

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #156 - Sides A/B

Subject: Lela Loggan Sitz

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date: May 12, 1984

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: Pauline Braymen, I'm interviewing Lela Sitz on May 12, 1984 at her home in Burns. Lela has been chosen the Queen Mother for the 1984 Harney County Pioneer Association Pioneer Days Celebration. Okay, Lela, can you tell me who your parents were?

LELA LOGGAN SITZ: John and Ella (Howser) Loggan.

PAULINE: And how did they happen to come to Harney County?

LELA: Well my mother was born here in 1879.

PAULINE: And she belonged to the Howser family?

LELA: Yes, she was the youngest of the A. W. Howser family.

PAULINE: And they lived near Harney?

LELA: Yes, they came here in 1876.

PAULINE: The Howser house that the painting has been done of, that we see around, was that their original homestead house?

LELA: Yes. For a short time when they first came here, they lived just a few miles north of Burns. My mother was born there. And then in 1882, with the help of his neighbors, my grandfather built the log house, which still stands over at Harney. And they lived there, well up until my grandfather's death in 1921, I believe. It was a farm, they had cattle, and my mother grew up there.

PAULINE: Okay, and do you know where they came from?

LELA: Yes, they came from California, from Marysville, California to Oregon, and settled here. There were only five other families here in this area when the Howsers came here. One of the families I can remember them telling about was the Whiting family. And Stancliff was another family, and I don't --- I really don't remember the other three families. Then my father's family came here from Nebraska, and they came to this area in 1885. My father was the oldest of the Loggan family. His father was John H. Loggan.

PAULINE: Did he settle in Burns, or did he settle in Harney?

LELA: No, they first lived on a ranch near what is Buchanan now. They lived there for a number of years, then they moved to Harney. And at one time my grandfather was Justice of the Peace at Harney. And he worked for a man who sold implements, I believe. Then later he had his own store, and had, oh a little candy store and the post office in Harney for a number of years until he became ill. And then after his death, my grandmother lived with her children. There were eight in that family, and she lived part of the time with one, and part of the time with the other until her death. They are both buried over at Harney, Harney Cemetery.

PAULINE: Okay, and you were born in Burns, December 8, 1904.

LELA: Right.

PAULINE: So you went to school in Burns.

LELA: I went through grade school in Burns. Went to school to Professor Sutton, who we all always remembered, although I never had any problems with him. And then I went two years to high school. The high school then was Harney County High School here in Burns. Then my father was in the garage business with Archie McGowan and we moved to Crane where Dad was in charge of the garage down there. And I finished my last two years; I graduated from Crane Union High School.

PAULINE: I didn't know that.

LELA: Many people say that.

PAULINE: No, I would never have guessed that. That's kind of neat. You have roots then in both places.

LELA: That's right, yes I do. Then I, after high school I went to, it was Oregon Normal School then at Monmouth. It's Oregon Western College now (Western Oregon College) I believe. And then I came back to Crane, and I taught two years in Crane in the primary grades. I had the first, second, and third grades. And then, that was before Eldon and I were married. After we were married, we were married in May 1928, and after we moved to Burns then I taught several years in the Burns Grade School. Mr. Slater was the principal here.

PAULINE: How did you meet Eldon?

LELA: Well I had known the family for quite a long while, and I really met him through dances at Crane. Everybody danced then. That was the main entertainment was the dance, and he came to lots of dances at Crane. And we began going together, and then oh it was probably a year and a half or so before we were married.

PAULINE: Where did you first live when you were first married? Did you live right here? Have you lived right here all of these years, or did you have another house before you moved here?

LELA: No, we lived in Crane for several years. And I used to work, I had a --- worked in the telephone office in Crane for several years, and then they asked me if I'd like to transfer up here. And Eldon was working here so we moved to Burns, and that was in about 1933, I think. And then we've lived here ever since.

PAULINE: When did he become sheriff? I've forgotten that date.

LELA: 1945.

PAULINE: So not too long after he --- he worked as a deputy for a while before he ---

LELA: Yes, he worked in the Burns Garage for several years, and then he was a deputy sheriff for three years. And then in 1945, he was elected sheriff, and he was sheriff then until 1973, until his retirement, which was 28 years.

PAULINE: And during that time you taught school some, and you worked ---

LELA: Yes, I taught school several years here in the grade school. And after I quit teaching regular, I substituted then I think as long as I taught. And then finally I gave up and didn't work anymore after that.

PAULINE: Okay. You mentioned here that, about the sidewalks in Burns. Can you tell me about that?

LELA: Oh yes, but I don't know if you want that!

PAULINE: Oh, yes.

LELA: Well when I think back, living in Burns as a youngster, that's one thing I remember. Not too often, back when, that we had a nickel to spend, and occasionally my brother and I would have a nickel to spend. And of course we would just go right to the candy store, to get a little sack of candy. You'd get a pretty good-sized sack for a nickel then. And I can remember, oh several times, I suppose I was gawking along and I dropped my nickel in a crack of the sidewalk. Sometimes we'd get a stick and we'd work and work, I don't think we ever got one out. And that was really a disaster when you lost that nickel. No candy! (Laughter)

PAULINE: Well, it was quite a long while before they paved the streets in Burns, wasn't it?

LELA: Oh, yes.

PAULINE: I understand it was really kind of a muddy mess a lot of the time.

LELA: Yes. It was after we were living here. Probably --- well I don't know, we lived in

Burns a short time before we went to Crane. But, oh I think it was around 1930, or something like that before the streets and sidewalks were paved. And we --- another thing I remembered as a kid, all the kids walked to school, there were no rides at all. You just walked through the deep snow, or the cold, or the rain, or whatever. And of course then we went to the --- well where the present grade school is, it was the old grade school then. Its been torn down now. And it was quite a hike for most of us because we lived down in the lower part of town, but we never thought about a ride. That's quite a change.

PAULINE: Yeah, it is quite a change. Now we have to ride around the block if ---

LELA: Oh yes, I'm just as bad.

PAULINE: Where was the Loggan home in Burns, in Burns?

LELA: It was where the Burns Garage Shop is now, on that corner; just west of the Burns Garage was our home where Frank and I grew up.

PAULINE: Do you remember Julian Byrd?

LELA: Oh, very well.

PAULINE: Can you describe him for me?

LELA: Well he was a wonderful person, friendly and outgoing. And after we bought our home we lived next door to Byrd's over --- before we moved where I live now. For a number of years, that was when Nelda's growing up years and, oh we thought an awful lot of the Byrd family. They were just wonderful.

PAULINE: And he was the editor of the Burns Times-Herald of course for many, many, many years.

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: My memory of him is that he always spoke no matter --- if you met him on the street, he always spoke.

LELA: That's right.

PAULINE: And it didn't matter whether you were five years old or fifty years old or ---

LELA: Right.

PAULINE: Ah, he seemed to know everyone's name.

LELA: Yes, he was an exceptionally friendly person. And then they were wonderful neighbors. We used to, of course, visit back and forth a lot, you know. And they were just, just wonderful neighbors.

PAULINE: You had one brother?

LELA: Frank, yes.

PAULINE: Frank. What did he do? Did he stay here after he grew up, or did he go somewhere else to ---

LELA: No, he finished high school here, Harney County High School, and then he graduated from the University of Oregon. And he never has lived in Burns since then. And, well practically all of those years after his graduation he has lived in Bend. He was in the Bend Bulletin paper there for, oh I don't know how many years, a long, long time. Then he bought the KBND Radio Station, and he was manager of that until he sold that and retired. And he taught a seminar class on radio management at the University of Oregon for about three years. And then they came back to Bend, and he and his wife still live in their home in Bend.

PAULINE: Do you expect them to come for Pioneer Day?

LELA: I'm sure Frank will come. Lillian isn't very well and might not be able to come, but Frank will be here I'm sure. I hope.

PAULINE: Oh, I'm sure he will too. Okay. You said here that you became a member of the Pioneer Presbyterian Church, and the Rebekah Lodge in 1928. What are some of your memories about the Presbyterian Church?

LELA: Well my memories go back to the time I was about five years old, because Mother

started Frank and I going to Sunday school. I know I was five; Frank was probably about seven. And Mother taught in the Sunday school a long time. I can remember the old Christmas programs, and how we used to go trudging up there in the snow or cold to practice. And then, well of course I attended Sunday school through my high school years. And then after Eldon and I moved to Burns, I taught in Sunday School for a long, long time which --- those are some of, I think some of my happiest memories. I like to work with youngsters, and that Sunday school work was just real pleasant for me.

Then I was active in the Rebekah Lodge for a lot of years too. I went through the Chairs, and that I enjoyed. It has its ups and down, but you look back on it with a lot of pleasant memories, association with the other members. And Eldon was an Odd Fellow, and we always attended Odd Fellow and Rebekah joint things that they would have, which we both enjoyed. And I think, let's see, 1951, no 1953, I received the Decoration of Chivalry.

PAULINE: Yeah, the degree of ---

LELA: Yes, in Portland at Grand Lodge. I always appreciated that.

PAULINE: Well, that's given to someone who has worked not only in the Lodge, but in the community.

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: And it is a very, very much an honor to receive.

LELA: Well I certainly appreciated that.

PAULINE: The Burns Mother's Club was another one of your activities.

LELA: Yes, I enjoyed Mother's Club very much. Worked in that for a number of years. I was a past president of Mother's Club and always attended until we finally just disband. The interest in it had, well there was such a lack of interest in it, and people had moved, and women were working, and times changed a lot, and we finally gave up Mother's Club.

But it was, it's one of my pleasant memories too, when I think back of the few things I did do.

PAULINE: Basically the Mother's Club was interested in the youth and in the school system.

LELA: Oh yes.

PAULINE: I remember that your programs each month usually involved some kind of entertainment from either the schools or ---

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: Piano students or ---

LELA: Right.

PAULINE: --- that sort of thing.

LELA: We always enjoyed having the youngsters perform for us, and we did quite a few things. One time, that was before I belonged, the Mother's Club built up a park. It was over here in the, way over in the east part of town. It's all gone now. A play park for the children. And in our later years, we gave a scholarship, \$200 I believe. We always worked to earn some money to have that scholarship available every springtime for a graduating senior, I believe. No, they spent their first year in college. They were --- had spent their freshman year in college, and we gave them this scholarship. We were doing that at the time we ---

PAULINE: I remember that.

LELA: --- quit meeting. Uh huh.

PAULINE: Times really have changed, with the fact that more women work now.

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: Can you see where that's changed family life? Or have you observed that it has made a difference in the way the people live now?

LELA: Well I don't know about the family so much, but it certainly made a difference like in our Club, for instance, the fact that women were working so much more. Young women, soon after their marriage, would get a position and work, and we found that that caused our Mother's Club membership to drop off, oh just a great deal. Usually when some of the young women would get married, well some of us would prevail upon them to come into Club. And we'd take in several members every year. But it grew to --- we didn't have that. That was one thing that made our Club go down a lot in membership and interest.

PAULINE: I've noticed this too. That the amount of volunteer services that were performed by women of your generation, and even up until, well probably through the '60's even. That was about when Mother's Club went.

LELA: Yes, it was.

PAULINE: About 1960.

LELA: The latter part.

PAULINE: That a tremendous amount of community service done by the women, because they had that time ---

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: --- to devote. And that now it is much more difficult to find people to do ---

LELA: That's right.

PAULINE: --- anything. 4-H leaders or anything else.

LELA: They are busy out of their homes. And I didn't belong to it, but another very good club they had for years was the Library Club too. And those women finally just disband because of lack of interest and membership. And they did an awful lot of good in the community.

PAULINE: Okay, and you and Eldon had one daughter, and when was she born? When

was Nelda born?

LELA: Nelda was born July the 25th, 1929.

PAULINE: And she married Tom Gibbon.

LELA: Right.

PAULINE: And had one son.

LELA: One boy, John.

PAULINE: And now he's married, is that right? Is John married yet?

LELA: Not now.

PAULINE: Not now, but he was.

LELA: He was married for a time.

PAULINE: And ---

LELA: Seven years.

PAULINE: And he has children?

LELA: And he has a little boy, Jeremy.

PAULINE: And you also have some family by association when Tom remarried Lola.

LELA: That's right. Uh huh. We have --- they have always sort of claimed us, and we claim them for a part of our family. And there's been a wonderful relationship, because as John was growing up he was, he was just back and forth a lot. Of course when he was in school he wouldn't be here through the week, but they were always good about letting him come and stay with us, which meant so much to us. And we have had a wonderful relationship with Lola and Tom and their two boys too. We think an awful lot of Joe and Jim. Well we think of them as grand --- grandsons too.

PAULINE: I --- I knew that you did and ---

LELA: They always called us Gram and Gramp, and we appreciate that. So it has meant an awful lot, and I'll forever be grateful to them for their friendship with us. I had Mother's

Day dinner with them today.

PAULINE: Okay. Also you received the Chamber of Commerce Senior Woman of the Year Award in 1980, which recognized your long ---

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: --- term of service to the community.

LELA: Yes, I appreciated that ever so much.

PAULINE: I --- this question comes maybe from far afield, but as the wife of the sheriff in this community, you met a lot of different people, and had probably some experiences that some of the rest of us would not have had. One thing in particular, I think that you've told me before that you had a really special relationship with some of the Paiute Indian people. And can you tell me any stories about some of those kinds of things?

LELA: Well not my relationship with them as much, Pauline, as Eldon's. But he always tried, if he could anyway, to help these Indian folks. And they would, I know they, they must have liked him 'cause they felt so free to come to our home when something was wrong, or they wanted advice. And it probably was advice that maybe they should have got from an attorney that you'd think, you or I would. But they'd come to Eldon, and what do you think, Eldon, and what should we do? And then of course they'd have their difficulties at the Village and they'd come late at night, or anytime, for Eldon to come up there and help them out of difficulties.

And another thing that I think of it quite often are trips that I went with Eldon on when he was sheriff, and returning prisoners. We'd go alone lots of times, and made --- well we made, well we went to Phoenix one time after a prisoner. That was an interesting trip. And Eldon would always handcuff the prisoner to a belt that he put around the prisoner's waist. And he'd always sit in the front seat with him, and I'd sit in the back seat. And there was usually a, well nearly always a sap in the back seat. And Eldon used to

say, "Now if you use that sap for any reason, if something happens, be sure and hit the right man." (Laughter) I got a kick out of him. But we did, we made some interesting trips.

And another thing that were pleasant trips for both of us, were Sheriff's Conventions. We went to a National Sheriff's Convention in San Francisco one time. That was --- the entertainment, and then of course Eldon would always enjoy the meetings because at those national conventions they'd have some excellent speakers, you know. And then another time we went to Colorado Springs. And then they had, while Eldon was still in office, the Oregon Sheriff's Association entertained the National Sheriff's Association in Portland, and of course that was an interesting --- those were always interesting trips and contacts.

Eldon belonged to both the Oregon Sheriff's Association and the National Association. He was a Past President of the Oregon State Sheriff's Association. Those are some --- and of course there were lots of difficult times and that.

I remember one time, Nelda was home then, and we were dressed ready to go to a wedding, a friend of ours, and the phone rang. And there was just one city policeman here on duty. Well I guess we --- I think this was the night, the policeman on night duty, because it was probably 7 o'clock or so. And he told Eldon a prisoner had got away from him, could he come down. And so of course Eldon just left. He was all dressed to go to the wedding. And Nelda and I went to the wedding, and while we were at the wedding, there was a call came for Eldon and they wanted him.

That same night a lady had died out in Catlow Valley, and they wanted of course the sheriff. And Harry Smith was the mortician at that time. Bertha Griffith went with Eldon as the county nurse, and they --- When we got home, Nelda and I got home from the wedding, Eldon had just got home. And it was raining, and he and the city policeman had chased this prisoner around, and finally caught him. And it was raining that night,

Eldon was just mud all over. So he changed into old heavy clothes then, and spent the night going out, and back to, a trip to Catlow Valley. Those are some of the way things would go. You never knew, you couldn't plan because a knock on the door, or ring of the phone would change your day.

PAULINE: We're just at the end of this tape. I'm going to stop right there so we don't get right in the middle of a story and have to ---

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PAULINE: I'd like to have you describe the old white church, what we called the "Little White Church" that was the Presbyterian Church.

LELA: It was a wooden building, wooden pews, and we always kept the inside of it clean and painted up and that sort of thing. One thing I remember about it, especially as a child, was the big old stove we had over on one side.

PAULINE: Me too.

LELA: It was a huge stove. And another thing that always fascinated me was the stovepipe. Oh, it seems like we had almost a mile of stovepipe to reach to the chimney. And then we had an old fashioned organ in there, which we used quite often; someone would play it. And then of course we had the piano, and we had--- it was a nice seating spot for the choir. And even during the time we were in that church we had, always had a very good choir. We didn't have Sunday school rooms there. We just --- the classes would just divide up and sit part of them in a few pews here, and a few pews there, and the little folks. We did have kind of a kitchen on the --- that was later built on the back, and the little primary folks used to go in there and had their tables and things to work on. We had, I can remember the little chairs, they were little red chairs that we had when Frank and I went to Sunday school there. And oh we took care of those chairs, we just

thought they were great. And they lasted and followed on for a good many years. And even when I was teaching we still had those little chairs, and then later bought some new ones.

But there was such a, well I don't know, you felt so much at home there, it was such a friendly place to go and worship. And there were times for a few years when we didn't have large congregations at all, but there were always a few there and usually a few people to sing in the choir and --- Well I don't know, I'll never forget that church. It stands out in my memory when I think back. Of course we've appreciated our new church too, but it was a, it was really a great --- I joined the church, when I joined the church in 1928, Reverend Harris was here then and we were in the old, or this little white church as we called it, and I remember that Sunday very well.

And during the time that he was here his wife, Mrs. Harris, oh she was a splendid musician. She taught piano lessons. In fact when I was teaching --- yes, I was teaching school in Crane, one day a week she used to come down there and spend the day. And I took lessons from her when she came down there. And that always helped an awful lot with our music in church, and for the little folks for Sunday school too, working on programs and things. I worked on lots of programs when we were still over there. But, I think we were still in that church, yes, that was after Louise Smith, Bob's mother, was working in the church, superintendent, when we made the little white vestments for the youngsters and had the little choir, and the Ladies Aide, and that sort of thing.

PAULINE: It's interesting that you, you know, what stands out in your mind is some of the same things that I remember, you know, the big stove and the big long stove pipe.

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: And I remember coming in the front door where there were big wooden doors, and then there were swinging doors of cloth of some kind.

LELA: Yes, to kind of keep the cold out.

PAULINE: To try to keep the cold out. And I will never forget sitting in those little red chairs back there in the kitchen.

LELA: Oh, yes those ---

PAULINE: And coloring at the little tables.

LELA: Yes, around the little tables. And another thing of course, you remember too, Pauline, and it was always used, was the bell there in the entry.

PAULINE: Yes.

LELA: Of course we have it on the other church now.

PAULINE: We have it on the other church, but it doesn't always work very well.

LELA: No, not --- but it always worked there, and I can remember lots of times, of course Mother and Frank and I would always walk to Sunday school. We'd hear that bell ring on our way. Then before --- at 11 o'clock for church time, they'd ring it again. Oh, I just loved that old bell.

PAULINE: I did too. I wish that it could hang so that it would ring, could be rung again. We rang it at Karen's wedding.

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: And it worked pretty well. And at Janet's wedding I think we couldn't get it to --
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LELA: It wouldn't work.

PAULINE: It wouldn't work that day.

LELA: It doesn't always work.

PAULINE: But, I remember the bell. So --- of course Reverend Swanson was the minister throughout my younger years.

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: And he was here for a long, a long time.

LELA: Yes, that's when I did a lot of my Sunday school work was during Reverend Swanson's years here. Well Nelda taught in the Sunday school too, and had the primary grades, the primary group at Sunday school during her high school years.

PAULINE: Yes, she was my Sunday school teacher.

LELA: Is that right?

PAULINE: Uh huh. She and Marilyn worked together.

LELA: Yes, they did. And Bible School, Nelda and I several summers worked together with Bible School classes. Well Pauline, you helped me one year ---

PAULINE: Yes, I did.

LELA: --- with Bible School. That was the first year when we had John after Nelda was gone. And it was, I knew it was going to be pretty difficult to go back, but Eldon and I talked about it and he said, "Well, I don't think you had better wait, I think you had better go back." And I did, and you helped me, and I appreciated you so much, Pauline.

PAULINE: Well I, it was a difficult time for both of us.

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: I think we kind of helped each other.

LELA: Well, I certainly ---

PAULINE: There were a lot of memories.

LELA: --- certainly helped me.

PAULINE: There were a lot of memories swirling around.

LELA: I appreciated you. And I remember that time too; we didn't get Bible School material. Do you remember that? And we devised some booklets for the youngsters, the girls --- we had a girl's class. And of course John was little, he went in with the other, with the smaller group. But I always appreciated you so much, Pauline.

PAULINE: Well, thank you. I --- that's one of my special memories too. Well, can you think of anything else that we should put on this tape --- about you or your family, or about something that happened in Harney County that should be told?

LELA: Well I just might say these years that I have been alone; I still try to keep busy. I think it's the best way to make the time go by. I have always been a member of the Hospital Auxiliary group which I've enjoyed working with, and I've sewed a lot for them. And then since we have had the gift shop in the hospital, I work there one afternoon a week, and I enjoy that a lot. But still, I don't do much lodge work anymore. But I still work on the Cancer Crusade, I worked on that just a week ago. And, look on there; I might have mentioned something, I don't know.

PAULINE: Well, let's see. You talked about the Hospital Auxiliary.

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: Yes, you did, you've got the Cancer Crusade here.

LELA: I try to visit, probably not as often as I should, but occasionally at the nursing home, and I think ---

PAULINE: Oh, and you said that you have been going with the minister to the nursing home playing the piano so that they can sing.

LELA: Yes, I've done that several times for Karl (Christ), and always enjoy it. But I do think to keep busy and have an interest in something is real important. I do lots of handwork here at home. And I am still able to drive my car and get around when I want to.

PAULINE: Well you're still going strong, and that's good.

LELA: Well I just --- and I tell you, health means everything, if you have your health. That's one thing you feel so sorry about going to the nursing home, people who aren't well enough to get out and around anymore. I am real thankful for my health.

PAULINE: Well, I really appreciate your taking time to talk to me today. And this tape will be transcribed and put in the Harney County Oral History Project file. Someday, maybe fifty or a hundred years from now they'll get it out and play it. Say well, you know, people, this is the way that things happened to them at that time, and the way they talked about it, and the things that they remembered. It will maybe mean something to someone someday.

LELA: Yes.

PAULINE: I feel that it will.

LELA: Yes, I think those tapes are splendid. I've read quite a few of them there. And I thank you too, Pauline, for taking your time out of a busy day and coming to interview me.

PAULINE: Well, I should have been here sooner.

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