

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #124 - Sides B

Subject: J. O. "Jinks" Harris

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Interviewer: James Baker

J. O. "JINKS" HARRIS: One of the individuals who lived in Catlow Valley was named L. B. or Bass Haines. He was quite a character and a very peculiar looking fellow. ... He had an extremely large nose, and of course it seemed to slope from the back of his head clear to the point of his nose. And he was a witty old character. One time we were eating down to Spangleburg Ranch, that's where this happened on the --- there was a whole bunch of people at the table. And a fly lit on the end of Bass' nose, and there was a school teacher there sitting across the table from him said, "Mr. Haines, I can't stand it, there's a fly on the end of your nose. It's bothering me, why don't you brush him off?" And he said, "Why don't you brush him off, you're closer to him than I am?"

Another time, this happened at the Home Creek Ranch, I was farming on the Home Creek Ranch at the time. A fellow by the name of Ross Dollarhyde was farming on the Roaring Springs Ranch. He came down to visit me, and we got to looking over our equipment and one thing and another, and we were late for supper. When we came in the cookhouse, the cook fixed us a plate apiece and we sat down at the table. And Bass was still sitting there, he hadn't left yet, the rest of them had all gone. He was sitting there visiting with the cook. We sat down to eat and Bass was sitting immediately on my right, facing across the table from Ross or "Skinny" as we call him, Dollarhyde. And after a while Ross, or Bass reached down in his pocket and pulled out a silver dollar and handed

it across the table to Ross. And he said, "Mr. Dollarhyde, you own this." And he said, "How come I own that?" And he said, "That's the dollar I got one time in a contest for being the homeliest man alive, and up until that time I'd never seen you."

JAMES BAKER: You'll have to describe Ross now, "Skinny".

JINKS: "Skinny" was a tall, slim, probably six foot one, or two, and probably weighed around 165 or 170 pounds. And he had a head about the size of a 6-year-old kid. But he was a peculiar looking fellow. Actually, he was a noted rodeo bull rider, Skinny was, yeah. He had great big teeth, and when he'd laugh, he'd wrinkle up his face and the only thing that showed was the end of his nose and his teeth. Both of those fellows are dead now.

JAMES: What about that story you were mentioning, had to do with keeping your nose out of other people's business?

JINKS: Oh yeah. That was another time with Bass at the Home Creek Ranch at the same table. One of the young guys working there in haying time, kind of smarting off anyway, and he said, "Mr. Haines, how come you got such a big nose?" And he said, "I kept it out of others people's business and give it a chance to grow." Bass had a homestead down in the southwest corner of Catlow Valley, right in the valley itself. He finally sold it to the Company in later years and he had 5 tons of hay that he sold with it. And that hay was plucked by hand, grasses that he had plucked in the summertime and hauled in a wheelbarrow and stacked. Another story about him, a fellow by the name of Lem Kirchwell (sp.?) come riding by there, coming in from the south, coming up to Home Creek, and he stopped to see if Bass had a drink of water. And he said, "Sure I got a drink of water. I'll get you a fresh drink." So he went out to the well, which was out in front of his house, and started letting the sand bucket down the well. And this was the only way he had of getting water out of the well was dipping it with the sand bucket, and

windlassing up with a home-made hand windlass. So, Bass got the water into the sand bucket and started wheeling it up. And old Lem said, "Give me the end of that rope on my horse, and I'll just gallop across the flat here and pull that up in a hurry." So, he started across Catlow Flat there pulling the rope, and finally Bass hollered at him and says, "It's here now, you can get your drink." And he said, "Let it go, I'm closer to Rock Creek Ranch than I am to your place. I'll just get a drink there."

Bass lived there for years, and he used that four inch sand bucket to windlass his water with, and the well was 180 feet deep.

JAMES: Gee! He really went ... to get that, didn't he?

JINKS: He drilled that well by hand.

JAMES: He did? How would he do that?

JINKS: With a spring pull.

JAMES: What's involved in drilling a well with a spring pull?

JINKS: Well, drilling a well with a spring pull it is a very simple operation, it is going to be hard to describe. You take a green pole, probably 30 feet long, and anchor one end over a log so it sets at about a 60-degree angle. Then you run your rope up through a pulley along the pole, anchor your rope at the bottom, and put it on your drill bit. And then you start pulling the rope up and down and the pull starts springing. And actually it is the action of the pull that drills the well.

JAMES: It's a pretty simple machine.

JINKS: It is a real simple machine, and there's been a lot of wells drilled in that country with them out there. You have to kind of learn to do it; you have to keep letting out your rope a little all the time because your drill keeps going down. Of course, this is gauged entirely by the material that you are drilling in.

JAMES: Did you know Tebo?

JINKS: Did I know Tebo? I probably knew him as well as anybody in Harney County.

JAMES: I heard that he could stand up against a wall and he'd ask you to hold on to his ears and pull him away from the wall. What would happen?

JINKS: You couldn't do it.

JAMES: How come?

JINKS: He just had that much strength, I guess, in his whole body. And he was a very skinny Mexican. Probably 6 feet tall, or a little taller, and skinny. Didn't look like he had any strength in his body at all. But he could also take two horseshoes and hold them in his left hand, and there was nobody could spread those shoes. It never was done. He could hold them just by gripping them like that. Of course, they were hard to get a hold of. He had all kinds of tricks; he used to do all kinds of tricks. And no matter, somebody come in with a wild story and they'd sit and tell it for Tebo's benefit. And in a little bit he'd tell them a story that would top theirs, they never did beat him. There used to be some pretty good guys around the ranch there and they'd get together and try to figure up a deal that would beat Tebo in telling a story that evening after supper.

One time a fellow named Mann Bundy and a brother named Frank, and they'd been over to Nicaragua, and he came back and he was telling Tebo, and he said, "You ought to go over into that country and see how fast things grow in the rainy season." He said one time when he was there they cut in with their machetes into a jungle quite a ways, and had to come out for night, and the next day it was growed up so bad they couldn't find their tools. And Tebo says, "I'll tell you what I seen one time myself right down here in a sagebrush field." He said, "There was some people came along there and camped and they had two or three kernels of corn, and got to looking around at that great big 6 foot high sagebrush and thought it was pretty good soil. So they planted the three kernels of corn. And in a week or so, they went out to see if it was sprouted yet, and there

it was, even had ears on it and was clear out of their reach. So he tried to bend them over, but the stalks were so big he couldn't bend them. And so he went back to camp and got an axe and went to chop them down. And he'd chop a gash in them and by the time he could swing for another gash, that one would be grown clear out of reach, and he never did get it chopped down." No matter what you could come up with, Tebo had a better one.

JAMES: He always had a story ready.

JINKS: Oh yeah. They were talking about pulling teams there one time, this used to be quite a deal with draft teams, pulling contests. And Tebo said there on the ranch one time they had a great big young horse, and he was real stout, and he could out-pull a team even. Finally, he said, they hitched him on to a deal that they knew he couldn't pull, and he just pulled and pulled and pulled until he split his hide and walked right out of it. Then they threw some sheep pelts on him to keep him warm, and the next year he sheared 400 pounds of wool. (Laughter)

JAMES: Put it up in those eight-foot sacks.

JINKS: Oh yes, I knew Tebo. I worked with Tebo lots of different times. He was a real good buckaroo, too. He was easy and quiet. And he was honest as any man who worked there. As far as the wild tales go, they were just wild tales. When honesty was involved, with borrowing money or anything like that, you couldn't find a more honest man than Tebo.

JAMES: I heard one time he was up on a ridge somewhere looking in a fog, leading some fellows around trying to get back to the P Ranch, and they couldn't find anything. They couldn't see 10 feet, 15 feet in front of them. And somebody asked Tebo if he was lost, and he said, "No." Said, "Well, then where's the P Ranch?" And he swung his arms around his head and says, "It's over there."

JINKS: It was lost, but he wasn't. Yeah, Tebo was quite a fellow. Of course you've heard about his pet fish?

JAMES: The one that drowned?

JINKS: Yeah, he drowned in the river there; he fell off the footbridge. He had a racehorse he called Barb Wire.

JAMES: Why was that?

JINKS: I don't know, just the name he had for him. He used to run him in races. I don't think Barb Wire ever won a first; he won a few seconds and thirds. But he used to race him here and over around Sisters. They've always had a racing deal over there. He'd ride old Barb Wire across country, a big white horse, and he'd enter him in races. In his later years, Barb Wire kept him broke. Of course he had money as long as he lived, he was guaranteed an income, but it wasn't a very big one. And Barb Wire kept him broke. He got too old on him, but he wouldn't give up. That's kind of a habit that racehorse men have.

JAMES: I never heard any stories about how strong Tebo was.

JINKS: Tebo was a real strong person. I don't know where his strength came from, he was the most deceiving person you ever saw, I don't know where it came from. He just had it, that's all, in his hands and in his wrists. We've got a, I don't know where it is, we've got a picture of him someplace, sitting down in a chair, and my sister standing my him, she was about this high, and she was peeling an apple with a table knife.

JAMES: Did anybody try and peel apples and see who could get the longest peel?

JINKS: Not in this country, there wasn't that many apples. That's a deal for a party, same a hanging one up and seeing who can get the biggest bite without knocking it down, and not use your hands. Did you ever try that?

JAMES: No, I've never tried it.

JINKS: Well I have, lots of times. It's pretty hard to even get a bite.

JAMES: Yeah, slips right off. Did Tebo ever take an egg in his hand and try and crack the shell and then give another egg to somebody?

JINKS: Not that I know of.

JAMES: That's another trick. You can't crack an egg if you don't, if it is absolutely flat in your hand. You can't crack it like this. You can do it like that, but that key ---

JINKS: Of course you can stand one up on the point too.

JAMES: How do you do that?

JINKS: Just tap it on the table.

JAMES: Oh!

JINKS: Yeah, this is an old, old story, you know. They were talking about things that could be done, and things that couldn't be done and the visions that people had, even Christopher Columbus. Finally a fellow took an egg and says, "Stand that up on the little end," and they all tried it and they couldn't do it. And finally they decided it couldn't be done, and he just reached out and tapped it a little as they set it up there. And of course it broke in and just set right there. See how easy it can be done when you know how.

JAMES: Was Tebo a particularly good roper?

JINKS: No, he was just common. There were some outstanding ropers in that bunch, but Tebo, Chapo, and Chico, and some of those fellows were just ordinary, just common. Chino was exceptionally good, and Juan Redon was the best.

JAMES: Juan Redon. I've heard someone talking about how well he could rope.

JINKS: He was the best known, not only here but in California and every place. And he used about an 80 or 90-foot rope, and he used it all.

JAMES: He used it all. That's really a trick.

JINKS: Yeah. I watched a fellow last spring and he used a 76-foot rope, and he was

using about 50 or 60 feet of it. He never did use it all. But of course there is no occasion to use a rope that long now in the way they do their roping. Juan Redon was absolutely the best. Back in 1908 when this Game Commission in Oregon wanted to bring some re-stocking game into the state from Yellowstone Park, those elk, they took Juan Redon from here up there to rope those elk. That's the way they caught them. He told me himself that the first cast, the first loop he threw, he caught two elk running close together, you know. Yeah, he roped those elk and they brought them down here in 1908. And they planted them at Billy Meadows up here in 1908. Later on they made another planting but that is the origin of the elk herd that we have in Northeastern Oregon now. So he was that good that they would pay him and take him clear up there.

And he was an illiterate man, too. In fact, all those Mexicans were. Chapo couldn't read or write, and Chino couldn't either. Well they could write their names, that's all you know, they learned to write something and call it their name anyway.

JAMES: Yeah. People would recognize it that way.

JINKS: Oh, yes.

JAMES: Did many of those Mexicans have families up here, or were they all bachelors?

JINKS: Well they were all bachelors when they came here. One or two of them got married after they were here. Chino was married, but he never did have any kids. Chapo was married; he and his wife never had any kids. That's the only two that I can think of that was married. Tebo was never married. Chico was never married. He didn't stay here, he went back. Then there was a nephew to Chino named Augustine Gilbert, and he was never married. JAMES: I've heard the name.

JINKS: He was the last one to stay here, or leave here.

JAMES: I see.

JINKS: He stayed longer than any of them. After Chino died and his ranch kind of --- well



his, I mean --- not Chino's but --- what did I say?

JAMES: Chapo?

JINKS: No, Augustine.

JAMES: Oh, Augustine Gilbert. Yeah, you were talking he was the last man to leave.

JINKS: Yeah, he had a homestead up there and he tried to develop water on it, and the development didn't turn out, so he just pulled out and left. That last I heard of him, he was down in California. And I was told since that he died down there.

JAMES: Oh, so there is nobody, there is no Mexicans that ---

JINKS: There are none of the Mexicans left in that group, none of them. There is a Mexican woman here in town, but she came from over the mountain on the other side, and came out of the Mexican colony down there, and she is the only one left. She has a couple of sons, but they don't live here. She is the only one left here of that group of Mexicans. She must be over 70 years old. But she is still here and she still works.

JAMES: Can you remember her name?

JINKS: Oh yeah, her name was Belle Oleachea.

JAMES: Belle Oleachea. Doesn't sound Spanish to me at all.

JINKS: Oh yeah. It isn't Spanish, it is Mexican. Well of course, Mexican is Spanish. But her husband's name was Bedell Oleachea. He was drowned in Catlow Valley, right out there in the middle of that desert in one of those sand pit lakes. His horse got him down and drowned him.

JAMES: Were you born in this area?

JINKS: No, I was born in Montrose, Colorado.

JAMES: What were your folks doing there, mining?

JINKS: No, raising cattle.

JAMES: Raising cattle.

JINKS: Yeah.

JAMES: Where were they before that?

JINKS: They were in Colorado and Mexico. My mother came from Nebraska --- wasn't it Nebraska --- Iowa, yeah someplace back there.

JAMES: Yeah, back in the Midwest. What was your dad looking for when he moved from Colorado to Eastern Oregon?

JINKS: Well like I've told you before, I've never figured that out. I don't know.

JAMES: Was that one of the questions I asked you before?

JINKS: Yeah. For the life of me I don't know why anybody would leave the country where he was, and come out into this place.

JAMES: Was that particularly rich out there?

JINKS: No, but it was a good, he had a good operation. And he sold out, of course. It's just one of those things. See my mother's step-dad was already living here, and he wrote to them and told them what a wonderful country this was, and all this sort of thing, and so they came out here. They got here in the early part of August of 1908, and I was born that same year in Montrose, Colorado. So I'm not an Oregonian, not by about 8 months.

He came here and, of course, they came to Ontario, the end of the railroad. And they shipped their own wagon and horses; they had a split-car of horses and machinery. He brought his pet horses; of course, both the workhorses and the rest were saddle horses. When they got here they assembled those wagons, or that wagon, and hitched the horses on to it and came on down to The Narrows with the wagon. And my oldest brother rode some of the saddle horse and drove the others along, you know. I think he had either 10 or 12 head.

So he came here, and the first thing he done was, of course they put up at my mother's folks place for a while until he could look around a little bit. And he bought a

hotel, and dance hall, and saloon in The Narrows. And right away he sold the hotel and dance hall, and he kept the saloon for quite a while, and sold it. And during the time that he owned the saloon, he also bought another house where we lived, and he had bought some cattle. And he'd also bought a squatter's right on the Refuge out there.

And then when he sold the saloon he bought more cattle. Then he began to devote his entire efforts, of course, to raising cattle and making a living out of them, which he did. And also to breed up the stock, improve it, upgrade it. The stock was real, real common in this country for years. I can remember real common cattle. Of course now it has some of the best, but that was a long time ago that I'm talking about, 1910-1912.

See Judd Wise worked for my dad in 1914. You've been talking to him, he and Judy were married, and the first job they had was working for my dad in 1914.

JAMES: Yeah, we talked about a week or so ago. He's getting along pretty well.

JINKS: But he went over to Hereford, Oregon over here and bought some bulls, paid \$100 a head for them. And I was along, and we drove those bulls from Hereford, Oregon to The Narrows. It took several days too. You know where Hereford is?

JAMES: Quite a ways.

JINKS: Over in Northeastern Oregon. That was the first registered stock that was in Southeastern Oregon. From that we developed the best bunch of cattle down there, and we used to get a little more money for our cattle than our neighbors did, and they kind of resented it. But ---

JAMES: What kind of prices did your dad get?

JINKS: Well I can remember one year, especially, this is getting along later in 1918 or somewhere along there, when he got \$32 a head when the rest of them got \$30. Nothing was sold by the pound; there was no scales in this country. Everything was sold by the head. We had just bigger and better stock, that's all. Where he came from they raised

good stock.

JAMES: That's what he wanted to do.

JINKS: Sure. He couldn't be satisfied with this common stuff, this grade.

JAMES: You were mentioning something about ropers, came to your mind.

JINKS: When you were talking about ropers in this country, we always seemed to confine our remarks to the Mexicans, because they were the ones that really brought the thing into the country. They worked for outfits that had lots of cattle, and they roped a lot and there wasn't any occasion to rope unless you had a lot of cattle, you know. But it is kind of a lost art, this roping. And actually when you are talking about good ropers, Judd Wise was one of the best, he was real good. And Joe Fine.

JAMES: And they say his dad was a good roper.

JINKS: Yeah, they talk about ... and Joe Fine being a good roper. And neither one of them could out-rope Judd by any means. Buck Miller ---

JAMES: I talked to Buck about a week or so ago.

JINKS: He's one of the very best.

JAMES: I saw a couple of bridles that he was braiding, beautiful things out of rawhide.

JINKS: Oh yes, I've seen lots of them. He used to braid rawhide riatas too, but he can't any more, can't pull strong enough. There's a lot of those fellows, they learned from the Mexicans, now there's no question about it.

JAMES: No question.

JINKS: They learned from the Mexicans. But ---

JAMES: How would you go about, if you wanted to preserve that art on tape, or with pictures, or with drawings or something, how would you go about it?

JINKS: I don't know. I know how to do it; I don't know how to describe it. I've got a picture out there of where I was roping.

JAMES: Maybe you can just describe that picture to me.

JINKS: That's a poorest picture, and I'm ashamed of it, in fact. This honda this loop.

JAMES: That big loop, yeah.

JINKS: No, this is --- well they call it a big loop, but it's not really a big loop. A big loop would drag through ... your horse here.

JAMES: Oh, I see.

JINKS: But this honda is supposed to be halfway down your loop, and they kept a hollering at me to hurry up and I just made a quick honda. See that's a 60-foot rawhide riata that I'm using right there.

JAMES: What's the honda?

JINKS: This right here, the eye.

JAMES: The eye. It hooks around back.

JINKS: Your rope goes through it like this. I've got some more pictures of me roping, over at Joe's. There was some of them better than I, that's for sure. But ---

JAMES: But you could rope with the best of them?

JINKS: I kept up my end of it all right.

JAMES: What would be the most spectacular thing you could do, if you were roping cattle? Would it be the distance, or the number of cattle you got, what would be the ---

JINKS: Well, the distance and the ease in which you can get them without disturbing your herd.

JAMES: That would be important.

JINKS: That's what you try to accomplish, pull these things out and not interrupt the whole herd. This was important in those days, because you branded outside, there was no fences and no corrals. The distance that you could throw a loop and the control you had of the loop after you threw it. I don't know, it is really hard to describe.

JAMES: Yeah. Well maybe I can think of ---

JINKS: You don't throw a rope, you cast it. It is more of a casting action than it is a throwing action. These team ropers, they throw a rope because they're ---

They say that everything could happen in The Narrows, and usually did. ... One time in the spring, a nice warm, bright, sunny day, the 50-buckaroo outfit was moving about 1,000 or 1,500 head of cattle from the Double O to the Sod House. And, of course, they had to come right down through The Narrows, right down through the lane. They had them strung out for about two miles. And there was a man in the lead and a ... rider with them. And once in a while two, and then there was two or three guys bringing up the drag. Everything was going lovely. We were up on the hill watching them. Everything was going just as well as it could go and the cattle were walking good.

And then for some unknown reason there was a bull that just turned out of the bunch, walked through a yard gate and right up the walkway and into the front room of a house where an invalid woman lived. And she saw him coming, the front door was open, a nice warm spring day. But she saw him coming, and she was afraid he was going to come into the house, so she just slid her chair into the kitchen and locked the door, shut the door between the kitchen and the front room. And that left the bull in the front room all by himself.

Two of the riders got off their horses and were going to get him out of there, and he put them out. There was another little old Mexican buckaroo named Chapo come riding up. He was on the drag, and he come riding up and he says, "What's the matter, boys?" And they told him they had a bull in the front room of that lady's house. So he rode up there and looked in, and got off his horse and looked in, and tightened up his cinch a little, and got back on his horse and took down his rope, and within two or three casts he threw and caught the bull around the head. He wasn't able to pull him, of course, he wasn't able

to drag him, but he was able to hold him.

And then these, those two buckaroos went around the house and in the back kitchen door, and out through the front room door, and in behind the bull and with prods prodded him out into the yard. He broke thorough the floor in four or five places. So they just got him out into the yard, and outside the yard, and they cut out about 20 head of cattle and left them there in the field adjacent to the house where the bull was, and he went off with the cows, of course, and then went on.

And after talking to the lady for a little bit, the next day there was two men and wagon with some lumber, came from the Sod House to rebuild her floor. They put in a new floor for her, and fixed her house all up as good as it was, or better than it was before, actually.

And old Chapo and another guy came down and gathered up the cows, and rounded up the bull, and took him on with them with no trouble at all. But nobody knows to this day what would cause a bull like that to walk into an open door of a house.

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