

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #167 - Side A

Subject: Del Witzel & Marcus Haines

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date: March 1986

Interviewer: Marcus Haines

MARCUS: Well Del, first we'll kind of identify ourselves here a little bit, and so I'm going to ask you where you born, and when you were born. And if you're like me, you never made money enough to leave Harney County, have you? So you had to stay.

DEL WITZEL: Well, I was born in Burns in 1901, August the 8th.

MARCUS: And you have been here all your life, haven't you?

DEL: Yeah, all except for a trip to Florida, and maybe ---

MARCUS: Oh, you've been that far away from home?

DEL: Yeah, I went down to that Stockman's Convention, you know, in '50.

MARCUS: Oh, did you?

DEL: There was quite a bunch from Burns, and Harney County went down.

MARCUS: Oh yeah. There were pretty good times along about then, you know.

DEL: Yes, there was, yes.

MARCUS: Kinda keeping them at home now though.

DEL: Yes, it is. No, we went down there for, I don't know. We must have been there for about a week, you know, during that time.

MARCUS: Well, did you go over to Cuba? No, you wouldn't have then. But some of them went to Cuba down there earlier.

DEL: Yeah, lots of them went to Cuba, yeah. That was just a small flight over there, you

know. They was paying \$15 or something like that. But seemed like maybe we went on a boat ride up through there somewhere, the Everglades or somewhere in there. Some of us, and some of them went over there, you know. In fact, I never did care too much about a plane, so I didn't want to go over.

MARCUS: I don't care too much about a boat. I'll take my chances in a plane. I'm a poor sailor.

DEL: I told them I'd go on a boat, but I didn't want to fly over, you know. They catch that plane, I think. It was a very cheap price of going over there at that time, you know.

MARCUS: Yeah.

DEL: You know, I imagine five or six went in a small plane, you know, at one time. Something like that, you know.

MARCUS: Well, Del, you spent most all of your life up in Blitzen Valley, though haven't you?

DEL: Blitzen Valley, yes, most of it, yes.

MARCUS: Yes. And then Diamond Valley, you lived right there.

DEL: Diamond and Blitzen, yeah.

MARCUS: And I spent all of my life down in the lower end of Blitzen Valley, right on the south shores of Malheur Lake. So we have been around a while anyway. Yeah, I was born the 17th of February 1907; I'm 79 years old here now. So we aren't exactly spring chickens. Well Del, first what I'm interested in finding out is --- how many people were located there on the Company ranches there, and what --- We talked some about this before, the people came in and the Company built them houses, and they built them a barn or something, and then they rented so much land, Del, how was that handled?

DEL: Well, you mean the P Ranch Valley there?

MARCUS: Yes.

DEL: Well it was, you know, there must have been awful close to about 20 there at that time.

MARCUS: Yes.

DEL: If you would name them right down, but --- I could if I'd sit and think a little bit, I could name all of them that was in there, you know. But they would build you a house. Well, it was according to if you was running a dairy, now, say Comegy had a dairy there, you know. And he just rented the place and just cut the hay and stuff for his dairy. But there was George Parker, and Vern Bossuot, and myself, and my father, and Critchlows, and quite a few of them, you know. We farmed that, and all, I maybe had a section and a half there, that I just give them a third of the grain that I raised on it, you know. Maybe it was a 150 acres of grain, and then the rest, all of the rest of it was mine. And they built me a house and barn, and a chicken house, and everything, you know.

MARCUS: And that was the rent, Del, that you paid.

DEL: That was the rent, a third of the grain.

MARCUS: Was a third of the grain, was the rent?

DEL: Yes. And then if you raised any hay, or you had cattle or anything why that was all up to you. They didn't charge more. Craven was the head of that, you know.

MARCUS: Yes.

DEL: And he always told me he was --- we were quite friends, Craven and I were. I don't know why, some guy like that will pick up with some different guy, you know, a kid or something, you know, that he kind of liked. And he always told me, "Now," he said, "Del, I'm going to save this place," he said, "so it's going to be yours now." And he said, "And I want to sell it all, we're going to colonize it and sell the whole thing, you know, to the people there."

MARCUS: Uh huh.

DEL: But then the refuge come in and it was all over with.

MARCUS: Well just as soon as the Refuge came in, they couldn't get those people off fast enough, Del, could they?

DEL: That's true, yes.

MARCUS: Yes. And those grain fields went to pot. That's where the bird feed was.

DEL: Yes, you're right.

MARCUS: You had problems with the birds in your grain too, both threshing, I mean, both planting and getting around to threshing it there, they got their third of it before you ever got to it.

DEL: Yes, yes.

MARCUS: Yes, they used to do it there at the Grain Camp, you know, I know that. I've had that experience.

DEL: Now like in --- I owned a ranch there at Baca Lake, I bought that from Mrs. Merritt, you know. They owned that there, and I had that there, and then I homesteaded that Baca Lake, you know.

MARCUS: Oh, you did?

DEL: Oh yes, I homesteaded that. I lived there maybe about a year. I raised that grain there on that, when they went dry in there, you know, 75 bushel to the acre in there.

MARCUS: Oh, that's fine soil in there.

DEL: And then when the government come in there, why they kept after me and was going to buy that, you know. There would be one fellow after another come in, you see, from Washington, D. C. or somewhere and that. And I, this Barkley surveyed all that, you know, he and I were good friends. And he said, "Don't never sell it now," he said, "it's your home." And he said, "You can keep it, you know." And he advised me a lot on, and then he left and went back to Montana. He was a head engineer and surveying there,

you know.

MARCUS: Yeah.

DEL: And anyway, after he went back they kept coming. So I said one day, "Well, I'll tell you, if you'll give me a certain price for the Merritt place, and my homestead here, I'll take it." So they made the agreement, signed the papers. John Casey was the guy that done it now. And we was in the office up there and as soon as I signed the papers on that, Casey turned right around and said, "Well, that homestead don't belong to you." Just after I'd signed it, he said, "You see, I just noticed that now," he said, "you have no right selling that, or anything like that." Well I said, "John, I thought it was just an agreement that you would pay it anyway if I left now and didn't wait until I had proved up on it." "Oh no," he said, "you can't collect on that at all." So I lost the homestead.

MARCUS: Huh.

DEL: All that you see, all I got out of that was just on the Merritt place there. That was, I believe, 160. I'm not sure of that now. Could have been a 120.

MARCUS: Well what did you have, a 160 on the homestead or 320 or what was it?

DEL: There was --- I had the whole lake, and some there on the hill. I had close to about 320 on that. And at that time, you know, were allowed to maybe file your extra maybe on the mountain, you know. You could take, like you could get 640, you know, if you had 320 on there you could get the other on the mountain, you know. You'd prove up on both of them, you know. And so I was going to file on the mountain, but I hadn't filed up on that yet when I sold that. So in other words, you see, I was just beat out of my homestead.

MARCUS: You sure were.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: How much more time did you have left, Del, before you could have proved up on it?

DEL: It would have taken about three years, you see. And I would have had about a year and a half, two years.

MARCUS: If you could have hung tough another year and a half, you would have had her, wouldn't you have?

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: They would have condemned you before that probably and saw to that. They were aware of that.

DEL: Yes, they would probably have condemned it, and then bought it out anyway.

MARCUS: Yeah, they would have got you anyway.

DEL: And they ... told me, you know, that they couldn't condemn it, but he said they'll come to a reasonable price. You'll negotiate together, and if --- you'll get your price out of it, you know, or close, you know. But after I signed them papers, why I just ---

MARCUS: You found out in a hurry, huh?

DEL: I was sold out awful quick, yes. 'Course John Casey was working for the government at that time, you know.

MARCUS: You bet, you bet. He used to come over there and spoof my mother, you know. They were going to buy her out, John Casey. And Mama would --- she thought he was a nice little feller, she said, but when he started to telling her what she could do, well she said, "Now you get out the door, Casey, now when you get that out of your mind, well you can come back."

DEL: Well, you know, that's what I thought, that he was on the up and up, you know.

MARCUS: Yeah, yeah. They had their way; there is no question about that.

DEL: It was kind of like after I moved to Diamond, you see, and I bought that Olson place, you know. And so there was on 40 laid up there on that, you know, and they built right across. I had a 40 right up here, you see. And the government come in and built that

fence right across there, the BLM, you see. And they trespassed right across my land, you see. So then they come to me and they says, "We don't know what we're going to do," he says, "we built a fence and trespassed on you." And it all laid up on this fellow from Wagontire that was working for them. And so he says, "You know, I'm in a lot of trouble." "Oh," I says, "as far as I'm concerned, I'm not going to do anything about it." I said, "There's a 40 down in my field there, I'd just trade for it." This was all in crested wheat up there, this one was. So he says, "We'd sure appreciate it if you would." So then they sent a man out from Washington, D. C., you see, to make the trade. So he said to me, he says, "Well, I'm not going to trade that way," he says, "our land is worth more than yours." "Well," I said, "my land is all in crested wheat, they don't mind me just let it go." I said, "I don't want to trade, you're the ones that wanted to trade with me." So he left, so he was mad at me. So then they called me into the office in here, and asked me what deal I'd offered him, and I told them. And so they said, "You'd do that?" And I said, "Certainly, I don't care." And so we just made the trade right there. But they couldn't have taken that no way in the world. I could have gotten them for trespassing, you know.

MARCUS: Sure, you bet. You had them right over a barrel, you bet you did.

DEL: Well, we wasn't raised that way back years, back.

MARCUS: No, of course you weren't, no. You kind of lived and let live, you know.

DEL: But you never thought of suing somebody or something so ---

MARCUS: No, that's right.

DEL: It was all together different. Different people lived different altogether.

MARCUS: Well, Del, you were up there in Diamond, in the Blitzen Valley, for quite a while. I think your parents moved up there about 1919, didn't they on that ranch there?

DEL: 1919? 1918.

MARCUS: 1918.

DEL: The fall of 1918.

MARCUS: Uh huh. And lived up there until your parents died, and then Fred lived there many years afterwards in the very same place.

DEL: Yes, Fred lived there ...

MARCUS: Then the government, he and Charlie Barnes were the only rights that were recognized by the Refuge, and by the BLM, weren't they?

DEL: Yes, you're right, yes.

MARCUS: And how that come about, I don't know. But anyway, the others ---

DEL: Well, I think that was ... kind of like, I think maybe Scharff had a little on that help on the Refuge, between the Refuge, and that, you know, for them to get the cattle on the BLM, you know.

MARCUS: Yes.

DEL: Of course there was lots of range there at that time, you know, and that's kind of the way that was set up, I think, through there.

MARCUS: But there was always worlds of birds in that country.

DEL: Oh, there is a world of birds. When I had that broken leg down there, I leased that to them fellows in Bend. I don't know for three, or four, or five hundred, I don't remember what I got for that each year. And those fellows came over there, you know, and would hunt. They wouldn't kill nothing but a green head, ducks. And there was about 8, 10 geese apiece, you know. There was about six of them used to come there all the time, and then lots of other people got to following them too. They'd go back to Bend and show their kill, you know. And then lots of others got in there. But, you know, it was kind of hard to get in a hunt if you wasn't acquainted, you know, at that.

MARCUS: Yeah, you bet.

DEL: But that was at that time, you know.

MARCUS: But Del, don't you think as far as the birds are concerned, if the Refuge had never been made up there, they'd have been far better off? Don't you think there would be more birds today than if the Refuge had never been started?

DEL: Oh, there was a thousand, I think, to one birds then right in there, as there is today in there, you know. You kind of realize that from being around The Narrows, in there.

MARCUS: Well we had them down there all that time. My gosh, you know, old Alvie Springer had that little grain field out there west of the house, and then to the west of the grain field, he had a stack of hay and he kept that until spring time. And we'd drive out there with the hay wagon, across this grain field, to get a load of hay and take the shotgun. And these birds would just get out of your way. You just whammed off of the hay wagon, and got all of the birds that you wanted to eat. But they were all pintails, as I remember them. If you would find a pintail down in there in that country now, you would scare somebody to death with it.

DEL: I think it would, yes.

MARCUS: Yes, that's right. And then the mud hens, Del, the ground would just be working with them. We used to get out there at noon, at school, and run them back and forth through the fence, and finally get two of them hung up in the fence, and then get them by the wings. And talk about fight, or get a kid by the finger, and he would hop higher than this table. Now we had lots of fun with the mud hens. But there is a few mud hens show up around, but my gosh, there was one mud hen to where there was a thousand in those days.

DEL: You know in the last, in 8, 9 years since I've been a private citizen, but since I've been with Vogler down there. He had more birds on the Island Ranch than they have right down on the Refuge.

MARCUS: Yes, yes.

DEL: And that's because that's all mowed off, and birds go out there and pick that green grass. But if they had a little farming land, you know, they would be in there by the millions.

MARCUS: You bet. But why they have, well it's just the management that they have got up here. They have managed to run the birds clear out of the Blitzen Valley here for migration.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: You know you never see a bird up there. We were up there the other day, and when you go over Wright's Point, you've seen your last bird, until you get back. You've seen that yourself.

DEL: Yes, yes that's true.

MARCUS: And you can drive from here to Buchanan and those barrow pits will be lined with birds right now.

DEL: Yes, I was out there just the other day, and there are millions of them out there.

MARCUS: And you saw them everywhere there. And you go down there and you don't see a bird.

DEL: No. I didn't see a one.

MARCUS: No. What's wrong?

DEL: I see those swan out there in Pat Culp's field the other day, and there must have been 70 or 80 of those swan over there. And, you know, I will say that they have made a big improvement on those swan in the last ---

MARCUS: Yes, there are more swan all right. We saw quite a few swan out here in the valley, scattered around with the ducks, which I haven't seen here in recent years, with that amount.

DEL: No, I haven't either.

MARCUS: That's been about three weeks ago. Wally Welcome and I drove out through there.

DEL: But I do believe at one time they had all the swan killed out.

MARCUS: Well, I'm sure they did.

DEL: Just close to, maybe a very few. And those crane; they are getting by the millions. I don't know how they increase that fast.

MARCUS: Well, that is the big yak now, they haven't got --- Have you been reading this nonsense that's going on about these cranes? This fellow Littlefield down here, he's been living with the cranes down here. He started out with quite a bunch, and I think he's down to about 15 now. He finally concluded that maybe the coyotes were getting part of them, and maybe the ravens might be eating the eggs, after 15 --- He's been there about 15 years, I guess.

DEL: Those crane, you know, they have accumulated in the last while, because they only raise two at the most, maybe one.

MARCUS: Yeah, one as a rule.

DEL: One as a rule.

MARCUS: He'll kill the other one sometimes.

DEL: At the P Ranch Valley there, I noticed, you'd see ten nests in there, you know, and there would be maybe, three out of the bunch that would have two. And then they might not live all through their time, you know. They fight or kill one another, you know.

MARCUS: Yeah, they do. No, it's a strange thing. There is no question about that. I'll see how my tapes last; oh I got lots of tape here. I know I've talked to Joe Fine about this too, and he told me, he said, "That when we were at the P Ranch there," he said, "we never thought about getting a turkey for Thanksgiving and for Christmas. We always went down to Baca Lake and you'd get the biggest, fattest goose down there you'd want

to get any time of the year."

DEL: Yeah, I bet you would.

MARCUS: Yeah. But you go up through there now --- Have you been up through there recently, down through the sand patrol road, in there?

DEL: The P Ranch?

MARCUS: Yeah.

DEL: I was up there two years ago, last year or the year before.

MARCUS: Well, my gosh, you start down the sand patrol road there from the P Ranch, on that nice, finest meadow in Harney County, right below the house, clear down to the Brenton Cabin, and there hasn't been a spear of hay cut, or a cow in there, or a thing in here for I don't know how long. And I'll bet you they'll piddle around until they kill that meadow out. And they've got nothing, just grass matted, like this. Well a bird can't get down in that stuff, they hatch out little ones and they can't even get them out and get them to the water. And then these big tule patches, and flag patches, Del, birds don't go in them.

DEL: Coyotes and owls is all that live in there.

MARCUS: Yeah, yeah. And then they are talking about --- Here is an example, I know that you had it too, in your grain field you got a good stand of grain, those birds didn't lite in that, they worked till they got to the edges and they just worked right in there. They never went down in there because they couldn't get out, if they got down in there.

DEL: Yes, they never went in the middle of your field.

MARCUS: No, and the example is the same thing with these damn flags, you know. But these smart people can't seem to figure that out.

DEL: Well, I know my father stacked that hay at about 8,000, 9,000 ton there, 14 years, you know, there at the P Ranch. And, you know, there was nothing but the finest hay in

Harney County in that, you know. And now today there is so many thistles, that you can't even get to the creek to fish.

MARCUS: No.

DEL: And there was twice the fish in that creek then, than there is now.

MARCUS: Yeah, that's it.

DEL: You know, of course, people are more constructive today than they was then, you know. They might go up there and catch a hundred fish, and throw half of them away, you know. Which years back they didn't do that.

MARCUS: No, you ate what you caught. You bet, you bet you did.

DEL: Yeah, if you wanted 15, 20 fish, you'd catch them and that would be all, you know. The same with your birds.

MARCUS: Uh huh, yeah.

DEL: But now, if a fellow got the chance he might go out and kill 40 birds.

MARCUS: Yeah, well that's the thing that they keep laying it on to the rancher causing all this. Well, they used to, they are not coming in like they did now. The hunters used to come in here by the hundred, you know. And then every pickup you see, Del, has got a shotgun and a rifle hanging in the back of the seat, except yours and mine. I haven't got a gun rack in mine.

DEL: I haven't either.

MARCUS: I haven't either. But they all take their toll, but they can't see that. All they can lay it on is the cowman there, that causes all the damage, and he --- and that was completely wrong.

DEL: Oh no. That's constructive people, I think. Most of that, you know. Well, you take the telephone lines, and the electric lines, and things, people were always practicing shooting them off. I can't understand such things as that.

MARCUS: No, no I can't either. And the same way with shooting the eagles and the hawks. They are fine targets for these fellows with the high-powered rifles with telescope sights on them, but you never hear that mentioned here in any of the arguments about what has caused all this stuff here.

Now we went on a trip, Fred, or Del, with --- They have got this ranchers for conservation formed here, and so they took us on a show me trip, oh, a year or two before I left the ranch. We come in here in '79, must have been in '77, or '78. And we left the Refuge and so this fellow, Warneky, (sp.?) not Warneky, but, I can't think of his name. He was going over the hill there, and started up the sand patrol road and he says; "Now we got 2,000 duck nests up through this country here." And I said, "By gosh, they must be overcrowded a little bit, if I remember right you've got about, over 60,000 acres up through here, and that's a bird to every three acres, that's a little crowded isn't it?" I never heard any more about that.

So we got on up and drove down the hill from Fred's place, where he used to put up that little stack of hay right up under that rim there. Right down over the hill there. Well they divided up the irrigation on this field, coming right across through here, there's the creek coming down through here. And they dried up part of this, just experimenting, just how beneficial it was to dry up, up half of what --- that was the finest hay in the country, right there. So I said, "Well what's the purpose of leaving this?" And this Littlefield was talking then. I said, "I've been through here when Fred Witzel cleaned this up and stacked this hay, and in the spring of the year, you couldn't set another bird in here. They would be in there just a picking away to beat the band." And he said, "Oh, we don't want them up here in the spring of the year. We don't want them to migrate in this country here." And I said, "Well I don't understand that, that some of them come in here and maybe stick around and nest for you." "Oh no, no, they won't do that." So we got

further along, and so we got this, this one here. Now we, we're making a map of Blitzen Valley, and this is, we're going to manage this for geese, and this one for mallards, and this for teal, and if we have an overlay we'll just drop down over the map, and that will show where it's at, like you come down here. And somebody said, "Well, are you going to teach these birds to read, so they will know that they get into the right place?" And well, you know, ya ya ya ya, you know, and that's the thought and the management that is in this system at the present time.

DEL: And that's clear off, you know.

MARCUS: Why of course it's clear off.

DEL: There would be no truth to any of that.

MARCUS: Why anybody would know better than that, you know.

DEL: Well geese and ducks, they'll all swarm right together.

MARCUS: Sure.

DEL: And maybe they'll go where they like that best feed.

MARCUS: Yeah. They kind of get together for a reason. Just for protection too. Yeah, I think they do.

DEL: Yes, I suppose, yes.

MARCUS: No, we just can't have them in there. I remember reading an article here; I don't know whether he is right or wrong. This Tom McAllister, you know, that writes for the Journal? He used to spend some time here. I knew him pretty well. Maybe you remember him; he was just a big kid then.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: But he has written here, said that if a bird is hatched here in the spring of the year, they have a tendency to come back to where they were hatched.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: And he is probably right about that too, but that was his theory. Well you stop the migration up there, if that's true, why you have stopped your bird population. I don't think there is any question about it.

DEL: Well, I do know back years back, you know, maybe 30 or 40 years back, you know, you'd be --- Well something would happen in your hay stack, there would be a goose have a nest there or some-thing, you might take it in the house and hatch it under a hen. You would raise it there, you know, if you didn't clip the wings or something, you know, they would fly away in the fall, you know, with the other geese. The next spring they would come back. You would know because they were gentle. They would come right back to the nest.

MARCUS: Yes, they would come right to the house. The same thing happened there at the Refuge. An old hen hatched on top of that Refuge office there, about 3 years in a row, and it cost the government hundreds of dollars. 'Cause when she got ready to, she'd push them out off of that roof, and off of those tiles they'd come, and then she would come down and gather them up. You know, that was the way she got them off of there. And the whole bunch would flock around there and wait for the last bird, and sometimes it would take a day or so to get them off of there. But they can't see that.

DEL: I'd see them geese up there just above my place in Diamond, you know. They would go up there in those rims, you know, fifteen, twenty feet high, and build their nests up there. I'd often wonder how they got them off of there, but maybe riding and going past there. Someday I'd see her, and here she'd have the whole bunch coming down. So they had to have fallen out of there.

MARCUS: Yeah, she just pushed them overboard. That's what she did up there. They were sliding off of that roof and down they go, and --- Well, I don't know what anybody is going to do to turn this thing around, Del, I really don't. I ---

DEL: I know that, I don't care what you have, cows or horses, or anything, geese and ducks will mix right with them.

MARCUS: You bet.

DEL: On green grass or grain, or anything else, grain that is still good.

MARCUS: You bet. They pastured part of the P Ranch up there one time. They just left the cattle in there. I don't know just where it was. Over there on the Steens Mountain side there some place, for spring pasture. And I guess they had geese in there that they couldn't count them, they were running in there with those cattle. They kept that grass clipped down, and here they were, they had all they wanted to eat, right there. And these old cows could see a coyote coming from quite a ways off too, you know, and there was self-protection there among the bunch of them.

DEL: Now in my crested wheat that I put in there in Diamond before I left there, you know, on the hills there, there was geese right down on the Diamond Swamp there where there was lots of water and tules and stuff. They would go up on that crested wheat up there because they could see a long ways, and the cows was there, and it was kind of protection for them.

MARCUS: Little green shots there for them, just ideal.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: You bet.

DEL: They will not live where there is tules.

MARCUS: No, they are not that stupid.

DEL: Pheasants will do that though. That's the only thing that will. Pheasant will live in there because I suppose --- I don't know what makes pheasants that way. But they like it out on that green stuff. But they will go close to where they can run in on those tules, and stuff.

MARCUS: They would rather run than fly, if they can, don't they?

DEL: Yes, you bet they would. And it's something. Oh, maybe they have that for an idea of the hawks or something, I don't know. All birds like it out where it is bare.

MARCUS: Yeah, they like to kind of look around a little bit. But, you know, they went up there at the P Ranch and, well I told them this, and here's what they did. When I bought the property there, the bull field there in 1948, I always put in manure dams, and I'd take a fork and walk out through the field and a bird nest would fly up, and I'd go and look at it, and I could watch until it hatched out. Then three, four, years, five years before I left there, if I walked to that bird nest, it was gone the next day. Now either the coons, there was lots of coons there, and the coyotes got next to following me there for a guide, or else the crows figured out how too, and mashed down the grass.

Well, they go up to the P Ranch and make this big nesting study, and here they tromp all this down and count all these birds, and then they take a flag and set it up right here by the nest, so they can find it. Well, that's as good as the raven wanted, you know, here is a flag waving around and he's not that damn dumb, you know.

DEL: Yes. He's sitting right on top of the clump.

MARCUS: You betcha, he was right there, and run the old hen off. And then they got to flying the lake. They got the chance to, what did they call them? Well, anyway they had a point here, and a point over here, and here they'd come and they would turn around, and then back they would go and that happened about every week. Well, here we were over here, and we always had lots of geese there, out around home there, and about the time the plane would get along about in here, they would start to hearing them and away those geese would go. And here would come the ravens.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: They got next to these birds running off their nests, you know, from this

airplane. And then they would get the eggs while the geese are off flying around. So I told, it was Eldon McClurry, I don't think you got acquainted with him or not. He was the biologist at the time.

DEL: I met him I suppose.

MARCUS: And I said, "Eldon you are causing more harm out here than good." I said, "By doing this you are ---" Oh he said, "It's a lot of fun flying that plane, taking pictures, and counting birds, and do this and do that." And I said, "Well, I'm sure that's what's happening alright, but you are doing more harm than good." And then I saw a picture of them, where they had four airboats running out here on the lake here. That was before we left, and took some pictures. They were all flying out through here, and I said I could feel the wave up, flying like that, you know. And here are these birds, hanging with their nests in the tules all around, and away they go. Washed bird nests and the whole business out. I saw that right in the movie.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: There is just so much stuff, Del, that, that you can see with your mouth that could be corrected to help those birds.

DEL: Yes, that's true.

MARCUS: You bet, it's too bad.

DEL: Yes, I think they had all that from the P Ranch out. Every bit that they could get out, and get stock in there. I think they'd have nesting place in there for them birds, and they would come back there every year. Just the same as they used to do.

MARCUS: Yeah, sure they would, you bet.

DEL: Well, they would from here down to Tule Lake, you might say. They'd have billions of birds there, I guess. I haven't been down there, but they claim they have.

MARCUS: They always have had anyway.

DEL: Yes. Well, it takes time to change any of that stuff.

MARCUS: Let's see what I got here Del. Well I've got quite a little tape left here; it's a 45-minute one. I don't see it right now, but I see it turning (tape machine). Well, here comes a snowstorm again.

DEL: Yeah, but this is that kind of March weather though.

MARCUS: Oh, you bet, it's ideal. The Basco says the snow flies are coming down the valley here. When did you leave Diamond, and come in here?

DEL: I left there in '72, I think it was.

MARCUS: You've been in here since '72?

DEL: I think it was '72.

MARCUS: Yeah, well I'll be darned. We came in, in '79. Sold out, it's the only smart thing I think I ever did in my life. God, that's a mess down there now, isn't it?

DEL: Yes, it is. Yeah.

MARCUS: Oh, gee whiz, it's terrible.

DEL: Yeah, we was --- Fred wanted it pretty bad, you know. And he had the mountain place there too, you know. And so we let him have it, and he's a good manager there too.

MARCUS: Oh, he has done fine. You bet, he is a good manager. Your dad taught him. You betcha. Fred knew what he was doing all the time.

DEL: They're pretty --- they are well satisfied there too, you know. And it is a nice place too. It always was.

MARCUS: Oh yes, one of the finest ones, Del. There never has been a crop failure there, has there?

DEL: What?

MARCUS: There has never been a crop failure.

DEL: No.

MARCUS: You always get water enough down there to raise a hay crop.

DEL: Yeah, always enough water.

MARCUS: You bet.

DEL: And it's a quality of all good hay in there, you know. You know, when you go down towards Lawen, and in there, that's pretty poor hay, you know. We used to have kind of a poor hay there in, when we lived on the Rhineman place, you know, across there, you know. But that's all better stuff the last years, you know. Like your place there, you know, before you left.

MARCUS: Yeah, that finally was the finest hay down there.

DEL: Fine hay, yeah. You had alfalfa, and all that, you know.

MARCUS: Well, the wild hay was there too, you know. There was always the willow field, that was considered the best field.

DEL: Yes, that was all good hay. Yeah.

MARCUS: But, Del, when you folks lived across there in the old Rhineman place, there, you remember when you used to burn tules? Out between us there.

DEL: Oh yes, yeah.

MARCUS: They were clear up in there at that time. You know, I tell these people, Del, and I say I think I'm right. If this lake ever dries up, and it will sometime, or they will pump it dry, it'll go dry some of these times. There will be some of the finest soil there that they have ever had.

DEL: Yes, that's right too, you bet.

MARCUS: You bet. We saw hay crops down there, Del, in our time, where we would waste more hay than you stack off of the same land right now days.

DEL: Yes, you're right. Yes.

MARCUS: You bet. And it will level that ground out, and that alkali will all come up on

those knolls, and that will be washed off and cleaned off, and it'll just start right out --- well, like it was here 75 years ago, 70 years ago, as I can remember it.

DEL: You know when that lake was dry down in there and they raised a lot of grain and everything, all down through there, and up in this upper end too there, you know.

MARCUS: Yeah. In 1934, they estimated 7,000 acres of grain in there.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: And you could drive --- Were you, did you ever go down there when that was growing? You could drive in the car, and get out all you could see was straight up, out in those oats.

DEL: Oh yes, yeah.

MARCUS: They were far above your head, you just couldn't believe it.

DEL: Oh yes. That's the way it was down there on Baca Lake, you know. There was ---

MARCUS: Yeah, I'll bet, I'll bet.

DEL: That land, you know, after the silt and everything in there, you know. And I didn't do nothing to that, only just plant it, you know. Seed it, and it just ---

MARCUS: You didn't have to irrigate it or anything did you?

DEL: No, I didn't have to irrigate it.

MARCUS: No. Well, there must have been --- Well, Critchlows raised a lot of grain up there according to Wanda.

DEL: Yeah, Critchlows lived right above me, you know.

MARCUS: Yeah, they had a long strip down through there.

DEL: Yeah, we joined, Critchlows and I. They raised --- We raised about the same amount of grain there. And then right across from me, Vern Bossuot was in there, you know. Somebody was in there before he was in on that place. Oh, I guess Allen Turner was there. And they raised a good crop right in there too, you know. Then Barnes, not

Barnes, but George Parker, right below me, you know, and then White's down below me, and that was all.

MARCUS: Yeah, that was all they did was farm, wasn't it?

DEL: Yeah, that's all they did. George had some sheep, but Whites had a few cattle, but they done mostly all farming, you know.

MARCUS: Yeah. Then you come on down to the Grain Camp that farmed both sides of that there.

DEL: Both sides of that, yes.

MARCUS: Then down onto the Tipton place, they farmed that.

DEL: The Tipton place, yes, that was all farmed.

MARCUS: Clear down through there. And I was talking to those folks, was there any farming over in the Diamond --- back in the Diamond Swamp any place? I never did know of any ---

DEL: No, they never farmed in there, but they had --- That was all good hay all through there. That was all good hay. Now today, you know, you would be awful lucky if you could get dried up, the tules and stuff that's in there. You would be lucky if you could get maybe 70 or 80 ton of good hay. And at that time they would have stacks in there. They had 15 or 20 stacks, all over a hundred ton stacks down through there.

MARCUS: Well in 1929, Del, I went up there, Wilber Springer and I went up and helped Angel Johnson work their cattle there. We took 418 head of yearlings, calves they had weaned, they weren't yearlings yet, to Crane and put them on the train, and they were still stacking then. Catterson had a camp over along the lava beds there, someplace, and they were still stacking hay down through there.

DEL: Stacking hay down there, yeah, that's right.

MARCUS: And that was in October.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: Yeah, you bet.

DEL: And that was all pretty good hay all through there, you know. Today that is all flag and tules.

MARCUS: Oh, it's a real --- and the same thing, Del, I've got something here. This is a hay measurement and it was taken in 1935 here, and probably John Scharff made the measurement, but it isn't by somebody else. I just happened to pick this up. I got a file they hauled out to the junk pile, and I've got it there at home. And at the Sod House they stacked 1836 tons of hay. My mother did that stacking.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: And at the P Ranch, they put up 5028 tons, down at Buena Vista, there was 900 tons. And up in Diamond there was 1500, for a total of 9264 tons, and they rake bunched a lot of that hay, you know.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: The Company had three years use of that you remember, there in the trade there, they retained that and bunched a lot of that hay there rather than to stack it. It was pretty damn tough days, you know, about then, you know.

DEL: Well, I don't think after the Refuge got that they ever stacked, but very little of that hay through there.

MARCUS: Yeah, that's what I mean. Yeah, 5,000 tons is no hay for that P Ranch country.

DEL: Oh no. I know, for a year or two there, but of course now that was in what they call that Knox Swamp there, you know. My father put that up a year or two in there, you know. The Company got short of hay; they had more cattle I suppose or something. They just used that for pasture, you know, in the fall. And he stacked that, so that run

about 7,000 ton there, you know. Right down through that. That was 4 or 5 mile wide, and about the same long, you know, right through there. Maybe 2 or 3 mile wide.

MARCUS: Well they made grain fields out of that, and then they just quit the thing for some reason or another. I haven't seen it farmed in there for quite a while.

DEL: No, there was about anyway 20 families in there. Hebners was in there, you know. And there was ---

MARCUS: Well, old Jones, he did a lot of farming, Calvin Jones.

DEL: Jones had that place and farmed it in there. Tom Bailey had a place in below Jones, and he farmed in there, you know.

MARCUS: Alvon Baker.

DEL: Yeah, Alvon Baker was there, yes.

MARCUS: Fay Comegys was there.

DEL: Fay Comegys was there, and there was --- I could sit down and think. I'll bet there was 20 people there.

MARCUS: I know Joe named them for me here one time. I've got it some place, and it is, it's about 20 people.

DEL: Yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah, but --- they tore those houses down and run those people off just as fast as they could when they got in here, you know.

DEL: Bill Faye had a dairy there too. Him and Fay Comegy both had dairies there, you know.

MARCUS: Yeah, you bet.

DEL: If I'd stop to think a minute, I could remember all of them.

MARCUS: You bet, you sure would.

DEL: I can see them, but just for a minute, I can't think of their names, you know.

MARCUS: You bet. You were right there among them.

DEL: Its been 20 or 30 years, you know, and I could if I'd think for a little while, but ---

MARCUS: Yeah, its been over 50 years, Del. In 1929, we were out in Catlow Valley with cattle. Charlie and I had bought cattle through old Gus Davis at the time, and went broke the next fall, that fall. But anyway, we had a, cattle, and I come over and stayed a couple of nights with Fay and Holly Comegys. And rode the road there, and picked up a few cattle, and took them back up on top. And they were milking cows around there then, when you couldn't believe it, you know.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: That was the spring of 1929, it was the early summer.

DEL: You know, I don't know where they --- They must have shipped --- Oh yeah; the stage was running through there.

MARCUS: Yeah, the stage was taking it to Crane.

DEL: Crane, yes.

MARCUS: Yeah. Then they were sending it out to the creamery at Nampa. That was where it went to.

DEL: Yeah, we had that stage driver through Voltage up through there. Yes. Then from Voltage back to Crane.

MARCUS: What?

DEL: From Voltage right straight on to Crane.

MARCUS: Yes.

DEL: It would come out to Voltage and then on up to the P Ranch and in through there.

MARCUS: Well, then old Winn, that was Ruth Campbell's father. He drove a six-horse team, she told me about it, from Voltage to Blitzen. Can you remember that?

DEL: No.

MARCUS: It's been a long time ago. He came on across at the Rock Ford Lane there, and come down on the east side. And she said, there were times when he had to, not all the time, that he had six horses, but she said, when the roads were bad, he would use six horses hauling freight and stuff out there to those stores. Of course about that time Blitzen Valley was really booming, you know. DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: But that is the thing that kind of helped Marshalls down there too. That cancellation on all that parcel post that come in about then too. That's the way they used to get paid on stuff that they would mail out. On cancellations, if you would remember.

DEL: Yes, yeah. A lots of those fellows, you know, if you were going to buy groceries, or you could send in and write them a letter, and they would fix up the parcel post to write too, you know. And they were making money on the cancellation. That was the way they run their store, partly on their cancellations.

MARCUS: Well that's, when we moved up to the Grain Camp, in the spring of 1935, I went to work for Arthur Page there, irrigating there. And we moved up on the, with a hay wagon. So we was up there to stay. And we sent a note over to Rye, and that's what he'd do, he kept us in groceries. He'd just mail them back to us on the stage, and we'd get them the next day, you know. And it would just work out real good, just like having a supermarket in your own yard. You betcha.

DEL: Yeah, I worked for Page when I was a kid. He surveyed all that land in there, you know, all the ditches, and all that stuff for him for years, you know. Then he finally, oh I guess he died didn't he; he died of pneumonia or something. Yeah, I'd forgot that.

MARCUS: Yeah, him and old Tebo died about the same time. In 1937 or '38, along in there somewhere.

DEL: Yeah. Page died first, and then Tebo.

MARCUS: Yeah, yeah. Page was quite a guy, wasn't he? A dandy fellow.

DEL: Yes, he was.

MARCUS: He was telling me about when he --- you heard him tell too, about when they left here and went down to Los Angeles, and bought the apartment houses down there. And they were starving to death down there, and they couldn't get anybody --- and they got a job of skinning calves for Swift. They had never skinned a calf in his life, in the daylight. (Laughter) And he learned to skin calves down there, and here ---

DEL: He was kind of a dry witted guy, wasn't he?

MARCUS: Oh, yeah. It was fun to hear him tell that. Yeah.

DEL: Yeah, I worked most of one summer for him. My father had done a lot of ditch work, you know. And Page was always up through there, so he'd get me every morning to go with him, and I'd drive stakes for him.

MARCUS: Huh. John Porter worked for him for years too, didn't he?

DEL: Oh yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah. Did you work --- They had a camp, John told me about up in the sagebrush field there. They were starting to lay that out in tracks of so much, I've forgotten, maybe 80 acres, or 100 acres, or whatever it was.

DEL: The same thing, according to Sully, and then Abner, each one had a place up there, just above Rock Ford Lane toward the P Ranch up there. They raised grain and stuff in there too.

MARCUS: Yeah, yeah they did.

DEL: They were going to farm that all the hay into --- Craven always maintained that he had that all ... on it for 6 or 7 years.

MARCUS: Uh huh. Probably would have too.

DEL: I imagine he would have, yeah.

MARCUS: Of course that depression hit him, but if he had of hung on until around 1940,

he would have made a billion dollars out of it.

DEL: Well, you know, the people that --- You know, he'd help them all with their payments and stuff on the ranches, you know, and buy their hay or something, you know.

MARCUS: Well, Dunns, I bought that Dunn property, and Mrs. Dunn told me that the first year they had the place there, they put up 503 tons of hay, and sold it back to Craven. I don't know just what they got for it, but she told me in five years time that the hay paid for the ranch.

DEL: Yes.

MARCUS: Over there on Mama's place, which she bought it at the same time, and she sold 418 tons of hay back to Craven, there besides --- Hell, you couldn't see a team turn a corner, you know, after they got it around the corner. That grass, back in those days ---

DEL: Sure. I know when John Porter bought that land up there, he sold it back to the ---

MARCUS: Yeah. He did the same thing.

DEL: --- for several years, you know, and just about paid for it. He and Mackey, you know, had that place there. And then he got that of Mackey's.

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