

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #83 - Side A

Subject: Reverend Eldon W. Borell

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date: August 24, 1979

Interviewer: F. David Reed

Release Form: Yes

F. DAVID REED: This is the Reverend Eldon W. Borell, on August the 24th, 1979, in Burns, Oregon. This is an oral history, concerning the history of the St. Andrews Episcopal, where Reverend Borell was pastor.

REVEREND ELDON BORELL: Can I begin talking now?

DAVID: Yes.

REVEREND: I'll just hit the high points. I was born in Minnesota, brought up in California. After graduating from the University of California, and the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, I was ordained in the Deaconate of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, on March 7, 1939. About a week later I came here to Burns, Oregon for my first charge. I served St. Andrews Church, Burns, Oregon. And also at the same time, the St. Thomas Church in Canyon City, with occasional services at Crane, during the year and a half that I was in this area.

In September 1940, I entered the Army Chaplaincy where I served throughout the war; first at Fort Lewis, Washington, then at Camp White near Medford, Oregon. Then overseas in the Asiatic Pacific theater for two and a half years, returning to the United States in late November 1945. After my military, active military training, I remained on as a reservist for the next several years. And spun out over twenty years of combined active and reserve military duty, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel.

DAVID: What was the thing that brought you to Burns? Was that the offer of the church?

REVEREND: This was a mission at that time, and Bishop Remington had been down to CDSB and talked to the Deacon there, and the Deacon had recommended me, and so I was invited to come to Burns, Oregon. Bishop Remington invited me to come here.

DAVID: You came out here as a single man?

REVEREND: At first, yes, I came out here as a single man. I was not married until March 13, 1942 at Fort Lewis, Washington when I was in military service.

DAVID: What did you find in an Oregon Church when you came out, or to Burns?

REVEREND: I don't know how to describe it. It was a simple church, a very attractive church, especially on the inside. The inside was of knotty pine, and it was very attractive on the inside. A small church, but very attractive, with a very attractive parish hall adjoining.

DAVID: Was that the old high school building that they had remodeled at that time?

REVEREND: That I don't know. I don't know enough of the past history of St. Andrews to know whether that was the remodeled former high school. I suppose it was; I do remember that there was a high school across the street from the church.

DAVID: You mentioned that you held services occasionally at Crane ---

REVEREND: Yes, once a month, I think, I went to --- and Canyon City quite regularly. And as I remember now, bare in mind this goes back 40 years. As I remembered, I took morning services here at Burns, and evening services at Canyon City every Sunday. Once a month I'd go over to Crane for a service.

DAVID: Did you have a fairly large congregation at that time?

REVEREND: Oh, it was, no, no, it was not that large. I could not give you the numerical strength of it. It was a cozy congregation, not large. But enough to be fun to work with.

DAVID: I'm curious, have you been back to Burns since that time, or is this your first trip back? What changes in Burns itself?

REVEREND: I did not return to Burns until about a year ago. I was on a trip with my wife up to

Canada to visit our daughter who lives in British Columbia. And on the way back we came through Burns, and we stopped to talk with some people about some directions, and found that Mrs. Voegtly, I found that Mrs. Voegtly who was out in the garden and with whom we talked, was the wife of Allan Voegtly, who was a boy when I was Vicar here at Burns. That was my only visit to Burns, and even then I just stayed overnight and was on my way the next day.

Well, the town seems to have grown, but I did not think too much. I think it is still a fairly small town. Oh, I think it's not changed drastically since I was here.

DAVID: Have you visited enough at the church to notice any changes --- from here to when you were Vicar?

REVEREND: The big change, I think, is the amalgamation with the Presbyterians. They're now having joint services with the Presbyterians. And in fact, the rector of this parish --- I think it has parochial status now. The rector here, I believe is a Presbyterian, but he has Episcopal orders also. We do that sort of thing. We ordain members of other dominations also. I believe that is the status. This Presbyterian now, the Reverend Mr. Christ is Presbyterian, but also has Episcopal orders. I mean orders from the Episcopal Church, I should say. He is the one in charge now. But that's the big change. I understand that took place not too many years ago. They joined forces with the Presbyterians here. Well, I think that was a good move, the Episcopal congregation alone is very small. By adding the Presbyterians to them, and having joint services with them, adds to the numerical strengths and other strengths.

DAVID: What made you consider going into the Army as a Chaplain? You said you stayed here for about a year --- I say what influenced your decision at that time?

REVEREND: I realized our country was on the brink of war, and I thought I ought to get in where the action was. I thought it would be a worthwhile experience to be an Army Chaplain for a few years.

DAVID: Could you tell us anything about the church services? How they were conducted at that time --- in comparison to what they are now? Are things definitely different that way?

REVEREND: Of course, I'm just not too sure how they're doing it here now. I know what we did then. It was strictly Episcopal, and strictly in accordance with the 1928 Book of Common Prayer. And I would imagine that now they use the Proposed Book of Common Prayer --- is quite different in some respects to the 1928 prayer book. I'm not sure whether, under the present setup, they also have Presbyterian services. That I don't know. I haven't, I just arrived this afternoon, so I don't know just what goes on here. I'd like to talk with more people, particularly with the clergymen.

DAVID: Do you have time to stay the weekend and go to church on Sunday?

REVEREND: Yes, those are my plans, yes. I'm on a trip. We went to Canada to visit our daughter up there --- and when we leave here Sunday afternoon, and we plan to go to Caldwell, Idaho where my wife has a sister. We'll visit there for a few days. And then go up to Slocan, British Columbia, to visit my daughter and her family, and our two grandchildren.

DAVID: Now are there any special experiences that you can think of at the time you were Vicar here?

REVEREND: I had a pleasant time during that year and a half in Burns. I hold with a special pleasure my association with a service club, then known as the Boosters Club. Whether they still have that or not, I don't know. I remember the Boosters Club with a great deal of pleasure.

DAVID: Was that --- on that would --- Was the Boosters Club connected with the high school, things of that nature, or was it just ---

REVEREND: It was just a service club like the Lions, or Kiwanis, or Rotary.

DAVID: And they did special things in the community?

REVEREND: Oh yes, they did that, oh yes. Well, I think that's why they were called Booster Club, because it attempted to boost things in the community. To deal with the welfare of the community. There's one thing that may of changed since I was here, but then again having arrived here only this afternoon, I don't know.

When I was here the high school band was very colorful, they wore Scottish garb, you know. The town's named after Burns, because one of the pioneer's love of things Scottish, and

especially the poet, Burns. So they decked the youngsters in kilts, and one thing and another, and that was very colorful to see them marching in their Scottish plaids.

DAVID: What special things do you remember?

REVEREND: Things that I remember here? Well, my tenure here embraced two summers, both good summers. I went to the young people's conference at Cove, Oregon. Which now, as I understand, is going very strong --- they have the school and all sorts of things we did not have when I was here. But we did have a young people's summer camp here each summer, and I enjoyed that very much.

DAVID: I was going to ask you if you kept contact with people after you left here, did you keep contact with people? Did you have a writing contact with any members in your congregation that kept up on the news of Burns after the time that you left?

REVEREND: No, no, I did not. I pretty much lost contact with them. I was first of all in the military service, and I served at various parishes in the United States. And then finally ended up by teaching in a college in Decatur, Alabama. So, during all that I lost contact with Burns. And I did not renew any contact until about a year ago when we happened to come through --- I mentioned that earlier.

DAVID: You weren't aware at the time that the old church burned down?

REVEREND: I didn't know anything about that at the time. I'm sorry that I can't give you more information, but you see ---

DAVID: I think some of the things that you told us here have been very delightful. About the Boosters Club and things of that nature.

REVEREND: Is there anything; is there anything else you want to ask me? Anything else you would like to know? I could go on interminably talking about my personal life, but I think that isn't what you want though.

DAVID: We were interested in what it was like in Burns. Of course, I was interested in what happened to you after --- what brought you back to Burns, and things of that nature.

REVEREND: What brought me back this recent time was an invitation to come to the Golden Anniversary.

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