

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #135 - Side A - (No Tape)

Subject: Stella Barnes

Place:

Date:

Interviewer: James Baker

JAMES BAKER: You were talking about growing up the south side of the area, and you came from parents --- your parents were ranchers?

STELLA BARNES: Do you want their name? George D. Hagey and Flora Hagey.

JAMES: Do you know why they moved from the Salem area?

STELLA: Well, you see, they come here to get land, was the main thing they come here for.

JAMES: To homestead the land?

STELLA: Yes, but we never did. We never homesteaded.

JAMES: Why was this land particularly ---

STELLA: Well there was just lots of it, and open, you know. People came here from everywhere to take up land.

JAMES: Well it was hard to live on it ---

STELLA: Oh, yeah. I don't know how we lived, but we got along all right, some way or another.

JAMES: Your folks were ranchers here, and I guess it would be good to know what time of year you came down from Polk County.

STELLA: It must have been in the spring. I don't know any dates or anything, but it was in the spring of the year. I'm quite sure of that.

JAMES: Did you come down in a buckboard?

STELLA: We come with --- it was horse and buggy days, you know, come in wagons.

JAMES: And then took up land in this county, but you didn't homestead.

STELLA: No, we never homesteaded.

JAMES: Inez told me to be sure and ask you about the first winter.

STELLA: Well it was a terrible bad one, I'll tell you. We had cracks like that in the little old cabins. Talk about cold! Oh, my! I know my mother had a lot of canned fruit and stuff, and I remember her saying if she had known enough to have dug a hole and buried them, but she didn't know that. Just let them all burst, you know. Couldn't keep anything, it was too cold.

JAMES: They decided to stay here ---

STELLA: Oh yes, never did leave here. My daddy was 84 when he passed, and Mother was 81. And always stayed right here.

JAMES: Do you have family?

STELLA: Just one boy I had, and he's a pilot. And he had his 25 years in, two years ago, and he said, "Mother, I come right out of high school in the service. I've got no trade. Got no, nothing

--- what would I do," he said? So he re-enlisted again. Now they've sent him overseas for a year. He does the same work there that he did here. He picks the boys from the ground for pilots, and he is an instructor. And he told me in his last letter, he said he had an air conditioned room and office. And airplanes just come in there by the hundreds to be repaired. And he says, "They are sure keeping me busy. A year will pass awful fast, Mother, don't worry." So I'm not worrying about him. Of course, you can't keep from thinking about him.

JAMES: Does he come up here much?

STELLA: No, he just went. He's been there about a month --- for a year.

JAMES: He must have grown up in this area and went to high school here?

STELLA: Yes, that's right.

JAMES: When you were --- quite a number of years ago --- when you were a young girl, do you remember any of the stores in this area?

STELLA: Well all the stores there was here for a long time was Brown's, the old Brown building. About the only store here for years.

JAMES: What did he sell?

STELLA: He had all kinds of clothing and stuff like that, you know, wearing material. And there was another store started up, that was Lunaburg and Dalton. They were pioneers here, you know. They had groceries and things like that. Began to get things like that in here, you know.

JAMES: Do you remember some of the people you would see when you went into the Brown Store? Who would you see on a day when you went into Brown's?

STELLA: That's kind of hard to think about. Hard to think who you would see. That's the trouble with me; I don't remember dates and names like I should, you know, like I used to could. Getting too old for that.

JAMES: Well let's try it another way. There's lots to talk about. Do you remember anything that you liked to talk about when you went to the store? What did people talk about when they went to the store? A lot of people now-a-days don't talk about very much when they go to the store, they just go in and ---

STELLA: I know my dad and I were just alike, you know, we knew everybody. But Mother was the other way; she couldn't meet strangers. I know I went to Berkeley, California and they put twenty of us women on the doors to let the boys go in the service, you know, and I'd take Mother down to the store with me of evenings, and when she

came back, she'd say, "Who was this, and who was that you were talking to? And I'd say, "I don't know, Mother." She says, "I don't know how you do that. I wish I was like you." She couldn't talk to strangers at all, you know. But I never met a stranger.

JAMES: That's a nice thing to say.

STELLA: I know my daddy used to tell me when I was quite small, "Don't let an Indian, Nigger, Chinaman, or anybody overdo you. Speak to everybody." So I just grew up like that. Never seen any strangers.

JAMES: I would like to know some of the things people talked about in stores.

STELLA: Well sir, that's just beyond me. Just ordinary life they talked about, and wonder how they was going to make it, and how they were going to live. That's about as far as I can remember.

JAMES: That was probably enough.

STELLA: Yes, that's right.

JAMES: Do you remember some of the things that your mother used to cook, and that later you used to cook --- when things were pretty rugged, when there wasn't much food around?

STELLA: Things we used to cook? No, I know she was quite a person to figure out things, you know. So I just don't remember. Seems to me like we always had all we wanted. We never went hungry. That's about all I remember.

JAMES: Does anybody do anything with sagebrush or juniper? Can you cook with it at all?

STELLA: Not very much.

JAMES: Is it just a seasoning?

STELLA: They used to use sagebrush though, just for wood, you know. They have, did a lot of that here. But that's been quite a while back.

JAMES: Well I was also kind of curious about dances. Can you describe a dance at a Grange Hall or some big hall? Can you recall for me what went on at a dance?

STELLA: Just old-time music, and old time waltzes, and things like that. Of course now, these younger people don't know what you're talking about when you talk about this old time dancing and stuff, you know.

JAMES: Now the dances, you mean, are dances in a line, and you don't cross your feet on them ---

STELLA: That's right.

JAMES: What would be a band --- how many people would be playing music --- a guitar or what?

STELLA: Usually just a couple. Violins they played mostly.

JAMES: Violins --- well those are the kinds of things that I'm interested in, about the kinds of things people normally don't ---

STELLA: Don't have any more.

JAMES: Do you remember if there was --- would musicians be people who worked as ranch hands, or would they be people who came in from out of town?

STELLA: They would be mostly ranch hands, for a long time, before anybody was able to hire anybody to come in. Didn't have any money to hire anything, you know. How we got along is what I wonder sometimes. But we did.

JAMES: Is there anything about this country, the land out here that you really like?

STELLA: You mean the farms?

JAMES: Yes, is there something that if you went away to the big city, or if you went away to another part of the country for a while, that you'd think back on and say, "Gee, I miss the space, or the juniper, or miss the weather?"

STELLA: You know, down this Hanley Lane, well that's where we --- when I was just a

child, you know, my folks bought a ranch down that Hanley Lane. And we would, in the spring of the year it was mud everywhere, no roads, no grades, no nothing. And we'd come to town on a Saturday, and it would be one man come along with a horse and lasso rope and pull us out. We'd get stuck all the way to town and all the way home. He'd have to pull us out, you know. And I've always remembered that country down in there as something very special, that's where I grew up. Called the Hanley Lane, no roads, no grades, no nothing. We just struck out through that mud. We'd get stuck all the way, and this man with the horse would pull us out.

JAMES: Do you remember any ranch hands or any men who did work around, that particularly stick in your mind as memorable people?

STELLA: It's been so long, you know, since I've thought of those things. 85 years is a long time ago. I never thought anything about it, you know.

JAMES: What would be interesting for people to know about? What would be a --- as I come in as an outsider, what would be interesting from your experience in this land that --
- were there important events in your life in this part of the country when you think back?

STELLA: Well I think some of the other people I been telling you about could tell you a lot of that stuff that I can't. Ella Luckey ought to be able to tell you a lot, if she just would. I think she would. She's kind of interested in them things, I think. I think she would be very good. I can remember when she got married --- just to give you a little idea about her. She married a man that used to just beat her up, you know, get drunk and beat her up. And the first week she got married, she got scared of him and went out in the country and hid in the haystacks. Nobody found her for a whole week. And she lived with that man all these years. He just died a couple of years ago. He used to beat her up, pull her hair out. She'd have to run to the neighbors in the night for protection. So she's went through a lot. She sure has.

JAMES: Was there much conflict that you can remember between the people who were in the sheep business, and the people who were in cattle business?

STELLA: I think that come on a little later. There was a lot of trouble, but a little later I think than ---

JAMES: The only thing I know about has to do with Peter French. Apparently was a sheep man who involved in the conflict there. Would the conflict be over cutting down the fences, using the land? Would it be personalities that they wouldn't get along because of their different ways of life?

STELLA: I think it would be more than that cutting down the fences and things.

JAMES: Do you remember any sheep ranchers?

STELLA: No, I can't tell the names. I just don't remember. Clarence Young should have a lot of that in the book he's writing.

JAMES: Was he a cattleman or a sheep man?

STELLA: He's just about --- I think he's quite a little bit younger than me. He never was on the ranch, I don't think. But he knows, his father was, he knows it that way. And I think he'll have a very good book that he's writing.

JAMES: I'd like to see that.

STELLA: I think he'd let you have it. I'm pretty sure he would. He's just doing it because nobody else ever would, I think. I think he'd be very good.

JAMES: From what I've read out of the books, it seems like the cattle and sheep were important parts of the history of this country. And another part that seems to be important is the coming of the railroad. I guess that had a big impact. Do you remember anything about that?

STELLA: You mean when the railroad came in here?

JAMES: I don't mean the date of anything, --- just how it affected you. Did it change life

around here much?

STELLA: No, not too much, I don't think.

JAMES: Can you think of something that really changed life here?

STELLA: Well, you know, when this sawmill came in here, all these old timers didn't like it, you know. They figured it was the worst thing in the world for the country. If it hadn't come in here, I don't know what people would have done. But that's the way they thought it would be. Thought it was the ruination of us.

JAMES: I'm glad to know that, because nobody's really talked much about the ---

STELLA: Well there's a lot of old timers here yet thinks that mill has damaged the country.

JAMES: What is it they say against it?

STELLA: Well, I don't know, just been here too long without anything, you know. Without anything to bother them. They figure they'd be bad, but I would think by this time they'd know better. But I expect there's a lot of them yet just hangs right on to it. Wouldn't be surprised.

JAMES: Probably brought a lot of money into the area.

STELLA: Why, sure, that's right. Well this here Cecil Bennett ought to tell you a lot, too. He'd be very good, I think.

JAMES: What kind of activity --- was he a cattleman?

STELLA: I think his father ahead of him was. He knew a lot about it from that.

JAMES: Probably worked on his dad's ranch?

STELLA: I think he'd be very good. He'd know a lot of things for you.

JAMES: Did you travel much out of Harney County?

STELLA: No, just simply never. I know there was an old man died here a few years ago - - his name was Bradeen. He used to take me around and we'd go places, you know.

And he'd say, "What in the world --- where have you been all your life? What did the men folks do that didn't take you around?" I said, "Just work, work, work. Never thought about running around anywhere."

JAMES: What were the kinds of things you were working at?

STELLA: I used to be my dad's boy. I always went out with him, and Mother would hire somebody to help her cook. And I'd mow the hay, and rake, and drive the pull-up team, and all stuff like that. I was my daddy's boy.

JAMES: You had life then as a ranch hand for a while?

STELLA: That's right.

JAMES: Do you think it was pretty unusual for a daughter to work like that?

STELLA: It was at that time.

JAMES: What did most of the girls do? Did they just stay home with mother and do the house --- which would probably be a lot of work anyway?

STELLA: That's right. That's very true.

JAMES: What parts of the county did your parents live in? I mean, where have you lived in this county?

STELLA: I've always been just here in Burns.

JAMES: Your parents came to Burns, and you've been here since?

STELLA: I've been away several times, two and three years at a time. But I always come back.

JAMES: Why did you come back?

STELLA: I don't know. Just something about it.

JAMES: Is it the people or ---

STELLA: I think it's the people. The people here are very friendly and sociable, that is the old timers. Of course, there's so many new ones in here now that it's a lot different.

But still the old pioneers, there's a lot of them hear about me being up here, you know. I've been here two years the 24th of November. And they think, you know, that I can't get out. And they'll come here to see me. Some of them I haven't seen for two years, three years. I have to ask them who they are, you know. But they don't forget me, they come see me. That's the old pioneer stuff, you know. Once you're a pioneer, you never come out of it. Real old pioneers.

JAMES: Well, it's been a really wonderful experience for me to meet some of the people. Where did you go when you left for those periods?

STELLA: Just like going to Bend and different places. We got so we'd venture out and go to Portland for a while. That was a big city then. I didn't like it. I never have wanted to live in a city, so I never liked it. I'd rather be in the big wide-open spaces. That's my life.

JAMES: Well, you know, I think a lot of Portlanders probably agree with you. I'm sure a lot more are coming out here to see the Malheur Bird Refuge and relax a little bit out in this part of the country.

STELLA: That's right.

JAMES: I'm really partly concerned about how people out here have used the land, and what the land has meant to them. And a few times you've talked about the open spaces, and the kind of people that move out here and live here. And I wonder what it is about this part of the country that makes it so attractive to people to live out here, even though they really have to suffer ---- they have to work hard?

STELLA: Well there's lots of them that come, you know, that just got broke into it, you know, just by degrees. And there's a lot of them old pioneers here now that did that. Been here all their lives.

JAMES: They were born and raised here?

STELLA: That's right. A lot of them don't know anything else yet, you know.

JAMES: They buy most of their things in town? They don't to go Bend?

STELLA: They used to, they had to. We'd go every winter, every fall, you know, and get enough supplies for a year. Haul them in here with four, and six, and eight, and ten horses and a wagon.

JAMES: What would you buy?

STELLA: Just all kinds of canned stuff and everything that would keep, and dried stuff like beans, and all kinds of stuff like that. Get enough for a year. For years there was no stores here, you know. That's the only way we had to live was to go out and bring it in.

JAMES: Did you buy clothes?

STELLA: Yeah, everything.

JAMES: Or did people make clothes very much?

STELLA: Not then. They finally got so they got to getting these spinning wheels and make cloth and things. Gradually did that.

JAMES: I would think that the buying would be a really important time, when people went to Bend to buy that.

STELLA: Oh, yes it was.

JAMES: Were there any celebrations about that time?

STELLA: It didn't take them long to start in, have a celebration. We used to go for miles to celebrate.

JAMES: Special occasions?

STELLA: Yes, that's right. We think of them old times now and these times they have now, they have now, they aren't the old pioneer times. We don't enjoy them like we did those.

JAMES: You mean it's not as much fun now?

STELLA: Oh, no.

JAMES: What was --- did they have parades then, or was it the dances, what was the most exciting kind of celebration?

STELLA: I can't think of anything. It took a long time before we could have parades, I know that.

JAMES: I guess most of the celebrations then would be where there would be dancing, and where there would be food, drinking, parties?

STELLA: That's right.

JAMES: Everybody would make their own fun?

STELLA: That's right.

JAMES: Well I wonder if there is anything that I have overlooked. I don't think I have asked very good questions. I've shot in the dark pretty blindly, and I've --- what do you think? What would you like people to know about the pioneer --- what do you think is important about the pioneer past? Something that is lost and should be recaptured, or something important about ---

STELLA: They have pioneer programs, picnics here every spring, you know, in June.

JAMES: I want to ask a question about --- what is important to preserve about the old days --- something special?

STELLA: You know there was lots of killings going on a long time ago. And some of them men, like Clarence Young, can tell you about that.

JAMES: So it's not all good things?

STELLA: He could tell you about that. I'm sure he would.

JAMES: You know, sometimes it's hard to get people, particularly with a tape recorder going, it's hard to get people to talk about that sort of thing, and I don't know how much luck I'm going to have. But I think that would be important to learn about too. The killings would have to do with personal feuds, or what?

STELLA: Uh huh. Clarence Young, I'm sure, could tell you a lot about that.

JAMES: I'll talk to him about it. I think I'll ask one more question and then wrap it up and give you a chance to relax a little bit. I know this must be a pretty strange experience. How has the land changed the most, as you remember it?

STELLA: Well now when we bought --- see we bought this place --- I think Mother give \$500 for it, a place down the Hanley Lane. And finally she sold it to the Hotchkiss's for \$3,000 and they still own that. He's --- one of the boys is County Judge here, Newton Hotchkiss. And that's the way it just gradually come up--- got higher and higher and higher. Just by degrees, I'd call it. I don't know what else you'd say.

JAMES: People are paying more and more for the land?

STELLA: That's right, and still are.

JAMES: Well I think we'll wrap it up, and thank you very much for

STELLA: Well I'm sure them names I've given you, that will help you.

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