do you kind of stick to one type of writing?

EUGENE: I've sold several articles, aviation articles. And I did quite a little flying in Alaska, and I've written a lot on that. Adventure and misadventures in Alaska. But no, I'm interested in anything. But I especially like this history, because I've got things to work with here.

BARBARA: It's never ending it seems.

EUGENE: Yeah.

BARBARA: One thing leads to another. One story leads you to another person.

EUGENE: One of my interests or --- for a long, long time has been genealogy. And in studying genealogy you learn a lot about history. And that has always whetted my appetite, because once in awhile in studying things you will find these little gems about history that are rare. And just like a gold, finding a gold mine, because they are so interesting.

BARBARA: Well you mentioned earlier about your Grandmother Ella was the second White child to be born --- Who was the first one then, according to her, or the other lady?

EUGENE: I forgot what her --- I think it is in Brimlow's book. No, she --- for a while they did think that she was first. But I don't think that's true. This other lady it seemed like ---

BARBARA: Was a Smyth was it?

EUGENE: Yeah, I think it was Smyth. And they weren't quite sure what her birthday was; it seemed like something like that. But I've forgotten all the details of it.

BARBARA: Records were not real accurate then.

EUGENE: Yeah. Always, one of my grandmother's favorite stories, you probably saw

this in the paper too, was about this Jack Miller. He was a cowboy from Texas that moved up here and worked for Todd Hunter and Devine in the early days. He was a buckaroo. And he worked for them as a buckaroo for several months and saved all his money, and he hired, quit them and hired some men to go up and cut wood. And he had a cook up there, a man cook, but he come to town one time and he married Ella's aunt, and took her back up to the lumber camp for a cook. And this made the cook that he had mad, furious. So ---

BARBARA: Too many cooks in the kitchen.

EUGENE: Yeah. So later, the --- this Jack Miller come to town and he got into an argument with this former cook, and the cook was going to kill him. And so they both drew their guns and had a wrestling match, and during the course of the wrestling match Jack Miller killed him dead. Well self-defense, so no problem with that.

BARBARA: Oh, dear.

EUGENE: So then a little later he come back into town. And he'd been up around Baker country, and the sheriff was not far behind him, and said he stole some horses up there. Well Jack Miller got wind of the fact that this guy, the sheriff, was after him. And he went out there not too far from where my grandmother's place was and hid in the slough all day. Well, they looked all over and they couldn't find him, the posse did. It was when --- no Jack Miller, but they had a pretty good-sized posse. So along about three or four o'clock in the afternoon Jack Miller crawled out of the water in the slough. And Grandmother Ella and her brother was coming home from school, and they knew Jack, and they liked him. He was freezing to death, and been in that water all afternoon. They got him some dry clothes and fed him. Jack asked my grandmother if he could use that, use her; take her pony to get out of the country. She said, yep he can have the pony. So

he got an old slouch hat and pulled it down on his eyes, and got on her pony and rode right out of the country. And the posse never caught him.

So they never did hear anything about Jack for over a year. And they come to learn that Jack had gone to the Klondike. And while he was at the Klondike he fashioned a road, or a trail over to Dawson City, and he charged tolls for people to go over that toll. And sometimes they didn't want to pay it, and he'd point his gun at them and say, "Pay it or else."

But he changed his name from Jack Miller to Jack Dalton. And Jack Dalton was up there when the soapy Smith guys and a lot of these banditos up there --- during the gold rush up there. Jack become quite wealthy from charging the toll on these roads. And then he was furnishing food to the Klondike. And the woman that he married here, she eventually went up there, but she died shortly after getting up there. I guess the weather was too bad. But anyhow Jack Dalton became quite famous in Alaska.

BARBARA: All because he had to get out of Harney County.

EUGENE: Yeah. Well I thought that was a good story that she helped a bad man get out of the country.

BARBARA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Yeah.

BARBARA: So what did his wife do during this year or so that she got left here?

EUGENE: I guess she just went on cooking. (Laughter)

BARBARA: She had to make a living, huh?

EUGENE: She had to make a living.

BARBARA: She didn't have any idea where he was then?

EUGENE: Yeah.

BARBARA: Oh, gosh.

EUGENE: She was a sister to the McClintock, which was grandmother's grandmother. Ella's grandmother.

BARBARA: Ella's grandmother.

EUGENE: She built that house down there across from the power, where the power and the police, that little green house down there. You know where the police and power company are?

BARBARA: Uh huh.

EUGENE: Built that in 1890, it's one of, that's the oldest house in town I believe.

DOROTHEA: Oh, across the street from there?

EUGENE: Yeah, that little green house.

DOROTHEA: I'll be darned.

EUGENE: Used to have all kinds of little gingerbread on it. But I don't think most people know that. That that's the oldest house in town. It wasn't taken on the inventory; it was, the gals inventory, 1890. Also have a picture of the original Whiting house, this ranch house out here. They built it a year after they got here in 1875. So that was an old house. Good picture too.

DOROTHEA: Is that the one that burned down?

EUGENE: No. No, they moved it.

DOROTHEA: Oh, they moved it too?

EUGENE: Out there, moved it out on the George Whiting place.

DOROTHEA: Oh.

EUGENE: They built up, more on to it. A lot of them burned down too.

BARBARA: That was a thing that happened on Main Street frequently in the early days.

EUGENE: Yeah, especially that one big fire.

DOROTHEA: You mentioned Tom Baker. Now that was a Whiting, married to a Whiting?

EUGENE: Yes, Suzie Whiting.

DOROTHEA: Suzie Whiting. And they lived back of where Frank built his place, or the Lazarus place.

EUGENE: I'm not sure.

DOROTHEA: You're not sure. Because I live in the old Tom Baker place.

EUGENE: Oh, do you?

DOROTHEA: And I just wondered if that was the same place, or if there was another one.

EUGENE: Well there is Bakers, there is Bakers out here in the Harney County that I'm related to, but I don't know how. If you've lived in Harney County long enough, you're inbred to just about everybody.

DOROTHEA: You're going to be related to everybody, right.

EUGENE: You want to be careful who you're talking about.

DOROTHEA: Well I think, unless you've got some more interesting stories to tell us --- our tape is about to come to an end. And we want to get you on video so we can store this also. And we'll ask you a few of the same questions that we've asked you here. Do you have anything else that you would like to add to this, or shall we call it an end?

EUGENE: No, I think that pretty ---

DOROTHEA: About covered everything?

EUGENE: Well, not everything.

DOROTHEA: No, I know, we could sit here all day.

BARBARA: Skimmed over the top.

DOROTHEA: Have we skimmed the top?

EUGENE: Yeah, I think you got the high points at least.

DOROTHEA: Okay, well we will close this off then. And we'll get some of this down on video, so that this goes with the tape. And it will be stored here with it, and some of the history of your family and so on. Thank you Gene, we've enjoyed this.

(END OF TAPE)

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