

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #19 Side B

Subject: Bessie Wood Duhaime

Place: Duhaime Home - Ryegrass Lane

Date: April 4, 1972

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

Bessie Duhaime has lived in the Ryegrass Lane area of Harney County southeast of Burns almost all her life. Her parents, Albert and Zella Wood, came from Missouri to Baker, Oregon, and when her dad heard about land opening up for homesteading in 1908, they came to Harney County in a covered wagon with a four-horse team and located at what is now known as the Johnny Wood place, southeast of Burns. Bessie was eight years old. She was the only child at this time. A brother had died in Baker before they made the trip to Harney County. Later another brother and sister were born at the homestead: Johnny Wood, of Hines, and Eva Rodriguez of Hines.

PAULINE BRAYMEN: Okay, this is Pauline Braymen, I'm interviewing Bessie Duhaime at her home on Ryegrass Lane in Harney County. The date is April 4th or 5th, April 4th, 1972. Now what I wanted to know was when your parents came, and where they homesteaded.

BESSIE DUHAIME: Well they came to the area in 1908, and they homesteaded two miles south of here. I don't know what section it would be.

PAULINE: That would be in this area, just ...

BESSIE: Yeah ...

PAULINE: And what was their names?

BESSIE: Albert and Zella Wood, Z E L L A.

PAULINE: Where did they come from?

BESSIE: They come from Missouri.

PAULINE: Do you know how they happened to --- how did they find out about Harney County? How did they happen to come here?

BESSIE: First they came to Baker, Oregon, and then Dad heard about this land being opened for homesteading. And they come over and located the homestead down there. They came over in a covered wagon with a four-horse team. Made the journey from Baker over here.

PAULINE: How old were you then?

BESSIE: I was eight.

PAULINE: You were eight years old. How long did it take you to come, several days?

BESSIE: Well yes, it would. I don't remember how long. They camped every night, you know. They turned the horses loose to graze at night. So the next morning Dad would have to go find them, and took them up and come on some more.

PAULINE: He just turned them loose then, he wouldn't tie them or anything?

BESSIE: Huh?

PAULINE: He didn't tie them or anything? He just ---

BESSIE: Oh no, they hobbled them and put a bell on them, a little bell on one of them. It seemed like they pretty well stayed together. And they couldn't go very far because they had hobbles on their front feet.

PAULINE: They would just graze.

BESSIE: Well they could graze. And then the next morning he would go find them and we would start out again. They generally weren't too far away.

PAULINE: Were there other children in the family at the time?

BESSIE: No.

PAULINE: You were the ---

BESSIE: I had a brother that died in Baker before we came over here. Johnny and Eva were both born out here on the Ryegrass.

PAULINE: Well now what is Eva's name now, I should know?

BESSIE: Rodriguez.

PAULINE: Rodriguez.

BESSIE: Mrs. Henry Rodriguez.

PAULINE: Where does she live?

BESSIE: In Hines.

PAULINE: In Hines. Now I didn't know that.

BESSIE: They've been here over a year. Of course Johnny is in Hines too.

PAULINE: Yes. I hope to get hold of him and track him down and talk to him before I get through here.

BESSIE: Yeah.

PAULINE: What kind of a house did you have to live in at first?

BESSIE: Well we didn't have a house; we just had our camp until Dad could build a house.

PAULINE: Did you have tents, or did you just live in the wagon, in and out of the wagon?

BESSIE: I think we lived in the wagon, I'm not sure. I think we lived in a wagon until they got the house built. But we might have had a tent, but I don't remember it. I don't remember that part of it.

PAULINE: Did he dig a well, or ---

BESSIE: Oh, had to, there is no other water. They dug surface wells. He went down about twelve feet I guess.

PAULINE: Well, that would about do it. These were, they dug them out by hand.

BESSIE: Oh, yes.

PAULINE: I've often wondered how they kept these from falling in, or the dirt from caving in the sides. But they ---

BESSIE: Oh, they had to case it with lumber. Dad made a lumber casing.

PAULINE: Well I would have thought they would have to do something. But I had never asked anybody.

BESSIE: They did. They cased it with 2 x 12's.

PAULINE: Were there quite a few other people homesteading out here too at that time?

BESSIE: Oh yes. There was homesteaders on almost every 160 acres at that time. Pickleheimers lived to the west of us. I don't know who owned the land to the east of us. No one ever lived there as a homestead. Then Otto Gasch was just to the south of us across the road.

PAULINE: That's where the oil well is. (Note: The oil well is a test hole. Oil was never struck.)

BESSIE: Well no, it's across the road.

PAULINE: Oh, no.

BESSIE: On the east side of the road.

PAULINE: Did they have a school at this time or did the school come later?

BESSIE: Oh, they had a school down here, Ryegrass.

PAULINE: Ryegrass School is where you went to school.

BESSIE: I went to school. Yeah, we'd ride the old horse three miles to school. Freeze to death in the wintertime. I thought I was anyway.

PAULINE: Ida Cross was telling me the other day, she said every kid in Harney County had chill blains, she thought. (Laughter) BESSIE: Well I know we'd get cold, our hands

and feet would get so cold that we would bawl when we was getting warm, you know, it got so cold. But that didn't stop us from going to school.

PAULINE: What kind of clothes did you have to wear then, do you remember?

BESSIE: Oh, we dressed up warm. Long underwear and heavy clothes, as we could have.

PAULINE: Do you remember what kind of crops your dad put in?

BESSIE: Oh, he tried to grow some crops of --- but he couldn't make much success, because there was no water for it and the wind blew the dirt all away, over on the other quarter there. You can go down there now and see the east side of the road is all built up with dirt that blew off our place. Blew it clear down to the sub-soil. He didn't do much farming.

PAULINE: Well this is what happened when he plowed up the ground?

BESSIE: Uh huh, plowed it up, why it was so loose it just blew away. It got so dirty that they even moved the house and all down about --- it was about halfway closer to the corner than it is now. And they moved it down where it hadn't been broke up on the west side so that the wind wouldn't bring quite so much dirt in.

PAULINE: Well I know the wind blows hard in Harney County, and I've heard other people talk about the dust.

BESSIE: Yeah, you can see it sometimes yourself going up ---

PAULINE: It is still blowing, isn't it?

BESSIE: Yeah. Of course that land when it is dry, it sure does blow, no doubt.

PAULINE: Did you find lots of Indian artifacts, arrowheads, and relics down in that area?

BESSIE: No.

PAULINE: Not any?

BESSIE: Not that I know of.

PAULINE: Well some of the areas around, right in through here are pretty ---

BESSIE: Yeah, some of them do.

PAULINE: Seems like they must have been camping grounds in certain areas.

BESSIE: We have picked up some, and Roy picked up some arrowheads out here in the field.

PAULINE: We found some when Alan had the Jackson place. He found some over there in one area, one field, when he plowed it in the spring and turned it up.

BESSIE: Yeah, it has been there ages, I guess. Just come to the surface.

PAULINE: Yeah, uh huh. Well how long did your folks stay on the place there?

BESSIE: I guess they, I don't know. They stayed there until Mother got sick, then they went down to California. But I couldn't tell you the year.

PAULINE: You know just about how long they were there?

BESSIE: I would have to do some figuring and thinking.

PAULINE: Well then I understand that Treft and his brothers came into, and said they worked for the Denstedts ... and then bought land.

BESSIE: Yes, they did. Treft did.

PAULINE: Can you tell me a little bit about where they came from, and how they happened to come?

BESSIE: Well my husband came from South Dakota, Elk Point, South Dakota. And they came to Portland, and then they, Joe, and Bill and Treft they homestead in Clover Swale.

PAULINE: Now where is that?

BESSIE: Clover Swale? It's way down south here, south of the lakes down there, quite a ways on down.

PAULINE: Down ---

BESSIE: South.

PAULINE: Yeah.

BESSIE: Be the South End.

PAULINE: Well that's a new name. I hadn't heard that.

BESSIE: Down to Diamond. I don't know whether it's this side or the other side of Diamond, I think it's the other side, but I'm not sure about that.

PAULINE: This Clover Swale is a new term, I hadn't heard that before.

BESSIE: Oh that was a name of a place at that time.

PAULINE: Was there a town there then, or a post office, or was it just the name of a general area?

BESSIE: I don't think so, I don't think so. I think they got their mail in Burns. But there was a community at that time there they called Clover Swale. Nellie Miller could tell you.

PAULINE: Well I hope to talk to her before I get through.

BESSIE: She could tell you all about it, because I was only there a short while. But she was there, lived there.

PAULINE: See; let me make a note of that to ask Nellie about Clover Spring, or Clover Swale.

BESSIE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: So then you must have lived there for a while after you were married?

BESSIE: No, I wasn't down there very much. Because after we was married we lived over here. I never did live there.

PAULINE: Oh, I see.

BESSIE: We lived over on the Jackson, what is the Jackson place now. Then Treft went into the Armed Services from there. And I went to Portland. And then in 1920 we came back and bought this place down here, this 160.

PAULINE: So he was in World War I then?

BESSIE: One.

PAULINE: Did he serve overseas?

BESSIE: No, just at Camp Lewis, Washington.

PAULINE: And then when you came back you come ---

BESSIE: When we came back here, why they, Treft and Bill and Joe bought this 160 over here.

PAULINE: Then your children all went to Ryegrass School?

BESSIE: Roy and Alice --- and Roy went to Ryegrass School. And they both went to Burns to school after the school bus was started. PAULINE: So do you remember about what time they discontinued the rural school out here and went into town?

BESSIE: No. (Laughter) I drove the school bus too.

PAULINE: You drove the school bus.

BESSIE: Yeah.

PAULINE: Were you the first school bus driver for out this way?

BESSIE: I guess I was, yeah.

PAULINE: What kind of an outfit did you have to drive?

BESSIE: Just a, I think it was a Ford car. I'm not sure about that Ford business. But it was a car, a touring car.

PAULINE: Touring car.

BESSIE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: How many kids did you haul in?

BESSIE: Well, it was full. I don't know, there was the Shaddock --- Larry and Darrel. And there was, oh I don't know, a half a dozen or more. It was full.

PAULINE: So in every day, and home every night.

BESSIE: And the roads were not graveled at that time.

PAULINE: That could have been a little messy in the spring.

BESSIE: Yeah, it was bad. Sometimes I got stuck. I got stuck on the highway down here in ... meadow.

PAULINE: Yeah.

BESSIE: And there was ruts in the road, and I slipped off into the wrong ruts. And that evening we didn't have to come by the Experiment Station, so we were coming down the highway to home. And there I sat, and the kids, Billy Duhaime from this other place, young boy, Gertie and Bill's boy, was there. And we all had to walk home and then we had to walk back and get the car.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

BESSIE: Treft took a team of horses, and after he got it out then I had to drive the car home, and he brought the wagon home. I sometimes think about that when I go by that nice highway now.

PAULINE: Yes, it's quite a difference. Well I can remember just vaguely when, in the spring when the water would come up, and sometimes would go over the highway up there by the river bridge. And lots of times when I come home from town, I think about that. I guess the road just wasn't built up as high, because the water certainly gets up.

BESSIE: Well when my folks first come here it was the only gravel road there was, or graded road, pretty near, was as far as the Grange Hall, and the rest was all mud. We used to, in the summertime to avoid the mud and dust on the road, we'd go through the meadows from west, about a mile west on that road down there. And then go through the meadows, out through; come out by Bill Hanley's house.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Across the Bell A land then in other words, the meadows in the Bell A.

BESSIE: Of course you couldn't do that when the water was high, and everything. But

after the haying started, why then you could go through there, and it wasn't so dusty.

PAULINE: I hadn't heard about that either before. That's something new. I've been learning all kinds of things that I didn't know before. Yeah. Well then Bill and Joe Duhaime, they had houses in this area too out here, and raised families here?

BESSIE: Well Bill was married later, but not at that time. He was married after we moved down here. After we bought this place.

PAULINE: Then did they leave here, and go someplace else?

BESSIE: They went to Portland awhile, but Bill died here, you know.

PAULINE: Oh he did. No, I didn't know.

BESSIE: Yeah, in the old hill hospital up there. It isn't a hospital anymore.

PAULINE: No. Yeah, the Valley View Hospital. No, I didn't realize that. Of course this was a little before my time. And I can't, you know, I just remember that you and Treft being here. I don't remember there being other Duhaimes here at all. Well let me see now, I've been asking some questions about what, how the woman survived in this world out here in the early days.

BESSIE: I really don't know. (Laughter) I often think Mother used to, see the dust sure bothered her, you know, and the dirt blowing and everything. I don't remember much about it. They didn't talk to me about it. Everything seemed to be okay.

PAULINE: Did they, of course milk a cow and have some chickens.

BESSIE: Oh yes, we had a milk cow, and we had chickens. She sold butter and eggs in Burns. And drove in with a horse and buggy once a week. That's the reason we had to go to town was to avoid the dust. We used to make sauerkraut and sell it. I used to do the same thing when I first started out too. I delivered eggs, and whatever I could get my hands on to make any money, you know. Because people didn't have any at that time, they were very scarce. Everything they could get hold of and sell, why they did. They

even traded grain for groceries. We sold everything. (Laughter)

PAULINE: What about, do you remember anything about the rabbit drives, and the rabbit bounty?

BESSIE: Oh yeah. Right across the road here they had a rabbit drive and they would get out, and they made their pen first in the corner, and then they all got out and spread out and drove the rabbits into the corner where there was rabbit wire so they couldn't get out. Had wings on them, so they'd drive them in there, and then they'd kill them by the wagonload. They about ate the country up, all the crops you know.

PAULINE: This was ---

BESSIE: Killed all the crops, you know, and everything.

PAULINE: Yeah. This was in the, oh 1920, along in there wasn't it? Or was it earlier than that even?

BESSIE: Along in there.

PAULINE: Yeah.

BESSIE: After we come out here, yeah after 1920.

PAULINE: From what Aunt Gladys told me, even up until around 1930, between 1920, 1930 in there.

BESSIE: Well maybe she remembered it better than I did. I don't remember the dates, the dates get me confused.

PAULINE: Well I don't --- I just --- Just from the things that she said, this is kind of the conclusion that I came to more than a date that she said, but just from her conversation that this was the time that I placed it, was the late 19 ---

BESSIE: They'd just eat up everything.

PAULINE: Well we had this --- was it similar to what we had happen here a few years ago, only worse?

BESSIE: Oh yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah. I know I went down to the South End with the county agent, and I never saw so many rabbits in my life as I saw at that time. And I kind of have an idea of what it was like then. BESSIE: Yeah, well they come right in and, right in here and eat on the haystacks and undermine the haystacks. Right here on this place. Not only here but everywhere else.

PAULINE: Yeah, and everywhere else.

BESSIE: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well you said you made sauerkraut and sold it. And you raised your own cabbage.

BESSIE: Oh yes, raised a big garden. Everything that would grow here.

PAULINE: Anything that would grow, like cabbage and ---

BESSIE: Cabbage and carrots and rutabagas. Not things that would freeze easily. I tried to raise tomatoes, but I've never got a ripe tomato in all the time I've tried. And then Mrs. Tiller moved over here across the road from me, and one year she had nice string beans and ripe tomatoes. I believe that's the only time in history they ever had a season long enough for them to ripen.

PAULINE: I've gone the same route. I tried and tried, I'd started them early in the house, and the men built me a hot bed, and I kept them covered, and I went out in the fall and covered them with blankets.

BESSIE: They'd still freeze.

PAULINE: They froze, they froze.

BESSIE: That's the way they did for me too. Mrs. Tiller asked me what time of vegetables that we plant out here, and I begin telling her the hearty ones, you know. Then she grows tomatoes and string beans. But the next year it didn't happen that way.

That don't happen very often.

PAULINE: Well I'm sure that when I say this, that you did a lot of canning.

BESSIE: Oh yes, did lots of canning.

PAULINE: But what about your mother, can you remember, did she do a lot of canning?

BESSIE: Well she did some. It's such a high altitude out here; it's difficult to can on an ordinary wood stove. And she would can and sometimes they wouldn't keep. Especially peas, they are hard to keep. And you'd have to can them in the wash boiler with water, you know, and the biggest part of them wouldn't keep. I got me an oil stove and a pressure cooker canner, and then I could can them.

PAULINE: Well the reason I asked, was that I know that, well like in talking to Ida, and well even Aunt Gladys, they have never mentioned canning, that their folks, that their mother's canned. And Ida was telling me mostly that they had dried fruit.

BESSIE: Well the fruit in this country, no use canning it, because you have to buy it anyway. So we didn't bother canning the fruit. But I canned vegetables and canned beef, and canned pork. After I got my coal oil, little coal oil burner stove and a pressure cooker, then you could do it.

PAULINE: But before --- but on a wood stove it is difficult.

BESSIE: The wood stove, you just couldn't do it. It wasn't reliable enough. You'd work and work and get nothing.

PAULINE: Well did your dad go out then for supplies? Did he go to Vale or Huntington?

BESSIE: No, huh uh. They used to have freight teams going in and out. But we never done, or he never done that.

PAULINE: So he'd just buy then from, in town.

BESSIE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Well I know that people had cellars to store things like potatoes and ---

BESSIE: Oh, yeah.

PAULINE: But out in this area where the water comes up and everything, how did they fix it so that they didn't get --- or did they?

BESSIE: Well they didn't. When the water came, you had to get your things out of the cellar. Maybe you hung them in the well, see on a rope, down in the, with a rope down in a surface well. But you had to get them out, because here you can see the water stands on top of the ground out here. And we had an old cellar back out here. And in the spring, until the water went down, the table went down, you didn't use it. If there was anything in there you had to leave it because it was full of water.

PAULINE: Yeah. Well I can appreciate that. I don't know whether it was the cellar there where we live now, or at the Korten place, but I remember water down in there, and the boards to get across the water.

BESSIE: You couldn't do it here, because the water table was too high, they just had to take things out.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

BESSIE: My dad and Otto Gasch had a threshing machine that they used to thresh with, custom threshing around the valley.

PAULINE: This is a horse drawn one, or was it ---

BESSIE: Oh no, they had a steam engine.

PAULINE: A steam engine.

BESSIE: Steam engine. Of course the horses had to haul the water, and haul the --- for the steam engine. But they had a ---and they went around, all around the valley, all around here in the fall, threshing.

PAULINE: Mostly wheat, or oats, or barley, or whatever they had.

BESSIE: Whatever they had, whatever there was. They used to grow wheat down here

on this other place here. And they used to, threshing crew used to come. They cooked breakfast and dinner and supper for about twenty-four men, you know you're doing something.

PAULINE: Yes, you would.

BESSIE: Gladys Denstedt used to come down and help, and the neighbors all come in to help, you know. She used to come down and help me to cook for them at noon and in the evening. But at breakfast I had to cook it for them all by my lonesome, on a little four-burner wood stove.

PAULINE: What did you usually fix for them?

BESSIE: Potatoes and steak and biscuits. I don't know how I ever cooked it all on that little stove, but we did. And we had fried potatoes, regular man-sized breakfast, you know. A hungry man would eat. And Gladys would come down and help me, and then I'd go down over and help her. Variens the same way over here. They used to haul bundles in, and take the bundles off the wagon and put them in the threshing machine and that required a lot of men around to do that.

PAULINE: Well I wasn't thinking about how these threshers worked, but you didn't go through the field with the thresher then, you brought the grain to the thresher.

BESSIE: Oh, they brought it to the, oh yeah, brought it to the threshing machine. I have some pictures, but I don't know where to lay my hands on them. Great big piles of straw, you know, where they hauled it in. They had to have quite a number of wagons, hay wagons. Oh they had hayracks on them, and horses to haul a load. And then they'd come to the combine, or the threshing machine, one on each side of the threshing, and they'd each throw a bundle in, and keep that up, see. Then one would pull out and another would be ready to pull in. That way they kept it a going.

PAULINE: Kept it going all the time.

BESSIE: And somebody sewing sacks as the grain came out.

PAULINE: And then you had to have a water wagon to haul the water.

BESSIE: Oh yes, had a water wagon to haul water.

PAULINE: Where did they haul the water from?

BESSIE: From the houses from wherever the wells were.

PAULINE: From the wells. And did they have a motor or something to pull up the water, or did that come up by hand?

BESSIE: Oh that come up by, however you brought it. Maybe the windmill was running.

PAULINE: If the windmill was running, why you had it easier ... to run the pump handle. Well I know some of these questions sound silly, but you know, they don't do these things this way anymore.

BESSIE: No, they don't.

PAULINE: And that's the reason for this project is to record how they did these things then, before it all becomes lost.

BESSIE: Well in haying, they done practically the same thing. They took a slip, a ... like a bottom of a hay rack, only it just had poles under it for slack to slide down, they'd pitch the hay on that. And pull it over to the derrick and pick it off of there with a derrick fork. Pick it up and put it over on the stack. That was before they baled it. In those days if they baled any hay they baled it after it was stacked and cured. And they had a stationery baler.

PAULINE: Did many people do that in this country?

BESSIE: Well that's the way they did it, that's the way they hayed.

PAULINE: I mean the baling part. It didn't ---

BESSIE: Yeah, they baled, they didn't, we never baled any here. But the wild meadows sometimes would have a baler come in and bale some of their hay. We never did.

PAULINE: Well I had never heard of them doing this before. I knew that they stacked it, you know, just loose.

BESSIE: Stacked it loose, yeah. Then if they needed bales, or for some reason, why they had a stationary baler that stayed right there at the haystack.

PAULINE: And baled it up. Well we certainly do it different now.

BESSIE: I should say they do.

PAULINE: Alan climbs on his stack cruiser and off he goes. Of course we stack with slips just a few years ago. Put the bales on the slips and hauled them to the stack. And he does now with his stack cruiser what it took a crew of four to do. And he does more in a day's time than a crew of four could do in a day's time.

BESSIE: Oh yeah.

PAULINE: And it's just fascinating to me, I just can't believe it. But it's --- you can't find anyone who wants to stack hay anymore.

BESSIE: Oh, you couldn't do that now. You couldn't even begin to get the labor to do that anymore.

PAULINE: No, that's the thing, you just can't.

BESSIE: It isn't here. They don't know how, and they don't want to.

PAULINE: They don't want to either, no they don't. Can't much blame them, it's hard work.

BESSIE: When anything comes to be work, why it is too much.

PAULINE: Well getting back to your school days, what was your day like? What kinds of things did you study, and ---

BESSIE: We went to school and there was all eight grades to one teacher. I don't remember how many children was in the school, you know, for the eight grades. But they generally had the eight grades. And when our time come to recite our lessons we had to

go up on the front and recite our lessons. And then that class would go back, and another one would go up. In the meantime we had to study and pay attention to what they were doing too, you know.

PAULINE: Well do you remember, maybe you weren't in school at the same time as Aunt Gladys, but I had the idea that you were.

BESSIE: Yes, we were.

PAULINE: Yeah, well then I've got ---

BESSIE: She ... down here too.

PAULINE: Well then I've got my dates all right here then. She was telling me about a man, I can't remember now what she said his name was, Taylor I think.

BESSIE: Yeah.

PAULINE: He used to recite, and that the children all loved to hear him recite. Do you remember him?

BESSIE: Yes, I sure do. He had us in plays and everything else, you know. Every Friday afternoon we had recitations that we had to get up before the class and speak. Yeah.

PAULINE: From memory?

BESSIE: Yes, uh huh. We had to learn pieces and recite them.

PAULINE: She was telling me about one in particular that she liked real well. It was about the one where he set old blue hen.

BESSIE: Yeah.

PAULINE: She remembers that one.

BESSIE: I remember that too, I just haven't thought about it for so long, that I can't think. But anyway, the old man got up there, and they broke the egg, and they all fell on the, you know, the broken egg dribbled down his face.

PAULINE: She said the kids all liked that one. They requested that particularly.

BESSIE: Yeah, Gladys and Wesley and Charlie all went there. And Jimmy Varien and ---
The folks that lived where you folks used to live there ---

PAULINE: Yeah, at the old Experiment Station.

BESSIE: No. On there too, but on up ---

PAULINE: At the Korten place, what was the Korten place.

BESSIE: The Korten place. ... whether it was Charlie or the other one. But they used to
come to school down there.

PAULINE: Well then they came from quite a wide area then to Ryegrass school.

BESSIE: Yes, uh huh.

PAULINE: If it included clear up there.

BESSIE: Yeah, they included there. And then the last two years that I went to school, the
seventh and eighth grade, they formed another district down here at Lone Star. And I
went down there for two years before I went to high school.

PAULINE: Yes, Aunt Gladys went to Lone Star Schoolhouse. It was what, about two
miles did you say out here?

BESSIE: Oh, no, it was, I don't know just how far it would be. I was trying to figure it out.
I think it was about from Dad's place to the corner, that was approximately two miles. It
was about three miles from our place. About the same as it was to here. But I went with
a horse and buggy there and didn't go on horseback. And the folks from down towards
Lawen came there too, the Wilfongs come there. I don't know where any of those people
are anymore.

PAULINE: Now the Wilfongs, this is a name that I hadn't heard before.

BESSIE: The last I heard, some of them, one of them lives in Idaho, but I don't
remember.

PAULINE: Did you ever visit or know anyone who lived out in the Sunset Valley area, out

by Dog Mountain and over in there?

BESSIE: No, I never was down there. I've been down there since then, but only about once.

PAULINE: Yeah. Can you remember anything about the Experiment Station when it first started up?

BESSIE: Oh yes, uh huh. Goldie and Opal Shaddock run it.

PAULINE: I understand that they used to have dances down there.

BESSIE: They what?

PAULINE: That they used to have dances in the house down there. Do you ---

BESSIE: Used to have what?

PAULINE: Dances.

BESSIE: I don't know, I don't know. The only thing I remember about there was their field days that they had every summer for all the neighborhoods to come in, and they'd look over the place and tell about what they had done on the Experiment Station. The results of their work for that year, and their pumping that they had just started, pump irrigation. And Mr. and Mrs. Farson used to live there, that was Goldie's brother. And Mrs. Farson I believe lives with her daughter down here at, what's the name of that --- well it's the junction down here that goes to, over to Idaho and down to California.

PAULINE: Well is that what they call Burns Junction?

BESSIE: No, not Burns Junction, the other side of Burns Junction, east of Burns Junction. What's the name of that community over there? Gone.

PAULINE: Well I can't think either what ---

BESSIE: Jordan Valley.

PAULINE: Jordan Valley, yeah.

BESSIE: I believe that Mrs. Farson still lives there, and I think she comes up in the

summer. And she lives in California in the winter.

PAULINE: Uh huh. It would be interesting to get a hold of her to

BESSIE: She lives with her daughter there.

PAULINE: --- she might have some interesting things to tell me. BESSIE: I don't know if I can find her. Sometimes the names get away from you. ... Rayburn is the daughter of Mrs. Farson.

PAULINE: Is that B U R N on the end?

BESSIE: R A Y B U R N.

PAULINE: Uh huh, okay.

BESSIE: They don't live in Jordan Valley, but they live close out, they're farmers.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

BESSIE: Well it's --- the other side of Burns Junction, you go east --- it's been a long time since I was there. But the first line of telephone, not telephone but the electric line goes down. You go down that, went north on that road and you come to their house. I think it's the first house on that lane.

PAULINE: I might write to her and see, you know, if she's still

BESSIE: If you want to write to her, it's Box 236, Jordan Valley. Oran Rayburn, O R A N.

PAULINE: And if I couldn't go see her, why maybe she would write a letter, you know, and just tell some things.

BESSIE: They raised cattle down there, feed cattle, raise cattle. PAULINE: Well can you think of anything else that happened when you were young and foolish?

BESSIE: Huh?

PAULINE: Can you think of anything else that happened when you were young and

foolish that we should record for ---

BESSIE: I don't suppose so. I know --- one time I had an uncle, one of Dad's brothers, come out to visit from Missouri. And there was lots of geese here at that time, in the fall of the year, you know. So they went out and they hunted geese. And they only brought home twenty-four geese.

PAULINE: Just twenty-four.

BESSIE: And of course there was no limit on them or anything else at that time. And Mother took the breasts and sliced them off and salted them down, you know, so we could use them later. And we ate carcasses for a long time, you know, that wouldn't go in there.

PAULINE: Well I ---

BESSIE: There was no way to, she had no way to keep them except to salt them down. No freezer, no canning, or anything else.

PAULINE: Well she had lots of feathers for ---

BESSIE: And feathers, they had feather ticks all over the place, yeah. They all had to be picked and cleaned and everything else. That was a job. We got awfully tired of eating carcasses.

PAULINE: I can imagine. (Laughter) One goose carcass is about all I can take.

BESSIE: The only thing I like about a goose anymore is his gizzard. I never did get tired of eating goose gizzard. And it still, if you get a goose, the very best part is to fry that breast. Slice it, you know, like you was going to slice it and it makes very good steak.

PAULINE: Uh huh. That's good to know.

BESSIE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Well we had just been married a little while when my dad brought us a goose as a present. In fact I think there were two of them. Alan or I either one knew what to do

with them. So we took them down in the basement, we got them cleaned, but it was a job. Because either one of us know how to go about it.

BESSIE: Well I think Mother skinned most of these after she got the feather off, because that was just an enormous job.

PAULINE: Well they've got so much down on them.

BESSIE: Oh yeah.

PAULINE: That really, it's about the only way. But we didn't know that until later. So we tried to pick it.

BESSIE: Whenever you get another one, slice that breast. It's much better fried than it is baked or any other way.

PAULINE: I will. That sounds like a good idea. Did your dad hunt? Did you have venison?

BESSIE: He hunted, yeah. He kept us in meat, some kind like that, you know, most of the time. That's about all the kind of meat we had was wild game.

PAULINE: What about the antelope? I know that they come up, still come up pretty close around here.

BESSIE: I don't know, I don't remember eating antelope. But he did go deer hunting. In the fall he used to haul the wood out of the mountains here, you know, and they would kill a deer up there.

PAULINE: Did they make jerky out of it, or just ---

BESSIE: No, I don't remember him making jerky. I don't know how they took care of it.

PAULINE: I suppose they, of course if they ---

BESSIE: ... get another I guess.

PAULINE: Get it in the fall of the year too, the weather would be cold.

BESSIE: In the fall of the year it might have been cold enough to keep.

PAULINE: Did you ever go along when you went to haul wood?

BESSIE: Huh uh. No. Folks --- Joe and Bill used to go haul wood too. We used to get our wood out of the mountains. Mahogany wood was very good, you know, it keeps fire longer than pine.

PAULINE: It does, I didn't know that.

BESSIE: Oh yes, it's just like burning coal there. We burned some sagebrush, but you've got to keep poking that in all the time, it burns too fast. Mahogany would keep a better fire, lots better. They did burn quite a bit of pine. They'd go up and get a load.

PAULINE: Well most people did this, clear up until ---

BESSIE: They'd get a permit to go and get down so many old trees, dead trees. Because green trees they'd have to dry out, or, you know, so they could burn them, because green stuff don't burn as good as dead timber.

PAULINE: Do you remember when you first saw an automobile, or first rode in an automobile?

BESSIE: The first time I seen an automobile was when Hopkins used to have a homestead, and they came out here. And it must have been, it might of been a Ford, I don't know what the name of it was. But they let me ride from the house down there to the highway. Then of course I had to turn around and walk back, but that was wonderful to ride on that running board of that car.

PAULINE: It was quite a thrill then?

BESSIE: Yeah, yeah, that was quite a thrill. That was the first time I ever rode on an automobile. Of course I believe they had them in Burns before that. That's the first time I ever rode on one.

PAULINE: Do you remember when --- when did you have your first automobile?

BESSIE: We had it when we come out here in 1920.

PAULINE: In 1920.

BESSIE: We had a Ford. It wasn't ours, it belonged to the ranch. Yeah. Had to have some way to get to town. But we didn't have it right away, because we used to go to town with a horse and buggy. It wasn't right away that we had the car. It wasn't too long afterwards.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Early 1920's sometime.

BESSIE: Uh huh. '20, '21, somewhere along there. At first we went to town with a team.

PAULINE: Do you think the weather has changed a lot over the years? Or do you see a pattern?

BESSIE: No, I don't think so.

PAULINE: You just think it just kind of stays the same.

BESSIE: It's still as unpredictable as it ever was. No, I wouldn't predict the weather in Harney County. Except it generally does what it did a while back, get nice and warm, get things growing and then come along and freezes everything up.

PAULINE: Freeze it all, yeah. Well I was thinking, they used to tell --- my dad tells about skating to school down at Lawen. The river and everything froze up down there enough so that they could skate to school. And it just doesn't seem like it gets that cold anymore.

BESSIE: It only got twenty below here last winter.

PAULINE: Right, it did. We've had our days and our nights all right.

BESSIE: That was only one night, but it did get there.

PAULINE: I think this last winter was probably the hardest winter we've had in a long time. Well Bessie, I sure thank you for talking to me. This is more fun; I'm really having a ball.

BESSIE: Well if I'd of known what you wanted, I could probably looked through some pictures, and showed you some pictures of the old times.

PAULINE: Well I may come back and look at your pictures another day. That would be --

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BESSIE: If you've got time, they're in a box out there if you want to look.

PAULINE: Well, let me look at ---

(END OF TAPE)

The Duhaimes farmed in Ryegrass from 1920 until the present time. Treft is deceased, as are Joe and Bill. But Bessie and her sons Roy and Ralph, and daughter and son-in-law the Wallace Shepards operate the ranch as an alfalfa operation under the name Ryegrass Ranches. The Duhaimes were of French-Canadian descent. The pictures accompany this report to show the machinery and methods of farming in earlier days in Harney County.

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