

HARNEY COUNTY BASQUES

Oral History Project

This interview of Marcelino Osa took place as a part of an historical inventory of Basques in Harney County for the Harney County Historical Society. The purpose of the interview was to acquire information about historic sites in order to establish a database for historic resources. As a result, the book *Harney County: An Historical Inventory* was published in January of 1978 by Royal G. Jackson and Jennifer A. Lee. Jackson and Lee taped this interview with Marcelino Osa on September 24, 1976 in Burns, Oregon. At the time, Jackson was an Associate Professor in the Department of Resource Recreation Management at Oregon State University and Lee was a student in that department fulfilling an internship requirement. Amanda B. Purkey created a transcription of this interview in March 2001 as a part of an independent study project at Oregon State University.

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MARCELINO OSA
September 24, 1976
Burns, Oregon

Interviewers:
Royal G. Jackson
Jennifer A. Lee

LOG

- [001-020] About his province in Spain and reasons people left that area.
- [020-040] His father's arrival in the US and work history.
- [040-060] Remembering living in Spain as a young boy with his mother.
- [060-080] Arriving in the US; gaining citizenship.
- [080-100] Growing up in Burns as a Basque.
- [100-120] Basque, Spanish and English use as a child.
- [120-140] Shepherders and prostitution in Burns.
- [140-160] Shepherders activities in town during vacations.
- [160-180] Reputation and behavior of shepherders in town; Basque prejudice in Burns.
- [180-200] Prejudice; Native Americans; generational split in Basque families.
- [200-220] Basque friends growing up.
- [220-240] Basque and Spanish speaking in school; traditional Basque dances.
- [240-260] Marrying within the Basque community; Basque festivals.
- [260-285] Basque traditions in Burns.
- [285-300] Independent, hardworking nature of Basque peoples.
- [300-330] Spanish politics in Burns.
- [330-360] The political sides against one another in Burns.
- [360-380] Prevalence of Basques marrying within the Basque community.
- [380-405] Work history.

Marcelino Osa
Log continued

[405-430] Military duty.

[430-2:005] Work history after the military.

[2:005-2:030] Created a youth boxing league in Burns.

[2:030-2:055] Boxing in the military; Native American youths boxing in Burns.

[2:055-2:070] Changes in the Basque community in Burns over the years.

[2:070-2:090] Changes in the community continued; Marcelino's family and children.

[2:090-2:110] His children's interest in the Basque community, language and culture.

[2:110-2:130] Disagreements among Basques in Burns; his opinion of the future.

[2:130-2:155] Recent Basque picnic; more work and family history information.

[2:155-2:180] Talking about the Tiajuana Bar and the Star Hotel in Burns.

[2:180-2:200] Information on the Plaza Hotel which his father built.

[2:200-2:220] Information on other Basque boarding houses in Burns.

[2:220-2:250] His wishes for his grandchildren regarding Basque culture and language.

[2:250-2:275] Importance of preservation of culture and language.

[2:275-2:295] Americanization of Basques.

[2:295-2:320] His father's education history in Spain.

[2:320-2:335 end] Basque-Americans in US politics.

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[001] {R} Okay let's see your name is Marce Osa, but your real name is Marcelina is it?

Marcelino.

{R} M A R C E L I N O, Marcelio Osa.

Right.

{R} When did you, were you born in Spain did you say?

Yes, mm-hmm.

{R} And what province?

Viscaya.

{R} In Viscaya, what was the name of the town, do you recall?

Andarowa.

{R} Andarowa is a town where several Basques in Harney County are from as I recall.

Mm-hmm.

{R} Quite a few, quite a few also from Viscaya, the province of Viscaya.

Yeah, the majority here I think.

{R} Why is that, any particular reason?

Well, I think because the first that came here, there's all these relatives they brought over you know and I've got a map of Viscaya, but I left it at Tijuana and if you look at it it isn't a very big province. There's a lot of people, a lot of small villages and a lot of, mostly we call them Viscanos you know, they call themselves Viscanos. And they all live in Viscaya but they're from a very small area of Viscaya. You know they're from the East (indiscernible) majority and along the coast. And over here they're shepherders. The majority of them over there were either fishermen or small farmers.

{R} What was your dad was he a Basque there?

Well, he was from he bought in Galua, another small village near there.

{R} Also in the province of Viscaya?

Right, you see he came with a cousin from Spain and they worked for his cousin's brother in law who had one of these big sheep companies in Idaho.

{R} What year did he come to the United States, do you know roughly?

Well I think it was 1918, it was either 16 or 18.

[020] {R} So he came over because he had some relatives who were working here, went into the sheep herding business like a lot of Basques in that time did and then when did he marry your mother?

Well, he married her, I think he came in 16 and married in 18 is what I think it was.

{R} But he went back to Spain to marry her didn't he?

No, she was already here too.

{R} He met her here.

They were, my mother says they were distant cousins. They didn't know each others families they were from villages near each other. And I don't think they knew each other in Spain but they met in Boise and they married in Boise.

{R} Then when were you born, what year?

1921.

{R} What city was that in?

In Andarowa, you see my parents were married in Boise, in Idaho, had a sister born there then my mother went back to Spain and I was born in Spain in 1921. I didn't see my father till I was five. He stayed here. He worked for Morris and Kinutson when they were you know, small.
Morris - Knudsen

{R} Is that a construction company?

The world's largest.

{R} Morris and Kinutson is what, building?

Yeah they build all over the world. It's the world's largest construction company now. My father likes to brag about them he worked for them when they went broke and they refinanced and they became the largest construction company in the world. Then he came to Burns in 1925 he was working for them laying sewer pipe. You know it was probably about a year or so before he (indiscernible) went in there right and wanted to make sure it came out right. But that's when he came in 25 and then he sent for us and we came to Burns in 1926.

[040] {R} And your mother as far as I recall from talking to her was very ill different periods wasn't she, had a very hard time and she went to Spain and you were born there and then that's when you had an accident or something and stuck something in your eye she told me.

Scissors, yeah.

{R} And you had a series of operations there and well, why don't you tell the story.

Well, I mean the thing is that I don't recall I mean I can tell you, she knows it better than I do because she remembers that I don't remember it. And she told me, just operations and I got hit by a car or truck or bus or something and it was chance the sight was coming back until that happened and evidently that stopped it. And then when I was seven my father took me to Boise to operate on me again, and but nothing came of it we took treatments and stuff.

{R} What are your recollections of being in Spain, let's see you were five years old then.

Well I really, well I keep thinking I can remember going fishing with my grandfather and getting sea sick, you know I think I remember that and

{R} Other than that not a lot of vivid recollections?

No, nothing I would say vivid, I just remember that. I seem to remember that because I remember I liked the way the boat looked and things like that and then my, I remember my grandfather on my father's side because he only had one arm. And you know no one ever said how he lost that arm until a way, just until a few years ago, because my father died about five years ago. Just a year or two before he died I asked him how did he lose that arm. And he lost it dynamiting fishing, I said well that's illegal, you know it's the same thing over there.

[060] {R} Let's see how old were you when you came to this country then?

Five.

{R} Were you a Spanish citizen then, or did they worry about citizenship status?

Right, well those laws have changed. They change every few years. People don't realize immigration laws, because when I applied for citizenship I was living in Portland working there and I became a derivative citizen by proving that my parents were citizens and I didn't have to take a formal test. I answered a lot of questions, but they were citizens after I had come to, well my father was a citizen I think before I came and my mother after I came, by proving they were my legal parents and legally married and I became a derivative citizen.

{J} Would it be more difficult to get citizenship in Burns than it was,

Well, I didn't become a citizen until 1942 or 3, just before I went in the service. And the thing is that we talked here and I had to be a certain age before I could apply either 18 or 21 before I could apply for citizenship, because it was a special status and then we had the county clerk here, Billy Carroll, he was really up on the laws of course because there are Basque herders coming here all the time and they waited longer than average then to apply for citizenship than they do now and every few years the laws would change. And then you'd have to go look all that stuff up see, certain laws could apply to me that didn't apply to somebody else.

{R} But a lot of changes over the years.

In that time there were. I don't know about now. I would imagine a lot more now.

[080] {R} Where were you brought to when you came then, you came when you were five years old, did you go to Boise then?

Yeah we came, we hit New York and then by train we came to Boise. My father met us in Boise, but he was already established here and working here and we came here from Boise.

{R} You came directly then to Burns.

Shortly after, we had relatives there. My father had a sister there and cousins there.

{R} So you pretty much lived in Burns most of your life.

Off and on.

{R} What do you remember about coming to Burns in that early time, what year would that have been?

26, 1926.

{R} What was Burns like then? Do you have much recollection?

Well no because what I recall is mostly the kids. You know we had our own group and we did everything together you know and that was it you know. And I couldn't speak English when I started in the first grade and I played hooky a little bit because the teacher thought I was kidding, and then when I got so I could speak English I wouldn't speak the other language. You know my mother would speak to me in Spanish and I'd answer in English. My father teach me Basque and I'd speak English and it was a was both ways you know it just became kind of who was the stubbornest.

{R} Did you kind of stick to your friends then, your Basque friends then when you were a kid?

There were no, well no that was just it there were other kids here but the Basque Star Hotel has your ^{Uribe} ~~Risors~~, they had boys just older and just younger than myself and then the ~~Marris~~'s had the Commercial, or actually two Basque boarding houses then the Commercial, she was Basque and he wasn't, the father, Mr. ~~Marris~~ wasn't Basque, but Mrs. ~~Marris~~ was. ^{Ramirez}

Ramirez

Ramirez

[100] {R} Now that's the present wife of Lavaneta.

Martina, yeah, you've met her?

{R} Yeah, Martina.

And Lias, her boy, her only boy was my age. He didn't speak at home you know, Basque or Spanish and I didn't and then the other kids. I didn't hang out with the ^{Uribe} ~~Risors~~ much, but we just it was embarrassing to speak our own language or even try to, you know but,

Uribe

{R} Why is that, because there was some people that spoke it and you were,

Well, I think kids are more sensitive you know to what other kids thought in them days because it was just disgraceful to try to speak anything but English. I think to address yourselves.

{R} So did you sort of deny your language then, did you not use it much?

Oh yeah, yeah.

{R} But you did learn it.

I knew it, it was the only language I could speak them both until I got started in school and I learned English I wouldn't speak it, I wouldn't try to speak the others you know. I don't know just a kind of false pride or something.

{R} But you did, now as an adult you do speak Basque.

Nope, I don't speak it and I don't understand a lot of it. But for a long time I could understand all the Basque but I just refused to use it. For so long now that it's hard to use. I understand Spanish and speak some Spanish, but I tried to use it whereas the Basque it just got away from me, just didn't use it for too long.

[120] {R} What do you remember about those early days and the Basque people, did they get together at parties or anything?

Once a year only. Things were a lot tougher you know, you always say depressions don't hit the small towns well, they didn't hit here because we worked so damn hard that they just refused you know they ignored it you know. But the guys at the sheep camp they'd maybe be out there, well the average would come into town once every six months. You know some didn't come in that often, some came in maybe every three months. And at that time the Star and the Commercial were more or less Basque boarding houses. Even the Commercial we'd call more of a rooming house, and then there was a place that didn't even have a name at that time. A guy named Leo (indiscernible) Boise he had a place that's torn down now and they took Basque boarders. But that was a place the boys came in a few days out and they left their clothes there you know, sometimes they had their good clothes stored there so when you went to camp you didn't have to (indiscernible) them you know, move around,

{R} So they kept a set of town clothes,

Yeah, kept them in town, yeah.

{R} What did they do when they came to town, what are your recollections of the sheep herders coming in? Did they drink a lot and chase girls or?

Not really, well yeah at that time they had legal houses around here you know and of course you're young and

{R} Legal houses of prostitution?

Well, I mean it was just you know, there were always three, at least three and sometimes five when I was a kid growing up here.

[140] {R} Here in Burns.

Oh yeah. When the army came I guess they had war games here, I left here in 41 and shortly after that they had war games and the army closed them. And afterwards they tried to reopen, but they didn't stay open, but that time and of course they were all the, and I'd say on the whole the Basque herder, the average

was a lot less rowdy than the cowboy and the average soldier you know. They come to town they have a few drinks and they'd eat good. The boarding houses had good meals and they'd always have a few, they'd shoot dice or usually shoot dice for who bought the round of drinks. And everyplace had a bottle of, they'd have a few drinks before dinner and then you could talk for a while after dinner and do a lot of arguing and talking you know.

{R} So arguing Spanish politics still and that sort of thing?

No, well you talking about way back early, all I remember is there was a lot of talking you know around the table you know and so it sounded the same all the time and,

{R} So as a kid you weren't very interested in it.

No but my father he was in the height of his glory you know.

{R} With all these people talking to him.

Yeah, of course they'd all sit there and they'd all holler, you know well not always but it was it was really a picnic you know. You'd think there was going to be fights and everything, there never was but, you take the words from the story.

[160] {R} The herders kind of had a reputation for being very industrious and dependable and, didn't they? I mean your comment that they were less rowdy than some of the cowboys is,

Yeah there'd be one in fifty that would once in a while get drunk but the think is that it was embarrassing and the others would, unless a guy was real bad and he couldn't be handled well then they'd try to kind of make fun of him. But the average they'd look out for him and kind of you know,

{R} In other words the Basques kind of policed their own group there. They were embarrassed if one of them really made a scene or something and they took care of themselves.

Right. Yeah, they been, well consider them being in the hills all that time alone and everything and coming to town every once in a while, I thought they behaved very well.

{R} Let's get back to you now, you came here as a young boy, went to school here in Burns schools?

Mm-hmm.

{R} Did you graduate from high school then here?

Yes.

{R} In what year was that?

1939.

{R} Did you then, lets see probably the war was about to happen then.

{J} Do you feel a lot of prejudice from the Americans here?

Well, there was a different, prejudice was nobody had it nobody used that word you know. Everybody was prejudice against something you know. Like the Indians weren't allowed to go to school with us then you know and most of the kids I ran around with their folks said if the Indians were allowed to go to school they'd pull their kids out of school you know. And we just, we didn't think much about it because you know, outside of getting into rock fights and snowball fights with the Indians that's about the only contact we had with the Indian's.

[180] {R} Did that happen a lot where you had conflict between the Indians and the,

Well just, actually we started out playing and but that (indiscernible) when you get a rock out of there, one or two of them guys could throw better than three or four of you guys you know and we got a little respect for them. Didn't we knew each other, we didn't speak to each other, there was a different proposition you know.

{R} They had their own school then or did they go to school at all?

Theoretically, I don't know about early way back you know, but later on when they moved what they call a new camp, it's an old camp now but they called a new camp, shortly after it was built they had a classroom, they guy that was over it all I don't know his title, supervisor or whatever it was, there was a guy there that was that theoretically handling the Indians you know and he had a nice home and the back part of the house was a classroom. And they were obliged to go to school to a certain age like every kid in Oregon was. I remember going out there and the kids were sitting there and they learned to write their name and that was about it so the majority, some would go and some wouldn't you know.

{R} But you didn't have any real feeling of being different then growing up as a kid in Burns being Basque, was it,

I don't remember that. I remember that we were prejudiced against our own parents is the way I remember it you know.

[200] {R} That second generation phenomenon where the kids kind of reject the foreignness of their parents?

Is that common is it?

{R} Oh yeah, it's not usually till the third generation till they begin once again to say boy, look at all this heritage we have. Quite often the second generation wants to get away from it cause it's alien and not American and they don't speak English well and is it that way for you guys?

Yeah, I mean it was for me and I think it was for some of our friends, because well they you know you're with a certain group of kids, we go to school together there are four of us went to school together and came home together and did everything together on our days, our weekends for twelve years.

{R} All Basques.

No, only one other kid ^{Ramirez} ~~Romerez~~, his mother was Basque, Mrs. ^{Ramirez} ~~Marris's~~ boy. And for twelve years every day we did everything together, we played ball together we did everything together. Days we went to school and days we didn't go and the foreign, one kid's a Dane his folks is from the old country and the other kids is from here. But like we were ashamed of our parents almost you know. I mean we weren't you know but it was just that well the Basques were put down in subtle ways, little ways you know. Like all foreigners were in all communities. Where they don't you know they didn't know their, the families were new here and it was like there were a lot a lot of Basques here but they were very seldom in town they were all bachelors and working the hills. And there are a lot more families now.

[220] {R} Did they ever tell you that you couldn't speak Basque or Spanish in school for example?

Oh no.

{R} That never came up huh?

No we never tried it, but I don't think they ever said anything. They tried to get us to speak later on like in the fourth grade Mrs. Whitney my teacher she was from Texas and she spoke a little Spanish and tried to encourage you know like Liss, Romerez and I we speak still speak Spanish and I was embarrassed she would even want us to try to speak it.

{R} Did you ever take part in the dances like they do this traditional dance LaHota in those Basque festivals?

I never been to it. I been to the sheep herders ball they have in the winter there they have what they call a sheep herders ball, I've been to that. And in the summer they have, in August, the celebration of I guess it is Saint Ignacious and there's a picnic and they have a dance, this year they had two dances. They kept things going there.

[260] {R} How about here in Burns, there's much of that?

Well they started and we had our own revolution.

{R} Oh is that right?

Oh they didn't tell you about that?

{R} Well I heard, I'm not sure I heard the details.

Well I don't know the details, I don't want to give the details but I know that I used to make the joke when I had the race rides, so if we had a couple more we'd have our own race rival when it came to pass but we'd have it against each other you know.

{R} A lot of the old feeling among the Basques?

Yeah it was very, it was money, years ago you ask they had a celebration in the old days every new years they'd dance around a Christmas tree in the center of main street they'd have a big big Christmas tree.

{R} And the whole town would,

The Basque people would.

{R} Oh, just the Basques would.

Yeah they'd have a dinner usually at the Pine room. There's a picture of that dinner was on the Burns on the calendar. Then at midnight or right around, they'd try to be there around midnight dancing around that tree and the town would turn out to watch them.

{R} What year would this have been that this was done?

This was done in all through the thirties I'd say and I think it might have gone into the forties also. I left here in 41. But it started in the thirties and went almost every year. And that was the only formal get together through the year you know. Like now they have a semi- picnic and kind of dance, but no one knows what it's going to be or when they just and they don't all turn out for it whereas at that time all the Basques would turn out for it.

[285] {R} It was more of an integrated community then. All the Basques were pretty much pretty close then?

Not really.

{R} Basques are pretty independent aren't they?

Yeah I think so, because I don't know if they're jealous or I think it's just a natural feeling they don't want one of them to get ahead of the other one you know and the thing is that they work so hard and I remember them back when things were tough. I remember those things more, it's a different life now. Everyone had to work harder and it was normal to them you know whereas it was tough times to everyone else it was normal to them. You know a lot of them work that hard now you know. They save more.

[300] {R} But there's been a kind of a falling out among the Basques today as I understand it because of a number of things. One being the money that was sent to help some political refugees or something in Spain. In other words Spanish politics has been important here in Burns.

Well I think the whole story is that, it took me a long time to realize it, but I think they're great people, but they had no formal education in the old country. You know they could barely read and write Spanish you know the majority of them were from Spain there were a few like (indiscernible names) they were French Basques you know so their second language was French, but they all spoke Basque among themselves. But they weren't very well educated over there. And like my father they argue politics, my father loved to argue, but he admitted that he didn't know the politics about the war. They'd argue this and they'd argue that about the war and he said well I don't know anything about it and they don't know any more than I do. You know, what the political ramifications were.

{R} By the war you are talking about the Spanish Civil War of 1937.

Spanish Civil War, yeah. And before that you know and then like afterwards after the war and things got settled down so many of them went back there and had a good time and they always asked my father to go back and he says no he says if I had anything over there I'd have never left he says you know he didn't like living there and he didn't want to go back. Well finally he wanted to, but things were different then. But when you say politics and even right now everyone has opinions but I don't think we really know, you know and something like this then you're having someone get on one side for a while then on the other so what the heck.

[330] {R} So whatever the case somehow the group is kind of split up now.

It's too bad. Yeah there's a bad feeling and the thing is that they'll never admit no one will ever admit they're wrong you know. You look at it from a distance and you say well why can't they get together, but what difference does it make you know they're too sensitive.

{R} Is it just two factions then or are there more than two groups?

Well, I tried not, I made up my own opinion and then I thought well, I don't want to because if you ask and then pretty soon they try to put you on one side or the other and I don't want to be on either side and so I haven't asked any questions. I've got information second, third and fourth hand so I think it's a shame because I think it's so important that it's just prudent that the community that got back together, now the kids like you say, the third generation, they're not ashamed of their heritage you know and they're learning the language and they're picking up the customs and dances. They've got so much to give, but they've got to get together you know here and I think this is really percentage wise a size community, we've got a lot of Basque people here.

{R} How many would you say, have you got a rough idea?

Well, I haven't got a rough idea I don't because they're having kids all the time where as in the old days the families were all there were three families already made and that was it and all these people weren't married. Now there are a lot more married people and there are more going back and getting married you know some getting married here and some getting married in Spain and there's a lot more young kids that before you know I knew all the kids and now I don't know half of them. I don't know a third of them.

[360] {R} Are most of them marrying within the Basque group or are they marrying outside?

Oh yes. Practically all of them married in the Basque group all the young ones.

{R} Is there kind of a pressure brought to bear to do that, or?

No, it isn't, the things that impress me about the Basques is it isn't formalized you know. It's just done because that's the way it's done and you wonder how you got away from it. And to look back I think it's done the best way. Not because it's written or preached or anything else it's just the way it's done.

{R} It's the way people believe and feel.

You know you get along better with your own and fight better with your own.

{R} Let's get back to your life now. We dropped off in 1939, you got out of high school in 1939. Did you go into the military then?

Not until 43, 44 I went into the military in 44.

[380] {R} So what did you do to make that,

Well 39 I worked in a store here ^{Polly} ~~Holly~~ Thornberg a little grocery store, then I worked in a garage here Bennett, and then 1941 I went to Portland with a fellow from here Jack McGee who was working in Portland and married a cousin of mine and I went to work in Portland for Richie Brothers and Service Station and then I went to work at Oregon Ship you know with everyone else, and then I went in the service from there.

{R} In 44.

In May of 44, right.

{R} How old were you then?

I was 22, I was 23 later in the year I was 22 at that time.

{R} Did you see some overseas duty then, or?

Mm-hmm I was in India for six months, and then China for a year and a half.

{R} What service were you in the airforce did you say?

No I was trained with the quartermaster core in Wyoming and then I went overseas as a casual, I went overseas as a truck mechanic, and then I went to radio school in India and then I went to China as a radio operator and became the chief radio operator for the Chinese Army headquarters. (indiscernible name).

[405] {R} But now were you affiliated with any particular service Army, Airforce, Navy?

^{Co'ps} Well I was on, I'd say I was on what they call I was temporary duty to the Signal ~~Core~~ School and the temporary duty detach service and it was the (indiscernible name) duty special. And you name and it was one company of the communications people. Everything you know, code men. And we were loaned out. We scanned over three thousand miles. We were loaned out to every kind of group. Table organization for a company is two hundred men we had over seven hundred men scattered over three thousand miles. So we was a kind of a screwed up outfit.

{R} So let's see you were, came back from India was that your last,

China.

{R} China? You came back from there in what year?

In well we hit the states in 45. They took us off so we'd be ashore for Christmas day and just in ^{Los} Angeles and I got out of the service in January of 46 in Fort ~~Louis~~. Lewis

{R} Now were you married at this time, or?

No.

[430] {R} What did you do then in 46? (missed some info when tape was turned over)
Hines ~~Heinz~~ lumber company in 46 pulling greenchain, you came back to Burns then as soon as you were discharged.

Right, I though about staying in Portland. You were supposed to get your job prior, get your job back and Oregon Ship was still operating and I went and talked to them and they said well it would just be an amount of time of letting guys off. You had, you know your seniority went on you know you got a good job in the union and you didn't lose the seniority and theoretically you could just bump people and get back to work, but they discourage it and I didn't much care you know. So I came back here and went to work for ~~Heinz~~. Hines

[2-005] {R} How long did you work for them?

Not very long. In 19, then later in the fall they built Wolverine Western ^{Saw} ~~Small~~ Mill here, it's Prineville Wood Products now, Prineville Pine Products. And I went to work on building that and then I worked there when they first operated. Then in 1947 I, a guy loaned me some money and I leased the Palace for a year.

{R} The Palace Restaurant?

Mm-hmm. And operated that for a year.

{R} Was it where it is now or was in the old,

Yes, it still is where it is now. And then 1948 I operated the Pine Room for a year and in 1949 I went back to work for Heinz, pulling lumber. And then I went back to work for the Wolverine and I worked. And every one of them they'd shut down, pawned their trees and they couldn't. Oh they tried every other doer with different things but after so long they shut down and then in the winter I ran a boxing program for the Elks Club. I'd started this before, I started the boxing program with Father Egan, let me think when it first started, but then every winter then I did it for the Elks sponsored me, but then I did it for years for nothing then for two years the Elks paid me.

{R} Now where did you learn how to box?

In the, well I lived in the YMCA in Portland before I went overseas, and all the kids box here, but they wouldn't let me because I only had one eye. And so then I lived in the YMCA in Portland and they were giving boxing instructions, and my roommate he's from here, well he lived here he's I think he's here right now visiting his mother, but when he left, he went into the service before I did. And they started giving instructions at the Y so I started taking instructions there. Then when I went over, well then when I was in ^{Cheyenne} ~~Shyanne~~ they had a very, the regiment I was assigned to the fourth, they're really gung-ho on boxing, in fact all on ~~Shyanne~~ ^{Cheyenne} was and they kept you a permanent party of the good guys I wasn't even, all of the good guys were permanent party there.

[2-030] {R} So you boxed in the military too then huh?

Yes. I was raised by a champion there Warren, but I wasn't much. See I wasn't even good enough to go on the team. They go to Denver and have what they call the seven service command tournament there every six months and Fort Warner wiped it out see the last year, well the year I was in Warner I wasn't good enough to go to the team and they had sixteen final bouts and fourteen of them were Fort Warner fighters. That's all the services in the nine states in seven service areas you know.

{R} Pretty tough competition.

Yeah they kept, some place would keep their fighters from the parties. I mean some places would keep their football players, Warner kept their fighters. And they had a kid named Mario (indiscernible) the boxing coach, he was the only amateur to beat Ray Robinson. He lived in the gym and wrote his own pass.

{R} Very privileged status.

Well yeah it was a jockstrap like that, some places were some places weren't.

{R} So when you came back to Burns then you started a boxing program at the YMCA is that what you said, or no with the Father Egan,

Well Father Egan had some gloves and he said take these, maybe you can help the Indians and do some good. So all right so they got a little shed out there and the kids ate it up you know.

{R} Out at the Indians?

Yeah at the school.

{R} So you dealt mostly with Indians then?

Well, when we finalized the program and started bringing them in to the gym in town here the thing is that they're the ones that the tough kid and the tough attitude, and I made the program so tough that it ended up most Indians it was too tough for the other kids the other kids, you know, because we were boxing on the outside they're probably the kids that got more they've had more fights than we've had workouts you know. I took them all over the country. And so that's the reason I ended up with mostly Indians because the program was just too tough.

[2-055] {R} And the Indians were the only ones who could take it.

Well, and to them it was recreation. To the other kids it was work. You know, some of the kids stuck with it, you know and it did them a lot of good. You know Dell Smith he's a line for the (indiscernible) he stuck with it. And Joe Schaffel he's one of the football coaches at Oregon, he stuck with it. Well he wasn't from here, but anyhow.

{R} As an adult in Burns now you're in this period what about 1950. You're in your mid 20s early 30s by then? What was the Basque community like then, was it very different from now?

Well, it was much different than now because that was before the influx of these young marrieds you know.

{R} What do you mean by that?

McCarran Act

Well you see the ~~MacCaranak~~, when the Basques came over here and had a pretty good life, then they wanted to get, they all wanted to come over. But because of the quota and because of the politics and because of the war in Spain, you know you couldn't get out of the country see. They say the average twenty, twenty-five, thirty years you have to wait if you got on the quota see.

McCarran Act

[2-070] {R} That was after ~~MacCaranak~~?

McCarran Act

McCarran Act

No before the ~~MacCaranak~~. Then the ~~MacCaranak~~ apparently if you wanted to come over here and herd sheep you could come outside the quota and then the way I understand the law originally, you came and worked in the sheep so long and then you had to go back to Spain. Now if that fellow that you worked for wants you back he could request you back and then the second time you would apply for citizenship see. So that took time and those people came and then later on they tell me that they could come when they came and worked so long then they could automatically apply for citizenship. They had more freedom. It didn't take so long. So these people came over here and worked in the sheep mostly in Idaho and Nevada, but mostly in Idaho. And then they had friends around here that worked in the mill, well hell they'll make two and three and four times in the mill than working what they're doing herding sheep and if they want to live like

they do in the sheep camps they can save most of that you know. So they came here and most of them Basques stayed here and went back to Spain some married some didn't, but I say it's different now because they're making more money and they live differently. And they don't do things in a big group together. Well, it's a different life for all of us I think, for everybody, really. And in 50s I didn't have as much contact you know I wasn't living in a boarding house anymore so I didn't see them everyday. And I had my own family starting.

{R} You were married by then?

I was married in the last of 47.

{R} Did you marry a Basque woman?

No, she, her parents are both from Ireland.

{R} Did you have children?

Yes, we had four children.

[2-090] {R} Are they in this area now still, or?

Oh, the oldest girl is, her husband is a teacher and a coach in Brookings. And the other three children are here.

{R} Did any of them have much interest in Basque politics?

Well, yeah when it's too late. You know like the boy, he almost went to Spain you know Boise State has a program, a campus and I had a niece and a nephew that went and they raved they were just crazy about it. And he was about to go this year and at the last minute decided he wouldn't.

{R} This is a program just for Basques, or?

No, anyone can go and you pay so much and it includes everything the time you leave to the time you get back outside of spending money.

{R} But your boy decided not to go.

He decided not to go.

{R} Is he married?

No.

{R} Do they speak Basque, your children?

No, the boy's he trying to speak Spanish. He took Spanish in school and he's working on it now, he's taking, he's gone to junior college a couple years and he's trying to speak, pick up Spanish now on his own.

{R} He's kind of interested in his Basque culture?

Oh he's very interested in it now, especially since his cousin Connie Corbett's boy Ross went over and came back. Of course he sees him more and he's very close to his, Gloria. She came back and she didn't speak Spanish or Basque and she is teaching Basque for Boise State and then Ross he speaks Spanish fluent and didn't have a word of it in high school and he knows quite a bit of Basque too.

[2-110] {R} Ross is one half Basque, his mother?

His mother.

{R} What kinds of things do you see now for the Basque community, what does the future hold for this group?

Here you mean?

{R} Yeah, here in Harney County and specifically in Burns.

Well I don't think we get together as a group, but I think we've lost a lot. And let's see, the thing is that it sounds so easy, but you've got to know them, they'd rather be wrong than have their own way. They're all, and of course it's a matter of pride, but they're not going to change their mind. And I don't know how to get about it, you know get around it without, in other words if you discuss it you make it worse you know.

{R} The differences are so deep seated that you can't, it doesn't seem to revolve,

Well it isn't the difference I don't think that is deep seated, just the additive that they are so easily offended you know, by each other. You could probably call you know what you said or did didn't bother them, but what I said or did as another Basque, see that's were,

{R} Very sensitive.

Very sensitive.

{J} The differences all stem from that, the money that was passed for that political,

Well, yeah, then it brings out all the little things you know.

{R} All the simmering grievances that had always been there among them came out there and people kind of took sides?

Probably.

[2-130] {J} It's not according to provinces then,

Oh no, no I don't think so no. It's a sort of jealousy I think you know. You get around them and they want to pick at each other.

{R} They recently had a picnic as I recall, about a month ago, a few weeks ago and it evidently wasn't very well attended. One of the reasons evidently was that they weren't going to have any music. Well maybe that wasn't the reason, but they traditionally have a fellow that plays the accordion, the accordion being one of the instruments that they always have around at Basque parties and evidently from what I heard, did you go to the picnic?

No, I didn't know about it.

{R} It wasn't very well attended, which one time one of the people I talked to was saying this would have been a grand occasion, everyone would have come together. Right, but now it's more fragmented than it was before.

Right.

{R} We left, just to bring us up to date on what you did after 1950, did you then go into the Tijuana Bar?

I didn't go into that until 59. In the fifties, in the year 50 they started this program for the kids here and I worked in conjunction with the school then, but in 50 they told us we couldn't have any children, the wife and she had an operation in Ontario and her folks live in Ontario and she went back there and this doctor told us that. Well anyhow in 50 we were going to have a child, she had the operation before that and she'd had problems so we lived in Ontario in 1950. I scraped through.

[2-155] {R} Till when?

Till 51 we came back January of 51 we came back to Burns. And we've been here since.

{R} So when did you go into the Tijuana Bar? You owned that, do you own that still?

59. I sold it the first of this year.

{R} You operated it up until 59 and then,

Up until 76,

{R} I mean 76. So are you retired now?

Oh no I still work. I still do real estate, I been doing my buying and selling, trying you know.

{R} You mentioned something about the Star Hotel over here earlier in our conversation, is that still a Basque Hotel?

No. They, the people, they have roomers, they don't have boarders now. In other words I think it was getting to be too much work. (indiscernible names) they both worked out there, Ida works at the mill and his kids work at the mill and Gloria his daughter works at one of the restaurants here in town, but I think it was becoming too much work for her and so they quit having boarders. And she's been sick this year.

{R} But they do have roomers, and are they all Basques?

Yes.

{R} How many Basques would you say are there?

Well now I don't know, you know I would say maybe four might be more maybe less,

{R} Over the years was that the center of Basque activity, the Star Hotel?

Well, you see after, shortly after we came in 1929 my parents bought a house and added and built on to it and it's called the Plaza now but at that time it didn't have a name. Just Blackies Boarding House that's what they'd call it that.

[2-180] {R} That's what the Plaza Hotel was first known as, is Blackies Boarding House?

Well, that's what he called it you know. My mother didn't like that, but that's what it was, it was a boarding house. It was complete in 1930, 31. But in 29, 30 we built the mill that whole time. So they had three there

{R} We were wondering about that date.

Well it may have opened in 31 but it was built in 30.

{R} We've been trying to find out when the Plaza Hotel was built.

Well you see the original house was never torn down the people, the (indiscernible name) they owned that, we bought that house and property and house from them and my father just added on.

{R} So he didn't build that Hotel from scratch. He just bought an existing house.

Well the majority of it was built though it was just a small house. It was just and the hotel was built up around it. The whole second story and,

{R} Now at that time say in 30, was the Star Hotel operating then.

Mm-hmm, yes.

{R} Do you know when it was built?

Well, I don't know when it was built, but I was surprised it didn't start as a boarding house till around 26 or 7 I thought it had been in business a lot longer than that. And then you see before we built ours, at the time it was called the Shingle House and the Tourist Hotel, that was a place that's torn down now, it was also a Basque boarding house.

[2-200] {R} Now the Shingle House or the Tourist Hotel was a Basque Hotel that's gone now?

Originally, originally, right.

{R} Where is it located?

Well, you know it's a block south of the Sanders station on Main Street, you know where the cleaners plant is there,

{R} Quality Cleaners?

Yeah, it was next to where Quality Cleaners is now it wasn't on Main Street it was between that's Union Station and where the Quality Cleaners is now.

{R} So this is interesting, over a period of time then the Plaza Hotel, the Star Hotel, the Shingle Hotel, the Commercial Hotel, the Central Hotel,

Well, the Central wasn't really a boarding house, but it was built by this guy named John Ebar.

{R} Ebar?

John Ebar, yeah.

{R} All these then have been Basque Hotels here in Burns.

Right.

{R} At different times one more popular than the other to the Basques that would come to town or did they all kind of exist at different times?

Well, no at the time there were enough herders that like the Star had all Basques, like when we built the mill we had a lot of people work at the mill you see, you know and boarders there then I think a lot of the Bascos get along with us so then we kind of evolved into an almost strictly Basque Hotel you know.

[2-220] {R} You never intended it to be that way, but it just kind of happened.

We built a boarding house, I think my father built his boarding house because that was a business you know and it became a Basque hotel and then the Commercial was called a rooming house and it had mostly roomers in it, but it had some boarders.

{R} Is there any single hotel today in Burns that would be considered the place where most the Basques are, would that be the Plaza?

Yeah, they'll just have roomers. You know her husband's been sick and they're kind of getting out of it you know. The thing is that those are just work houses you know, I mean there was no money made they just work like dogs and that's the way it was and then now that after they've been here a while they figure what the heck the husband is working in the mill and we're better off him working in the mill and not working that hard you know. Because actually I don't think they realize it you know but people wouldn't pay what it took to feed them you know.

{R} How about your grandkids, do you have grandchildren?

Mm-hmm.

{R} What do you want for them? Do you want them to be interested in Basque culture and speak the Basque language, or how do you feel about that?

I don't think it makes any difference what I like what they do. I don't think it makes a damn bit of difference, they're going to, you see my grandkids, their father is half Basque and their mother is half Basque, so they're double half breeds. And there's three boys and my daughter in Brookings she is going to have another child in February but they, well the father, he was never, he was raised out in the country.

{R} Who's the father, your daughter's husband?

Mm-hmm, but he's proud of his Basque heritage, but you really, every generation sees it differently and each generation they don't even see it the same. They change their mind as they go along like I am, everyone else has so.

[2-250] {R} Do you think it is important for the language and heritage to be preserved at all?

Oh yes.

{R} From your standpoint in life from where you are now.

Oh yeah, just like everybody else you kick yourself in the tail for not doing more about it. I think it's, well you're raised in a boarding house you see people, you know it's like being married, you see the good and the bad you know, you are like married to every one of them you know. Everyone's a personality and you get so you hate it you know as a kid it cut into your free time, you got to cut this much wood you know and we had three big heating stoves, we didn't have a furnace we didn't have you know, didn't have anything else. For me it was a war to my parents to prove that I was bigger than they were you know. Instead of just doing what I had to do and I think that's the thing with all kids, they want to prove their independence you know and pretty soon after it's too late you knew you were wrong all the time. So with the Basques I think that they've got a lot more to offer than they realize I don't consider, even though I was born there, I don't consider myself as much a Basque as the majority because they speak the language you know and they have, they're closer to the old country and they have better habits, work habits and living habits too. And it's, they live what this country preaches you know a lot of them, the majority of them.

[2-275] {R} In what way, what do you mean?

Well I mean they're independent, more independent than every American, he can take the easy way out you know, in fact when they, in the old days much of the cream of the crop came over you know, I think, I think they did. People didn't realize it, but they didn't have any formal schooling so nobody knew the difference. Now, I worked in Nevada and I worked in different places when things are slow here I'd go somewhere else and do something for a while. But in Nevada they brought them over to work in sheep and they came over Americanized. They were playboys when they got here you know. In the old days when the second generation got up and got to spending too much money and not working as hard as he should we say that was Americanized you know. They started coming over Americanized.

{R} Earlier they were much harder workers, industrious, willing to sacrifice,

Oh yes, well of course things were tougher, everybody had to and it was almost like they were out to prove they were a better worker than anybody else. See like

the Orientals are better workers than anybody you know and it's just a matter of course I think the Basques were out to prove they were a better worker than anybody else, but then on the other hand it was almost all they could do because they didn't have the language or education to do anything else.

[2-295] {R} Yeah, it's different now.

It was almost forced on them, but I don't think they realize what they had you know. They know that, I didn't realize I didn't have a lot of respect for education, you had to fight to get me into high school much less go on, and when he died he has a good friend Jimmy Lozanaz, lives in Lakeview he came over for the funeral they went to school together in Spain and I told Jimmy I says papa was always bragging about you were good buddies in the old country you went to school together, I says how far you go to school? He says two years, what do you mean, there's a lot better schools over there, I says you're kidding, he says two years that's all. And I think that's maybe the average or as much as the average, two years.

{R} Two years of school. To the second grade. Maybe just learn how to,

He wrote Spanish and he spoke English better than the majority, my father did. And he spoke pieces of, he'd been around the world when he was fourteen. He served the French in the merchant marines, but he had a lot of respect for education, like a majority of them do. They put it down one way but they got almost too much respect for education.

{R} They see it as a way to advance and do better.

Right. The things that they should, the things that they needed you know.

{R} So there's a generation now certainly of Basques that are growing up with college educations and are becoming very successful in fields not traditionally engaged in like politics. (indiscernible name) isn't he from Nevada isn't he Basque?

Yeah, he was the governor yeah. He was governor, then senator I guess or vice versa.

[2-320] {R} As far as you know have the Basques ever been involved in the Harney County politics much? Have they every held offices?

Well, we got ~~Bizz~~, he's going to be the next county clerk.

Diaz

{R} Able Bizz?
Avel Diaz

Yeah, and then you know the judge you know taking Burrow's place, he's Basque. His grandfather was the first Basque in Malheur County, Frankie

Yraguen

~~Rogwin~~. He beat Dorrey, here he is a young attorney. He was appointed DA of Malheur County course his parents were raised there and he was in southern Oregon and he came running and he's been in office for over twenty years and beat him in Malheur County beat him more than two to one. And beat him about three to two here in Harney County. His first political campaign.

{R} So that's the judge that's coming here?

Yraguen

Frankie ~~Rogwin~~. He'll be taking Dorrey's place he'll be the district judge.

[2-335] {R} Well I really appreciate you giving us information. I think probably I've got enough here to start on anyway. (turns tape off)