

AVEL DIAZ

Burns County Court House
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Interviewed by:
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Royal Jackson
Horner Museum
979 1 12 A

Why don't we start by having you mention anything at all that you have heard about your grandparents or know about them--where they came from or anything.

Well my grandparents, of course, never were in the United States. My dad come over in about 1908 and then my mother come over several years later and they married in this country and they were both from a town called Leketsio in Spain which is in the province of Biccalla and they were primarily _____ people.

This is your mother and dad you're talking about.

Right and of course their parents were primarily _____ people too.

Did they know each other in Spain?

No, my dad was herding sheep in this country and he got Rocky Mountain Spotted fever and they brought him into town and my mother was working as a maid in this Basque Hotel in Multnomah, Idaho and it was her job to take care of him--they didn't have hospitals and while he was sick and through that why they ended up getting married.

What year did you leave Spain to come here.

About 1908 I believe.

Do you know why you came over here?

He had an uncle living in Shoshone, Idaho and he come over to work with his uncle.

What was his life like in Spain? Did he come from a big family?

No, what I can recall why he came from a family of three--two girls and himself and the mother--I was never to get much history on the mother because he passed away when I was still a baby but I have made contact with her sister that's still living in Spain. She's probably in her eighties. I'm gonna try to go back to Spain this summer, my wife and I and visit with her. After my mother passed away --the Basque being kind of odd people in some of their ways, why there was another Basque family in town that had a baby about the same age as I was and so that's

where I ended up. She was breast feeding this boy and they didn't believe in bottles so that's how come I ended up in that particular family.

When were you born? 1921

And where was that that you were born? Mountain Home, Idaho--it's quite a Basque comm--more Basques there than Boise and lived together at any time.

So your father left Spain in 1908.

Uh huh.

He came because your uncle was here and helped him get a job?

Uh huh.

And also sheep herding?

Right

And where did you do that sheep herding?

In Shoshone and Mountain Home, Idaho country

Did he tell you any stories about his earlier experiences?

No, not really. Most of the Basques experience in Spain that I know of is my contact with other Basques people cause I never lived with my dad as such. I knew he was my dad, he furnished me with clothes

So you grew up in the town and your father was a sheep herder.

Right.

And he would just come to town periodically to see you.

Right

Was that a standard pattern?

In those days it was, yes

It was pretty lonely wasn't it, for the men?

Well they seemed to survive on it. It was better than what they had in the old country.

Were economic conditions pretty bad in Spain that would cause them to want to leave?

Right. They never had a thing. No education. This country gave him an opportunity

to do something with himself. makes arrangements for boat passage and is, get on

Why did he not leave you in the hills when he was sheep herding?

Well it was all men and pretty hard to raise a two month old baby in a sheep camp you know one man, it couldn't even work good today. He had four children. Out of his kids I happened to be the youngest. There was three boys and a daughter or I had a sister. Just farmed them out with four different Basques families. We never lived together at any time.

Your mother had come over in what year now?

She came over sometime in the middle 1914, 1915 something like that.

Why did she come? que Hotel was so important, wasn't it? A place they could go--

Well in those days there was a lot of Basque sheep herders and several Basque hotels in the Boise Valley Mountain Home area and these Basque sheep herders would come in and stay in these hotels. They were all single, most of them and especially during the Christmas Holidays that was their big, and still is amongst the Basque, --they do a lot of celebrating, partying in that period and they needed maids over to make beds and help to take care of the Basque people, men--sheep herders and so there was a lot of young gals come over--somebody would have a hotel here worked and they'd need help so they'd pay these peoples' passage over here and then they worked out--I don't know how many years they had to work or what the system was but they paid for their passage by keeping the rooms clean and help cook and had a boarding house--room and board type deal and most of these gals, they and eventually married somebody that was here herding sheep. panish. Now they found

Do you remember your father telling you about passage over here, how he came and where he arrived? ur father's name?

Yeah, he came by boat into New York by himself about 16 years old. Couldn't speak any English and talked to somebody and say I'm going to Idaho and had a tag on him and got on a train and wouldn't talk to nobody--scared--couldn't speak any way. Ended up in Shoshone, Idaho.

Was there a travel agent or someone who arranged this whole passage?

New

Not in those days. The uncle makes arrangements for boat passage and say get on the boat and here you come. Most of them come over I believe down the hull of the boat. They didn't have good accommodations, just a bunch of people herded into the bottom of a boat like cattle. A lot of people, not just Basque, a lot of Europeans, the Irish down _____, that's the way they come. They'd put them on deck when they get to New York run them through _____ Island and they were on their own.

Nobody was in New York to meet your father.

No, hardly any of these Basques had anybody meet them in New York. That's why the Basque Hotel was so important, wasn't it? A place they could go-- and Right, sure.

How about your mother--did she recollect at all about her passage over?

I was just two months old so I never got--I mean there was not way. What did she die of?

She burned to death. The gal that raised me until I was eight, now she come over the same way and just scared to death you know--just what are we doing, what am I gonna--what's gonna happen and probably more fear than anything. Everything worked for them. They got out here.

That's pretty courageous to leave your known, home land and go somewhere where you don't know the language or the customs.

Right. I'd hate to go someplace myself even today and with things you know and nobody spoke Basque of course. These people all spoke Spanish. Now they found somebody that spoke Spanish they were able to communicate.

What was your father's name?

Emil Diaz.

And your mother's full name again.

Beatrice Echevarria

Is her maiden name.

Echevarria was her last name. It means new house in English New House?

New House in English or in Basque it's new house.

So after two months old you went to live with another family?

Right.

What was their name?

Astorica

Did you take their name or did you keep your's.

No, no they raised me until I was--well her husband died when I was about 6 and this little gal she had--she was a nice person--she had four children of her own and she'd wash shirts for sheep herders and underwear and sox by hand and made beds at the Mountain Home Hotel which was the Basque Hotel and kept everything going and then when I got to be eight she had an opportunity to marry some Basque in Boise that had a little farm and he was taking on quite a responsibility, taking a woman with four kids of her own so I got wiped off the list and I ended up moving in with a Basque gal that was quite a bit older and her husband didn't live in Idaho. He was foreman for a sheep outfit in Colorado and why she lived in Mountain Home, I don't know. She had an older boy that was in her late twenties and I moved in so it was just her and I and this boy would come in from the sheep camps occassionally.

You were eight and this boy was twenty.

Uh huh.

What was their last name?

Rutia, Maria Rutia was her name.

When you were living with the first family, do you remember the sheep herders coming in?

Oh yes, yeah.

Can you tell us about that.

Oh they'd land right near town during lambing. They lambed in what they called shed lambing. They don't do that in Oregon. Every night these people were able to come into town like a ranch hand cause the sheep was in corrals and lambing lasts usually about six weeks and they liked to party. I don't mean getting in scraps. They liked to dance and have a drink or two. Of course those were bootleggin days so everything was (laugh)--mostly Basque Hotels sold moonshine--that was their bread

and butter. They'd buy it out in the stills.

So as a kid you saw a lot of that?

Oh yeah, cause my brother that's two years older than I lived in one of these Basque Hotels--the Basque family that took him in was the same Basque family that brought my mother over and he just lived about a block from where I lived. They had a big dance floor and a big dining room with tables like this. Everybody would come in and ate family style, ate breakfast, dinner and supper and I used to go over and play with my brother and hung around this particular hotel quite a bit as a kid and these Basques would come in. During the holidays I really remember it very well because all the women and the men would get together just about every night and dance their native dances. They'd always have an accordin player or two around.

That's pretty much standard of the Basque gathering, huh.

Uh huh, right and as I recall there was a lot of good food.

Did they dance the gota?

Yeah they danced the gota.

Any other dances you remember?

No, there's other but I can't name them. They always called everything more or less the gota.

How often did they come to town?

Oh in the summer months not at all and in the fall when they brought the sheep close to town and they were feeding sheep hay in the winter months they'd come to town quite often--not to stay. They'd come over in the evening.

How did they adjust to life? Were they relatively happy or were there men that were separated from their homeland and

No, really most of them seemed real happy. The fact that they have a chance to make a dollar--they've never had these opportunities before. What they made was theirs and they could come and go and they didn't know what a dollar was or what money was.

We'll just say money because--and here they are they're not working for a lot of

So they were left pretty much alone until the civil war--this is when the big

money but in those days nobody was making the money they was probably getting--
 \$40-45 a month, meals. Some outfits furnished them with smoking tabacco, some
 outfits furnished them with tabacco and their shoes and their work shoes and some
 of their work clothes. All the money went to the bank. They saved everything.

Did most of them plan on going back--saving up and going back?

Some--a lot of them no. I would say the majority of them had not planned to go
 back. The majority of them said this is it. We like what we got here. A few
 went back, yes but the majority of them didn't go back. They liked what they had
 and thought this was the place to raise families. They were able to do things here
 that their parents weren't able to do in Spain.

Do you remember them talking about being out in the hills or any stories they'd tell you?

Oh yeah, there again you know they'd like to kid each other. Their great for lifting
 weights and running and chopping, wood choppers so in the summer months and when
 the weather was good why they'd get together and tie bail and wire on great big
 old boulders and see who could pack it the furthest using the bail and wire for a
 handle and then they'd see how far they could throw them and then they'd argue and
 fight and--not fight but you know--and then they'd chop wood. They had a lot of
 them that brought their axes from the old country. It's a different axe then
 we have in this country. It's built different and they'd go down and chop
 and see who could chop through a log the quickest and they liked to
 argue. I don't mean you know just argue about anything. They'd argue about that
 building over there being wood instead brick.

How about Spanish politics--was that a topic of discussion?

During the civil war was when I first realized--the Spanish Civil War--that there
 was--yeah they were interested in politics. They, even then the Basque people
 that came from the old country they had their own government although it was under
 the Spanish crown--it's like we have the federal government and we got the state
 that have their own governors and their own capital which was of
 Spain and their own parliament, but they did pay taxes to the Spanish government.
 So they were left pretty much alone until the civil war--this is when the big

political hassle come along. Franco says we're one government and there's no states and you don't have your own parliament, everything's going to be done through Madrid.

People resented that they took some _____ from them. Of course I think there's some Basques, I don't mind saying it, this is what caused the problem here in Burns I think--there's some Basques that say well it's not all that bad and then there's those who still believe that a separate country or separate government or whatever and we have both functions in Burns today. Some say well the government isn't all that bad and then we got others that say no good. I'm not gonna mention names but I had a guy come in the office a week ago to get a passport. He's a naturalized American citizen and gonna go back for a month, six weeks. Him and his wife this summer and I says well you'll go to Madrid and he says no, I'm not gonna go to Madrid and I says well how are you gonna go. He said well I've got my arrangements made that I'll land in Barcelona which is Basque country. He says I'll never step on Spanish soil and I says well it's all Spanish soil--no not all Spanish soil. I says well how did you do it the last time you went to Spain. He says I went through France and I crossed the border into the Basque country. He says I'll never go--well he's one of the

He still feels strongly

Very strongly against the government and what they have there today.

In those early days when you were a child and you were hearing these discussions, were they usually in Basque?

Oh yeah, in Basque, always Basque

But then you didn't come at a _____. How did they know they were all going to meet at one time?

Oh no they didn't--you mean like partying?

Yeah.

Oh it'd be just like you going to Portland or something--you meet somebody in Portland by chance that you knew. A lot of these people never knew each other until they got over here.

Wasn't it related to the seasons of lambing and sheep herding?

Yes, yeah and then your festivities during the holidays

How did the rest of the community that wasn't Basque _____ with that?

Well I hate to say this but when I first started grade school in Idaho we were looked down upon. We were Black Bascoe so and so's and we--I've got in many a fight over it and I was a kid in grade school. They'd call us garlic eaters-- they use a lot of garlic in their food but it's not that way anymore. In fact, I was surprised I come to Harney County when I was twelve and there was Basque here of course and they called them Black Bascoes here and it didn't mean anything here. Down quite a few Basque people and sheep herder down in the south end of the county where Andrews is and that's wehre I stayed with my sister and gosh I just thought there was gonna be a fight here pretty quick some old ranch hand had called somebody a Black Basco and the guy just laughed and said let's go have another drink. They were different here than they were in Idaho.

Why is that?

I don't know. I never could--probably wasn't as many of them but I just couldn't believe it.

Why did you move here when you were twelve?

My dad remarried--married an American gal and so I wasn't getting along with this single gal I was living with--I lived with her for four years and life wasn't too good.

Those were what years of your age then?

From 8 to 12, so when my dad got married why he sent me to town to get some groceries I just never went back, I went to live with my dad and that wasn't a very good move on my part. I just kind of jumped from the skillet into the fire.

You went to live out in the hills with your father?

He lived in town. He had a home in town and married this American gal and he was still working in the sheep camp but then again it was close, Mountain, Idaho and he'd come to town just about every night and then my older brother, he--so I was old--they called me Ade--if Ade can move in with the old man why he's left his

people that raised him and then the third brother that lived in the hotel he talked to his people and says well two brothers are living together with the old man. They says go and if it don't work out for you well this is home and he left with that understanding well my oldest brother well he run away really to go live with his dad. He had no home to go to and I didn't either and after we moved in with the old man we could see that it wasn't any good.

Why was that?

Oh the mother or step mother was an alcoholic and the old man in the sheep camp all day--oh he'd come to town not every night but two and three nights a week and no supervision. My oldest brother joined the 3C's after the 3C's started. He lied about his age and he joined the 3C's. My other brother that's two years older than I, he went back to the hotel and I was stuck. My sister got married real young. She, there again, would go back. My sister bounced around from Mountain Home to _____, Idaho and then from _____, as a child of Vale and had a Basque hotel in Vale and took here in to do beds when she was still and she earned her keep there.

She was about what, 13?

Yeah, something like that. So there was a Basque Hotel in Andrews, there was a lot of Basque sheep herders there then and so these people happened to be in Vale and they were looking for somebody to work and these Basque people at this hotel says there's a gal and take her--it was like slavery. My sister ended up in Andrews working in this hotel.

Was that the _____ hotel at the time?

It was Mrs. Uraisers sister Marceline Ariolla was running it at that time and they had bought it from the Uraisers and so there was a Basque fellow that was borned and raised in Chile running a store there in Andrews so God he was 20 years older than my sister and they got married. She was what you'd call a child bride, I suppose.

She was 13?

14, he was 32, something like that.

Did your sisters and brothers and you know Basque?

Yeah, so then my sister and her husband come to Mountain Home to visit. I hadn't never seen my sister more than half a dozen times up till this point. So they come down at the house and and said well why don't Ave come and spend the summer in Andrews with us and so the old man says that sounds great so I got on a train in Mountain Home and come to Ontario and then they used to have a passenger train from Ontario to Crane or to Burns and I got off at Crane and took the mail stage down to Andrews and stayed there that summer and come time to go to Idaho that fall why my brother-in-law said why don't you stay here--go to school in Andrews and Did you work in the hotel there--what did you do there in Andrews?

I just stayed at the store. They run a store

And helped out there?

Yeah, uh huh

Had you been going to school in Idaho?

Yeah, not too many women but a bunch oh I'd say probably 35-45 Basque sheep

So you knew English also.

Oh yeah, we all knew English

What about Spanish?

TAPE 1 (side two)

No, a few words, but these Basque just don't speak it unless they have to--even today. So when this brother-in-law gave me the opportunity to--and the old man didn't care--said why don't you just stay here and go to school and things were a little tough-- it was during the depression, he says I'm gonna go herd sheep and your sister and you could kind of manage the little store they had pump a little gas and--didn't have a pump in the house. We packed water, he says you can pack water and pack wood. I thought that was great. I didn't want to go back to Idaho and here I am. I never, I'll go back to visit but never went back to Idaho to live.

Was Andrews a large community at that time?

Oh yeah, probably 35-40 people living there then.

What else do you remember about it when you first arrived?

To Oregon?

To Oregon camp--they were self taught. They wanted to learn. Now most of these that I thought it was great. I just automatically fell in love with it. I don't know. I just liked it. and get by.

How does it differ from Idaho?

Well I lived in town in Idaho and was--I'm not cryin the blues, just kind of got shoved around and had no purpose and I come to Oregon and the people are different. The Basque people are different. Just like I said, you could call one of them a Black Bascoe so and so and there was no--there was just different attitudes. they

Were they friendlier here? quotas system--and then when they started looking for sheep Friendlier, oh yes and the people were friendlier towards the Basque. I mean you were just another person. rved their contract and then most of them come back--

You didn't sense any discrimination at all? citizens--well they're a little different than

None whatsoever. my folks' generation.

And there was a large Basque community? those contract Basques came over, roughly?

Oh yeah, not too many women but a bunch oh I'd say probably 35-45 Basque sheep

Yeah herders in the area.

I would say--I could be corrected on this, but they start coming over in the late forties and up until the middle sixties. TAPE 1 (side two) rse the sheep camp--I think

Just like the Mountain Home at the Basque Hotel and had an old fire plant to run the is of sheep and or the player piano and they'd come in and put nickels in that thing. less than two months in Mountain Home, Idaho--it was in February.

How big was the hotel? burns? how many? the employees is like to get their money

Oh probably--it was in two units--probably had 15 rooms. There's no sheep in this

What was the name of the man that owned it? y serve their contract out and they can get

A permanent r Ariola. here, a lot of them come out here and go to work out at the

That was the brother-in-law of _____?

At Right, in fact Mr. Ariola lives in Vale at the present time.

I wanted to ask you before I go on, did your father know English? ng for work that have

Let me put it this way--the Basque people that come over in the early 1900's for Idaho, some reason or another learned--most of them learned to read and write English in

sheep camp--they were self taught. They wanted to learn. Now most of these that come over now, they don't care if they learn to read or write or not. They learn enough to speak and get by.

By now, you mean today?

Yeah, the ones that are--see there was another group come over to herd sheep under contract so there was a lull of Basque coming over here for a period of maybe 20 years. There wasn't too many Basque come over this country cause they weren't allowed over here because they had quotas, immigration quotas. Not because they were Basque. But the quotas system--and then when they started looking for sheep herders they says well we'll let so many Basque sheep herders come over why under contract why then they served their contract and then most of them come back-- permanent residents and then become citizens--well they're a little different than the generation--my folks' generation.

What would have been the time period when those contract Basques came over, roughly?

You mean when did they come over?

Yeah

I would say--I could be corrected on this, but they start coming over in the late forties and up until the middle sixties and then of course the sheep camp--I think they still come over in some areas but there's no sheep in Oregon--you know, no bands of sheep and they still come over. I met five of them that were just in this country less than two months in Mountain Home, Idaho--it was in February.

Do they still come to Burns?

No, I met them in Idaho. There's no use for them here. There's no sheep in this country. But what they do is after they serve their contract out and they can get a permanent residence here, a lot of them come out here and go to work out at the saw mill.

At Hines.

At Hines. In fact there's two here now that just come looking for work that have herded sheep. So they're still bringing contract sheep herders to Colorado and Idaho,

and Montana where they still have sheep--none in this area and like I say I met 5 young fellows--happened to be in Mountain Home visiting with my brothers towards the end of February and one of my brothers has got a bar over there and here these Basque come in. You can tell, I says to my brother in Basque, I says them are new ones aren't they? And he says yeah, they'd just been here a short time so we had a couple rounds of drinks and these people are surprised when they talk to somebody like myself that's American born that speaks Basque to them. They really think that's some Thanksgiving Day. She'd have Basque food.

They like it don't they?

Yeah, uh huh. There's not too many Basques that come to this country in this area that learn to speak Basque. Basque food is hot, highly spiced with garlic and paprika

You mean American born Basques? as and tomatoes.

Garba Yeah, American born Basques.

Why is that, is that less emphasized? personally don't like hot food. But I can remember

Oh you go to school, you speak English and you understand it--probably all understand it--they all understand it but just don't learn to speak it. Very few--there's a lot of Basque people my age in Burns that were born and raised in the United States and they don't speak Basque. put it out there on platters. If you wanted 5 eggs you

How do you feel about that? dinner she'd have stews or just you know just food--homemade

I'm glad I speak it. I think it's great. I have fun with it. I really have a lot of fun with it. I've always enjoyed it. their own lamb or mutton and she'd have

Let's return for a second to Andrews. I'm interested in life in that little community.

Now there's a structure out there that's called the Andrew's Saloon. Do you remember much about that when you were a kid? Was that there? th or week or by the meal or how?

The building was there but it wasn't a saloon then. There was a Mexican family by the names of Fidel say some sheep who lived in it then but then of course being a kid you heard a lot of stories about the old saloon. Now the saloon--it was not a saloon cause the Ariolas run the hotel and they sold beer and that was right after they changed the 21st Amendment or whatever. breakfast cost you about 50c, dinner--

Prohibition? really, well yeah it was probably a lot of money for those days but not

Prohibition, yeah so booze--hard liquor was illegal but they sold 3-2 beer and had a beer license and they sold--they'd buy bonded whiskey which was legal to sell. They had no--they couldn't sell it, but they'd come to Burns or go to Winnekmucca and bring back an old pick up full of booze and sold it for two bits a drink or something. That was more or less--all the ranch hands went there, not just the Basques. It was the center of the community with that hotel. Mrs. Ariola would cook a big Thanksgiving dinner. She served meals three times a day too but everybody would come Thanksgiving Day. She'd have Basque food.

What kind of food was that?

Oh they use beef and stuff that we use but they just season it different--not hot. A lot of people think well Basque food is hot, highly spiced with garlic and paprika and they use a lot of onions and tomatoes.

Garbanzo beans?

Yeah, but it's not hot food. I personally don't like hot food. But I can remember that old gal had an old woodstove that was probably 10 foot across and God she'd just shove sagebrush--it'd burn sagebrush--and just shove sagebrush into that oven (laugh). She was quite a cook and like breakfast--just plain old bacon and eggs or ham and eggs--nothing special just put it out there on platters. If you wanted 5 eggs you ate 5 eggs and then for dinner she'd have stews or just you know just food--homemade bread and then supper, she'd have--that was always her big meal--she'd have probably --they butchered their own beef and had their own lamb or mutton and she'd have fried lambchops or make lamb stew or cook lamb in dutch ovens or beef or whatever and just put it out in big platters.

How did people pay for this? Did they pay by the month or week or by the meal or how?

Oh the ones--mostly just paid as they ate. Now if somebody come and stay at the hotel for a month, say some sheep herder would be kind of down or not able to work or might be sick and they stay in the hotel why then they'd pay by the month.

How much did it cost, do you remember?

I could be lying but it seemed like to me breakfast cost you about 50¢, dinner--nothing really, well yeah it was probably a lot of money in those days but not

really a lot. three, and his folks lived in town and there was the old Shay boys

What kinds of things did you do for entertainment as a kid? the Starbucks and the Panalogs

Oh in Andrews my brother-in-law gave me a twenty-two and a box of shells. In those

days the county paid 5¢ for every rabbit you killed and had a bounty on them cause

there was a lot of rabbits and you cut the ears off and dried them and then you'd

bring them to the courthouse--someplace you'd bring them in--and then the county

would give you 5¢ and so he says that's all the bullets I'm gonna give you, you're

on your own and then he'd give me 4¢ on the rabbit ears, the store took them as

collateral or cash--some old rancher would come in with a couple hundred rabbit ears,

pairs of rabbit ears, why he'd buy groceries with it and--all those stores in that

area did that _____ and they'd take these rabbit ears in as money and

instead of paying them 5¢ on rabbit ear they'd give them 4¢ see and then they'd

bring them to town and redeem them and they'd get the 5¢ so they were getting 1¢ per

--or there was a lot of sage hens in the country. I kept everybody in the area

supplied with sage hens the first couple of summers I was there.

Good eating? to--I came here in '32.

Good eating, I _____ middle of the Depression..

What was the idea of killing the rabbits?

Oh they were destroying crops cause they were well you couldn't walk from here a

block without running into 50-60 of them. The county even tried to poison them.

They had people come out and spread, I don't know what they were spreading, but I

remember it coming in big gunnysacks full--had rabbit poisoning and they'd spread

it out and try to kill rabbits with it.

This was a county program where they were eradicating the rabbits.

Right it was a county program.

And they gave money for the ears? much money but they didn't know what the Depression was.

Right. they know of course but I mean the lifestyle was such that.

Did you do this friends? hem that much.

Oh yeah, you've probably heard of Cactus Smith and he was a few years younger than

did orders come there to Andrews or to _____

myself, about three, and his folks lived in town and there was the old Shay boys and there was some people by the name of Blaylock and the Starbucks and the Panalons and there was quite a few families you know and one was run by the Smith family You associated with non Basques. store and they had a little--they always had a mechanic Oh yeah, and then there was Dan Ariola, of course he was Basque. In fact Dandy and I were the only two young Basque kids, well we had two brothers that were older, but in Andrews we were--although there were a lot of Basque people there, they were all bachelors, see and the Ariola family and then I moved in. So Dandy and I were the only two Basque kids going to school in those days. We had a school of maybe about 25 kids from 1st to 8th grade. There were no other Basques going to school there.

Where were the Basque kids then? There wasn't any Basque kids. There was just one Basque family--Ariolas. The rest of them were all bachelors--sheep herders. They either owned sheep--no Basque families. This would be in the early thirties, middle thirties you're talking about.

Yes, '32 to--I came here in '32. So that was in the middle of the Depression.

Uh huh. What are your memories of the Depression? Was that hard time for those people? No, that was something that surprised me. In Idaho, yes, the Depression--I could tell it--come to Oregon--come to Andrews life went on. They danced, they had by the dances about every other Saturday night either at Andrews, Fields or a lot of hay. All the ranch hands would go, all the women. I'm talking about not Basque women cause there wasn't too many. Ranch hands and young people--and they'd dance all night and have a beer or two to drink and everybody had a bottle outside and people had plenty to eat, maybe not much money but they didn't know what the Depression was. Sure they knew of course but I mean the lifestyle was such that. It didn't really affect them that much.

Right. Did sheep herders come there to Andrews or to _____?

Yes everybody for--because of the country, the terrain, the grazing habits. Let's go
 Why was that? Idaho. Most of the sheep people in Idaho did things out of what they called
 Well because at that time Andrews had two stores, one was run by the Smith family
 and my brother-in-law has a store and they had a little--they always had a mechanic
 working. It was just kind of a center, more of a center than Fields is today but
 you in those days Andrews was the center.

That was and is a major transportation corridor wasn't it? herders he's take care of.

Yeah. herders would be scattered over quite an area so he'd go spend a night with
 What was it like then? Did people have model A's? maybe cook a pot of beans and leave him

Oh yeah, Model A's and Chevrolets--Bennett's here in Burns probably sold, there was
 probably more Chevrolets in that area cause he would come down and sell cars, Cecil
 Bennett, you probably heard of him and he knew a lot of people down there and some
 people in all those days as I can recall, I was really surprised, still travelled
 by wagon. They didn't care. then the camp tender would come along every few days

You can remember that, huh? comes and bring him a loaf of bread and cook him a pot of

Oh yeah, they'd come to town with a wagon to get groceries. 't have time to cook.

Like one horse, two horse teams, ng care of the sheep, huh?

Two horse teams. Now the Turner family, Mrs. Turner used to come to town every
 Saturday with a little buggy with a high stepping little horse and fringe on the top.

What central camp or whatever ranch? to call it. west side, this side is now in it

Were The Alvoid at that time was run by Gus Davis and a meat producer in Salt Lake by the
 name of McFarland and they hired a lot of people, a lot of buckaroos, a lot of hay
 hands in the summer months. herder?

Were some of these Basques? depends on what they needed when you want to work.

They No didn't get paid any more? this price was what and he didn't pay any more?

Were the Basques not at all drawn to ranching, cattle ranching?

Did They got into it. They really would've rather been in ranching but there was--it
 was easier to get a job with a sheep outfit. It took less know how. The average
 person don't like to go out in the hills--this country was different than Idaho.

When you went to herd sheep in this country, you went out in the hills away from

everybody for--because of the country, the terrain, the grazing habits. Let's go back to Idaho. Most of the sheep people in Idaho did things out of what they called a sheep wagon, pulled by horses, rubber wheels. It looked like a covered wagon. Back to our campers now days in this country everything was tent--mule, you packed a mule and you moved camp.

You had camp tenders then didn't you?

Yeah, right. The camp tender would have 3 or 4 sheep herders he's take care of. Sheep herders would be scattered over quite an area so he'd go spend a night with one sheep herder and make his bread for him, maybe cook a pot of beans and leave him with something to cook for two or three days and then the guy would cook his own breakfast and warm his own meal so he didn't have to stop and bake bread and he'd go on to another camp. He had a central camp. Most of these sheep herders just put their bedroll and stuff up on a burrow and go with the sheep, where the water was and where the feeding was and then the camp tender would come along every few days and bring him some groceries and bring him a loaf of bread and cook him a pot of beans, cook him rice and raisins for dessert, cause he didn't have time to cook.

It was an all consuming job taking care of the sheep, huh?

Yeah, and he didn't have a stove. This guy would cook with a campfire and the camp tender, he'd have an old sheep herder stove and a tent and loaded with groceries and central camp or whatever you want to call it.

Were the camp tenders Basque also?

Right.

Was that a step up from being a herder?

Not really, no. Just depends on what they needed when you went to work.

They didn't get paid any more?

No.

Did you ever aspire to be a sheep herder?

I herded sheep two summers for the Alvoid Ranch--no not really and I tended camp for--I'd go out in lambing time and tend camp and cook. See lamb is altogether different. You get different bands of sheep and you'd have them all within an area

Did you and then everybody stayed in one camp and you lambd out in sage brush and so you'd
 take the lambs that were dropped in a 24 hr period--we say drop, we use that with
 Did lambs--you made a bunch out of those. You kept them as a bunch for until marking
 time, branding and marking time and so you'd have little--a sheep herder would
 Why have as high as 25-30 bunches that he took care of and he never mixed them and the
 reason they didn't mix them, there was difference in the lambs and their age is
 24 hours made a lot of difference so they kept each 24 hour unit separate until they
 got so they could eat a little grass and so the center of activity in lambing camp
 He's would be one main camp and you'd get up in the morning at 4 and took a pot of coffee.
 We had Americans working. I had guys like John Smith. He used to run a grocery
 store here and a guy by the name of Wade Jacobs and a guy by the name of Moppin.
 It wasn't all Basque, the mother and I this, which was Mexican--they worked in the
 lambing camp and they put extra help during lambing. So you'd get up in the morning
 put a pot of coffee on, a big pot, and they all got so they ate at the Basque said
 Did it was good for them and kept them going. They'd crack two eggs in a bowl and beat
 them real light and pour a little canned cream in them and then chop some cheese
 into that and then pour hot coffee on it and stir it and that was breakfast.
 Pout hot coffee on the omeletts? average of say 3 or 4 bands, some of them had more but
 Yeah. It wasn't an omelette it was just in the bowl and it's good and then they'd
 How all come in about, oh they'd start coming in about nine, this would be four in the
 morning, they'd go out and make sure the coyotes weren't bothering the lambs and
 they'd come in between 9 and 10 and then you'd have a regular breakfast--ham and
 Some eggs or hotcakes, whatever and then I was just a young fellow but I cooked all the
 and bread. I cooked as high as 12 loaves of dutch oven bread everyday. They'd really
 go through the bread and then cook a big stew and we didn't have steaks. Once in
 a while we'd have lambchops but you can't cook--we just had a little stove about
 this long and that wide, a little sheep camp stove. We did most of our cooking in
 the ground, dig hole. and the banks kept some of them going in fact, they said what
 Burn sagebrush. do with these sheep. There was several Basque sheep outfits brought
 Burn sagebrush and bury it--cooked all our bread that way.

Did you ever have a fire get loose on you?

Never.

Did women ever come up and cook?

No.

Why is that?

Didn't want them around (laught) I guess. It wasn't no place for a woman. There

was one Basque family by the name of Sabola, Domingo, and he ended up in the

Roseburg area in the logging business, him and his boys.

He's not related to the Sabalas?

No, no and they got started in the sheep business by going around to all these other sheep camps and picking up bumper lambs in the spring of the year and the whole family worked at it, the mother and I think there was three girls and three boys. They didn't hire anybody but each ear they'd go pick up another couple of hundred bumpers and they'd bottle feed them and they got wealthy.

Did many Basques come to own large herds?

Not, say three or four bands. When I come to Oregon there in the Andrews are alone there was probably oh just the top of my hat probably 8 or 9 Basque sheep outfits. Each one of them had on the average of say 3 or 4 bands, some of them had more but say the average.

How many in a band?

1000-1500 lambs and ewes, what I'm trying to say is they'd have 1000 ewes and they'd have lambs.

Some of the Basques did then go from nothing to having a great deal just by herding sheep and saving their money?

Oh yeah, yeah, the banks went along with them and loaned them money to buy sheep and then the depression. Of course they felt the depression--a lot of them did go belly up because they bought sheep in the late twenties and then in the thirties sheep wasn't worth nothing and the banks kept some of them going in fact, they said what are we gonna do with these sheep. There was several Basque sheep outfits brought here to Burns and told the banker here they are. The banker wouldn't give them any

more money to buy groceries with, wouldn't give them any more money to pay the herders with. They said well their your sheep, I can't pay for them and the old banker says well how much take to--so he'd give them the bare necessities and tell them to go back to the hills with them. This happened several times.

Some of the bank went, would be going to pot during that period weren't they?

Not in this area.

I wanted to ask, where did they take the sheep for grazing? Where were the grazing lands?

What was the pattern?

Well in the winter months they'd bring them down to the valley and buy hay from ranchers cause they didn't have no home base themselves to feed them. They'd start feeding them in November and then in the spring, first of April, they'd go out and lamb just in the foothills around old Ted Carson farm between Fields and Andrews out sheep heads and lamb just out in the brush and then in May, around the first week in May they'd mark the sheep, brand them, put them back in bands. They'd bring all these little bunches together and make bands and then they'd still stay in the low areas and in June, they'd shear them in June. There was no use taking them way up high until they were sheared. Then they'd shear them in June and they would go out on top of Steens Mountain, can't beat Mountains. Oh used to run lease land in the he country and just trail them. This is what happened to the Basque people in this country--sheep herders in this country. They didn't own any ranches. They didn't own any land. They were running on public domain.

Do you remember Grazing Act.

Yeah, that's why there's no--they had to fold up.

Let's back up a minute to Alvoid Ranch. What do you remember about the buckaroos in those days? Were they wild and willy like you see on television?

Oh good people--worked hard, played hard. When they come to Andrews or come to Georg Burns they're ready to play. They're ready to party. They were good people. Good hard-working people, really worked. Asked no quarters and gave none--no they didn't go around packing guns. Sure they still do it in the south end--you go to a dance

or someplace and you expected to see a couple of them square off and work one another over but within an hour after that was over with they had their arms around each other and tipped the bottle--just showing a little manhood I think more than anything. I'm a man and this is what I got to do. There was nobody that threatened to kill anybody or say you and I got into a fight, we were a couple of ranch hands and so you didn't plot for weeks to get even with me or I'd never plotted for weeks to get even with you--hell we were partying, we got into a discussion and we decided the only way to settle it was to go outside and beat on each other.

Do you remember any cases where someone killed someone else?

No

Do any names stand out in your mind as being particularly onery or notorious.

Oh maybe onery in a good way like old Ted Carson, his wife run, he's gone now, but they still run the long story he was ranch boss or foreman at the Alvoid and Johnny Anderson, he just retired working for country road department. He was young, heck these guys were what 18-19-20 years old buckaroos and there's Pug _____, he's still around, there's Johnny Crow, you've heard of him.

Yeah we know Johnny.

O.K., there's a typical good people, you can't beat em. They were just young and the fine family, the _____ fall down at the _____. I thought it was great.

Good life, huh?

Good life.

Do you remember _____?

Oh yeah, I've worked lambing camp just within walking distance of _____ farm and it was when Pollick still had it.

Do you remember the Wrenwicks?

Oh yeah, went to school with the Wrenwicks?

George?

George _____. I was very fortunate that Crane dormitory was--let's see I went to grade school at Andrews, spent his two years there then the dormitory my

sister contributing paying taxes so I was allowed to go to school at Crane so I went to school there one year, it was my first year, and then her and her husband got a divorce and that left me in limbo again and then these Basques says O.K.--I was just a high school kid--come to work in the sheep camp, they was good to me. I'd go work in the sheep camp and they paid me just like anybody else--\$45 a month and in the summer months I'd go work in the sheep camp and the fall of the year why I'd work a little longer, I'd work to October and I wouldn't start school in September so I went back to Crane so I did that for two years and then my senior year why the school board out at Crane decided--which was right that say that guy doesn't got any family paying taxes in the school district, he can't go to school here so they notified me and told me that if I wanted to go to school I had to pay \$20 a month, room and board, which just wasn't in the cards. But the old school principal, we're still real close, he was running the dormitory and that was my senior year, he moved out of the dorm cause his wife had a child that summer and so he rented a house in Crane and he said heck just move in with us. It won't cost you nothing so I spent the winter with them.

You moved around, didn't you? I moved around but all the time I went

TAPE 2 (side 1)

979 1 12 a O.K. Folly Farm, as I recall Folly Farm it was a post office and a little general store run by the Pollick brothers which also had the juniper ranch and Tom Pollick was the brother that run the store and Fred and Max run the ranch. Their mother was involved, I can't recall her name and there again their primary customers were a few homesteaders and sheep herders or sheep people and a few ranchers that lived in the area.

About how many people were located at Folly Farms?

Just Tom at the store and the _____ were three or four miles away at the _____ place where Folly Farms got its name--there was George, Bill and I

believe brother Jim lived there. I was 18 going on 19.

George, Bill and Jim Wrenwick? you involved in? Working in the store mostly?

Uh huh and that was about it in that area. store, help hay at the Alvord for Mustang

Did a lot of people stop there people. Basque with sheep. Of course went to school so

Yes it was more of a stop. There was a stage stop, mail stop--had no eatin facilities. spring to go lamb so one year I decided the heck with the sheep business, I'm

Do you remember the irrigation system. for one year. I hayed for Warren McClain and

No that was before my time. When I hit this area it was more or less just used for grazing. The name Folly Farm of course comes from, you probably searched that out but no, they didn't raise anything as such just some rye hay and stuff like that

How did --the big operation was done with when I come to this country? Was that encouraged

How about the mountains that surround the sheep herds, do you remember activities in those mountains? several of them that decided that once I got to high school age I should

Just again sheep. There was a lot of Basque people like Sam _____, and John _____ and those people run sheep out in that area

When the grazing act went into being do you remember the reaction of the Basques? I went to

Yeah, they were unhappy. There again I think a lot of it was them not knowing what was coming. Nobody knew of course and where they were contented with just running on public domain never realizing they'd ever be kicked off and they were just caught short with no base profit in. Of course the cattle people kind of were glad to get the sheep off of the rance cause they figured the sheep were ruining the range which again I don't think they did. one way to make a living and most of the sheep

Do you feel animosity from cattlemen? and I just couldn't see any future in me working

No, not really. It's just the fact that the cattle people--there's a limited amount of range and they wanted it for themselves. There wasn't really what you'd call plentiful range so there was a matter of either mostly sheep or mostly cattle and this is the way it went. No the cattle people they got along with the sheep people at least in the days that I was around they did. There was no problems.

Let's back up a minute now, in following your life's thread we stopped at Andrews when you were about 12, 15. by Basque girlfriends around. You never see a Basque carry a

I started 12 and left there when I was 18 going on 19.

And over that period what were you involved in? Working in the store mostly?

Oh no, just about a year and a half in the store, help hay at the Alvoid for Mustang Smith and mostly help sheep people, Basque with sheep. Of course went to school so this was just more of a summer and spring activity cause I dropped out of school every spring to go lamb so one year I decided the heck with the sheep business, I'm gonna do some haying so I just hayed for one year. I hayed for Warren McClain and Mustang Smith there on the Alvoid. We had a contract to put up the hay. Warren had the cuttin contract and Warren had to cut and Mustang Smith had to stack and contract--two separate contracts.

How did the sheep herders and Basques feel about you going to school? Was that encouraged or did they feel like you should be with the sheep more?

Oh there's several of them that decided that once I got to high school age I should just go to work and I was wasting my time. Like when I got out of school I went to aircraft sheetmetal school in Pendleton and then had a change to go to work at Boeing so I was broke and so I come down to Folly Farm and borrowed some money from the Basque to pay a couple months room and board and my union dues up there and they said hell you don't need to go up there. You got a job here. There's still the sheep business. I said naw this is no place for me. I'm gone.

What had motivated you to go to this school to learn sheetmetal?

Well I didn't have no ties and was looking--it was just prior to us getting into World War II and was looking for some way to make a living and most of the sheep outfits were going out of business and I just couldn't see any future in me working with sheep any longer. There just wasn't no future in it so being young and foolish why I was gonna try something else.

Speaking of being young and foolish, what was your social life like in those days? Did you have girlfriends?

Oh yeah, sure.

Basque girlfriends?

No there wasn't many Basque girlfriends around. You never see a Basque marry a

Basque anyway in this country. They always married somebody else. There wasn't any Basque gals. I think in high school there was two in Crane out of a student body of about 80 there was two Basque gals--two sisters and there was just 3 or 4 Basque kids.

So most of the people that married Basque women went back to Spain and got wives and brought them here?

What Most of them yes.

Did that occur a lot?

What Oh yeah. Quite a few of them. Like I say a lot of them married Basque gals that come over here to work as maids and pay their passage over and some of those ended up getting married.

What happened with your sister after she was divorced?

Oh she married some Missourian and they went back to Missouri and then they come back out west and settled in Idaho when they got back. Still living in Idaho and get along real good.

Do you remember when the hotel burned in Andrews?

No, see I was just--that happened about 1920, 21, 22--no I wasn't around. I've heard _____ talk about it but that's about it.

What about the dentist, Hibbard. I understand he had a circuit that he rode and fixed teeth. Did you ever know of a time he stopped at Andrews?

I can remember, I can't tell you if it was in the summer, fall or when it was but I can remember him making a couple runs down through there to fix teeth. He had an old _____ drill. I can't remember what time it was but I remember him working on some teeth. He never worked on mine but--there used to be a Catholic priest by the name of Father Egan. He used to make the circuit every summer and have mass at Folly Farm, _____, Andrews, Fields, _____, White Horse and then come back to Burns. He'd do this a couple times during the summer months--quite a guy.

Were most of the Basques Catholic?

All of them were in fact when I first met this Father Egan, he, the first summer I

What was here he come to Andrews to serve Mass and I asked him if he needed an alter boy. God, he couldn't believe that there was somebody that could serve mass. I'd been an alter boy in Idaho. I served Mass for him and he says well you might as well come along so I made the circuit with him--went to Fields, _____.

How old were you when you did that?

What Oh going on 13.

What do you remember from that trip?

Oh it was really my first trip through the south end and I was just really amazed.

What do you remember about it?

Oh the vastness of the country--big--not too many people, a complete new world, you

know. What is all this, you know. I don't know, just different.

How did you travel?

He had a fairly new car, probably a '32 Chev coup and we stayed at the old hotel in Fields one night and then stayed at the Basque hotel in _____, then we stayed at the ranch at White Horse.

I didn't know there was a Basque hotel at _____.

Yeah run by Joe _____, had a saloon.

Did he know Basque, himself?

Oh he was from Spain.

Was he Basque?

Yeah, he was, God, his wife was Basque and she'd married an Irishman when she first come to this country and think between the Basque and the Irishman she had about 15 kids, a whole tribe of them.

Did you say he went to White Horse ranch?

Father Egan did, yeah.

Were there Basques working at White Horse ranch?

No, he was just interested in giving mass for whoever wanted to hear mass. He figured that in those days they just didn't see any preachers down there. There were a few

Catholics like the Madoids and different and not just Basque--there was some other--

Callahan, the O'Keefes, Murphys--they were all in the sheep business--Irish, those people.

What do you remember about White Horse ranch? *the sheep just went--outside of McClain's*

Oh, remember, it's still there, the big barn with the white horse on top of it. *ly*

In those days it just amazed me that ranches could be that big you know. Let's say

oh this was all one ranch, you'd travel for several hours and still be in the confines or fenceline or some part of that ranch. *nd later in which is a fore ranner*

What other points were on your itinerary then? You started where at Burns? *government*

Well I picked him up at Andrews and we went from Andrews to Fields and had mass *near*

there and then to _____ and then across the desert and went to Wild

Horse, White Horse I mean then he'd come back and drop me off at Andrews and he come back into Burns. *here at Marble Orchard*

What did people do if they needed a doctor in those days?

Come to Burns--this Mrs. Ariola, she was kind of a mid wife, in fact she was. *th*

Everybody that had like my sister, she had three children, she had two in Burns and

the third one Mrs. Ariola acted as a mid wife and delivered it. The _____

family--I think she probably mid wifed most of those children--home remedies and

whatever. Just to go back I can remember the winter I was in 8th grade my sister's

oldest boy got pneumonia when he was about 8, 9 months old and couldn't get out, we

were snow bound and consequently it passed away and we couldn't find a doctor--couldn't

get out to get a doctor--they tried to do stuff for it and then the Blairs, you've

probably heard of the Blairs in that country. Old man Blair, he had come to this

country from Missouri. He was an old cabinet maker so he made a coffin and I can

remember him lying up with my sister's wedding dress or something. That's what

they buried the nephew in--went to the cemetery there in Andrews and there was no

connection with the authorities or nothing. It kind of reminds you of something you

see way back--had to get rid of something. That's the way they did things cause

they were more or less self sufficient. *country?*

Were you in Andrews when the Taylor Grazing act came? *to see one, I think I could*

Uh huh *him as a Basque if he was Basque.*

What happened after that? *in Boise?*

Outside of one of two sheep outfits everybody just--the cattle business didn't change

in fact it probably flourished more and the sheep just went--outside of McClain's and the Alvoid ranch and then of course later the once or some--was about the only three sheep outfits left but they had home bases and that was private grazing lands on the Steens and gradually they just went out of the sheep business too, a lot of it had to do with the fact that BLM again entered into in which is a fore runner step son of Taylor grazing, even these people had to run sheep on some government land and BLM would cut off their permits and so no place to run sheep in the summer why--it takes a lot of energy to run a bunch of sheep.

Where did all these sheep herders go?

A lot of them up here at Marble Orchard

What is Marble Orchard?

Uh graveyard, Marble Orchard (laugh) and most of these guys were associated with sheep during the land of Taylor grazing if you give a little of thought--cause most of them are dead cause they'd be 80 or 90 years old today--come over here when they were 16, 19, 20 years old in the early nineteen hundreds why most of them are-- there's a few left, not too many though.

Were you in that period, let's say the late thirties or say the decade of thirty to forty, were you pretty much aware of most of the Basques in vs. what are county through gatherings--did you all know each other?

Right, uh huh, yeah.

And why was that? Because of the in John Day.

It's because we were Basque I think. Just the idea--I think you'll even find that today. We'll see somebody and for some reason something about them you can just, at least I can. I can pick out a stranger in town and say hey that guy's Basque and go talk to him and yeah 99% of the time I'll be right. I don't know why.

Is that the case today then in Har country?

Oh yeah, I see a stranger in town today, if I was to see one, I think I could identify him as a Basque if he was Basque.

Did you ever go to festivals in Boise?

No just Mountain Home. They have one there every summer too, but not to Boise.

The B: Never been to any at _____ or any of the Nevada ones, no. I'd like to have gone but was always tied up driving ambulance or some _____ type thing. Let's pick up the story of your life again when you--started going to sheet metal school and did you go?

Yeah, I ended up working for Boeing up in Seattle, come here and got some money from a Basque fellow to pay my room and board up there and he wanted me to stay--no, going to Seattle and worked up in Seattle a year and the war broke out so I joined the service. Didn't have to go but I joined.

What year was that, in '41?

'42

What service?

Army aircorp--served 44 months in the service and come back. I was gonna come to Burns and try to get a job out at the saw mill. That was the only thing I could think of. I didn't want to go back to Seattle. I could have got work at Boeing after the war--didn't like Seattle, didn't like the climate, the rain and was gonna come back to Burns and run into my old Crane school principal in the Trailways Bus Depot in Portland, just a coincidence. I was going in and he was headed out. It was during Christmas Holidays and hey, he says, what are you doin and I says well I'm getting a bus ticket to Burns. He says well why don't you come to John Day with. He was teaching and had the principalship for Grand Union high school. He says I got a job for you in John Day. He knew I was gonna get out within a matter of time--fine. I went to John Day and went to work at Ford garage and lived in John Day for six years. Oh it was a good place--liked it.

Were there many Basques there?

No I was the only Basque there.

How did you feel about that?

I didn't feel bad. Didn't bother me. I'd come to Burns occasionally and I was single the first four years of it and had a car and did it you know, no strings attached. I'd come to Burns probably on the average of once a month. Come over for their fair every year.

The Basques had a fare every year?

No, the _____ county fare.

I wanted to ask where you went when you were in the army.

Oh, California, New Mexico and then Seattle and then went over seas, _____
in Hawaii and then from there helped on the invasion of Iwo Jima and then after the
war was over come back home.

Were you an officer or an enlisted man?

I was an enlisted man.

What rank did you achieve?

Sargeant.

Just out of curiosity, where were you in New Mexico?

Hobs, New Mexico down where the oil fields are.

Were there any other Basques serving with you? Did you feel isolated being away?

I ran into one of my old high school buddies in the chow line in Santa Mario,
California and we were not in the same outfit but we visited and then he shipped
out and then it kind of struck me kind of funny. I was laying on my bunk one
afternoon and they brought a bunch of new guys in and they were reading names and
the sargeant had a hell of time reading this guy's name and I thought to myself
well that's a Bascoe so I found out what barracks he was assigned to and start
walking down through the barracks and then there he was. He was Basque. I asked
him where he was from and he said well he'd moved--his folks had moved to Los
Angeles when he was about ten or eleven years old and they lived there. I said
do you have any relations in Mountain Home, Idaho and he said oh yes. I've lost
track of them but I've got some first cousins in Mountain Home and I says yeah I
know. I had gone to school with them. So we were together for 21 months in the
same outfit.

What was their name?

John Aruzabala and he'd been in the army for several years. He was older than I was.

Did you have any desire to go back to Spain and see where your roots were?

Yeah, I hope to go back this summer. I don't know if I will or not. If everything

goes into place we'll probably go back this summer. So we went together for about

Have you maintained contact with your relatives?

She Yes, my mother's sister. She's 80 some odd years old. She writes to us and I send her a book or two once in a while. My brothers send her a book or two. Although we've never met.

You still maintain a contact with her.

What Yeah, uh huh?

So you went to John Day for six years?

Belc Uh huh

And what did you do there?

Does Worked at Ford garage and then as a sheet metal man, body man under the GI bill I didn't figure I was making enough money so I went to work for Husbeth Lumber Co. and then got snowed out one winter, got married and went to work in a cleaning shop just to help out and ended up being the cleaner so had a chance to buy a cleaning shop in Burns in 1952 so I was wanting to come back over here so I bought a cleaning shop in Burns and runned it until last year.

Tell me about meeting your wife.

How I was just kind of bumming around John Day and had an old buddy and picked him and his girlfriend one night when we was gonna go partying in my car and my buddy said have you met this gal. This gal was walking down the street. Says she's new in town and she's working for an attorney here in town so why don't we pick her up so we stopped and asked her if she wanted to go to Prairie City and she said well yeah and I asked her where she was from. She said Missouri and I said how long you been in this country and she said oh six, seven months. She'd been working _____ . Her dad had moved out here in the forties from Missouri and her family was split up so she come out to stay with her dad after she finished college and I said what part of Missouri and she said Macon and I said oh Macon, Missouri I got a sister living there. She says you're nuts and I says yeah I got a sister that lives in Macon, Missouri, which I did have. And she says what's your sister's name. I says well she married one of the Linleys and come to find out her folks know them. These

were next door neighbors--it was just one of those. So we went together for about a year and got married.

She wasn't Basque.

No huh uh, she looks Basque but she's not Basque.

What year was it you got married in?

'49 I think

What was her name?

Her name was Belcher, May Belcher.

Belcher?

Uh huh--hard headed Missourian.

Does she speak any Basque?

No

Does she have an interest in it? In the Basque culture?

Oh yeah--she buys everything she can on them. If she sees a book on Basque or reads something about them, their culture or something in books, she'll clip it out. I didn't teach my kids Basque. I wish I had of. Of course she didn't speak it but they're interested. The kids have all been interested in Basque culture too.

How many children do you have?

Five

What ages?

29 down to 22--29, 27, 25, and then something happened, 24, and 22.

Boys or girls?

Three boys and two girls

Why don't you tell us their names.

Richard, the oldest one, the second one was a girl named Donita, third one was a boy names Michael, and then fourth one was a girl and we decided we'd name her after my mother, Beatriz and then Tony come along, Anthony. That's it.

Where are they now?

Two girls live in Burns. They're married. Gene's in Mexico and Mike's plumbing in Springfield and Tony's working in the sawmill here.

Did any of them marry Basques? the kids had, I mean my age.

Less No ork oriented do you think?

Did they have much interest in the culture? It's American--they get more Americanized as

Yeah, they're proud that they've got a little Basque heritage and all that but, they never married any. my don't--we were always taught when you was working--I

They're fifty percent Basque. and this in other hispanic groups like Germans, Italians

Yeah, we call them the watered down Basque or the polluted Basque or whatever. you

Did they associate or do they associate with mostly Basque people? now days, uh what the

No, mostly with--they're Americans, you know what I mean. that respect why I think

Culturally their Americans. and be second generation. I got three grandchildren. I suppose

Yeah, so there again if one of the Basques their age do something or something or goes wrong with one of them, they know it. They'll come home and say something about it. But as far as having ties, no. They're pretty much Americanized.

Did you encourage them to get an education, a college education? we didn't

Yeah, I tried but none of them wanted to--we'd a sent them all to school if they wanted to go. they're hard working people or something.

Is that typical Basque? in 1952, did you say?

Oh I think so of '52.

Most of them seemed to be impatient to get to work. see a change from when you'd been here Yeah at

Is that accurate? ill about the same as when I left to go to Seattle. The big change is

Yeah Basque community came here when the group that I keep calling the contract

Very industrious. that bunch started bringing women and raising kids. Now that's where

I think so, course maybe I'm bragging--yeah I think so. each other that was the old

Aren't Basques for example at Hines Lumber known as good workers a few left like Mrs.

Yeah, well anyway when a Basque goes out there they don't hesitate if they've got Santo an opening to put him to work. to go they

Why is that? Is that a cultural trait that's related to being a Basque? my left but they

Well I think, now there again, I think the American born Basque, so we'll say the second generation like my kids--they don't have the same working habits that my

brothers had or I had or the if I should've said kids had, I mean my age. a little
 Less work oriented do you think?

Yeah I think so. There again I think it's American--they get more Americanized as
 each generation crops up. I mean sure these American, I don't mean it that way,
 sure people work but they don't--we were always taught when you was working--I
 think you've probably found this in other hispanic groups like Germans, Italians
 or whatever--if you've got a job you work at it you know until you could see maybe
 something a little better. Kids now days, the average kids now days, ah what the
 heck, just another job. I can get unemployment or--so in that respect why I think
 let's see my kids would be second generation. I got three grandchildren. I suppose
 when they grow up to be adults well they'll have less attitudes towards working or
 I don't mean not lazy but say ah what the heck. I think that's true with any

How about . Isn't that a card game?

Not that I know. They play those and TAPE 2 (side 2) their two games--briska, I

Maybe about Basques cause you can in areas where they have been and they'll tell
 you well yeah, they're hard working people or something.

You came back to Burns in 1952, did you say?

Right, the fall of '52.

What was the Basque community like then? Could you see a change from when you'd been
 here before?

No, it was still about the same as when I left to go to Seattle. The big change in
 the Basque community came here when the group that I keep calling the contract
 keepers and that bunch started bringing women and raising kids. Now that's where
 the change was. They didn't have quite the loyalty to each other that was the old
 Basque. And then the old Basque have all died off--there's a few left like Mrs.

Are you Catholic? and my Clarineta

Santos ? I go, don't go very often.

Yeah Santso and those people. There aren't many left but they
 were different like I told you earlier. They were more group oriented than the
 Basque that are here now or more interested in their own--they're kind of jealous

Did you of each other. I don't know if I should've said that or not but there is a little
They're not as cohesive. I do, yeah, baptizing and they went through communion and con-

No. And when they got old enough to decide if that was for them, fine and if it

Did they bring their extended family? Aren't Basques very family oriented people?

When Yes they are. In the fifties were they having Basque festivals here in Burns?

I don't understand I guess how they can be jealous of each other if the summer and

Oh within a family group itself they're close but oh yeah they're still close but

not as close as they were--that first group that come over is what I'm trying to say.

Yeah they're still--when you see them pile out of church Sunday morning they all

gather together and they visit back and forth within the two divisions and

Do they entertain a lot in each other's homes. What would be a typical socializing day?

Sunday afternoons. Oh they play a little card game they call moose and visit.

How about moose and visit. Isn't that a card game? Again a different attitude. The older

Not that I know. They play moose and briska--that's their two games--briska, I

Are don't know how you spell that. Basque? Basque? Basque? Basque? Basque?

They did that on Sunday afternoons? your veins why that's all that we need all necessary

Yeah and then the winter months, mostly. In the winter months they don't have

Was that a mostly male activity? but you can be an honorary Basque, like you can come

Oh the women play. They like to get in there. You know like we play pinnacle and

you'll find a lot of them in the summer months, three or four families get together

It's and will go up to Logan valley or Logan valley and fish and have a picnic like we

do. I say we cause I consider myself an American and a Basque. They get

Is religion still important to these people? religion still important

Oh yes, not so much to the American born but the old country Basque, even these

people, yes. Religion is still a pretty dominant thing with them. 40 calls from

Are you Catholic? say heh, can I come and I say no sorry I'd sure like to have you come

Yeah, well I guess. I go, don't go very often. no it's strictly gotta be Basque--

Has it been important in your life? heritage someplace. I think it's important

Well In my younger days it probably was but I never did feel--maybe I'm wrong but I don't

feel it's that important. I think maybe it's the society we're living in.

Did you encourage your children?

Yeah, sent all my kids, yeah, baptizing and they went through communion and confirmed and when they got old enough to decide if that was for them, fine and if it wasn't, fine. There was no pressure.

When you came in the fifties were they having Basque festivals here in Burns?

Well yeah, we had a big New Years Party and had a big picnic in the summer and there again we invited--we have what we call a lot of honorary Basques in those days. We used to take somebody like you folks or different merchants in town and say O.K. we'll give them a card and honorary Basque and we had a lot of fun and then when this new bunch come in and the old ones again passed away and a lot of Basques in my generation didn't want to be involved well three or four of us tried to work a deal with the present Basque and they said no we don't want anybody to belong to the organization unless they're Basque. So there again a different attitude. The older Basque they thought that was great. They wanted other

Are they talking about these people back Basque?

Just so you had Basque blood in your veins why that's all that was still necessary to join this organization but my contention is O.K. let's tell them they don't have any voting rights or anything but you can be an honorary Basque, like you can come to our parties, you can come to whatever we have but these other people don't want that. Bunch of trading families here now say now this is

It's more or less a separation.

What Uh huh

How does this community feel about this?

Well the community will advertise that they're having a Basque banquet or something at the Pine Room we'll say around Christmas and gosh I bet I get 30, 40 calls from people that say heh, can I come and I say no sorry I'd sure like to have you come but the people that are pulling the strings say no it's strictly gotta be Basque-- you've got to have some Basque heritage someplace.

Well do they still have those banquets?

Yeah, they're getting smaller and smaller. I think we had one this year and my wife said well I don't think we should go to anymore cause I think there was about 40 that showed up. Heck we used to have 150, 200 show up. Now I can, I go down to the Elks Club and I'll get two or three of these Basques that are members, that've been Americans, naturalized and we'll go down and cook a big Basque banquet for the Elk membership and they enjoy it and we enjoy doing that for non Basques. There's not very many Basques in the Elks Lodge but when it come to their picnics well like in Idaho. They have the big annual picnic in Boise, they have one in Mountain Home. It's invited for business people in town and the Basque put it on. It's all Basque food. I enjoy going to those cause there's--they invite--say you people happen to be in town and somebody would run into you and say well we're working on a book or something--well God why don't you come down to this picnic, we'll have a ball you know. But there again in Mountain Home in Boise you gotta go back and there's people my age that are running the show see, not these people. I sound like I'm giving these people heck, I'm not cause they're good people but they're not running the show they're American born Basque that are running the show in these towns like the Basque convention in Alcoe, Nevada. That's not run by these people. It's run by American born Basque--they're the people that one of the gals that--the wheel in that Alcoe deal is one of the gals that was raised in here is from in that Basque hotel I was telling you about and she's really spark plug. Every year on this convention she's the secretary of the association.

What's the name of this association?

It's called the Alcoe Basque Club or something like that.

Does the one in Burns have a

They call themselves the isn't it?. I don't know if I've got a card or not, it's hard to spell. That's one thing I never learned. The Basque language is hard. They didn't teach us anything about reading or writing, just to speak it.

Do you know of anywhere else in County where there's a significant settlement of Basques besides Burns?

No.

That's a historic change then isn't it?

Yeah

They all sort of clustered in Burns, now they're working in the mills

Uh huh, right. No there's no other Basque community.

What about in Lakeview or in Lake County. Are you in contact with any Basques over there?

Very few--I've been passed Lake County--all Irishmen--all Irish sheep help is from

Lake County. Just a complete--just a difference. I never heard of a Basque in

Lakeview.

Is that right? Do you still have an association with Mountain View?

Well yeah, I got two brothers that live there.

Are you closer to them now than you were as a child?

Oh yeah, we're in fact we're probably because of our background, not living together, probably close than most families that were raised together--I mean not bragging--

I think we are--now I don't my sister but I do the two brothers.

Did your wife learn how to cook Basque food?

Oh yeah, we got a little variety of good old American cooking and Basque cooking.

Nope, don't have one.

How about Jordan Valley, do you have much contact with those Basques?

Yeah, got a lot of friends over there. One of my best friends here is from Jordan

Valley.

Now is that because of Basque festivals that you've gotten to know people or are you related in some way?

Oh no, just knew it was a Basque community and just pulled in there and got acquainted

with them. Yet the two communities don't have nothing in common at all.

It's a very large group there isn't it?

Yeah, very much so. That's just I belong to Lyons Club here so we chartered a

Lyones Club in Jordan Valley and hell 90 percent Basque. I think we started out at

about 60 members over there and when we chartered the club 50 of them had to be

Basque. Well so when you organize one of these Lyons Clubs you mother them and

father them for a year and so we'd go over there and had several meetings and they'd

come over here and really that's the only time any of them come over here is when we have a special doings over here. The Lyons Club will call over there and say we're having a lady's night or something so there'll be a couple dozen of those Basques and there again a lot of people about my age will come over and we go over there. But that's the only association with Basque I've had with Jordan Valley. So there isn't a relationship necessarily.

No, for work. I think a lot of these Basques, I'll be right honest with you, either social or by blood line.

No.

Did your daughter know the gota?

Both of my daughters learned to dance the Basque dance when they were children, yes.

Mrs. _____ taught all of them in those days--Mararite _____, you probably heard of here.

Is she active in dancing?

Yeah, well gosh she's 85 years old. She'll still get out there and dance though.

You said that you regretted not teaching them the Bascoe language. Is there something else that you wish you had taught them?

No, that was it. I kind of kick myself for not teaching some Basque when they were younger.

I wanted to ask you how many Basques would you say there are today in _____ County, if you were to estimate.

Are you talking full blooded? What are you talking about?

I guess people you would consider culturally Basque like yourself.

Oh I would say, children and everything, oh golly there must be 200, 250 just off the top of my head.

How would that compare with the fifties when you came back?

More, there's more here now.

Why is that. Is more coming in?

Because of the saw mill.

They're coming in to work for the mill.

Right, they hear that there's good work opportunities and there's other Basque here so. And that's the contact a brother owes _____ or something like that.

Yeah, well actually there's not many brother and brother relationship. No they just hear there's Basque here and here they are.

And the motivation is more often than not economic reasons.

Right, for work. I think a lot of these Basques, I'll be right honest with you, the present Basque, if it wasn't for the job situation, they probably don't like Burns.

Why would that be?

Oh I hear the women say, the Basque women, gosh what's here you know. I know one Basque fellow that works at the saw mill, his wife thinks this is the--she won't live here. She lives in Spain--still married, he sends her money--I won't mention names. I met her here three summers ago and talking to her and I said how do you like Burns--Burns, in Basque, why this is terrible--yeah, what have you got. So I was talking to Chuck Arino and I says boy that ole gal I'll be glad when she leaves for Spain and Chuck's been back there a couple of times and had talked--he met this gal in Spain--he says this, you ought to see the town she comes from in Spain, see but

The economic condition of the Basque in Spain is still not as favorable as here then?

Oh no

Pretty uneven still?

Yeah

Have you been back there?

No

You never have been there

Sure'd like to.

You're going this summer, though?

I hope to

Is that a tour of some kind?

No I'll probably go on our own. They usually have a tour out of Boise and people from here go on it but this due to to whatever they cancelled it. What they do every other year in Boise, the Basque club, it's called the Basque Club in Boise, they charter a plane from Boise to the Basque country one year and then the following year they charter a plane from Spain over here so every other year they switch. They bring Basque people here to visit, relatives and stuff one year and then the following a group goes over there and this has been going on for about 12, 14 years and for lack of why--I think the reason it fell through is that they usually go in June or July and this year they wanted to go in May. The airlines couldn't make arrangements for later in the year and the weather over there apparently is wet and damp in May and April so they just didn't get too many takers.

Do American born children seem to have an interest in the Basque culture? *could go to?*

Yes , now due to this Boise state and the Basque group in Boise, even from here we got 1, 2, 3, probably 4 kids from Burns going to school--Basque kids going to school in the University of Barcelona in Spain today and two of them, one of them is a junior in high school and he'll come back and finish high school here next year.

And we have oh there's Matt Olsen and the Corbett boys, now that's not Basque but their mother was Basque--the Corbett boys have all gone to school in Spain and what I like about it, these kids are my children's age and none of them spoke Basque. When they come back from Spain that's one of the things they gotta learn when they go to the University of Barcelona is speak Basque so they come back and

Do you think that's changed over the years? Do you think the young people of the fifties were not proud and do not want to claim to bring their families here, but they can't

I think right now the trend for people like my children are kind of looking into Basque history. They're really wanting to know more about what it was all about. Why do you think that it?

I don't know, I think maybe you'll find this in any group, not just Basque. I think you'll find it in the Italians

You mean in this day and age.

Yeah, this day and age, yeah. I think probably a lot of it is brought back by that

Right, right.
 ole TV deal, "Roots." I think people are kind of--I really do
 And is it a board and room?
 It really had an affect.
 Room and board.

Yeah, people say heh, there's a little more to it than me being Irish or Basque
 Just like the old Basque hotels in every way?
 or whatever. Let's find out and we noticed in downstairs we have all kinds of
 Oh huh, but don't know anybody ever stay there cause they stay a month or two
 and then they kind of get climatized and rent an apartment because it's cheaper
 for them, they're trying to save money.
 people coming in. We had two gals last week. I don't know where they was from--
 Minnesota or some place. They're great, great grand dad or somebody had come over
 here with the calvary and homesteaded and were looking through books, Harney Co.
 Can you say...
 records way back in 1889 and 1886 and they're starting to search. I think people
 go through these things, maybe I'm wrong.

Well it's definitely a trend now.

Yeah, I think "Roots" has had a lot to do with it too.

Is there any central index of the Basques in Harney County that a person could go to?

Late.
 No, unless I could go through the naturalization papers and see how many of them
 Why don't they have...
 was naturalized in the last say since the 1900's.

Could you do that and get a pretty accurate feeling for what Basques have come to Harney
 enough.
 County, you wouldn't be _____.

No, once they're naturalized in the county why the records there.

What do Basques coming now say to Burns--one time they came and went to the Basque Hotel
 come out on it...
 cause they didn't speak the language, know the custom. Where do they go now? Do they
 three or four years ago.
 come to people like you?

Most of them come single or they've got their wives and families in Spain.

FRISCO, there's some...
 There are several here. I mentioned this one where she don't want to live here;
 would cost you \$10 or...
 there are several of them would like to bring their families here, but they can't
 of these basques were...
 because of the quota. They come over and first they'll stay at the Basque Hotel
 cabin some place and go and get two or three meals with her. You can't buy
 groceries and feed yourself for that.
 apartment and start batching.

Where do they meet now? They go to the Plaza Hotel?
 Is that the only Basque hotel really, in Burns?

Yeah.

In Harney County, probably.

Right, right. _____ and the men playing - or they'll be playing cards

And is it a board and room?

Room and board.

Just like the old Basque hotels in every way. (laughter) I mean, you know--

Uh huh, but don't hardly anybody ever stay there cause they stay a month or two and then they kind of get climatized and rent an apartment because it's cheaper for them, they're trying to save money.

Can non-Basques --

Oh yeah, she takes non-Basques. She don't board them anymore. She'll cook a big meal for them on Sundays, maybe Saturdays. She quit feeding them here oh three, four years ago.

What's the name of the man who runs the hotel? Heck with them. I think they are doing

Lete. Damego and ~~Leah-Lete~~----- Maria Lete

Why don't they board anymore?

Oh, I think because the food costs; don't charge enough, afraid to charge enough. They know just one way to cook, three or four course meals for dinner, three or four course meals for supper; too expensive. She was feeding people three ~~or-four~~-years ago for a dollar and a half for meals. No way she would come out on it. Say, if she was feeding today, or was doing what she did three or four years ago, I could take you down tonight and we'd eat with them. She'd charge a buck and a half. The same meal in Portland or like Frisco, there's some Basque restaurants and a meal like she served down here would cost you \$10 or \$12 bucks. So it was just economics again. And some of these Basques were taking advantage of her, they'd rent a room, or rent a cabin some place and go and eat two or three meals with her. You can't buy groceries and feed yourself for that.

Where do they meet now? They go to the Plaza Hotel?

Yeah, Every Sunday you can go there and they'll be 25-30 cars parked around there. complaint. I don't mean being -- no backbone, if you're right, hang in there.

Women'll be in room _____ and the men playing - or they'll be playing cards together.

Drink wine and play cards?

Yeah. Lie to each other. They like to lie. (laughter) I mean, you know--

What do you see for the Basque community in Burns and Harney County? What's the future?

No more than any other working people in Burns and Harney County.

Do you think they will all similate and lose their culture?

I think so. ...there's something razz and jazz them. I've tried. I can't keep it going. I'd really like to keep it going. I can't get people like _____ or _____ and Garties and _____ to help. They say oh no, they fight too much. We don't want to get involved with them. Heck with them. I think they are doing everybody wrong.

They don't want to get involved _____

What were the names you just mentioned? Would they be some of the old line Basques names of people still around.

Right.

Who else comes to your mind?

Malay- Mallea, he's from Jordan Valley, but the same line. Gareata. Osa, Urisers, Larreneta, there's Ramaras, quite a tribe of them, mostly girls, one boy, all my age; about my age. Who else is there? Oh, Madaragan, Tom. He's still here, he's a little younger than I am. His dad is the one I told you about we buried and paid all the bills for.

How about Ebark?

Ebark's another one. John.

TAPE 3, Side 1

If somebody comes down with a complaint, they don't want to listen to it.

If it's a ligitimate complaint or if there's a little doubt, go along with the complaint. I don't mean being -- no backbone, if you're right, hang in there.

But if there's doubts, make an adjustment. Don't worry about it, don't fret.

How do you find this job as county clerk?

Enjoyable. Really enjoyable.

It's an elected position?

Right.

When do you come up for re-election?

1980.

Do you plan to again run?

I am debating. At this point in time, like I said earlier, if I could find a little business, why I'd make a move. Right now I am content, but if ----- tied down too much. And even in the cleaning business, I could go to work, I did go to work most of the time 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning and get my work done, then circulate the town.

You like the out of doors?

Yeah. Go camping.

Does your wife work? Or has she worked?

She spent the first few years in Burns raising the family, and as they grew she came in and worked in the cleaning shop several hours a day. Right now she's working for Wendell _____ half-days in the attorney's office.

Did the Basque people accept her? With no reservations?

Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Even though she wasn't Basque.

No problem. Like I say, we all married non-Basque, anyway.

~~Did you ----- the taste of the quality of the tribe?~~

~~Tried to.~~

~~Have they been pretty successful _____~~

~~Oh, along with Mexi--- Oh, the one in Mexico~~

~~You correspond in English? Spanish?~~

~~She writes in Spanish, and I get one of these Basque fellows to - I don't write Spanish, he writes in English for me. I can - I don't have anybody read her~~

Did you instill in your kids the quality of pride?

Tried to.

Have they been pretty successful so far?

Oh, the one in Mexico is doing well.

What is he doing?

Oh, he started out working on boats. He works on yachts. I think a couple of

other kids from Burns have got a yacht down there. And the other one is doing

good in the plumbing business. He don't own the business, but he's working

steady. And of course, I had the same problem any other married American family

had during the Vietnam deal, a lot of bitterness, a little pot smoking, anti-

government, didn't believe in the Vietnamese war, I mean I didn't believe in the

was as such, but I'm of the old school, my country right or wrong, and a lot of

hard feelings - you know, not where we're parting, or no fisticuffs, but some hard

feelings over it. Over government policy, and I'm still not completely convinced.

I still say this is it. If they don't like the country, there's none better.

Maybe we're not the best.

You think it's been good to you?

You betcha.

Have you traveled South America or any other place in the United States? to meet Basques

There's plenty here.

No. No. Don't care to. Only place I'd like to go just to go would be to

Spain.

Why would you like to go to Spain?

Oh, to look up some of my Dad's folks. I don't know who they are but I know

they are there. And meet my Aunt. She'd like to make contact with us. She

lost her sister, and there's plenty of people. Every letter she writes she

mentions her dear sister (which is my mother) and her poor kids, now that's

been years and years ago.

You correspond in English? Spanish?

She writes in Spanish, and I get one of these Basque fellows to - I don't write

Spanish, to write my letters for me. I can - I don't have anybody read her

letters, I can read Spanish well enough to figure it out. I could probably write it if I was forced to, but it's a lot easier to get somebody to come to-- She doesn't write back?

They do, but they all write Spanish. Because that's --

Is that a typical pattern to have Basque as the spoken form, the communication form, but often not being able to read or write it?

Right.

Would that be the case with you?

Yes.

And with most Basques in the country?

Right.

It's mostly just a spoken language in the country?

Right.

There's no Basque newspapers, for example?

There is now, I think, but see, Franko, this is what happened to these people that are here now. Franko outlawed Basque, even the speaking of Basque, and of course, he couldn't go into everybody's home and stop it, so they spoke it at home.

What about in this country? Is there a Basque newspaper letter of some kind?

Boise started one here several years ago, but it didn't take.

Not enough people are interested?

No.

We never asked, what happened to your father? Did you lose complete contact with him when you moved to Andrews?

Oh, like I say, we weren't close, and then when I got out of the service, he had a business in Mountain Home, bought a bunch of property, had a bunch of rentals, did this during the war. He had a night club, they had a big air base there and a lot of GI's and he made some money during the war, and then I think in 1940-- yeah, the same year I got married, he passed away in 1949, yeah, I went over, and I knew he was sick, and like all good sons are supposed to do, I suppose,

I went over, but we weren't that close. I went to the funeral, we went to my step-mother's funeral when she passed away. There wasn't really -- you know, no closeness. I was closer to a lot of the Basques here that I worked in sheep camps with than I was to my dad.

Who stands out in your mind as influencing your life ..

Oh, about as much as anybody probably taught Tom Sabalan. He's still alive, lives in Winnemucca. Pete Sabalan down here at the Star Hotel, his older brother.

Why is that?

Oh, when I first came to Oregon he'd - he ran a little sheep _____ above Andrews and he was a mazed I could speak Basque, and everytime he came to town, why he'd take me up to the sheep camp on weekends, and just kind of taught me how to cook in sheep camps. He's the one who taught me how to cook. He's hell-of-a cook himself, and just kind of I always kind of looked up to him.

Do you think there was a certain kind of personality that could stand solitude of the sheepherder life?

Oh, I think most people if they wanted to and felt that this was the way they had to go - not every body but most people I think could climatize themselves to making it. You know, worth it, if that was the only thing available

There wasn't a common complaint among Basques?

Never heard anyone complain.

Not even about the lack of women?

Nope.

That's unusual.

No, I never did.

Were they usually religious men?

Not really. I think this group here, the men are more religious than my father's group. I can remember when I was a kid in Idaho, all the Basque women went to church every Sunday and every holy day and all during Lent, and you never seen the old men there.

Did most of them have an avocation or skill, like music, or --

No schooling at all.

Most of them couldn't read or write in any language?

No, not even in their own.

They didn't entertain themselves by playing an instrument, or carving --

Oh, no. Maybe one out of 30 would be an accordion player. They just needed one

accordion player. So each village would have an accordion player and the rest of

them danced. See what I'm getting at? And they had what they called a _____

player, played kind of a flute. And a tamborine player, that was it. They didn't

have fiddles or guitars, or -- so they had an accordion player, someone who played

a tamborine, and a whistle, why they were in business. Each town had probably

a couple of accordion players, depends on the size of the town. I'm just putting

this together, I'm not -- most of them had to work. Big families, very little

acreage, most of these people didn't know what a sheep was until they come to this

country. And they say, 'well, Basque raise sheep in the old country' - they didn't

raise sheep over there. My old man herd sheep for 20 years and his folks were

just fishermen. Most of the folks were fishermen. And if they did have sheep,

how many did they have? Maybe 20-30 head - don't herd those.

So the image of the Basque as a sheep herder is totally an American _____

Right, right. They come out here and they _____ A lot of people wouldn't have.

They could have been herding cattle, or _____

Well, yes.

Any other pasture that was undesirable. They were willing to do what other people

wouldn't do.

Right. Just like the Chinese were willing to build railroads and work in mining

camp and dig the ditches and stuff for the miners - John Day Valley, you've

probably been in there, had quite a settlement of Chinese, worked the devil

out of them. But they were willing to work. Same way with the Basque and the

sheep. Joe Blow came over here and went to the sheep camp. And, hey, this isn't

too bad. So he brought his nephew over, or brought a brother over, and then the

next family heard about it, and God, Old Archibald is doing good over there, in America. What's he doin? Well, he's working with sheep. Well, if he can do it, I can do it. And another string would come. I will say one thing for them, although they seem to have a natural instinct for taking care of stock, not only sheep. They are just great with animals. They are good doctors with animals. I remember the sheep - we didn't lose many lambs; they doctored those ewes and I've seen Basque people, nobody taught them, you know, like a rancher, they know how to take care of sick cattle, something that just seemed to be part of them. They make damn fine ranchers. Good stock people. Some of the biggest ranches in the McDermitt - Winnemucca area, Quin River, Denia, they're all Basque; my generation, some of the older ones started out with sheep and went into cattle; very successful.

They seem to be successful at anything they try. pendent going up?

Well, most of them. here in town. Four or five of the gals would get together.

They try a business, they make it work. and say well this is our work to go

Right. mountain, and the sheep herders and the old cowboys know they was going

Just because they work harder than most of them. e-was-

Course, I'm not bragging, but there is just something, they grab ahold of something, they say, well this has got to go. nter) and they went to this own

Like Nick so they city motel horsehouse carpeting

Best carpet layer in town. When he comes in your house to lay a carpet, it's not a coffee break every ten minutes. He comes and lays rugs. He laid my rugs.

My wife couldn't believe it. That guy - my wife was home, brewed a pot of coffee, hey, Nick, have a cup of coffee. "I haven't got time for coffee. You're not paying me to drink coffee. I'd come home from the cleaning plant, pull out the bottle and say, let's have a snort. "Oh, I've got work to do." "Oh, come on" and talk to him about it, sit down, relax, let's have a snort. so he'd finally have a snort. arns got a little more society-oriented.

I wanted to ask about the sheep herder's carving on the _____. Do you remember anything about that, or participated in it, or----

I wrote my name on some. Just a pasttime. Write down our names and alot of
 These times the year of our birth or birdhday. Alot of them would draw figurines of
 women. So, they were thinking women. Just something to do.

Is there anything to the story of whorehouse meadows?

Right. ~~the old Whittier hotel is now there was one there - you know what they~~
 Did that actually occur up there? ~~Maid's Place, there was the jingle house, another~~

Yes, yes. ~~about five.~~

Can you tell me anything about that?

That was in the '30's. They had a lot of call houses in Burns eseveral of them,
 Serve in fact, during the summer months when the buck crews and alot of Basque herders
 on the mountain can't get off. So they'd come up - the gals would go up there
 and pitch tents.

Was that an organized effort or was it just independent there? going up?

No, they'd organize here in town. Four or five of the gals would get together,
 maybe one house would get together and say well ~~xxxx~~ this is our week to go
 on the mountain, and the sheep herders and the old cowboys knew they was going
 to be there, so there was no fighting, ~~there-was-~~

Pretty profitable business, was it?

It must have been. They went out there (laughter) and they went to this one
 spot, so they called it whorehouse meadows. you know something --

How many years would you say that practice occurred?

Oh, I would say probably - I'm just guessing - probably went for 15 - 20 years.
 Why did it stop? All the sheep herders it continued on until sometime in the '40's

Yeah. And then they closed down the houses in Harnery County. a Basque. They
 When did that occur?

Oh, in the '40's. ~~a meal for them. And whoever was on the stage, they always~~
 Why was that? ~~three or four passengers, not every day, but the mail went out Monday~~

Oh, state laws, and Burns got a little more society oriented. ~~into town or~~
 Moral - ~~on this thing. And there was always somebody - oh, some people from the~~

Yeah, moral oriented.

These houses that operated here in Burns were well known to everyone?

Oh yeah.

How many would you say there were?

Where the old Whittier hotel is now there was one there - you know what they called it? There was the Old Maid's Place, there was the Jingle house, another one - was about five.

Isn't that a lot for such a small town?

A lot of buckaroos and a lot of sheep herders.

Served the whole outlying area?

Yeah, and maybe I better not say this - maybe once in awhile a drunken business man would slip in.

How about in Andrews. Was there ever anything like that there?

No, not in my -

How about Field, Denial, _____

No, No, No

Burns was the center of sin?

The winter months was when they come.

Burns was the center of sin. ~~WINNEMUECA/WAS-WHERE-THEY-COME-SUMMER-MONTHS-TO---~~

The summer months the gals came up to visit them occasionally.

We were going to ask about Albertson. You said you knew something --

OK, Albertson Station was - no post office, a place where they sheered sheep every spring. In the olden days before my time there was a stop for freighters, you know, freight wagons, and then it continued on until sometime in the '40's. The last person that I knew that run it was Joe Lemma. He was a Basque. That is where the mail stage stopped for noon, Leave Crane, that was the noon stop and she always had a meal for them. And whoever was on the stage, they always carried three or four passengers, not every day, but the mail went out Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays, and there was usually somebody coming into town or going out on this thing. And there was always somebody - oh, some people from the

Juniper Ranch, Man Lake, buck crews riding for cattle, pull in there and eat and have a drink. Bootleg whiskey, and shouldn't tell you this, but one of the antidotes to this - Joe Lindley used to go to Denial or Winnemucca and buy his booze. He'd have old pickup truck and he'd come through Andrews with his truck full of booze. Well, he'd stop in Andrews and get in a poker game. At the hotel. Well, Danny and I didn't have anything to do, so while he was playing poker, well, we'd relieve him of a case or two of booze. And then when they'd have a dance why instead of his mother selling booze to the ranch hands, we were in the booze business, we sold booze to the ranch hands.

That's you and your brother?

No, that's Danny Arieolo. We were in competition with his mother. And then the Indians used to come from Burns horseback and old wagons and they'd be headed for McDermitt, and they'd stop there and they found out we had booze to sell, so instead of going to the hotel to buy booze we sold them booze.

How did you sell it? By the shot?

No, bottle.

What would a bottle go for?

Oh, gosh, we had very little overhead. We were probably selling - I don't remember what we was getting, we was probably getting a couple of dollars for a fifth while Marcelina was getting ten, see, so we was really under cutting her.

Cause we didn't have as much --- we stole alot of booze in that old barn - from that old boy. He didn't know we was doin' it. He was afraid to say anything, cause he was bringing illegal booze into the state anyway.

Did he play poker in the hotel?

Right. He had quite an operation at Albertson Station.

What were the years of this operation?

I'm guessing, it probably started sometime in the late 1800's and survived until the mid-40's, well, war years, I think it fell apart during the war. There again I think thing that really killed this probably like _____ was

the sheep going out of the country. And then the cattle ranches were, you know, modernized, and _____ Ranch used to hire probably 25-30 people in their peaks time, you know, and how many do they hire now? Nobody. They got where it used to take 60 people to put up hay they do it with 15-20 now; I bet they don't use that many.

Mechanized

Yeah, everything was done with horses.

You think the change in transportation modes, going to automobiles and better roads wiped out some of those --

Oh, yes.

You can go farther.

Yeah. That's what wiped out Andrews. Andrews survived until sometime in the '50's, '60's. There was still a store and post office in Andrews in the '60's. But they just - people - they just go right through Andrews, they say, let's go to Fields.

How about Maranda Lane. Do you know anything about that?

Maranda Lane? Yeah. That was named after an old Mexican. There was at one time what they called the Cooney Place, and Seranda Point. Couldn't read or write English, couldn't read or write Spanish even, come up here from Mexico. I knew the guy, he was an older fellow, and I met him.

What was his first name?

Damn it, I should be able to tell you. He was a huntch back. Had good horses. Hmm. I can't tell you his first name. In fact, he died sometime in the '40's.

Did he have children?

No.

Did he have a Mexican wife?

No. Just came over here as a Mexican buckaroo I think probably for Pete French and started homesteading, and got some land

What other Mexicans do you know about in those early days?

The only ones that I knew was Marinda and the Oldeshays, and of course the met old T Bow, you heard of him, on the other side of the mountain.

Chalis?

Yeah. I met him but never knew him as such.

He was a pretty good buckaroo, wasn't he?

Yes. He was Pete French's buckaroo. And then Mandalane was named after -- what the heck was his first name? Real nice old chap. Had a lot of money. Wrote checks on back of -- take a carnation -- this is no lie -- take a carnation label off of the milk can and write a check on it. The bank would honor it.

I wanted to ask you about the process of shearing sheep from beginning to the end.

Can you tell me the details?

OK. Bring the sheep in from the hills and you put them in a corral.

This was at holley farm?

Yeah, or Andrews. There was a sheep shearing - a Albertson Station had one. Polly Farm had a sheep shearing station. Andrews had one, and Fields had one. The reason there was so many of them there were a group of sheep here, a group there, instead of having to trail them a long ways they would -- there was plenty of sheep to keep everybody -- the sheep shearing crew would go from -- they'd start at Polly Farms and shear about a week, ten days, go to Albertson Station, shear about a week - ten days, come to Andrews, do the same thing, then Fields. The sheep people would bring in a band of sheep, keep everything separate, one band at a time. Put them in the main corral, then they'd have what they called hazers. Had a big, long chute, alleyway in the chute, they'd line these sheep into the chute, and then off of the chute would be a little stalls about this wide - oh maybe 4 feet wide and 8 feet deep, and they'd - these hazers would have to keep these stalls full of sheep all the time.

_____ were the men?

Yeah. They'd 12 stalls and 12 shearers. In front of the stall would be canvas or gunnysack and the sheep shearer would reach in there, he'd never even look,

he'd just grab a foot through the canvas, pull it out, and shear the animal.

(Can not hear what Jennifer asks)

A had a power plant, not electric but a gas engine and a belt driven mechanical sheers. At least that's what they were doing when I first hit the country. A lot of break downs, but Basque would get mad at the shearer who cut his sheep, a lot of times they'd get careless and gouge them with the clippers, and the fight was on. And then you keep the fleece all in one -- you take the animal. and set him right in your lap like this. The shearer ~~would-then~~ was bent over all the time. And they'd grab this animal and put the back of the animal on their stomach and then they'd start shearing, do the stomach and then the legs, just like skinning except they didn't have hair flying all over, they kept it in a bundle. Then he'd get his feet and push it over here, then the wool tier would come along and he had a bunch of twine on his belt and he'd pull this twine off and make a bundle out of it. He'd just go up and down the alley way there of the chute and tie fleeces. He got paid by the fleece that he tied, so many. Then they'd have a bunch of kids come and pick the fleece up and take it down to the end of the line and then they had what they called a wool stomper - a derrick, they'd put these big wool sacks in this derrick, flat on top, and the sacks would fall through, and this guy would jump in there and that's all he did all day, was they'd throw fleece at him in bundles and he'd sit there and with his weight and pack it real tight. Just as tight as the top of this table. And when he got the sack full just like sewing grain sacks, he'd sew it up, drop it - be a couple of guys there with a roll - you've seen them, haven't you, ~~XXXXXX~~ about as long as this table wool sacks, not quite that long, but anyway. Roll them out of the way and he'd insert another sack over the hole, and start stomping. Then when the shepp were sheared they'd go into a little pen and they'd count them so the sheep shearer would - he got paid by the head, and I forget what it was, so much a head. And then we branded them. We used chimney black and fur, and then we used some kind of an oil, kind of a cresote-tar type oil and we'd mix

chimney black in it and cook it. Had fires going. We'd boil the chimney black to cook into the oil and take wooden branding irons and we'd brand the sheep and turn them loose.

What happened to the wool?

In those days there was a trucking outfit by the name of Oatman Truck in Burns

and they hauled wool all over the country. They'd come - they'd be wool buyers,

they don't have it nowadays, of course, there's not enough sheep, they just have

a wool pool some place in Portland, everybody that grows wool in Oregon ship all

their wool to the wool pool in Portland. But these people sold their own

wool, each individual sheep -- there would be several wool buyers there and

they'd be kind of like a bidding, they'd-all-give- I'll give you 30¢ a pound, or

and so they weighed each sack and sold it by the pound. Some guys would even

bring it to burns and warehouses until the price got better if they had enough

money to run on, and if the price wasn't good enough during the time of the cutting

why they'd warehouse it.

I have probably a naive question, Were the sheep grown primarily for the wool, or for the meat?

Both.

Oh.

That's what the Basque used to say, or most people sheep people would say, well cattle people have one crop, which is the calf crop, you sell steers. Well the sheep people always say well we got two crops. We got a lamb crop and a wool crop. They raised them for both purposes. Wool, yes.

What seasons do they do the shearing?

Always after lambing and usually in June because the weather would - when they knew the weather wasn't going to be cold anymore. And then they went up to the high mountains, why they'd have wool on them that thick. And going through the sagebrush and stuff the heat would just be uncomfortable. So by the winter months he'd have a coat of wool again

TAPE 3, SIDE 2

They call Lasareca and Grey, and a nice day, and they took the sheep out that night and come a blizzard and snow storm and out of a thousand head of sheep he lost a little over 900. Just froze to death because the wool was taken off. A freak turn of the weather.

Yeah. Just dead sheep all over the sagebrush.

Where did they take the sheep to be butchered?

Oh, to Salt Lake, Omaha, Chicago. Trail them to the train in Burns and then ship them out by rail. They weren't butchered in this country.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Maybe some other time maybe you can get some more questions. for me, if you're back.