

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #99 - Sides A/B

Subject: Henry Ausmus

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date: March 30, 1982

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

Release Form: Yes

PAULINE BRAYMEN: ... my father, Henry Ausmus on March 30, March 30th, 1982. Okay, why don't you tell us how it would be your Great Uncle B. F. Ausmus happened to come to Harney County, as near as you know.

HENRY AUSMUS: Well as I know, he came from the Portland area to Harney County and homesteaded in the, or right near the Red S Field. And he made a trip to the railroad for supplies and when he came back, why he found his house moved three miles south of where he had originally homesteaded. So, he just left it there and took the land where his house was. It must have been comparable land or he --- he didn't raise any fuss about it anyhow. But that was when the Company moved out all the homesteaders, and just moved their shacks off of the land, and took it under that Swamp Act.

PAULINE: Now that, the place that he continued to homestead was what's known as the Ruh place now, or it belongs to Opies now.

HENRY: Yeah, it belongs to Opies now.

PAULINE: And I understand that one of the little buildings is; the original buildings are still there.

HENRY: Yes, one they used for tack shed was the original B. F. Ausmus house that he lived in.

PAULINE: Do you know about what date he came to Harney County?

HENRY: Well, it was in the early '70's, but I can't right off tell you the exact date.

PAULINE: Yeah, sometime in the 1870's.

HENRY: Yes.

PAULINE: So, he would be one of the very earliest homesteaders in the county. Ah, he was originally from Missouri, or Illinois?

HENRY: Well, Illinois.

PAULINE: Illinois.

HENRY: Yes. Now his father, my great-grandfather, lived in Jacksonville, Illinois, and then moved to Missouri later on. And whether he ever lived in Missouri or not, I don't know. But he was born in Illinois.

PAULINE: And came to, went to California during the gold rush days, and from there to Portland where he was in business and owned property. And then from Portland to Harney County.

HENRY: That's right.

PAULINE: Okay, I know that he had a daughter Maida, were there other people in that family, other than Maida?

HENRY: No, there was just one daughter.

PAULINE: Okay, and her name was M A I D A, and she was an artist, and we have evidence of some of her paintings still.

HENRY: Oh, we have that one ---

PAULINE: The plate, I have it.

HENRY: It's a plate. It's a picture of Mount Hood taken at one of the lake sites.

PAULINE: Okay, then your father was, he lived in Missouri, he grew up in Missouri.

HENRY: Yes, he grew up there. He was born in Jacksonville, Illinois.

PAULINE: And his name was Charles Benjamin.

HENRY: Charles Benjamin.

PAULINE: As a young man then, we don't know whether ---

HENRY: Well, his father moved to Missouri shortly after he was born, and they settled in, around

Mason City, Missouri, in that area. And he grew up there in Missouri, and that's in the same area as the Standleys lived in Missouri. See they moved to Missouri too, and they all settled in the same area, around Jacksonville, or Mason City, St. Joe ---

PAULINE: That's where he met Lillian Ludella Standley.

HENRY: And they were married in Missouri.

PAULINE: Well, did Grandpa come out here before any of his children were born, or before he was married, or ---

HENRY: No, no.

PAULINE: Well, he was married and had ---

HENRY: Ormond and Dick and Golden were born in Missouri.

PAULINE: In Missouri.

HENRY: Uh huh. And then he moved to Kansas, Wichita. And from Wichita he went down into Oklahoma, and when they opened the strip, the Cherokee Strip.

PAULINE: This is what you were talking about on this other tape with Baker, and this is something really that I really hadn't heard that much about, or at least it didn't dawn on me that that's what you were talking about.

HENRY: Well, he and his cousin, Harve Banta, went down and took up land in, right in the middle of where the Seminole oil fields are today. And they didn't like that, so they moved on up north and took up land north and east of Blackwell in what is known now as the Dillworth Oil Field.

And Harve Banta, he held on to his place, but Dad gave up his and come to Oregon then. But Dad's cousin, Bob Welsch had his homestead right next to Dad's, and he held on to his. And I visited in that area and he had seventeen oil wells on his piece of land, and I don't know how many there was on Dad's.

PAULINE: What was on Dad's.

HENRY: But Dad came to visit Dick and I while we was there at Blackwell. We went out there and we asked him if he could really believe it, and he said if he had stayed there he wouldn't have

lived long enough to enjoy it anyhow.

PAULINE: He just didn't like it at all.

HENRY: Well, he was just crippled up with rheumatism so bad while he was there. And I guess it is all for the better because he liked it here.

PAULINE: Well, the story is that his uncle, B. F. Ausmus wrote and asked him to come out, invited him to work with him, or be in partnership with him.

HENRY: I think that was the deal. They'd made some kind of a deal before Dad came, I'm sure. But I don't have any record of it. But anyhow, Dad came out and went to work with him, and they run horses over on the Table Buttes, that's in there southeast of Crane, and in the valley.

And I think he came in, well, he came right on the break of the year, '96 and '97. He probably hit Harney County in '96, but most of the records, well I've heard him talk about being around Christmas time, you know, so it was in the break of '96 and '97. And then Mother came out on the train from Oklahoma; she had stayed with Aunt Jane and Uncle Harve until '98. That's when she came to --- in the fall, I think, of '98. She came to Oregon on the train. And evidently, they arranged it so they would be in Huntington with the freight wagons when she came in. And she came in through the Warm Springs Reservation, or through Beulah, on the freight wagons from Huntington.

PAULINE: And she had the two children. Golden had died when she was quite young.

HENRY: Yes. She died when she was two years old. ...

PAULINE: So, she had Uncle Ormond and Uncle Standley with her. You told me a story one time about some place over there after they left Beulah, that wanted, she saw Castle Rock or some mountain over there and she wanted them to wait while she hiked over there to take a better look.

HENRY: Yes, she was looking at Strawberry Mountain, which to her looked right close. The way she told it, Uncle B. F. Ausmus told her she'd better take a day or two supplies.

PAULINE: It was a little further walk than she thought.

HENRY: And have plenty to get back on. But it must have been, well it was 30 or 40 miles from

Beulah across there, maybe further, I don't know. But it looked right, right close to her.

Anyhow, she used to tell the story about when they got in with their freight wagons, Uncle took her into the house and said, "Well you can get us some supper. Here's the sourdough all ready to go." She says, "Sourdough, God in heaven, what's that?" She had never come in contact with sourdough biscuits before, but she must have caught on pretty quick because she could really bake them.

PAULINE: Before I go any further, this fits in right here, she did have a reputation of being a pretty good cook and was famous for her burnt leather cake that she always made. And you've told me about the time that she took the cake to the social event of the evening at the school. Can you tell that story again?

HENRY: Well yeah, I remember that quite well. So, it's the first time she'd ever had any cake left over. And she found out the reason. She had --- you remember, I don't suppose you do, but we used to get lemon extract, vanilla extract in a big bottle. It was kind of square, or not oblong, but it was square on the corners and exactly the same kind of bottle that Watkins Liniment came in. And she mistakenly got a hold of the wrong bottle and put the Watkins Liniment in the frosting instead of the vanilla. Well, it was edible, but it wasn't what it was supposed to be, and she was pretty upset about that.

PAULINE: Well after --- in the settling of the estate then, when my Uncle B. F. died, then Grandpa's was moved down further onto the lake then and homesteaded again. Am I understanding that right?

HENRY: Well, I think so. I don't believe he took up that land in the lake until about 1904, so ---

PAULINE: And that was, that was called Little Cane Island.

HENRY: Yeah, we called it Little Cane Island.

PAULINE: Little Cane Island.

HENRY: But that was about a mile and a half south of where the house stood. Now the old house stood about a quarter of a mile south of the meander line. That is, it was surveyed by Neal.

PAULINE: And you told me before that that was, that this cane that grew there --- well tell me about that, because I can't remember just exactly now what kind of cane it was.

HENRY: Well, that cane, I don't think there's any of it ever survived the drought. But it only grew in three places that I know of on the lake. The batch on the, what we call Little Cane Island, and there was quite a patch of it there, possibly a quarter of an acre of it. And that grew a good deal like domestic cane, only taller, more like bamboo. It got about as big around as your thumb, and maybe ten or fifteen feet high, and it had joints in it just like bamboo. And it had a tassel on it similar to cane or maize. And well, you've seen this canary grass when it's all headed out, it had a tassel on it very similar to that.

PAULINE: But it was not big around?

HENRY: No, it didn't get very big around. I don't think the stems were much bigger around than your thumb, about three-quarters of an inch, maybe, in diameter, the big ones. Then it grew in another place on the lake that is south of Pelican Island, on Cole Island. And we used to refer to Cole Island as Big Cane Island, but it was actually Cole Island. And the other place it grew, according to the records, was in Mud Lake. There was a patch of it there, a sort of an island out in Mud Lake where there was cane.

PAULINE: Was this something that the animals like to eat, or was it something that they kind of ignored?

HENRY: No, I don't think that they ate it much because it was too coarse, you know.

PAULINE: Probably a remnant from dinosaur days, maybe, or some-thing. But it has always intrigued me when you told me bout it.

HENRY: I asked John Scharff about that cane, and he said it grew in other localities in swamps down in California someplace. But there's none of it that I know of left in Harney County, in Malheur Lake.

PAULINE: In 1933 and '34 when the lake dried up during a drought, that killed it out.

HENRY: That cooked it, that was the end of it, and it never seeded back. And most of the sugar

grass, you know, that was prevalent around the lake, it's coming back a little bit now, but nothing like it was before that drought.

PAULINE: And this is where you were born, on Little Cane Island, was that homestead on Little Cane Island?

HENRY: Well, no, the homestead was a mile and a half north of the Cane Island.

PAULINE: A mile and a half north from the Little Cane Island?

HENRY: Yeah, I was born there in that shack.

PAULINE: Okay, and this was in 1909. And you went to school then when you were old enough to go to school at Lawen.

HENRY: Well in the Otley District, they called it.

PAULINE: In the Otley District.

HENRY: Uh huh. That was about a mile, a mile and a quarter north of where we lived. I've forgotten the number of that school. Lawen was 15, was 15, 16 and 18, was the three of them. One was on the Crowley place, and one was at Lawen, and the other was the Otley District. There was three schoolhouses.

PAULINE: Okay, and by this time you had three older brothers. There was Dick; there was Ormond and Dick, and Standley, and your sister Izola. You tell about, well there is two things you tell about, and if you think of something else, why throw that in too, here.

About Uncle Standley teaching you to ride, or you riding horseback behind Uncle Standley for a long time when you were really little. And then how they used to skate to school with the broomstick between them, and you hanging onto the middle, and away you go.

HENRY: Yeah. Well as far back as I remember, why I used to ride around the country quite a bit with Standley. But I never remember riding behind him so much, as riding my own horse. I wasn't big enough to reach the stirrups or anything, and he would tie a broomstick across the pommel of the saddle and wrapped my coat around it and tied it across the pommel of the saddle, and I could hold on with both hands to that broomstick. It didn't make much difference what the horse did; I

could hang on.

PAULINE: You could hang on. You might fly a little bit in between hops.

HENRY: Well, I had a pretty good old horse, and he was pretty sure footed. And I could stay with the horse, and that's all that counted. Don't ever remember falling off of it.

But when I was big enough to go to school, well I started to school when I was about five, there wasn't anything else to do so I just as well. But we didn't have school only five or six months out of the year. I think six months was the longest term we ever went to school.

But I can remember the sloughs come right down by the schoolhouse, I think the branches of the East River. The East River come down through there, through the Jordan place, which was close. And then it branched off in a couple of places. And one branch come down by the schoolhouse and on down past Otley's and right by our house. And the water used to come down in the fall, and into the Lawen country and fill those sloughs up, enough that we could skate on them.

And whenever it was so we could skate, why we'd just go out about a hundred yards from our house there and put on our skates and skate to school. And that was the recesses, noons and all, that's all we did was skate all winter long. And on weekends, why sometimes we'd go down to Cane Island and skate on the lake. And you see Cane Island bordered right to the open water. And I guess it still does, the shoreline may be out farther than it was then, maybe more tules, I don't know. I haven't been on it for years. But that was the, from Cane Island, why you only had to walk fifty or sixty feet through the tules to get onto open water. And we used to skate from Pelican Island to where the Silvies River enters in, comes in. I run trap line along there, and that's the way we made our spending money.

PAULINE: Were you trapping muskrats?

HENRY: Trapping muskrats and we'd catch a mink once in a while, and skunks. I could --- Cane Island was a good place to trap skunks. There was a greasewood knoll on Cane Island that's about, oh maybe a couple of acres of greasewood was all that was on it, but there was badger holes there,



or the skunks had taken over. I used to set traps for skunks in those holes. I caught; I don't know how many skunks out of those holes, but a lot of 'em.

PAULINE: Well, does the skunk pelt have value for ---

HENRY: Oh, I used to get about \$2.50 out of them.

PAULINE: What did they, you would think the odor would have stayed with them.

HENRY: Well, it stayed with me quite a bit when I would catch them. But that's all in the life of a kid growing up, I guess. We used to catch lots of muskrats and shipped them.

PAULINE: Well, your father, at the time that you were growing up, you know, like from the time that you were born until you were like say 10 or 12, was he mostly running horses still, or did he start farming?

HENRY: No, that's about the time they went out of the horse business, you know. Horses weren't worth much by that time, well up till --- Dad had quite a little bunch of horses. Of course, early World War I there was still a demand for horses. Dad had a few horses then, but by that time why we had more cattle and the horses were secondary. Of course, we had to have horses to run the ranch, you know. All of the haying was down with horses. We had about 50 head of horses, I guess, probably.

PAULINE: Well then you put up hay then down on the lake.

HENRY: Oh yes, we put up lots of it.

PAULINE: Then in the summertime you move to what's called the Hill Place, the Hill Ranch.

HENRY: Yeah, we called it the Hill Ranch.

PAULINE: The Hill Ranch. And did he run his cattle there in the summertime then?

HENRY: Yeah, we run them back up on top, up on Willow Basin behind Crane up there. You see the water would come in, in the spring. We'd leave there about the last of April, getting on to the first of May, and we'd move everything on a, put it on a hay wagon, our beds and cook stove and, and everything, and move to the Hill Ranch.

We'd raise a garden there, and Mother milked a bunch of cows, and she used to pack butter.

And they used to pack that in a stone crock and salt it, and she would sell butter. But that garden was our winter supply. We'd raise potatoes and some corn. Everything that you would raise in a garden, beans, peas, and they had some fruit trees there. But I don't ever remember of getting any fruit off of them. There was a peach tree, and a plum tree, but I do remember the big garden that we used to raise.

PAULINE: Well, between the garden and of course you'd have beef because you had cows, and then in the fall and spring and there was plenty of ducks and geese to put up. Really about the only thing that you had to buy then would have been the staples like flour and salt and sugar.

HENRY: That's all.

PAULINE: Maybe a little canned fruit, canned tomatoes maybe ---

HENRY: Well, we used to have canned corn, and canned tomatoes, and dried apples. They used to get dried apples, you know, in the flats, and dried apricots and peaches. But most of our living was, well we were just about self-sustaining. Dad used to come to Burns and they'd buy flour by the barrel. It was made right here at the old mill here in Burns, and they'd get a barrel of flour --- that was, I think four sacks to the barrel or something like that. Any-how it was enough to run us a year, and they'd get a hundred pounds of sugar, and then dried beans. We was pretty well fixed up.

Then he used to go in the fall, take a team and light wagon and go to John Day, and bring back a wagonload of apples. He didn't bring them back in boxes or anything, he just put them in loose, and packed them in straw in the wagon bed, and they was just one big box full of apples.

And of course, we had the old dirt cellar, you know. You couldn't have a cellar there on the lake under the ground. You had to built it on top, so he built a cellar on top of the ground. The first one, that I remember of, was built just like, well kind of boarded in, filled between the walls with dirt, and covered over the top with dirt. And it joined on to the house, but it kept things from freezing. And we used to have bins and he packed her potatoes, and oh beets and we had squash and stuff like that, that kept all winter in those bins, and they packed 'em in dirt, you know. So, all

in all, our fare was kind of simple, but it --- We always had plenty.

PAULINE: You certainly weren't hurting for food to eat.

HENRY: No, now we were ---

PAULINE: Now, I had a question popped through my head and I forgot what it was. Okay, its always been my understanding that Grandpa Ausmus was one of the very first, if not the first one to decide he could farm out there on that lake bed when it started to go down. Now the understanding that I have is that he went out and started to do it, and some of the other neighbors looked around and thought it was a good idea and started to do it also.

HENRY: Well, I don't know whether he was the first or not. There may have been some of the old early times --- that I think some of the settlers had raised a little grain around the lake shores. But actually, I think probably he was the first one ever to grow grain in the actual lakebed.

PAULINE: What kind of grain did he plant?

HENRY: Oats.

PAULINE: Oats. Oh, they should have done beautiful. I bet they grew good.

HENRY: Well, I remember the first crop he put in there. He got it in awful late in the year. He didn't get it in, in time for it to mature, ripen up, you know. And he went in and cut it with a mowing machine. And they had an awful time a cutting that because it was so long, that when they would cut down a swath why the mower had to run over the cut swath and it would pile up under the mower and slide like a toboggan, so they would have to dig it out. But he cut it for hay and stacked it, and salted it, cause it was green and it never did dry out, cure. And he put in a layer of hay and then a layer of stock salt on it. And I remember feeding that out in the winter, and it was really good feed. I ---

PAULINE: It would be really tasty to the cows.

HENRY: Yeah.

PAULINE: With salt on it too it would be well preserved.

HENRY: They really went for it. Then when it dried up in the '30's, why Ormond and Standley put

in a lot of grain. And they went out into that lakebed and they put in I think around 1500 acres. And Henry Otley come down about the time it was two or three inches high, they got some of it in and up, and he come down to see if the alkali had eat it off. He went and looked at it, so he went to Crane and bought him a tractor and he put in quite a slug of grain.

And then Del Hayes and Ted Hayes, they put in a lot of grain, and it was a catching on pretty fast. And Duhaimes they come down to the lake and they put in a patch of grain to the east of Ormond and Standley's. Anyhow they ended up with what they called the Big Grain Field. It must have been about, oh, Marcus Haines and I was figuring on it one time, probably 7,000 acres of grain was planted in that lakebed.

PAULINE: Did it mature and was that harvested as mature grain?

HENRY: Mature grain, yes.

PAULINE: Mature grain. Some of the pictures that Bessie Duhaime

--- I got --- Okay from you I have the haying operation, detailed with pictures. And from Bessie Duhaime I have the threshing procedure detailed with pictures. I think that was pretty much standard, what the Duhaimes did, or the Ausmus did, that procedure with the threshing was probably pretty much standard procedure.

HENRY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well then, we all know that along about, about that time was when the government decided that Malheur Lake was a navigable water and that it all belonged to the government, and we have the suit which is detailed in the histories of the ---

HENRY: Well, it was declared a Bird Refuge in 1909, 1908, yeah. That was the year before I was born.

PAULINE: 1908. But until, until after that drought really, they didn't move any homesteaders off.

HENRY: Oh, no.

PAULINE: They didn't try to change the boundaries of it.

HENRY: Oh, no. No, they never tried to change anything for years. They went along there until

about, well in the '30's, you know. Then they begin to agitate it a little bit, but --- it finally came down to who owned the land, you know. And they had to have a trial because those that had deeded land joining the meander line claimed to the center of the lake.

PAULINE: Riparian rights.

HENRY: Riparian rights, and so that's what the big trial was there between the state and ---

PAULINE: To decide whether it was ---

HENRY: --- how much of it was government land, yes.

PAULINE: Was government land. And whether it belonged to the state or to the federal government.

HENRY: Yeah. Well, finally the state come out on top on that, you know. But it was declared a Bird Reserve, and the government went ahead and condemned the land that they wanted. That's just exactly what they done. And that just --- Neal, well there was two surveys, you know, but the Neal meander line, which was to establish the boundaries of the lake. So, Dad's land was below the ---

PAULINE: Was below the meander line.

HENRY: The meander line, yeah. His north fence was the line. And anyhow, those who hung on got title to the land, you know. Well, they never got title to it, but they ---

PAULINE: Got recompensed for it?

HENRY: Well, they was reimbursed for it. But that trial, then the thing had to be settled and the government was gonna --- they condemned the land and everything, and come to an agreement or what --- but who to pay the money to then. So that trial wasn't settled until about 1940. Well, most of them were settled, but Dad's land was disputed between the Otleys and Dad. You know, Otleys claimed the land. We went to court about it and the lawyers had taken it on a percentage basis, you know. So, it came up for trial and then --- Dad had held that for nearly 40 years at that time and his rights were pretty well established. They was unable to throw him out, and had used it for all of these years. And he had bought the rights, or the improvements as they --- it was on unsurveyed

land and they couldn't buy the land but they bought the improvements. And he bought out Turner, and I understood that Dan Jordan was, owned part of it, and he got his rights, and a fellow by the name of Little. And anyhow he had a pretty good chunk of it put together there, squatter's rights. Anyhow, when it came to trial why they offered, oh it was some measly amount, \$500 or so for our interest in it, and we turned that down, and it got up into pretty good sizeable amount of money. And I don't know there, it amounted to about the same, as just splitting it down the middle, I imagine. Anyhow, we got \$11,000 or something like that, I think, and that was a pretty good piece of money at that time.

PAULINE: At that time that was, yeah, that was a lot of money then.

HENRY: Yeah, it was a pretty good piece of money. And everybody went home without ill feelings about it. And of course, Dad and Fred Otley Sr. why they'd battled along for years, and they was both pretty much enemies over it, the thing, you know. But the boys and us were, well there is no ---

PAULINE: This is the thing that I found, I talked to a lot of people and there has never been any --- I've never run across any animosity between the Ausmus boys and anybody, it, things pretty well got ironed out and life went on without anyone ---

HENRY: Oh yeah. We went on about our business just the same. There was Henry and Dick and Charlie, you know, and we worked together, and worked for one another. And well I even worked for the old man, you know. But we never let that dispute over the land ---

## SIDE B

PAULINE: The Hill Ranch was Grandma's ---

HENRY: Rock Claim.

PAULINE: Rock Claim. Now what is a Rock Claim?

HENRY: Well, they was Rock Claims and Timber Claims and Desert Claims and --- Anyhow, she got a 160 acres or so up there. I don't know; maybe there was 320, I don't know. It was a Rock

Claim. Now Uncle B. F. Ausmus owned that, what is known as the George Parker place, right south of where, yeah, it'd be right south at that time. And he got her to take up this Rock Claim. And it was plenty rocky because there was the rim rock down there, and the rock slides, you know, and --- but it was kind of in a, sort of a canyon, not really a canyon, but it was protected in there and there was a creek and some large springs on it. Now those springs now have all gone to wreck, you know. They could be dug out, I imagine, but they are all gone now. But they was live springs there that fed enough water to irrigate a garden and stock water. Then after the railroad came in I think that was the last year that we ever lived on the old Hill Ranch, we ever moved up there. But Mother homesteaded in the South End in Long Hollow.

PAULINE: Really, I didn't know that.

HENRY: Yeah, the O'Keefe place down there, you see. That was Mother's homestead.

PAULINE: Oh, well I didn't know that.

HENRY: Mother homesteaded that after Ben and Izola were married. And she went down there and she homesteaded that place, what was known as the Government Spring, just over the top of the hill from Long Hollow. And there was springs there and she could raise a garden. And Ben O'Keefe built the house and fenced the land and they proved up on it. And I have an idea that that was one of the last homesteads because they repealed the Homestead Act, you know, shortly after that. But she lived there several years, you know, while Izola's kids was growing up.

PAULINE: Well, you and your mother went back to Oklahoma when you were high school age, and you went to high school in Blackwell.

HENRY: That's right. Well, I had kind of a deal --- I was about 13 years old, I guess, and there was a fellow name of Jim Johnson, he's related, a shirt tale relation to Dad and Mother. And he come through the country, he come down out of Washington or someplace, he's an old railroad engineer, or had been. Anyhow, he stopped and visited them, stayed all spring. And he went out with the boys a shearing; he went out to wrangle sheep. When the season was over why old Jim was going back to Garden City, Kansas, you know, Ingalls. His sister was married to a cousin of

Dad's. That's the way it was. Anyhow, I went back to Kansas to visit Uncle Dick with him.

PAULINE: Now by Uncle Dick, do you mean my Uncle Dick, or your Uncle Dick? My Uncle Dick, your Uncle Dick?

HENRY: Yeah, our Uncle Dick. Dad's brother.

PAULINE: Your dad's brother.

HENRY: Your grandfather's brother, so your Great-Uncle Dick. We ought to get that straight. And I spent the summer there in Ingalls, Kansas with him. And I plowed corn, and worked on the threshing machine, and combined, and kept pretty busy during the summer. So, Dick and Izola come out to pick me up, I guess. Anyhow, they come out and we went from there down to Cherryvale, Kansas where Uncle Cy lived, and was there awhile, and school started and I started to school there. And Dick didn't find work there, so he took Izola and went down to Aunt Jane's, down to Blackwell, there was a smelter there, you know. And then he found work there. And I didn't like the way things was going there in Cherryvale, I was all-alone with Uncle Cy. They had a whole bunch of kids, you know. But I wanted to be with Dick and Izola, so I got on the train and went down to Blackwell, and I enrolled in school there. Stayed the winter with Aunt Jane, and that was my freshman year. So, in the spring, after school was out, why Mother came out, you know, with the Denstedts, they come back to visit relatives near there.

And anyhow she come, so Mother and Izola and I drove back to Oregon in a Model-T that summer. And of course, the next fall why I went to school at Crane, and I went one year there, and started the next --- I don't know, I never finished that year, my junior year there. But I went back to Oklahoma, where Dick was, and Dick was working with a construction company. And I went to work that summer with the same --- with him there. And that fall I started to school, and finished school at Blackwell.

PAULINE: And then you joined the Marines then in Oklahoma?

HENRY: No.

PAULINE: No.



HENRY: No, I get footloose, you know, I was just like a flea in a --- I got a little footloose and I took off afoot, down the road. Went out through into Western Kansas looking for jobs, and I wanted to see some new country. And I got out around, in Colorado, around Colorado Springs and Pueblo there, and Lamar. And I worked in the beet field, shoveling beets, and worked on a baler, baling alfalfa. And I worked in the apple orchard, picking apples. And that didn't get over very big; I couldn't pick enough apples to make my salt. So, I caught a freight train out of there through Trinidad, darn near froze to death in a cattle car, got smoked out. They went through a bunch of tunnels and, you know, all that smoke in a cattle car, I was chirpin' pretty good! (Laughter)

PAULINE: Doesn't sound like fun.

HENRY: Yeah. Went down to Raton, didn't find anything there that --- And went to Flagstaff and I heard there was a logging camp up above Flagstaff and there was a train run up there. So, I got onto the end of a gondola and was going to go up there, and it was raining. And while I was waiting for the train to pull out, the brakeman come along and threw me off of the train. Told me not to get back on. I decided it wasn't too good an idea anyhow, riding up there in the rain. So I went down to Phoenix, Arizona. And in Phoenix, I got a job unloading a lumber car. I made enough money there to buy grub for a day or two. It wasn't very much, a \$1.50 or \$2, maybe I made \$2.50 unloading that lumber car. That was pretty good. So, I caught a train out of there and rode it into Indio, California. It's right on the line, right down there on the Mexican border, through Yuma.

Anyhow, I ended up in Los Angeles. Now I knew some folks in Los Angeles that used to live in Blackwell. And I hunted them up and stayed there a day or two, and I got a job in a lumberyard working where this fellow worked. And I worked there a couple of weeks or so, and they shut the darned thing down, and I was out of a job again.

PAULINE: Well, this was around, this was about 1930?

HENRY: Well, '28.

PAULINE: '28. So, things were pretty tough all over.

HENRY: Things were starting to get pretty tough. So, I was downtown on Spring Street in L. A. there, right in downtown, and I run into a recruiting office, Army. I was going to join the Army, that was all right. So, they took me over to San Pedro and I signed up there and told the truth about my age and everything, and I wasn't old enough. So, they wrote to Lawen and Mother was here then, and at least I thought she was, to get a waiver so I could join the Army. And it never came, so after they kept me there about so long why they threw me out. Well in the meantime Mother had come back to Blackwell, see. And of course, I never communicated with Dad, or I could have got it that way, you know.

PAULINE: Yeah.

HENRY: Mother always did the dirty work, you know.

PAULINE: Yeah, I can understand, you know. If my kids wanted something written they never ask --- write and ask Allan for it, they'd write and ask me to write it. It's just the way that things ---

HENRY: That's the way it ended up, and I went back to Los Angeles, couldn't find a job. So, I went into the Marine Recruiting Office and I lied about my age and made it plenty, so was no hitch, you know. And they give me fare down to Sand Diego, and bus fare from the bus station out to the base and kept me there about a week. And gave us our physical and went, started through Boot Camp there. That's how it happened.

PAULINE: Well then you got sent to, you went to Nicaragua.

HENRY: Yeah, I went to Nicaragua.

PAULINE: Were you in the service 4 years then, or just 2 or 3?

HENRY: Well, it figured out about 3 years.

PAULINE: About 3 years. Have you ever thought about the fact that you were down there, you know, and helped, supposedly the U.S. was helping put Somoza into power? And how do you, what do you feel now about what is happening down there now, and the fact that now they are kicking Somoza out, and the U.S. is down there messing around again?

HENRY: Well, it's the same old story, and I expect it will be the same for the next centuries.

Mexico's come out of it some, more revolutionary, but it's just as natural as living down there. Their politics they take pretty seriously, whenever one side wins why they eliminate the opposition, and that's what they was doing then, and that's what they are doing today. And that's what they'll be doing --- the way I feel about it. Because they, those people really have lived under more or less dictatorship all of their lives. And of course, the natives are non-educated, they were 90 percent illiterate when I was there. So, they look to their leaders and they just try to pick the winning side, that's all, and they done what they were told.

PAULINE: Well, just from watching what we've seen on the TV news, and one thing and another, and from what you've said, you know, in the past about being down there, it looked to me like it was, that things really hadn't changed all that much.

HENRY: See I went down there, and they had run Sandino out of the country, he was over in Honduras. And his followers, there were some of his Generals --- there was Pedrone and some others, who --- well, they just went into bandits. They robbed plantations and was living off of the country, and it was banditry. And they had us out chasing all over the country after Pedrone.

PAULINE: Were there a lot of casualties, or was it --- Okay the parallel that I'm trying to draw is they sent the Army in here to chase the Indians around Harney County, and I think they lost one soldier, and a couple of horses maybe in the whole uproar. Was that the kind of thing it was there, or did you actually have a lot of casualties?

HENRY: No, there was not a lot of casualties. In the early part of it there was a few Marines killed, I guess, but not many. Right after I was shipped back, there was a patrol of eight men out of Henintaga which was close to where I was stationed --- went out to repair a telephone line. They laid their guns down, or hung them on the mules, and was working on this line. There was eight of them, and the bandits caught them unawares and killed all eight of them. Had anyone of them, or anyone of them been alert at all why it would have never happened. Because those patrols carried their --- oh the submachine guns and everything, and they could have just mowed them down. There was no reason why that, oh they may of, some of them got hurt but it's just one of those

things that shouldn't have happened, because they just wasn't paying attention. But I was on election duty while I was there. The country was under martial law, and they confiscated every kind of weapon that they could pick up, you know, wherever we went. And we found old model pistols, maybe a 45-caliber pistol loaded with a 32 caliber shell wrapped in banana leaves, you know, to make it fit, whatever they shot at. It probably wouldn't have hurt you even if you were shot with it, but that is the kind of weaponry. And they made bombs out of beer bottles and rawhide, and stuff like that. It isn't like the modern day; they got some pretty sophisticated equipment now. But that's the kind of warfare it was with us. Yeah, I got back to the states in '31. I was discharged in '31.

PAULINE: Well, then you worked with Uncle Dick.

HENRY: Yeah, I went back.

PAULINE: And he was doing construction and painting houses, and mostly painting.

HENRY: Well, he was still working on a construction company when I came back, but Tyler Construction Company went broke about that time, and we bought some of the equipment, cement mixer, you know, and truck. And we done a little cement sidewalk or storm cellars. Anything like that, that we could find to do. And then we got started painting houses, and it always seemed like we could always get a job painting a house someplace. Didn't make much money at it, but as time went on we finally had a pretty good painting business. We contracted with the Kansas State to paint the steel bridges, and we painted oh, I don't know, a dozen or so of those. ... us on our feet too, you know, pretty good. And we made a little money at that, but we managed to get enough to keep off of the relieve rolls, you know. That's more than most of them was doing. Then I came back out to Oregon and spent the winter out here, in the fall and winter of '35, and went back to Oklahoma in '36. I wouldn't have gone back, but I had ulterior motives. And then Inez and I were married in '37.

PAULINE: Well, Mom tells the story, I'll have to check out and see if the story she's told me is the same story you're going to tell, but you met her at a party. She had gone with someone else, and he

was --- got a little bit intoxicated so you took her home. Is that what I remember, does that get the story right? Or have I got it messed up?

HENRY: Well, I don't know exactly how that did happen. Fred and I was --- Fred Braun and I was at a country-dance anyhow, and Inez was there. Anyhow, I took her home, however, we were in the same class in school because I flunked out in English class and had to take an extra English class, and she was in that English class.

PAULINE: That's what she said, but you didn't really know each other then.

HENRY: No, we didn't. There was 600 kids in the school, you know, but she was one in the class, I remember her. She was a tall, skinny girl ---

PAULINE: And she would be hard to forget.

HENRY: --- and answered all of the questions that I couldn't. But that's --- and we kind of run around in the same crowd quite awhile before we met.

PAULINE: This is what she said.

HENRY: Her friends was my friends, but we just didn't get together until that time.

PAULINE: Go ahead. I'll even get you an ashtray. I think, when you need one --- you won't need one for a while.

HENRY: Well, I don't need one for a while. I'll use my shirt pocket.

PAULINE: So, then you came back out, you were married in '37 and I was born in April '38. In September '38 you packed everything you owned into the Model-T?

HENRY: No, I bought an Oakland Eight, quite an automobile, real nice. They don't make them anymore, but they were good automobiles. And I built a trailer, two-wheel trailer, and put a trailer hitch on it and we loaded everything we had in that car and in that trailer --- household stuff, beds, even had canned goods in there, you know, the stuff that Inez had canned. We had some sand plums and we brought them with us. Everything we had, we had in that car and trailer, and we come to Oregon in that. And it was one of those cars, big car, they got ten miles to the gallon whether or no, didn't make any difference how fast you drove it, or how slow it'd get just ten miles

to the gallon. And believe it or not gasoline was two bits a gallon here, and that was terrible. We'd been used to paying about 13 cents for gas. But anyhow, I drove it around here awhile and decided that we couldn't afford to drive it, and I traded it off and got a Model-A, which wasn't quite so heavy on gas.

PAULINE: Now you worked for Uncle Ormond, or with Uncle Ormond and Uncle Standley for a while and we lived --- well what would have been the Jetley place. And then we lived here, and we lived then down to the Korten place before you bought this and came back down here.

HENRY: Yeah. I --- the first fall I helped harvest, you know, and I worked for Ormond and Standley all winter. And then the next spring I leased this 80 acres right here, what is known as the old McLaren place then, you know. Milt Riggs was living on the place at the time, but I leased it from Pearl Vulgamore, and I raised a crop here on it. I guess the first year, not a very good one, and then I leased the Korten place. Well, about that time why Ernest Reynvaan married Pearl Vulgamore, you know, and he decided he'd farm the place. So, I had to have some place, so we moved up to the Korten place. There was an old house there that had pretty well fell down, but we got it patched up so we could live in it. Wasn't very good, but we did. So, we moved up there, and then Ernest he didn't do so good a farming this place, and anyhow, I went to her one time --- one day and I told her I'd buy the place, I wanted to buy it. So, we made a deal, and I bought it. \$6,000 for 80 acres here. Well, that was the start.

PAULINE: And then you added the --- as the years went by then you added the Jetley and the Riggs fields.

HENRY: Yeah. Well then, I had the Korten place leased, and I had this, and I leased the Jetley place for a year. And finally, they wanted to sell that, and I went to Pearl again, and she put up the money to buy the Jetley place. So, I had the two put together. Then in the meantime, Ormond had bought the Riggs place down here in the corner from Milton Riggs. And then when Standley died, why that went into the estate and I bought ---

PAULINE: You bought it at that time?

HENRY: I bought that at that time.

PAULINE: I never did know --- I knew that Uncle Ormond had it, but I didn't know at what point that ---

HENRY: Yeah. Well, that's how I got a hold of it. So, I finally got the whole thing put together. Then in 1960, you know, I leased the Kortens place for all those years --- 21 years, I guess, and I went up to Longview and, to see the Kortens, and he offered to sell that, and I made a deal on that. So that's where I got it all pieced together.

PAULINE: Well, while you were doing this here, and you basically run a few cattle, but mostly a grain operation up until what, about 1960 when you started to change it back over to a cattle operation.

HENRY: Yeah, '62, '61 and '62. We just had a few cattle --- I done --- 15, 20 head was all I had. It was basically; I didn't do anything but grain farm. But the years before we moved onto this place why I got in the hog business.

PAULINE: That's right. I had forgotten about that temporarily. I think you ought to tell about that. This was during the war and the Army had the base down here at the airport for what was it, P-38 bombers?

HENRY: Yeah, they was P-38's.

PAULINE: P-38's.

HENRY: Yeah, we were living on the old Kortens place there, and I was running hogs at that time. The way I got started --- Tim Jones out here to Silver Creek, bought rye from me, and I traded him rye for 9 head of hogs.

PAULINE: For 9 head --- well you had about what, 500 head when you got through?

HENRY: Yeah, up around 600, so we had lots of grain. We was raising grain, and it wasn't a very good market for it, so this kind of worked out, I fed them the grain and raised more hogs. I sold enough hogs that --- and then in the fracas I got a hold of enough money to make a down payment on this place.

PAULINE: Then you got --- I remember you going down to the airport to get the garbage from the Mess down there for the hogs.

HENRY: Yeah, that worked out pretty good, it was stuff the hogs needed. Protein, you know, and ---

PAULINE: And it got rid of their garbage in the process.

HENRY: Yeah. We did that for a while.

PAULINE: Well, there is one thing I remember. There was one time you come home with a great big salmon; a piece of salmon all wrapped up. The cooks had wrapped it up and put it aside for you. They said they were going to have to throw it in the garbage, and it was too good to throw away, so they ---

HENRY: Yeah, they gave me a whole crate of fresh salmon one time out of Mess Hall, they couldn't hold on to it, you know, they had it so long why they --- but it was good.

PAULINE: Yeah. I remember that I remember eating that, having that salmon. It was pretty exciting --- something we didn't really have too --- I don't think it was something we could have had. If Mom had gone to the store and bought it, it probably wouldn't have stuck in my memory, you know. But everybody was really excited. I remember too when you brought the eagle in that someone had shot down in the field, and you brought it in to show it to us so we could see what one looked like up close. And the horned toads that everybody used to bring me when I was a kid.

HENRY: Yeah. There used to be a lot of horned toads, I guess there still are.

PAULINE: Well, while you were putting this ranch together, and in business here, then Uncle Ormond and Uncle Standley were in business at the Verdo [Venator] and had put together about, what 3,000 acres down there, is the figure that I've always thrown around.

HENRY: Well, there's, yeah, somewhere around that, I think four and a half sections. You see when they moved out of the lake, '35 was the last year that they grew any grain. The lake started filling up after that. Well, they run about 400 head of cattle at that time, 400 or 500 head, and they sold out. Joe Fine bought 'em, and we took 'em to the Roaring Springs. Bought out Ormond and



Johnny Kirk's cattle, and then we took them to Smyth Flats on Steens Mountain. I guess Ormond took the money and invested in, he bought Hudspeth's place, and the Greenhouse place down there.

PAULINE: That's where they started then with this, when they were ... to go back into something else.

HENRY: Yeah, after they went out of the cattle business, they bought the Green house down there and the Hudspeth and they rented Section 29 from Mrs. Hanley. And they plowed that west half section of 29, and they raised oats in there. And they plowed up the Green house, or the Hudspeth place and raised grain in there. They never did farm the Green house side of that section. And then they bought those four and a half sections down there from PLS Company, and that's when they moved to the Verdo [Venator].

PAULINE: Well, that name, the Verdo [Venator], which is a Spanish name, I guess.

HENRY: Well, Ted Hayes told me the story, and if I had that on tape it would be worth a jillion!

PAULINE: Well, what did he tell you? We'll put what he told you on tape.

HENRY: Well in the early '70's, along about '71, or along in there someplace, maybe it was '69 or '65 or somewhere, it was in that area. The first settlers to come in here, there was a fellow by the name of Redabush (sp.?) [Ruh], and Verdo [Venator] were partners.

PAULINE: So Verdo [Venator] is a man's name?

HENRY: Verdo [Venator] was a man's name, and he settled in there and he had a hundred work mules. And they plowed up the Verdo [Venator] and raised grain in it, and Verdo [Venator] decided that there just wasn't enough room here to do what he wanted to do, so he went to Argentina.

PAULINE: Oh.

HENRY: And I don't know what became of Redabush [Ruh], but anyhow --- And when, of course that all went back to meadow again. When Ormond and Standley plowed up the Verdo [Venator], they found the old dead furrows where Verdo [Venator] had plowed it up originally.

PAULINE: Had plowed it up originally.

HENRY: Had plowed it up originally. So that's where the Verdo [Venator] got its name.

PAULINE: Well, with their ditching and diking you were highly successful as grain farmers down there, and really kind of wrote a chapter in Harney County history as far as farming was concerned, not to mention that you were doing the same thing up here.

HENRY: You see they bought that in 1944, that's the same time I bought this place here. At that -- in that era, '44 to '48, '49, we raised 85 percent of all the grain that was raised in Harney County. And I guess everybody stepped on the bandwagon along there, about '49, you know, and '50. And I think probably I was the one that started this malting barley market, more than anyone else.

Earl Sitz and I went to Klamath Falls and bought a truckload, semi-trailer load of seed grain, certified Henchen barley. Now there had been Henchen barley growed in the country before. Bill Huggard raised some and sold some as malting barley, a little bit, but most of it was contaminated with other varieties of grain that wouldn't qualify. So, I planted, oh, I think maybe 300 acres or so of that certified seed, and we got enough out of it, and kept --- to seed the --- get a good clean seed started. It had a little tree barley that had volunteered in it, but it wasn't enough to ever show up. Eventually why I had good pure seed. And I sold your Uncle Ormond 15 tons of clean Henchen seed. Other than before that we was just raising feed grain, you know. And then the malting barley went from there.

PAULINE: Then there were several years there, where that was a really a good thing going.

HENRY: Yeah. We was getting a good premium price for it, and then it got so it wasn't worth anymore than feed grain. And then to clean it up for ... we was losing as much as we was gaining, so we just quit. I did.

PAULINE: Well, we put another 45 minutes on this thing, it's about to run out. I suggest we call it a day and get together and talk about some things we forgot to talk about today, 'cause we didn't even scratch the surface.

HENRY: Well, there's a lot of territory to cover there, all right.

PAULINE: But that kind of --- I think we kind of got the --- the chain of events of how the Ausmus's came here, and what they did when they got here.

HENRY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Then we ought to go back and talk about some particulars.

(END OF TAPE)

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