

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #13 Sides A/B

Subject: Ed Koeneman

Place: Dog Mountain

Date: Spring 1973

Interviewer: Marcus Haines

MARCUS HAINES: Well Ed, you just told me you came from Washington when you were three months old. I suppose your dad moved down here and homesteaded this place where you live now.

ED KOENEMAN: Yeah, my dad homesteaded this place in June 1907. I was born in Snohomish, Washington, but my folks moved to Payette, Idaho first. They had a small ranch over there, but they got run out of there because that land he had all had alkali. And at the same time he was broke and he had to find someplace, some cheap land. And so he wound up here in Burns, and the land locator brought him out and showed him this property where we're at now, the old Koeneman homestead. And so he went back to Idaho and packed everything on his old wagon and tied the old milk cow on the back and come to Harney County. I was three months old at that time.

MARCUS: Well you came from Idaho to here then?

ED: Yes.

MARCUS: I see.

ED: Mother and Dad were married up in Washington, and they run that other place over at Payette first.

MARCUS: Yeah, there's plenty of alkali around over there in that country all right. You

bet.

ED: But later I think they washed that land out, and I was over there a few years ago and the same land that Dad had has got a big crop of alfalfa on it. They washed the alkali out of there.

MARCUS: Yeah, if they got water enough and drainage they can reclaim the land. I've noticed, and you have too, where the brick plant used to be there at Vale, just beyond Vale, it's an alkali son-of-a-gun settled in there, and they've leveled that and reclaimed it, and then they raised dandy crops there now. They just keep working up towards the Devine Hill there all the time with that reclamation. You can see their drainage ditches, they're putting their dragline, in fact maybe 20 feet deep, and there's a little stream of water running in the bottom of it. If they can get the drainage down why they can wash the alkali down and get rid of it. But if they can't, well then you got something else again.

Well Ed, at the time that your folks came in here they were having pretty good seasons.

ED: Yeah, we were getting more rainfall, Marcus. I'd say at least 20 inches of precipitation a year.

MARCUS: Yeah.

ED: Because we could raise wheat, and later years couldn't raise wheat at all, because it's --- You could raise rye by summer fallowing it, you could raise rye, get a crop. But it's just getting dryer and dryer. At one time there was --- at the time I started to school here, there was practically a family on every 160 acres of this country. And to look at it now, you'd never think it was farmed, because the sagebrush has taken over again. But that's how the whole country was all cleared, and people were making a living. Of course they

did it the hard way.

MARCUS: There wasn't any other way to do it. You bet.

ED: There wasn't any rocking chair money.

MARCUS: No, you bet. No rocking chair money, and no modern way of doing it. It was mostly handwork, wasn't it?

ED: Well some, most of these guys would work out and the family would hold down on --- Someone had to live on the homestead, I think it was nine months out of the year in order to qualify to prove up on it. Well, the man would go out and work wherever he could. Work at the Island Ranch, or over at the Double O during the haying season. And in the wintertime, they cut posts and sell them, and cut wood. And there was a lot of juniper at that time up on Dog Mountain. Most all the posts that are around, over there around the Island Ranch came off of Dog Mountain.

MARCUS: Yes, I'll bet they did.

ED: So people would work. Of course they only got a dollar, probably a dollar a day, but that was a dollar a day. There was no income tax to pay, and taxes were cheap. And they got by the best way they could.

MARCUS: Well, Ed, how many acres did your dad take up here in the homestead, you got 320, would it be?

ED: Well no, you could only file on 160 first, Marcus. But then later, after you proved up on your first, on your original, then you could take an additional within a certain radius of the farm, so Dad took another 160 additional up on the hill. It didn't join ours; my uncle had 320 acres between them, between Dads's original and his additional.

MARCUS: Oh, you had an uncle here? Your father's or mother's brother?

ED: My mother's brother, his name was Frank Klitzke. He was from Snohomish.

MARCUS: Klitzke?

ED: Klitzke, K L I T Z K E.

MARCUS: I never heard of him before.

ED: He took his, adjoining ours up north. And he also took up an additional which gives him 320. He got disgusted with this country and he left here in about 1917, I guess it was.

MARCUS: When did your folks leave out here, at the time of your father's death? Your mother moved in, in 1923 and sent you kids to school.

ED: Yeah, that's right.

MARCUS: And that your father stayed out here, didn't he?

ED: Well, we had a little bunch of cattle there and he didn't want to turn loose of them, you know. And he couldn't stand town life anyway.

MARCUS: No.

ED: And so in order for us to go to school, my brother and I were in high school, my sister was going to public school, I believe, Dad built a little house in Burns and we moved to Burns. On weekends, we'd come out and give him a hand. But, let's see, in about 1937, Dad's health went bad and he had a stroke. So we sold the cattle and the horses and rented the place.

MARCUS: That was about the --- well he wasn't ---

ED: He died in 1942.

MARCUS: He went through some pretty tough droughts there then while he was here?

ED: Oh, you bet.

MARCUS: You're darn right. Through those early '30's, along with the drought and the

depression there to.

ED: Well the army worms in 1919, you remember when they hit this country in 19 ---?

MARCUS: Yes, I do.

ED: We put in; we cut three acres of rye hay that year, that's all that was left when they got through.

MARCUS: Ed, it was along about that time in the late teens that this drought actually begin to take hold, wasn't it?

ED: Yes.

MARCUS: Up until about that time we had pretty darn good years. I can remember people telling about it.

Well then getting back, Ed, to the people who homesteaded in this country here. The schoolhouse was around this side, on the south side of Wright's Point, three miles or four miles, such a matter, Lyle Hill bought the old building and moved it in for a shop over there at his place. But I understand that the Sunset precinct at one time was the biggest voting precinct in Harney County, with the exception of Burns.

ED: Yes, yes.

MARCUS: And that's where they voted was at that schoolhouse, I think.

ED: Well they took in, they took in this precinct and also Weaver Springs, they had a school there and one here at Dog Mountain. All these people went to Sunset to vote. That's why they gave us a big, they had a big ...

MARCUS: There was a schoolhouse right directly below us here, from the Newell house I remember.

ED: ... the corner of Dad's place there.

MARCUS: Yes. I don't recall what happened to it? Who got it?

ED: Hughet, Bob Hughet bought, moved it up someplace and built a machine shed, or barn or something like that. And then just got it finished and it burnt down.

MARCUS: Well.

ED: The old foundation is still there, the old rock foundation.

MARCUS: Well talking, you were telling me here earlier, Ed, about hunting geese and ducks down here where you, well it would just be high greasewood now and sand dunes. You'd think there'd never been a drop of water in there during its recent history. That would be just east of the present highway down here, close to the Weaver Springs junction?

ED: Yeah. Well, it was a little bit south of that, Marcus. I'd say about a half a mile south. We drove down there. ... The Burns-Narrows road used to go along there, although there was quite a jog in the road.

MARCUS: Yes. The old Berry Corner, we called it, was where the road turned back towards Dog Mountain. There must have been a reason for that.

ED: It was water.

MARCUS: The Lake would come out in there, didn't it? You bet.

ED: The spring water would come clear up to the present highway between Burns and The Narrows. So they stayed closer to Dog Mountain, a mile or so, so they could just skirt the edge.

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: I tell people this, they don't believe it.

MARCUS: And that's where you did your duck hunting?

ED: Yes, just east of the Berry Corner down there. Charlie Berry was a county surveyor at that time, and they there. We left the car there and walked a half a mile east and Dad and his friends started shooting there and we brought home a whole carload of ducks and geese.

MARCUS: And then something else now. I can, I tell people and they look at me like I've got a hole in my head, just your hunting experiences here. But when I was a kid we'd leave The Narrows with a team and buggy and we wouldn't be out of sight of a house all the way to Burns.

ED: That's right.

MARCUS: And there was a livery stable and a hotel at the foot of Wright's Point on the south side, and I've stayed there, and you probably have too.

ED: That's right. I'm trying to recall those people's names. MARCUS: Tomlins.

ED: Tomlins, that's right.

MARCUS: Yes, Tomlins was their name.

ED: That's right. But the reason for that is if you pulled up to there, you had that damned grade to face.

MARCUS: You bet.

ED: You wanted a fresh team that was in pretty good shape, they've got the first pull up that hill, because it was really steep.

MARCUS: Yeah, and then when you got to the Model-T stage, then you wanted somebody to help you push just before you got out on top.

ED: I know when Dad bought his first Model-T, if you didn't have that damned tank clear full of gasoline you wound up backing up the grade ---

MARCUS: Right.

ED: --- in order to have gas in the carburetor. I've backed up that several times.

MARCUS: You bet.

ED: Dad always kept a can of gas sitting around just to top that old tank off before he started for Burns, just in order to make that hill.

MARCUS: But then Ed, along --- now we moved out here, we'll say, well the spring of 1923, and these folks are pretty well gone. We moved out on the Charlie Needham place out here near Weaver Springs. And he had leased the Ringer place and the Vanburger place, and two or three more there and put them all into rye. And 1923 was a good year. And we had a tremendous crop of rye out there; we cut it with the headers.

ED: That's right.

MARCUS: But these folks are gone.

ED: Yep, that's right.

MARCUS: And they, probably this siege of armyworms that you had in 1919 finished off a lot of people, didn't they?

ED: Well between the jackrabbits and the armyworms, 1919 and 1920 were real tough years. In fact, we hauled hay from The Narrows in order to get through the winters. We bought hay from Jim Henderson. We bought hay, wild hay from Jim Henderson and we hauled it up here, it was an endless job. In the wintertime you could only haul about a ton.

MARCUS: You bet, you bet.

ED: It was just all a team of horses could do to pull it through the snow. We didn't have a bobsled, some guys did. But we were poor people, we only had a wagon. Yeah, they

were pretty tough times.

MARCUS: But I imagine along in 1914, '15 there was probably the peak of the ---

ED: I believe it was 1914, or 1915, Marcus. This is hard to believe, but Dad had about a 15 or 20 acre patch of wheat down there and it went 45 bushels to the acre. And from then on it ---of course everything was right, we had good, we mostly had snow and a good runoff, and then we got some early June, we got a tremendous rain. Seemed to me it rained for a week there.

MARCUS: Well it used to, you know.

ED: You could depend on it.

MARCUS: Get June rains.

ED: At that time you could depend on a June, or late May or June good rain.

MARCUS: That's the key to production in Harney County, is those late rains.

ED: That's right.

MARCUS: You bet.

ED: You get some at the right time, you've got rain.

MARCUS: You can look back over your weather records and maybe this year its had 15 inches of precip, but maybe you'll find that you had a better growing year, that you only got 10 sometime. But it's just when it comes.

ED: That's right.

MARCUS: Like on the mountains here on both sides, a good snow packs, but it turns off dry and no storm to bring this snow out and it just isn't running at all. The water is all gone in the Burns country here, and unless they had above normal snow pack, and a lot of snow up there yet. But in talking to a fellow the other day he told me that it just isn't

running off. It just runs out there, a good stream of water coming from this snow bank; it just goes out there and disappears. It doesn't come on out. That's on account of the lack of moisture here to ... things up.

NOTE: This conversation in the spring of 1973 preceded one of the driest years in Harney County since 1934.

MARCUS: Well, we're up here in front of the old Newell house, Ed, so why don't we talk a little bit about it. I think you probably know the history of this Newell house better than anybody in the country. And I, ... attempted to get it together, but I think you're the best source we can have. You lived right here in the shade of the house here ever since you can remember, and knew the family well.

ED: Well, this house was started before my folks came to this country, Marcus. It was in the process of being built, I think. They didn't just build it in 30 or 60 days like they build houses now.

MARCUS: No, they couldn't.

ED: A lot of this rock that you see in this --- now some of it was brought from, south of The Narrows. Then they had a little rock portion north of the old house here where they got this gray rock.

MARCUS: Yes, I wondered where it came from. I recognized the yellow.

ED: They got a pit right up here north of here, oh maybe a quarter of a mile. That's where the gray rock came from. Of course they, you notice that some --- in the back part is mostly lava rock which they just picked up here on the ground.

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: The man that built this, the stonemason, his name was Charlie Backus. That was his

trade; he was a stonemason by trade.

MARCUS: You bet; I knew Charlie well. I always enjoyed Charlie. He always had one saying about --- you know he liked his beer. Charlie said, "Too much beer, just right."

(Laughter)

ED: That sounds like Charlie.

MARCUS: Doesn't that sound like Charlie? You bet.

ED: Charlie told me one time he could have built this house in a lot less time, but to get the boys to haul the rocks was sometimes a problem.

MARCUS: I'll bet.

ED: If they could do it a horseback, he'd have had lots of rocks, but they didn't like the idea of pulling it ...

MARCUS: Well now by golly, it's quite a trick to haul this yellow rock from south of The Narrows there. It must be 12, 15 miles, isn't it from here?

ED: Well the trouble was, Marcus, you see they just picked it up raw down there, and bring it up here and he'd cut it on a table. He'd chip it with a chisel and a little axe. And they'd lose fifty percent of the rocks.

MARCUS: Sure they would. You bet.

ED: You'll notice that a lot of this rock isn't all-square. Some of it is six cornered, and especially on these window openings. You'll notice the different angles that that rock is cut.

MARCUS: Yes, you bet. It's a design all of its own here. Now I think this building is about 50 feet square, Ed.

ED: I don't know what the dimensions are.

MARCUS: Well I think I stepped it here when I was here this spring. I was kind of curious to know about it. But we'll go in there pretty quick, and I want to talk to you a little bit about some of the rooms here.

ED: You'll notice the rock on the windowsills there, Marcus. At one time that was all in one piece clear across those windowsills. And the vandals have taken axes and sledge hammers and broke them all up.

MARCUS: Yes, they're all out on this side here, yeah.

ED: It's a shame, because the weather hasn't affected it very much.

MARCUS: No, gosh no.

ED: It really weathered good. But its --- I don't know why people like to break up something like this.

MARCUS: Well Ed, about what year would you say this was built, or completed? It probably wasn't built in a year for that matter, was it, now that we mention it here.

ED: It was a period of 10 or 12 years.

MARCUS: Oh, it was that long?

ED: Yes, they got it in shape so they could live in it, and then they just kept adding, or finishing and adding to it until you, it's what you see now. I think, of course, I was only small then, but it looked to me like it was completed when --- that I can remember.

MARCUS: The first time you remember it?

ED: But I think it was started in the late 1900's. But these people were already here and established. They didn't run many cattle. They had a wonderful herd of horses though, and horses were worth money, you know.

MARCUS: That was their business was running horses, wasn't it?

ED: Yes. Dad bought a horse from them, an unbroken horse, and he paid \$150 for it.

MARCUS: That was a lot of money in those days.

ED: And he was so damn wild it took all summer to tame him down so you could hook him up to something. But they did have wonderful horses. In World War I they sold a lot of horses to the Cavalry, the United States Cavalry. That was the --- They gathered up everything, everything that would qualify they got a good piece of money for. But then after, why the price of horses just dropped off to just practically nothing. People were getting, buying tractors.

MARCUS: Well Ed, let's --- can you establish fairly --- when they finally left here? They were gone in 1923 when we came out here.

ED: Oh yes, they left here; they must have left here --- well right after World War I. I'd say in about 19 --- I think Buck Newell was, he hung out here tougher than any of them. But he finally left, I think, about that time.

MARCUS: He used to work for my mother, and it would be long about that time too. He was married to Rose Crowley, and then they had a ---

ED: They lived at Lawen, didn't they Marcus?

MARCUS: They were over in that --- yeah back this way, west of Lawen there a little ways. And then they had a daughter named Vera.

ED: That's right.

MARCUS: And she was just 2 or 3 years old when she was around there.

ED: I saw Rose a couple of years ago at the Old Timer's picnic.

MARCUS: Yes, I did too, and Vera was with her.

ED: Yes.

MARCUS: Yes, in fact I've got a picture of them. But, yeah I think the house, Ed, as I recall in 1923, was vacant.

ED: Yes, but there were some people after that that lived here, Marcus.

MARCUS: Yes, I see that there is paper on the wall in there that's dated 1938.

ED: Yes. And there's some people came here from Idaho with the idea of raising turkeys. And it only took them one season to find out that they either had to be in the coyote business, or the turkey business, but they couldn't be in both.

MARCUS: Both of them wouldn't work, huh?

ED: They went out of the turkey business pretty fast. They finally got discouraged and they left. They had some plans to buy the place, thought it would be dry and ideal for turkeys. And lots of grasshoppers to feed them with. And if it hadn't been for the coyotes, I think they could have made it. But it was a failure. Their name was Jones, Sam and John Jones.

MARCUS: Oh, no relation to the Jones out below us here then?

ED: No, huh uh.

MARCUS: Well now that family of Joneses lived here at one time, did they?

ED: Who is that?

MARCUS: Lawrence and ---

ED: Oh yeah.

MARCUS: --- Teddy, didn't they?

ED: Oh yeah, right where they were living was their dad's homestead down there, you can see it right down there in the flat. They're still living there.

MARCUS: They lived in this house at one time though?

ED: No.

MARCUS: They never did?

ED: No, Lawrence bought this on delinquent taxes one time, but he didn't live here. He lived at our place-adjoining see, there. He lived over there. Here is quite a water problem because you notice the spring is down there 300-400 feet below the house. And if they lived here they'd have to carry the water, or else they'd have to put in a pumping system. They had a well here by the back door of the kitchen with a windmill on it for years, but it barely, if they were careful they could get enough water to run the kitchen, and that was all. And most of the time they carried water. Ben Newell and Molly Newell carried many thousands of gallons of water from this spring up to this house.

MARCUS: By gosh that's quite a trip.

ED: It's all up hill.

MARCUS: You'd go a little easy with the bath water, wouldn't you?

ED: Yeah, Ben said, "I wish this spring was on the upper side of the house, I'd carry water downhill and empty buckets ..."

MARCUS: Ed, name the family for me. I've been asked that by people, and I didn't know them well enough to tell them.

ED: I may not get them in order.

MARCUS: Well, that doesn't matter so much.

ED: I'll start out with the oldest gir, her name was Dolly.

MARCUS: Dolly Newell.

ED: She married a man by the name of Julius Chandler. And Julius was a good worker, in fact he helped Charlie on this rockwork, he didn't have anything else to do. He was

kind of a hay contractor; he put up hay over in the Double O country. In fact, one summer my mother done the cooking over there and Dad run the hay crew for Julius Chandler. Now that was Dolly. And then there was Manny and Todd. I'm not sure which one was the older ... But they also homesteaded north of here about two and a half miles east, she had a homestead up there. Then there was Buck and Rack.

MARCUS: Rack, I'd forgotten about him.

ED: He married the --- you remember the Kendall's that used to be related to the Joneses, you know. Mrs. Kendall was Mr. Jones' sister.

MARCUS: I didn't know that, but I remember where they lived.

ED: No, Mr. Kendall was a brother to Mrs. Jones.

MARCUS: That's the way it ---

ED: I almost got that ... Rack married their daughter Blanche. Now getting back to the Newells, then there was, the younger boy was named Ben. And Molly was the youngest daughter. And they had another daughter, and they called her, what was her name, I want to say Tina but that's not right. Anyway, we called her Sis, every-body called her Sis. She was a very happy go lucky girl. She married a, do you remember Newton, do you remember Frank Newton?

MARCUS: You bet.

ED: He was a schoolteacher.

MARCUS: Bill Newton was a brother.

ED: There was two brothers, there was Frank and Bill.

MARCUS: Yes, Bill lived just south of The Narrows there.

ED: Bill taught school at The Narrows for years and years.

MARCUS: I graduated from the eighth grade under Bill.

ED: Well Frank taught this school down here, one year. And a year or two later he and Sis got married. And whatever happened to them I don't know, I've lost track of them. I've never run into anybody that could give me any information.

MARCUS: Well I think the last time I heard of Frank Newton, through Bill would be, he was over around the ... country in Eastern Oregon.

ED: So that makes a family of eight children, Marcus. Five boys and three girls.

MARCUS: Now the father was a one-armed man, is that right?

ED: Yes, he was. A well educated man.

MARCUS: He was the school superintendent for Harney County here at one time.

ED: I'm not sure whether he was the first or second.

MARCUS: Second one, I think.

ED: Second one.

MARCUS: I've got the dates at home; I'll put them in this tape. I should have picked them up today, but I forgot my tape. Hank Slater got them for me.

ED: I can't recall the first man. Maybe you know.

MARCUS: No, no I don't.

ED: Well anyway, he was school superintendent there for years. At the same time he had already filed a homestead right on this place. And during a vacation and so forth he'd come out here and fence it, and put this homestead in shape in order to live here. And later, after that, he worked also in the newspaper, setting type and so forth. In fact, I guess he was editor. Then later the Griffins took over the paper, Mary Griffin and her husband. They worked in the ---

MARCUS: What paper would that have been?

ED: It was called the Harney County News.

MARCUS: Harney County News, yes there is a Harney County, I know that.

ED: Yeah, that's as far as I know. If it had another name, I don't recall it. Dad used to, subscribed to it all the time. It was a weekly, and we always looked forward to getting it because it was about the only source of news you could collect.

MARCUS: Right, you didn't have the radio or a telephone.

ED: Unless you met someone on the road, why that was the biggest way of finding, getting the news, somebody traveling through. In the paper, was really ---

MARCUS: You really waited for the paper, didn't you?

ED: It was really expensive; I think it cost a dollar a year.

MARCUS: Oh, all of that.

ED: I ought to tell Hinshaw that.

MARCUS: You bet. Well, Ed, the family then, they spent a lot of time in Burns, until they got this place --- until this was ---

ED: Yeah, the first year, yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah, when they first came they were in Burns, and then later ---

ED: Most of them all were going to school at that time, see the older ones.

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: Until they came out here. Now Buck, and Rack, and Sis, and Molly, and Ben all went to school down here on the corner. Buck and Rack were eighth graders at that time; they went out there one year. And I think Sis went two or three years. And Molly and I were just about the same age at that time. I've kind of lost track of all of them except a nephew,

one of Manny's, either Manny's boy or Todd's boy came through and stopped, and we had quite a bull session. He told me that, I believe it's Manny, works for BLM over at Vale.

MARCUS: Oh, he does?

ED: He's in the BLM office at Vale. Every time I've gone through there its either been a holiday or too late to contact him, and I've never been able to get a hold of him.

MARCUS: Well he'd be darn near ready for retirement, wouldn't he Ed?

ED: Way past retirement, that's for sure.

MARCUS: Well yes.

ED: Maybe he's only an advisor or something. Maybe he doesn't have a regular office, maybe he's just one the --- He knew so much about this country and the sagebrush, and the coyotes ... Maybe he's just an advisor, or on the board or something. But he has something to do with the BLM program, so he told me. ... old man Charlie Newell's grandson.

MARCUS: Oh, his grandson, oh I see.

ED: Of the old Charlie.

MARCUS: Oh I see. I thought he was one of the boys.

ED: Mr. Newell was a scout for the United States Army in Montana and that's where, I understand that he lost that arm was in the Indian skirmish, battle up there.

MARCUS: I was going to mention that to you, I thought maybe he might have lost it in the Civil War. He could have been ... to that too.

ED: Well he could have been.

MARCUS: Well, I mean I was just guessing there. But being a scout, he could have lost it

that way too, you bet.

ED: He was a powerful man. He lost his right arm; of course he was forced then to use his left arm. But he could chop more wood with that left hand than an ordinary man could in a long day's chopping, he could cut that much in two hours. I never saw a man could swing an axe --- he didn't just take a short cut on the handle, he got right out on the end of that handle and you wanted to stand back because the chips would really fly.

MARCUS: Holy smokes. Got a fellow by the neck he could really ---

ED: Really go.

MARCUS: You bet.

ED: Mrs. Newell was a very versatile person in this neighborhood. Anytime there was anybody sick in the neighborhood, why you could depend on Mrs. Newell to help them out. She was right there to help. A very charming person. Well let's go in the house.

MARCUS: Yeah, we'll go in and we'll talk about the house a little bit here. I'll shut the tape off until we get in there.

We're standing here in front of the old Newell house. I have some pictures, Ed, taken here and around, so let's --- I'll just, I can use this tape with these pictures here. The thing that bothers me is these two rooms here on the end when you get in them they are partitioned off. In order to get in either one of these rooms, you came out on the porch and went in. And then you get to looking in the ceiling and the roof and there's no sign of a stovepipe hole. And I'm wondering how they heated these rooms.

ED: They had only one chimney that connected the front room there in the kitchen, Marcus.

MARCUS: That's all I can see. I was going to mention that to you.

ED: They had a big old heating stove there in the front room, and it took up so much room that in the summertime they'd set it out. And then in the fall, they'd set it back in there. And that's the only source of heat in that whole house, was that one chimney there next to the kitchen. One stovepipe served both purposes. Now you see these two rooms you spoke about Marcus, this one on the left here was the old man's, what they called the parlor.

MARCUS: Oh, the parlor.

ED: Unless you were special guests you didn't get in there. The old man had a lot of Indian relics in there, bows and arrows, and a wonderful display of arrowheads. And that room was completely wall-to-wall with, just lined with old, old time stuff like that. And the one on the right was his library, he had thousands of books. At one time all those walls were lined with bookshelves, and any subject you wanted to look up why you could find it in that library. I'm sure it was a better library than any in the country at that time.

MARCUS: That accounts then for the two rooms being more or less isolated from the rest of the house, doesn't it?

ED: That's right, yeah. He didn't call it his library, he called it his study.

MARCUS: His study, uh huh.

ED: When he wanted to get away from all the noise and everything, why he'd go in there and lock himself up and take out a book. He was well versed on any subject you wanted to talk about. Why you could say he was an authority on it, a well-educated man, well educated. I don't know where he got his schooling, but if he got it the hard way, why he sure did a good job of it.

MARCUS: It stayed with him anyway.

ED: Right.

MARCUS: Well Charlie Backus, on down, he had probably some of the old buildings in the old country in mind when he built this house.

ED: Yes, I'm sure he did, Marcus, yes. But he said he kind of designed this on some castle in Germany.

MARCUS: I suspected that.

ED: He said it was a miniature reproduction, you might say, of that. He said the one he copied from was, covered acres, but he said he was afraid that it would take him too long to make one that big so he cut it down a little. He said it was supposed to resemble a castle in Germany.

MARCUS: Well getting back to the front of the house, you know, the rooms that Ed has just mentioned are separated by a porch that is probably twelve feet wide. And you come out of; I imagine the living room, Ed, out onto the porch here.

ED: Yes, you'll notice there is three doors, one to each side room there and then one to the main floor.

MARCUS: And then you came out on the porch, and then you went into these two rooms from this porch. That would be from the outside. There's no inside entrance to these rooms, and I can understand why now that Ed has told me the history of the place here.

ED: You notice those two windows on each side of the door there, Marcus, and the door was leaded colored glass at one time, all of it.

MARCUS: Holy smokes.

ED: In fact there wasn't enough clear glass in that door, I don't believe, to look out. In order to look out you had to open the door.

MARCUS: Had to open the door. (Laughter)

ED: But it was beautiful.

MARCUS: I'll bet it was.

ED: Greens and blues and yellows, and it was all leaded glass. And where it came from, I don't know.

MARCUS: And the two windows too, Ed?

ED: And the two windows.

MARCUS: Kind of a matching set then, in other words.

ED: Yes. I don't know where they had those made, but it was a beautiful job. You noticed they've all disappeared, you can't even find a piece of the glass.

MARCUS: No, I'll bet you can't, gosh no.

ED: Well shall we go inside, Marcus?

MARCUS: Yeah, you bet, we'll go on in.

ED: Better take it easy, this floor is pretty...

MARCUS: Besides a fellow might run on to a rattlesnake here too, wouldn't he?

ED: ...

MARCUS: There is a little of it laying there, right out on the porch.

ED: All pieces, but people have picked up the larger chunks, I'm sure. Yeah, you better be careful, you might walk through this old floor ---

MARCUS: Well this, Ed, was the living room then?

ED: This long room, yes. You'll notice there on the north side there's a little wainscoting left on there.

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: I don't know whether everybody would know what wainscoting is; because I'm sure it's not used much more nowadays. It was made of wood, looked like high-grade flooring, and stained or painted.

MARCUS: That's about a good four feet, isn't it?

ED: Yes, about four feet high. That went clear around this room, all the way around. And above that was papered. You can still see some of the old paper hanging here on the wall.

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: Now, this is one of the bedrooms here on our right, Marcus. I think this was the girl's room, as I remember it. And this other room here with a border paintings on it, you'll notice there are small diamond shapes, or half diamond shapes.

MARCUS: Yes, I saw that.

ED: This was the master bedroom, and they had, I used to marvel

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ED: This was the master bedroom, and they had, I used to marvel at the furniture they had in here, it was real nice, dressers, and easy chairs, and a beautiful bed, a big double bed. And this was the master bedroom.

MARCUS: Now this master bedroom is in the northeast corner of the house, isn't it?

ED: Yes, you'll notice it has two windows in it, see?

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: The girl's room only had one.

MARCUS: Well, Ed, now these walls here are over a foot thick, aren't they, and then these bedrooms here, this has been plastered. Is that true with all the outside walls? It probably is?

ED: Most of the --- no, I think that this one was the only one was --- these two bedrooms and the parlor and the library I think were ... were plastered. They used a lime, and I don't know whether they had cement in those days or not, do you?

MARCUS: Yes, I think they did, they had something.

ED: They had something to hold it together.

MARCUS: It stayed together anyway, hasn't it? You bet.

ED: Yes, pretty good shape. It was ... and plastered right over the stone, except around the window framing. These walls must be 16, 17 inches thick, aren't they?

MARCUS: Well yes, they must --- they're well over a foot. You can see right here on this -- I would guess 18 inches probably, Ed. Now this I suppose was the kitchen here on the northwest corner of the house?

ED: Yes, it was ... You notice the old stovepipe hole up there. ... They had the stove sitting out here, quite a ways out into the room here. And the stovepipe ... connected up with the stove in the kitchen. There was a great big old, great big old iron stove.

MARCUS: Probably an old, Old Comfort, huh?

ED: Now you see this other hole cut here, that was done later by somebody else, to get heat into that bedroom on that side.

MARCUS: Now that was a bedroom in there then. There was three bedrooms in the house.

ED: Just ... boys.

MARCUS: Well, Ed, tell me about the attic or the upstairs here. We've got a stairway.

ED: It was never completely finished, Marcus.

MARCUS: I wondered about that. I looked at these 2 x 6's, these ceiling joists, and I couldn't see any nail holes in them, like there had been a flooring laid on them, or somebody had taken it out.

ED: Well, on the east side up there, facing the east there, Marcus, it was floored over, but it never was sealed in, see.

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: And a couple of the boys kept that for their --- they did have a bed up there. I think in the summertime when it wasn't too cold why some of the boys slept up there. And when they had company, why somebody had to sleep up there in order to have enough room. I understand they had quite a family of their own.

MARCUS: You bet. Gosh eight kids, they had to put them someplace, didn't they?

ED: Yes. The kids probably sacrificed their bed and went up there in the attic. It was partially floored on that side, I'm sure. Now you notice the ceiling is completely gone on this, and I don't know what, but I think it was just this ceiling, a good deal like this flooring here, see, was nailed up there and then papered over.

MARCUS: Probably.

ED: This was a beautiful room when they lived here. They had pictures, paintings that they brought with them when they ...

MARCUS: You know this is quite a roof structure here too. The engineers would probably tell you that the way Charlie Backus put this roof on here nearly 70 years ago, that it wouldn't stand. But here the shingles on the north side are in pretty good shape yet, not

to mention the 2 x 4 rafters.

ED: I think one reason that those, some of those shingles are left, or a good part of them are left, Marcus, is because on the pitch of the roof, you know, it's very steep.

MARCUS: Right, oh golly, yeah.

ED: And it didn't hold any moisture. As soon as the snow went off why it dried off, and I'm sure that helped preserve it. Speaking about the building of that, with 2 x 4's and everything, you notice how straight up and down those are? There's very few of them come loose.

MARCUS: Right, it's well constructed.

ED: It's built like a bridge.

MARCUS: You bet.

ED: The cross bracing is perfect, and it really has taken the storms, wind. You notice the vandals have pulled some shingles off so they could use the crosspieces there; the shingles are nailed to, as a ladder so they could get up on the roof.

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: For what reason, I don't know. Because you can see quite a bit of this building right from the front door.

MARCUS: See enough without getting on top of this roof. Besides if you ever missed a step up there, you'd be on the flat of your back here on the ground before you knew what happened.

ED: At least you'd have slivers ...

MARCUS: You sure would.

ED: This was one of the showplaces, for a long time, in this part of the country. I don't

think there's a house constructed and set on such a nice view spot where you could look clear across the valley. You could look clear over there to Jack Mountain, The Narrows, the Steens Mountain. You can't hardly see the Double O because this point sticks out there, but you can look right over to Harney Lake, Mud Lake. It's a beautiful building site. I'm sure he spent a lot of time picking out just exactly where to built this house.

MARCUS: Yes. Well I think we've got this pretty well described. Ed, so shall we drive on around to the oil well now?

ED: Have you ever been down to the spring?

MARCUS: Well I've been there, yeah let's go down and we'll talk a little bit about that. I'd forgotten about that.

ED: If you have time.

MARCUS: Well we've got --- that's all we've got is time.

ED: Okay.

MARCUS: You bet.

ED: The day is yours.

MARCUS: Ed, we see quite a few junipers growing around here. Have you seen much of a change in these trees during your lifetime here?

ED: Well you see this tree right down in front of us, Marcus, I'd say four or five hundred feet, just kind of to the left of us down there, that lonely one?

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: When my folks came to this country Mother told me that the first week or ten days they pitched their tent by this little tree. And so in 1942, no, in 1942, 1943 when Louise and I came back from Panama, Mother said, "Are you going over to Burns?" And I said,

"Yes." She said, "Well I'd like to go."

MARCUS: She was living in Portland at the time.

ED: She was living in Portland at the time. So we brought her with us, and we drove down there to the old homestead and looked around. The Jones boys were living there then. And she said, "I'd like to go up to the old Newell house." Said, "Okay, let's go." The road passes right near this tree and she says, "Why Ed, that tree hasn't grown two feet since I saw it the first time." And I said, "Oh Mother, your eyesight is getting bad." And she says, "No, you just watch it from now on, out here in this country." And that tree, I'll say is practically the same size as when I saw it for the first time. So it really takes a long time for a juniper tree to grow.

MARCUS: Yes, well she knew the tree, and you've known the tree for over 60 years then. You bet, yes.

ED: It's grown, it may have grown two or three feet in height in that time, but that's all, I'm sure.

MARCUS: Well we'll slip on down to the spring here now. We're up here at the spring, Ed, we're down at the spring I should say, below the house here a couple of hundred yards. And I see there's a tunnel driven back into the hill. What's the purpose of that?

ED: Well in order to get as much water collected --- that goes back there and then it, there's a "Y" in it. Goes back there about 60 feet and then branches off, to drain as much area as they could. You notice that's kind of a conglomerate sandstone ...

MARCUS: Yes, yes I've seen that.

ED: There's a air hole there at the top there for ventilation. I imagine they put it --- or else to get daylight in there while they were digging. It could have served two purposes. If

you'll notice you can still see the old pick marks in that wall, of that hole there. At one time this --- when I was a boy, there was about an inch and a half stream of water run out of this all the time. There were some troughs here where they could water their horses, a few cows, and also water for their house. And it was a, dry years, it just kept diminishing until you see what it is now, barely a trickle coming out from under there.

MARCUS: Well, Ed, what has bothered me a little bit here, how they got next to this water supply here.

ED: Yes, well Mr. Newell said when he came up here and looked at this place that there was a lot of sagebrush here. The damn sagebrush was 7 and 8 feet tall, and grass was really something around this area. So he just dug a kind of post hole down just below us here, and the next morning it was full of water, so he just started tunneling from there, and they just kept going up hill here and keeping on it just about a grade, see more or less a level grade. And they got in there, and the farther they went the more water they got. And when they got there in the back why they had plenty of water for their needs. And in those days the drilling machines were not very good, or not very --- couldn't go very deep, so he figured well this is a good place to build his home. A natural spring, just what he needed.

MARCUS: I think I'd have built down here a little closer to the spring if I'd have had to pack the water though, wouldn't you?

ED: Yeah, I would too. I think he was looking at the view site more than he was the water.

MARCUS: And all those boys, those boys he had too, probably.

ED: Maybe he thought he could keep the boys busy carrying water; they wouldn't get into so damn much meanness.

MARCUS: Right. Now did this go dry during the, will this go dry during the dry years?

ED: No, its never gone dry, it's never gone completely dry.

MARCUS: Never seen it dry.

ED: It's always, always runs a trickle of water out here. Did you see the little pond there where the birds come in to drink, and the deer come here, what few there is left here, come here and get water. Now also, you see right over here southwest of us, Marcus is a dam.

MARCUS: Yes, I saw that last spring up here. I hadn't seen it before, I didn't remember it anyway.

ED: Many times in the good years I've seen the water right up to the --- of course they had an overflow, didn't they, to take care of the, in case it got high. But I've seen it right up to the edge of that many times.

MARCUS: In the wash down here where the road crosses, that runs a lot of water at times. It drains a lot of country back up in here, doesn't it?

ED: Yeah. A few years ago, well quite a few years ago, the old wooden flume there rotted away and that left an opening and we got a big runoff, and it completely cut a hole through it. Since then there hasn't been any water in it. But behind that dam was all clear at one time; there wasn't a brush in there. I imagine the water kept it killed off.

MARCUS: Well that should have raised excellent crops right down in it, by the looks of the big brush and all this. This should be good producing ground, Ed,

ED: They raised a lot of rye hay here, Marcus. When they lived here they had some wonderful crops.

MARCUS: Well now the barn and corrals were just down below us here, is that right? It

looks like the remainder of a barn and corrals maybe.

ED: Yeah, the water troughs were down there by the corral there, where the horses could come in to it to water there.

MARCUS: Now this undoubtedly was made for a catch pan here for water sometime?

ED: This was done later.

MARCUS: I assume probably it was.

ED: I would say that this little basin here in front of us, not over 15 years old. This was done with a bulldozer. You can see the piles of dirt here. But then when the Newells lived here this pond wasn't here, I mean this basin wasn't here. There was a pipeline went directly over the hill.

MARCUS: On down ---

ED: ... catch. And then they had a little ... basin here at the bottom where they got water for the house, it ran in there. And then any overflow, well then it went down to the corral.

MARCUS: Oh, they got a little, they had to start a little bit lower down on the hill from where we are standing now here at the mouth of the tunnel. He made it as tough as he could for those little kids, I guess.

ED: Yeah. Well he enjoyed working, and I guess he wanted the boys to get in on it.

MARCUS: He enjoyed making them work, probably.

ED: They were good cowboys. They didn't mind doing anything they could do a horseback.

MARCUS: Yeah, if they could do it horseback. I imagine they packed most of the water on horseback didn't they?

ED: ... handy on that.

MARCUS: I think you told me one time about one of the boys came in from The Narrows that was pretty well loaded, and had a bottle of whiskey or two with him. And you met him and visited with him ---

ED: That was my dad and I. We were cutting brush down there, Marcus. You want a comment on it?

MARCUS: Sure, you bet.

ED: Well I don't know whether it was Manny or Todd, but Todd had been down to The Narrows to a dance on Saturday night. And this was Sunday afternoon when he came back through. And Dad was grubbing brush out there south of the house, and I was burning for him, burning the brush. And he come along and he said, my dad's name was Ed too, Edward, but everybody called him Ed. Said, "Ed, would you like a drink?" And Dad says, "Sure," he says, "it's warm and I'm thirsty, I could stand a drink." And Manny was kinda rocking around in the saddle, you know, hadn't completely sobered up. Maybe he'd been hitting that bottle a little bit coming home. Anyway, Dad didn't take a drink, just pulled the cork out of it and held it along side of his leg and run the whiskey down the mattock (a mattock is a tool for grubbing brush) handle. And he poured it out, I imagine the bottle was about half full, and Manny handed it to him. And Dad left him just one good drink, put the cork back in and handed it to Manny and he rode away. Dad thanked him for the drink. And later he told a neighbor down here, Mr. Huffman, he said, "If you ever get a bottle of whiskey don't ever give it to that Koeneman, because he can really suck her dry."

MARCUS: He's really a drinking man.

ED: He's a drinking man. And Dad said that he never offered him another drink after that.

He ... of his whiskey to get Koeneman to ...

MARCUS: Well let's go on around to the oil well now.

ED: Well, all right.

MARCUS: We're up here at the site of the old, what I spoke of as the Dog Mountain Oil Well, Ed. Why don't you sit down on this well casing here ---

ED: I'll take a chance.

MARCUS: Yeah, if you fall in there why I'll tell them where you went anyway. So why don't you give us the history on this.

ED: Well this started in about 1912 or '13. I remember they were moving in the equipment by our homestead there the same day that my sister was born. She was born right there in the old house. They were going by then, and there were four or five big teams hauling casing and material for building the tower, and all that. We thought it would never end. But these teams were about a mile apart, and they just kept a stringing along there all afternoon. They hauled the lumber for their tent camp, and drilling tools. And after that it was a never-ending process. Every few days they would be hauling more material up here. Everybody was excited, because everyone was going to get rich on the oil that flowed out of this well.

MARCUS: I'll bet.

ED: And the first superintendent, his name was, a great big fat man, must have weighed about 300 pounds. And he had a great big fat bulldog too. I was scared to death of that damn bulldog. Oh, he was fierce --- anyone could pet him, he wasn't vicious at all. That dog was half as big as a man, I think, an English bulldog with the broken nose, you know.

MARCUS: They'd scare you to death whether they tried to get you or not.

ED: That's right, just looking at you would scare you.

MARCUS: You bet.

ED: But anyway, he was the first superintendent of the works, you know, what was called the Oregon Oil and Gas Company Project. And then everybody that had a few dollars couldn't stand still till they had some of the stock, even before they got squatted in. And the neighbors all give them a hand, and a lot of this lumber was just, dimension lumber, you know, rough. And it took thousands of feet of it to build this derrick.

MARCUS: I'll bet it did.

ED: All the carpenters around, anybody that had a hammer and a saw could get a job butchering timber here. Putting up frames for the tents, and they built a barn for an old team of horses so they could haul the fuel. They burned sagebrush in this boiler that was their source of fuel. Sagebrush and some juniper that they could haul, cut sagebrush, to keep her a going. And Mr. Jones down here, Lawrence and Ted's dad, he, as I recall he was one of the chief carpenters on the job. He, at least they had all the blueprints, and he would mark off the lumber, and this guy ... wood butcher, you get on her and cut them all on an angle, you know. And gosh you cut them 2 x 12's, you know, on an angle it took one hell of a lot of elbow grease.

MARCUS: You bet, and they had to be cut right too.

ED: And they had to match them. And that old tower was, anyway you wanted to look at it, it was perfect. It just had a perfect taper to it.

MARCUS: How high was it, Ed?

ED: Well we was speaking about that a while ago. I'm sure it was 85, but then when you mentioned 105, I'm not so sure that you aren't right. But I went up on it a time or two, and

I know it was quite a haul to go up that old ladder that was on the side.

MARCUS: Well Charlie Backus used to tell me quite a little bit about the Dog Mountain Oil Well. I had been to it once here in 1923, and it was closed down then. And I was always curious about it, and back in the early 1930's, mid '30's I worked with Charlie Backus quite a little bit, and he told me about --- He was a driller here at one time, wasn't he?

ED: Yeah, on the tail end of it he was, Marcus. The way Charlie got, Charlie and Arthur Hahn, do you remember Arthur Hahn?

MARCUS: Yes.

ED: They were kinda partners, and wherever you'd see one, you'd generally see the other one. They'd work on the haying jobs or building jobs, and later they went into the well drilling business too. After they left here, they bought an old rig and started well drilling. They were both capable men, as far as that was concerned, when it came to drilling. But they got their drilling experience right here on this site where I'm sitting here, Marcus.

MARCUS: How deep did this well finally end up to be?

ED: Just a little over 3800 feet, Marcus.

MARCUS: Well what happened, Ed, did they run out of money? It was kind of fly-by-night thing to begin with, wasn't it?

ED: No, Marcus, I think it started out all right. People were all conscientious about it. But as it went along, and they got deeper and it cost more money, and people just weren't making the money they make nowadays, they didn't dare plunge too much. I know my dad had \$500 or \$600 in this, and my mother didn't, she didn't think much of oil wells. But whenever he could slip a ten-dollar bill or a twenty-dollar bill away, why he'd buy another piece of stock see. And when my mother found it, why then there was kinda hell to pay

around the house for a day or two. Because she could see a lot of use for buying kids shoes, and overcoats, and over-shoes for the kids rather than buying stocks. But Dad said, "Ah Mom," he said, "some day," he said, "we're going to be rich, that's going to really blow in," he said. "I think old Charlie Backus is right, it's down there someplace and if we could just go down we're going to get her." That was Charlie's by-word, "Ed, we're going to get her."

MARCUS: Well Charlie told me something about a string of tools being dropped in the well here. He always felt that there was oil here, and somebody --- there was a driller sent in here, as I remember the story, and about the first thing he did was to drop a string of tools in the well. And Charlie always felt that he was sent in by a big oil company to close the hole on him. And he felt that there would be a time when they would come in and drill right here, and maybe there will be.

ED: Yes, you're right about that, Marcus. One of the big Harney County shareholders in this project was Charlie Voegtly that owned a hardware store in Burns. I'm sure that he is one of the larger stockholders in the company. And they got down there a ways and hit some awful hard rock, and the driller they had on here was a conscientious man, but in those days, you know, you had no hard surfacing you could put on bits. Run a bit for a few hours and you had to come out and change it. Gosh when you're pulling out of a hole, with that old time equipment, you know, 2500 feet, why it would take quite a bit of time to come up and change those bits and go back in. They had three bits, they had one in the slack tub a tapping it, and one in the fire, and one on the string of tools. And they wasn't eight hour days, those were twelve-hour days those guys were working.

MARCUS: I'll bet.

ED: Some of those stockholders got kind of discouraged and they thought that they should get an expert from Texas.

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is the end of the tape. Ed Koeneman also tells about the oil well in his interview with me, which was done, oh May 1973. He tells this story about the oil well.

(END OF TAPE)

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