

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #10 Side A

Subject: D. C. Jordan

Place: Burns, Oregon

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Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

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PAULINE BRAYMEN: D. C. Jordan, of D. C. Jordan Insurance and Realty, grew up in Burns and was in business in the community until his retirement, when his sons took over the business. His father and mother came to Harney County in 1907. And his father, a carpenter, built many of the older homes in the community. Jordan tells:

D. C. JORDAN: What do you want to start off with, their names?

PAULINE: Yeah.

D. C.: Well the first name, or just initials?

PAULINE: Well it was Dan, Dan Jordan.

D. C.: Daniel Peter Jordan, or D. P. Jordan. How do you want it?

PAULINE: That's fine.

D. C.: And Lydia Louise Jordan first knew about Harney County at the time of the World's Fair in Portland. My father had gone to the fair and the things that he saw excited him about this area. So

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he returned to Whittier, California, where they resided, and when he was a contractor. He decided to come to Harney County, what I believe was the early summer of 1907, where they took up a homestead about 12 miles south and east of Burns where Mother and we three children lived while my father worked in town whenever he had a chance to do carpentry work. He worked on, or built several of the older homes in Burns. Working on the staircase of, oh what's the name of this house up here --- Holland house, Ike Holland house. And he built the Rembolt house in about 1916. Prior to his being employed by Mr. Rembolt, he had decided to go back to California. But it was this job that caused him to stay here. He got the job to build this home, which is presently occupied by Mr. Goddard up here (278 West F Street). He also worked on the stairway, doing the, of the Voegtly home. And I --- there are many other houses around here, but I don't remember all of them. But he did quite a bit of carpentry work in Burns, building our own home down on the river which is presently occupied by the editor ---

PAULINE: Oh, Dwight Hinshaw.

D. C.: Dwight Hinshaw. But he worked extensively in here, and also in the country where he built a number of homes. My mother, during this period, was also one of the early schoolteachers in Harney County.

PAULINE: Now I didn't know that.

D. C.: Yeah, she was, she taught school here, and in many of the suburban area districts. In those days I think the wages were about \$65 or \$75 a month. And out of that you had to pay for your own board and room. But she taught, oh at Rye Grass and Poison Creek, out in Happy Valley, and several other schools.

PAULINE: Now your children weren't born here then?

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D. C.: My youngest sister, Marjorie was born here. Oh yes, in the house now occupied by Evelyn Sitz, the Miller home (940 N. Egan). My father built that house, it was one of the first houses that he built, was the old Miller house, up there, near where the old hospital is, you know, he built that.

PAULINE: What about the Dalton house down here? Did he ---

D. C.: I don't know. I'm sure that he must have worked on that, but I don't recall. I remember this one particularly because I had, I think it is one of the first ones that he either worked on or built. I believe he built it. Because later on, in later years why some of the local artists they painted a picture of that and gave it to my sister, who I think was born there, but I'm not sure. For a while we lived over here where this Assembly of God Church is now (next to the bus depot). It used to be ... But they both lived here for many years until my father had a heart attack. And then he went back to California, that's where they lived for the rest of their lives. And they left here in about 1938 or '39, I would say. He also built and put together the arrowhead collection that is up here in the museum.

He laid it all out; I watched him do that over many, many days. It took, finally put together, to find the different ingredients that were available at that time, so that the arrow-heads would stick to that --- At that time, I don't know whether it is now, I haven't seen it for a long time, but it was a table, it was a pool table.

PAULINE: That's what it looks like.

D. C.: He made all that, and then he made the frame and every-thing. And he made that from a collection of arrowheads that Grover Jameson had, and he --- I was in partners with Grover at the time, and he made this because he just wanted to do something for the firm. And it was put into our office, which at the present time is where this little fabric shop is (525 N. Broadway). And this was back in about 1935, '36, along in there when he built, when he made that. (Note: See the Burns

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Times-Herald, December 15, 1933, page 2, where a news article tells of the Jameson collection being framed by D. P. Jordan. The collection was made up of 25,000 arrowheads, with 600 of the more unusual colored specimens.)

I have been told that since then some of these arrowheads have fallen off, and someone else has put them --- But by father, I watched him over many, many days that he put this together.

PAULINE: That would be --- it's quite a display, it would take a lot of time.

D. C.: Yeah, well he did all of that originally. He did all of the original work on it. It was from that, that they named the Arrowhead Hotel. We put it in there, and Mr. Jameson and I owned the Arrowhead Hotel. And my father, this collection that my father built was used, put in there for a while. And that's how the, it got its name of the Arrowhead Hotel.

PAULINE: Now that's interesting, I didn't know that.

D. C.: That's how it got it --- from this display that he made. I haven't seen the display myself. I, originally it showed, they had a picture of a deer there made out of buckskin, and a picture of an Indian with a bow and arrow. I don't know whether it's still there or not. But he had a good theme back of the whole thing.

PAULINE: Well I remember the Indian; there is an Indian head still.

D. C.: Yeah, well this was an Indian in full standing position with his arrow.

PAULINE: I'll have to go back up and look at ---

D. C.: Well I haven't seen it for quite some time. I know that, perhaps I shouldn't say this, but my sister was quite disturbed when she saw it because she thought at least his name should have been on it, because he is the one that conceived the whole idea.

PAULINE: Well possibly the reason it isn't, is because the person that typed up the card didn't know.

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D. C.: But I don't mean to be cranky about that. But she was concerned because he actually was the instigator for the whole thing. He took these arrowheads out of a box and made it all.

PAULINE: Made it all. Well it is a beautiful display.

D. C.: At one time Mr. Jameson had thought seriously of giving it to the University of Oregon, but why it wasn't done, I don't know. But that was a personal thing. But I'm glad that it is up there.

PAULINE: Oh, I'm glad it stayed here.

D. C.: Yeah. Well now what else would you like to know?

PAULINE: Well I was talking to a lady last spring who had some pictures. And she had a picture of a twin homestead of a house--- the house was occupied, it was built as one house but it was occupied by two families, or two homesteads. Do you know about that?

D. C.: Yeah. The Vandemeers came up here, and my mother came up here from Whittier, as I explained to you a little earlier, and they took up a homestead out in the country. And my Uncle Charlie Bordan took up the adjacent 160 acres, and they built two homes with a porch in between. The line of the two properties went right down the center of this porch, and they called it Twin Center. And it was a stage stop for the stage from Burns to Crane. And they would stop off there on their way to, between the two communities. And they lived out there long enough to prove up on it. And they tried to make a go of it, but in those days it was quite difficult, they ran into a dry year and they simply had to give it up, which was done, and they moved to town. That's when my father stayed ---

PAULINE: Well this would be located then, off the end of Wrights Point, out in that area?

D. C.: Well do you know where the old Fay Oil Well is?

PAULINE: Yeah.

D. C.: Well, the road that goes down to it, you turn and go by the Wood's place.

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PAULINE: Yeah.

D. C.: And you go down to the, where that Fay well is, and you turn to the left. Just as you turn to the left, that first corner there, that was my Uncle Charlie's place. And to the, adjoining that on east was my father's homestead. And that was, that was the road to Crane in those days.

PAULINE: Well I'm glad to have that mystery settled. Because Bessie Duhaime has a picture of the house.

D. C.: Yeah.

PAULINE: And she thought it was your father's, but she wasn't sure, and she couldn't remember for sure just where it was.

D. C.: It is. Well that was it. And if you go out there even now, why the pump, pipe, or the pump is still standing up there. Someone took everything else, you know, like they did. They gathered up all the wire --- but that was what they called, that was their home, and they called it Twin Center because of the way it was constructed. And it was not quite halfway to Crane ... but fairly close to it.

PAULINE: Now what did you say was your uncle's name was again?

D. C.: Charles Bordan.

PAULINE: Charles Bordan.

D. C.: He had been a conductor on the Santa Fe Railroad, and came up here with my father. In fact he married my father's sister Mabel, who passed away here. Her son was drowned here years ago; maybe you remember it, down the river. He just dove in and --- I guess the shock of water --- right across from the .. place. What else would you like to know?

PAULINE: Well just maybe a little bit about your background here. About how long you have been in business in Burns. That would be a good thing to have down.

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D. C.: Well I was born in Whittier, California, and came up here when I was just a baby. I've lived here all my life except for the time that I went to Oregon State, which it took me five years to go through, because I had to stay out and work. But after I graduated from Oregon State in 1931, it was right in the depression there. It was impossible to get a job, so I sold life insurance on the street. That was known as a "curbstoner" in those days. Because you didn't have any place but just --- just work on the street. And I worked at that for a year or two, and then I went into partnership with Grover Jameson, who was giving up the insurance business because conditions were so bad. And he took a job as superintendent of Pacific Livestock Company, and I took over the insurance business, and went from there. So actually I've been in the life insurance business since about 1928, helping put myself through school. So its been about forty years in the business here, in the insurance business, both life and the general line business.

I'll have to call up my wife and ask what year we were married. ... We were married in 1937, in April of 1937. And I should have got the date, the 23rd I guess it is. You better check on that with her. And what else do you want to know? Three children.

PAULINE: That's Carol ---

D. C.: Carol Louise Jordan, graduated from the University of Oregon. She married Thomas Howser. Dan Jordan, who is in the life insurance, general insurance business. And Tom who is in the general insurance business and real estate business. And they're carrying on in place of me, I've retired.

It might be of some interest to know that, I believe that in 1947 or '48, I was one of the original incorporators of the Harney County Fair Association, as a community project. And I was the first secretary of it.

And in 1940 --- well I'd like to go back just a little bit here. When I graduated from school,

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I was elected to be the secretary of the Burns Chamber of Commerce, and I think this was in about 1932. And I was the secretary for 17 years, which would make it 1949. And at that time was the oldest secretary, in terms of service in the State of Oregon. I retired as secretary, and was elected president, and my project was to change it from a local Burns Chamber of Commerce, to a Harney County Chamber of Commerce. So it was my pleasure to be the first president of the Harney County Chamber of Commerce. And I also, that was my project, because I felt that we should broaden our scope. Instead of thinking of Burns as the community, it was our, thinking was to make the county as a community and be more representative of the whole community. So this was --- I was grateful and thankful that I could be the first president of the Harney County Chamber of Commerce.

Well I've taken some interest in civic affairs, but haven't been prominent in any particular thing in years. What else would you like to know?

PAULINE: Well I think that probably about does it. Maybe I should have the names of your brothers and sisters, just for the record.

D. C.: Oh, Kathleen Jordan, who lives in Los Angeles, California. And Marjorie Bickel, B I C K E L, who lives in Atascadero, I can't, I don't know how to spell that.

PAULINE: I'll look it up.

D. C.: Atascadero, California. Kathleen was the older, and Marjorie is the younger child. I can't think of anything, just at the moment. I should have given some thought --- I don't think of anything.

PAULINE: Okay. Well I appreciate you taking time to do this.

D. C.: Well ... Years ago, there was a lady by the name of Mrs. Dodge, she had the Sagebrush Orchestra. And it was quite an organization, and she was quite a musician herself, and a good

music teacher. She conceived the idea of this Sagebrush Orchestra. And she induced my father to make a float, and he did. He made it on the scale of a violin. And there are pictures of this available, different people around town have --- I've seen it before. I think maybe Wally Welcome might have one. It's a picture of a, it is a large violin, and there must be 30 or 40 children on that. And I'm not certain about this, but my recollection is that they either took the children, or the children and the float, I'm not certain, to Portland where it was on display. I can't tell you --- now you might run into some others who might know more about that than I. ... But it was a thing of interest, and quite a piece of workmanship to make that. I can remember seeing it going down the street on the Fourth of July parade, drawn by horses ...

The children were up there playing and providing the music for the celebration. But the Sagebrush Orchestra itself was ...

PAULINE: Well I understand that this was the beginning of the Portland Junior Symphony. Actually ---

D. C.: Yeah, she went to Portland, where she was --- Yeah. Well he had that much to do with it. My sister eventually was the first violinist there with that symphony. She was the first violinist in Portland. She and myself, and I can't remember who the other child was, but the three of us, we toured Eastern Oregon. (Laughter)

In those days it was quite a job to get to Bend. That's the first time I ever remember being outside of Burns. But we went to Bend, and we played over there and put on a concert. And then we went to Redmond, we went to Madras. The head of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, they were having a big celebration up there at that time. And they invited us up there, because there were going to be a lot of white folks, and all the Indian tribes ... And so they invited us up there. So we played up there at the Warm Springs celebration also. Just an experience we had as children.

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PAULINE: Well that would be quite an undertaking. I guess going to Bend in those days was quite a ---

D. C.: Oh yeah, a ten or twelve hour trip, you know. You was winding around through the sagebrush, you know. When they got down to where you could make it in six or seven hours, why you were a speed demon.

PAULINE: Yeah, yeah.

D. C.: Well I can't think at the moment of anything else.

PAULINE: Well I appreciate that. And I'm going to mention this thing about the photographs to the Historical Society. This project ---

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