

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #20 - Side A

Subject: Alvon Baker

Place: Baker Home - Burns, Oregon

Date: May 8, 1973

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen and I'm interviewing Alvon Baker at his home in Burns. ... How did the Bakers happen to wind up in Harney County? Do you know why they came? Did you ever hear your dad tell about what decided him to come here?

ALVON BAKER: Well he was an orphan boy, I know that. His parents died when he was young, and I'll tell you somebody who might remember that a little better than I would and that's that sister of mine, I'll go get her. She is older than I am.

PAULINE: Ida.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well I think she has probably told me some of this too. I will go back and look on the things that she told me the other day.

ALVON: She has?

PAULINE: Yeah. You see she was Queen Mother a couple of years ago, and I'll go back and re-read.

ALVON: Well I am kinda in the dark on that, you know, when you're younger there you don't pay any attention to it, I didn't. But someone like her would, see.

PAULINE: His name was Tom?

ALVON: His name was Tom, yes. James Thomas Baker. Sarah Etta was my mother's name.

PAULINE: What was her maiden name?

ALVON: Dixon. Grandpa and Grandma Dixon was her parents. Yeah. Harve Dixon and Mary Ellen, that was their names. Let's see, but my dad come here as an orphan boy and he, I think he was kind of a chore boy for the PLS Company. And then he settled on the old home place up here, as far as, I don't know just what he did, or when he did it. You're taking this all in, ain't you?

PAULINE: Yeah. But like I said, I talked to Ida and I've got some of these dates and things, I think she has given me.

ALVON: I think she's got better dates on them things than I have. Yeah. I got a frog in my throat too, can't spit him out, but he is in here.

PAULINE: That happens, especially in the mornings.

ALVON: No, all day long. They say it's some kind of a gland trouble going around.

EMMA BAKER: I told him he was talking too much.

ALVON: Huh?

PAULINE: That's what he gets for talking too much.

ALVON: Well I went over to Bend and had a feller examine my throat, you know, sometimes it could be cancer or something. But he said there is nothing wrong, and he sent word back to Dr. John that I talked too much. He got a kick out of that. Yeah, but I don't know.

PAULINE: Well you were born here then?

ALVON: Yeah, we was born here at Poison Creek, I was. 1895, on August the 11th, I am 77 years old.

PAULINE: Your dad's place was where George Purdy lives now.

ALVON: Well that's the place, yeah. I don't remember for sure. Well he never homesteaded; he died with his homestead right. I still got mine. So who he got that from, I'm not sure. I know who Whitings did, was Ziegler's, but they didn't have that part. I just don't know, I don't know if Ida would or not. Yeah. But I know he was just a young fella when he come here. I don't even know how old he was. You know a person ought to keep some of that, and she does, see.

PAULINE: Well I'll check back with her, because she told me quite a lot of stuff about the early times in history.

ALVON: Yeah, you would get the same thing if I remembered it.

PAULINE: Yeah, that will be fine. Then you went to school at Poison Creek.

ALVON: Yeah, that's the only school I ever went to. Yeah.

PAULINE: You rode horseback?

ALVON: Walked.

PAULINE: Walked.

ALVON: Most the time we walked. Yeah, all of us kids, nearly all walked. Some of them went to school up here, but I never, I just went to school at Poison Creek. Yeah, when the old freight wagons was there, the dust was that deep. It was my hobby to walk in those chuck holes.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Yeah, I did that, yeah. Yeah, that's the only school I ever went to. I went up, I never did go through the eight grade. Nope, finally quit and went to work. Yeah. They wasn't as strict those days as they are now.

PAULINE: Well I know my grandma only went through fourth grade, and she is better educated than a lot of people that have been to college, you know. You know, it's not ---

ALVON: Well it's a kind of a playhouse anymore, the college and all these schools, as far

as I'm concerned. Yeah, you know it too, yeah. Of course maybe you went to college, you might have been more interested, but there is such a small percentage.

PAULINE: Well there is a little of both, you know.

ALVON: Yeah, sure, it depends on the individual.

PAULINE: It depends on what you're looking for. Whether you're looking for a husband, or whether you are looking for an education.

ALVON: If you are a playboy or girl, well that's it. If you are interested, that's it, yeah.

PAULINE: So --- Did you ever do any freighting, go out with the

ALVON: Well we used to drive horses from here to John Day years ago, before there was any cars, and get a year's supply of potatoes and vegetables and stuff out of the John Day Valley. They didn't raise it here at all at that time. Yeah, I did it. The first time ever drove four horses was from the home place over there and back, three horses and a mule. I drove lots of them farming, but to get on the road that's the first time. Mrs. Bill Stewart and my mother took two horses on a wagon and they went over, and I went with them and I drove four. Yeah, we had quite a trip.

PAULINE: How long did it take you?

ALVON: Oh well, it wouldn't take too long. We could go over in a day, or something like that. But by the time we --- most of the time we had to pick up these potatoes. They'd plow them out, but you had to pick them up. Seems as though they didn't have nothing but our hands to do all this with, see. And that's the way we did it. Yeah. Yes, I drove one mule and three horses, and this mule was balky. The old Canyon City road, I don't know if you was ever over it.

PAULINE: No, I've just seen the remnants of it, looking down.

ALVON: It was just a trail.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: And there was some awful steep places on it. Well this mule would balk at the bottom of it, and the other horses would drag him over. But the road was so long that they were about to give out, so I had to do something to this mule. Either kill him, or get him to work. So we finally figured out a scheme, and he went to work. Yeah. But that's the first time I ever drove four horses strung out on a wagon.

PAULINE: How old were you when you did that?

ALVON: Oh, I could have probably been about 16 years old, I think so. Yeah, but I had worked horses all my life anyway. I think about 16. And then when we got in the John Day Valley and, let's see, I don't believe we were loaded up yet. But the Olivers over there, they had lots of holdings, still do. And it come up one of the worst storms you ever seen, and just like that it was hub deep to a wagon. They had a big shed there, and we run in there and stayed all night there. They had a little bit of hay in there so we fed our horses and stayed there, and we never bothered anything. I forget where we stayed, but we left, I guess we stayed in that shed too.

So the next morning I found out who owned this place, and their home place was way up toward Prairie City. I straddled one of them old work horses a bareback with a harness on, rode plumb up there to get one of the worst cussings I ever got in my life.

PAULINE: Oh, for heavens sakes.

ALVON: From the old lady Oliver. Yeah, Herman used to tell me to come back, and I told him what she did, that's after --- well she was dead before he was. He said you come back; we'll treat you right. We never did anything wrong, or anything that anyone else would, but she really read me the riot act. I skinned my legs and stuff to get up there and get that cussing. Well I offered to pay for any damage we didn't do, or anything. Wouldn't take nothing, she was too mad. But she was that type of a woman.

PAULINE: Well that was kind of the custom of the land, or the country then though wasn't it? If you needed a place to stay, why you made yourself at home, and left things as you found them.

ALVON: Yeah. Well you take a storm like that, my goodness that just poured down. It would just run down through that barn lot, the buildings are there yet, I can show you where it is. It just come off of that hill that deep, and just rolling, you know. Well naturally you was going to try to get out of it, which we did. Then we stayed all night there, and the next morning it was muddy as could be. And I rode that horse plumb up there to get a cussing. If I had known that, I wouldn't have turned a hand toward her. Yeah. That was just part of life, I guess.

I imagine I was about 16 or 17 years old when that happened. Yeah, a lot of things happens in a lifetime. But I remember this too, that that potato digging then, I think we laid over a day until things kind of settled. And there was, so muddy for picking up spuds see that ground. That was a regular waterspout. I think we laid over in the end, picked those spuds. Of course the people that had the place, they had some help too.

But my dad used to get about three, or four, or five tons of spuds to last a year. He fed a lot of people out here. And apples and fruit and stuff like that, you know, cabbage, all that kind of stuff. They raised it over there, and we would get it and bring it over, enough to last a whole year here, you bet, that's what we was doing. Yeah. But my dad did the freighting to Ontario. I never did do that.

PAULINE: He brought freight in and out for other people?

ALVON: No, for himself.

PAULINE: Just for himself.

ALVON: Oh yeah, he had some big high sideboards. He'd be gone a week or ten days. Make a trip, you know, in those days and get enough to run you a year. And the next fall

they'd go back again. That's the way they did it. I imagine Ida told you a lot of that stuff, I'm sure she did.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Yeah. Well when were you and Emma married?

ALVON: We were married in '17, 1917, in February. And at the time we were married, it was forty below zero, two foot of snow on the level all over the ground here, and forty below zero.

PAULINE: Oh, wow.

ALVON: That's different than it was this year, isn't it?

PAULINE: Well we had the forty below all right.

ALVON: We had it, you bet. Back there we never forget it.

EMMA: Had rabid coyotes at that time too.

ALVON: Huh?

EMMA: Had rabid coyotes at that time.

ALVON: Yeah, the hydrophobied coyotes were here in town and every place. Lots of cattle died the next summer. You'd see a cow laying out there on the range, look like she had been running, which they did do, and they'd fall, the hind feet out behind them, the front ones doubled under them. A big stout cow laying there dying from it, see. Seen quite a bit of it. I killed some of the coyotes too. If a dog barked here, no matter where you was at, you didn't want to run out. You wanted to take a light and look, he might be right there. And to my knowledge there was two or three people, young people, bit, but I don't know but if over one or so of them died. But I don't remember any more who they were. Yeah. There was lots of cold weather, and a lot of snow at that time. Yeah.

PAULINE: I didn't know that they were, you know, right up in town here too. Although I guess, from what people have told me that lived out in the county, that they, some of them

even put chicken wire fences around their houses in order to keep the coyotes out of the yard.

ALVON: Yeah. It would help some all right, yeah. It was pretty dangerous. You might be going down the road or something; you'd see a coyote. They said the thing to do if you had no protection, or couldn't get away, just stand still, don't move. If you didn't move he might go right by you, but if moved he'd snap, see. And I don't just remember, but I think there was two or three people bit, and at least one of them died. They didn't have the cure in those days that they have now. But that's the worst I ever seen it, and there was lots of them. Horses and everything, sheep, dogs, bit with them hydrophobic coyotes. I've never seen them like that since. There is a few, but not many.

PAULINE: Someone was telling me that the cow that has hydrophobia, that their bawl is just a terrible sound to hear. They make an awful ---

ALVON: The coyote?

PAULINE: The cow that is sick with it, has an awful terrible ---

ALVON: What they do, they travel, they like to travel. And they will travel about so far and they'll just stop and brace themselves like that and just bawl till they fall right down. And then they have, seemed like, a little bit like an epileptic fit, and they'll come out of that and get up and go again and do it all over. But you catch one of them and tie it up; they'll die in a short time. Darn this frog, if it ain't a nuisance.

PAULINE: Well, I can see you're suffering. That's annoying. You feel like you just can't -
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ALVON: Well, it don't hurt me or anything, it is just the aggravation of the thing. Not even sore, or tender, or nothing.

PAULINE: Sounds like that you would be sore. Sounds terrible.

ALVON: It isn't, it isn't even raspy. No. But there was one deer when they lived up here

at the Bowen place, that's where we were married. This is right at the mouth of the canyon up here. And there was a deer come in there, it had hydrophobia. And the water was ice cold in the spring of the year there, breaking up. And Elby Turner and Fanny and them, they were all up there, and he got out there and this deer too, after him. He run around the house, it finally caught up and jumped and hit him right in the back. Well they caught it and tied it up, and the whole town of Burns come to see it. Yeah, but it finally died of course. Yeah. I don't think it would bite you or anything to give it to you, but it would jump. It didn't know what it was doing. It died.

PAULINE: Why did you get married at the Bowen place? Was that a special place?

ALVON: Yes, yes, Bowen's had lived there before I was even born. And you see some of them old apples trees up there yet. Them were there before I was born.

PAULINE: Really?

ALVON: Yeah, they are.

PAULINE: Right there at that curve there.

ALVON: Yeah, right at the curve. Yeah, the buildings, the curve of the rim is here. The buildings used to sit right over there. There is some of these, what is them flowers?

EMMA: Bouncing Betty's.

ALVON: Bouncing Betty's.

PAULINE: Yeah, there is quite a bit of that.

ALVON: There is where the house set, was right there. Yeah, that was a well-known place, that was before any highways, or railroads, or anything like that. And no road up the creek, it went over the hill, the old Devine Ridge. But there was a horse trail going up the creek, and that's about all. Yeah, we were married right there.

PAULINE: Where --- I don't think I've ever heard anybody tell me about the Bowens before.

ALVON: Yeah, that's known as the Bowen place. I guess Buck Clemens did own it, and maybe, I don't know if Warren Raymond bought it from him, or who has it at the present time.

PAULINE: What --- do you know what their first name was?

ALVON: Oh boy, I don't know now. Let's see, Bowen, I have know it but ---

PAULINE: Were they the people that were living there when you were married, or ---

ALVON: No, no, her folks lived there then, the Kestersons.

PAULINE: Oh, okay.

ALVON: The Kestersons, they were living there then.

PAULINE: The what now, was their --- the Kestersons?

ALVON: The Kestersons, Grant Kesterson, her dad, you know. She was a Kesterson.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: And Fanny and Clara, her sisters. You know them, don't you?

PAULINE: Yeah.

EMMA: ...

ALVON: Grant Kesterson was her dad's name. Her mother died when she was young. She was there, never there. I don't ever remember seeing her, her mother.

EMMA: She died when she was 32.

ALVON: Huh?

EMMA: She died when she was 32 years old.

ALVON: Yeah, she was young. Yeah, but Grant and the girls lived there at the time we were married. Fanny and Elby were married there, and Bud and Carey Kidwell, they had a double wedding there. Well they was married ahead of us, wasn't they.

EMMA: Yes.

ALVON: Yeah. And then we was married in '17.

PAULINE: Well Emma, when did your family come? About what date did your family come? I take it you weren't born here.

EMMA: Oh yes.

PAULINE: You were born here.

ALVON: Oh yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Was you born here at your grandpa and grandma's? Or down to --- she was down to the "P" Ranch a whole lot.

EMMA: Well I was here in Burns, is where I was born.

ALVON: Born in Burns?

EMMA: Yeah.

ALVON: Do you know where?

EMMA: Where?

ALVON: What place?

EMMA: Well I think, you know where we used to live in that little house?

ALVON: See her dad was a blacksmith.

EMMA: ... blacksmith shop. They moved it now across the street, a two-storied house.

ALVON: That's down on the corner down there, where Smyth's Market is.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Used to be a livery stable and a blacksmith's shop. And she was just a little girl there. I didn't know her. But they lived right back of that. And the building they have, that building sits across the road now, don't it? The old house that she was born in sets across the road there, they moved it. Who's got that? Let's see, who does have that? I know the name of the folks that put it there, but I can't think of it. Do you remember? I don't know whether I ever will, but I can see him, but I don't know if I could get his name.

Let's see ---

PAULINE: Do you remember about what date your dad came to Harney County, your dad and mom came to Harney County?

EMMA: Gosh no.

ALVON: He come from Missouri.

EMMA: Mother, I guess, was born here. ... was her name. But dad ... I can't even think. A person don't think of those things for so long, and when you get older you don't.

PAULINE: Well you don't --- I have problems now remembering stuff. You don't think you would ever forget, but you do.

(Phone rings.)

ALVON: Yeah. They lived in it for a long time, don't you remember it? Yeah. And that building is still there. Now one instance I do remember about her, I didn't know it at the time, but years ago when they had these merry-go-rounds in here, they pulled it with a horse. There was a cable run, and this horse walked out here and that made that go around. Well I was just a big kid, I don't remember how old. You don't know what year that happened either, do you? But Babe Smith, you know her ---

PAULINE: Uh huh.

ALVON: --- she used to be Dillard's wife, and her were just little girls. And they rode that merry-go-round until they got so dizzy they fell off of it. Babe was a wearing a red sweater, and this cable run out in back around her drum like that. It caught her sweater, drug her a ways, pulled the sweater off. And I didn't know that was her, but they were together at the time. I knew Babe, but I didn't know her. And that's been a long time ago.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: But that scared the mischief out of me. She was caught in that sweater, I thought it was going to take her around there and eat her up.

PAULINE: Well, very well could have.

ALVON: But that sweater come off of her. And they just rode it until they got so dizzy they fell off of it. But she was with her I learned later. That's the first time, I guess, I ever seen her. And I never saw her until they took us up here. I didn't know it then, but we got to talking about that mishap, and she remembered it. But they was just little girls then. Yeah, I've known the Smith family all my life, but I never did know her family.

EMMA: We was living up here at the Bowen place. I was going down to the road for the mail a horseback, and I seen these two fellas a coming horseback. I supposed they'd go up the lane, you know, and around like that road shows. So I went off in the tall sagebrush, got off my horse, out of sight, and waited there. And by the time I thought they had time to eat the pie, I got on and come out. The old mare run right on him. I should have stayed on the road to begin with. That's the first time I'd ever seen him.

ALVON: Yeah, it's the first time I ever seen her either. But she hid in the rim, spooky you know, didn't want to meet nobody. And when we went in by, and met her there, when we passed, I said to that fella, "That's, there's my wife right there. That's her." I don't know why, but I said, "There's my wife, right there." So I got acquainted with her, and there she is.

PAULINE: There she is. You're a man of your word aren't you?

ALVON: Yeah, I guess so.

PAULINE: Going on 60 years, aren't you?

ALVON: I'm 77.

PAULINE: I mean of marriage.

ALVON: Fifty, or 65 years we've been married.

PAULINE: 65, yeah.

ALVON: Yeah, I was married when I was 21. Yeah. Our anniversary is the 27th of

February. See, we was married in February.

EMMA: Fifty-six years, wasn't it?

PAULINE: Yeah. I was trying to do my arithmetic, and not doing a very good job of it.

EMMA: Fifty-six years ago.

ALVON: Fifty six, oh I --- oh no, fifty-six. Yeah, I said it wrong.

PAULINE: I've got to figure this out now.

ALVON: Yeah, it would be 56, last February the 27th. Yeah.

PAULINE: Well after you were married did you live out here then where Sam is now, or did you have another place?

ALVON: Oh, I bought that afterwards from my dad. No, when we were first married, we lived up there. And that fall and that summer I worked for the Williams boys on a thresher, stationary thresher. And Paul Weil, you knew him, him and I worked together on that. He was the engineer, and I was the water boy, and we worked all fall with them.

And then after that, her dad moved out to the Kelly place down here, which belonged at that time to Gus Bardwell. And we lived there for about a year, and then I bought the Allen Dillard place up at Trout Creek. And we've been on our own ever since. Yeah. We lived here all our life but six and a half years, I lived in Idaho. We milked 32 head of cows here, and we moved to Frenchglen and milked them 32 cows, and then --- and that was in '26. We lived four years, I think, '26, '27, '28, and '29, and '30 then we went to Idaho. And we bought ten more cows and milked 42 head of cows over there. And that was in the early '30's, in the good days. You couldn't get nothing for nothing, and we went broke on that deal. But I got the biggest whole milk check, before it got so bad, out of the Meridian Creamery, of any producer delivering whole milk, 1115 pounds of milk, every day I took to that creamery. Yeah, I milked them, come out with nothing.

PAULINE: Yeah, those were hard days, those were really hard days.

ALVON: Oh yeah, you couldn't get anything for anything. I'd saved a bunch of heifers, and of course pasture over there, there was replacement for dairy stuff, nice heifers and things, but the pasture and everything all together it just ate it out. I stayed with them a year or two longer than I should have. Everybody said you just as well quit, but I hated to give up, but finally had to do it.

Then we come back here in June in '36. My dad come over there to get me. At that time I was working on the Arock Dam, that's where I lost my hearing. I was tending chuck with these jackhammers. And he wanted me to come back, so I come back in June of '36, and I worked a couple of years for him, and during the last year I made a deal with him on the ranch, and Paul Weil built our house for us there. We moved down there on Easter Sunday in '38, wasn't it? Yeah, on Easter Sunday in '38. Lived there ever since. Of course we've been in the stock business all our life. That's our main ---

PAULINE: Well this was your dad's; your dad was in the stock business.

ALVON: Yeah, that's all he ever did was the stock too, and farming, you know, and stuff. Yeah just ---

PAULINE: Well he had some brothers too, he had --- Your dad had some brothers here too.

ALVON: Yeah, Frank Baker, and Walter Baker and them boys, that was their father. Frank Baker and Grace was her name, Grace Baker. She was a Riggs, his wife, the mother of all these Baker boys. And then we got cousins. They're dead some of them, most of them. Emil and Bob Baker and them, they were second cousins. Yeah, the Bakers around here, we're pretty well related to them. There is one lives right here that we're not related to, right across the corner. Yeah. Yeah, and that's the only brother that he had here. The rest of them, well Don Baker there too. Let's see now they were first cousins to my dad. Yeah, a person should have wrote some of this down, he might have

known sometime he might need it.

PAULINE: Well, you never know.

ALVON: Never know.

PAULINE: Of course you should have known, that being a pioneer association member all these many years, that the day was going to come when you'd get yours.

ALVON: Yeah, I could have. Yeah, a lot of them don't live this long to tell it. See we put down when I was born, didn't I?

PAULINE: Yeah, August 11, '77.

ALVON: Yeah, 1895.

PAULINE: Wait a minute, what have I got down there?

ALVON: I'm 77 years old.

PAULINE: Yeah, that's your, 77 years old. I've got it here.

ALVON: I was 77 last August 11th.

PAULINE: Yeah, I was just reading my figures wrong.

ALVON: I see.

PAULINE: Yeah, I've got it here. And you've got six daughters.

ALVON: Yeah, we've got six daughters.

EMMA: Twelve grandchildren.

PAULINE: Twelve grandchildren. And you've got some great grandchildren too.

EMMA: Yes.

ALVON: Yeah, we were great grandparents before we was 40 years old. Yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah. How many great grandchildren do you have, do you know off hand?

ALVON: Well, let's see. That takes Louise and ---

PAULINE: Well they're grandchildren.

EMMA: Yeah, ... kids.

PAULINE: Yeah, it takes their kids. Why don't I call ---

ALVON: You mean our kids, our grandkids?

PAULINE: Great grandchildren.

ALVON: Well that's what I thought. Well that ain't Roselle and Chick and them, them's our grandkids. It's their children's children. Well Robert and Lyle, you see. Robert's got one, and Lyle has got two, and Louise has got ---

PAULINE: Two.

ALVON: Two. Ah, there is more than that. That's only ---

PAULINE: Well that Grant's got two or three now?

ALVON: Two.

PAULINE: Two.

ALVON: He's got two. Linda's got one, ain't she. Curly's, she's a great ... that's Linda's daughter, or Betty's daughter, she's got one. Yeah, that's right, she's got one. Linda's got one, and Curly's got one, and who else. Somebody we ain't named. Oh, Kitty's and Chick's daughter. She, Sharon got it, or not Sharon, but Chic's daughter, she got a baby?
No.

EMMA: I don't think so yet.

ALVON: I don't think she has. But DeWayne has got one, and so has Sandra, they've got one.

PAULINE: Well that makes 10.

ALVON: There is more than that. There is somebody we ain't named yet. I thought they was about 12. Who haven't we named? Somebody else, let's see.

EMMA: Roselle has two boys.

ALVON: What?

EMMA: ...

ALVON: Take your hand off your mouth, I can't ---

EMMA: Roselle I say ... kids, but they ---

ALVON: Well that's Robert and Lyle. Yeah, they've got three among them. There's somebody else we haven't named.

EMMA: Chick.

ALVON: Huh? Well, that's what I said, Chick's daughter there. Gary, Gary's got two, ain't he?

PAULINE: Well that makes 12.

ALVON: That's 12. I think that's about it. And our own girls have got two a piece, which would be another twelve. Each one of them has two.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

ALVON: It seems like there is somebody else. But I think that's it. We counted DeWayne didn't we? Yeah.

PAULINE: What was Pioneer Day like when you were a kid? Did you take in the festivities when you were a kid?

ALVON: They didn't have it.

PAULINE: They didn't have it.

ALVON: They didn't have it.

PAULINE: So you must have been in on the beginning of it. The---

ALVON: Could have been, yeah. Yeah, I don't ever recall of any Pioneer Association or meeting where they got together, I don't remember. I don't remember what year that it come effect, and still I got a little recollection. But ---

PAULINE: Well, I've got that date someplace at home with some stuff, but I can't remember right off hand now either, what the date was. I think it was 1913, but I'm not sure about that.

ALVON: 1913?

PAULINE: Yeah, around there.

ALVON: Well that ---

PAULINE: But I can look that up. But you've been going to Pioneer Days for a long, long time.

ALVON: Oh yes. Well you don't join the Pioneers until you've lived so long, 30 years you see. Yeah, well ever since we've been 30 we've been members. Yeah. You had to live here 30 years before you become a member of the Pioneer Association. Is that the way it was right on the start?

PAULINE: There are people that come that lived here for about six months back, you know, in the early days that come and register as pioneers. So I don't think that you had to have lived here 30 years, but it has to have been 30 years since you lived here, or something, I don't know. It's so confusing I don't know just what the rule is.

ALVON: Now I think you've got to live here 30 years before you are a pioneer. Like if you want to be a pioneer and was born here, you would have to be 30 years old, then you're a pioneer.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Yeah. There are lots of people around here that's older than that, that still don't belong to pioneer.

PAULINE: Yeah. But I know that there are some people that just lived here for a short time that come back and register as pioneers every year, and they only lived here maybe a year or eighteen months or so.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: But they come back and register as pioneers, because they lived here, you know, that long ago.

ALVON: Well, if they were born here, and lived here so long and then left, and come back and he'd lived here most of his time for 30 years.

PAULINE: Yeah, that --- they don't, they don't do it --- it doesn't work out that way.

ALVON: That wasn't the way it was?

PAULINE: No. But I think there is a lot of confusion really as to how it is, so I guess it really doesn't matter.

ALVON: No.

PAULINE: As long as a person feels like he is entitled to register, why I don't guess it matters whether he does or he doesn't.

ALVON: No, I wouldn't think so either.

PAULINE: Yeah. But anyway ---

ALVON: No, I wouldn't think so either.

PAULINE: How has the celebration changed since the ones that you

ALVON: How has it changed?

PAULINE: Yeah, what was it like 30, 40 years ago? Has it changed much?

ALVON: Well, there has, I think, let's see, one of the changes was that they used to just pick somebody. Now I don't think they have picked the oldest, as they do today. They go down the line, and they pick the oldest to be the president and queen mother. They had another procedure there, I just don't believe I can --- I can remember when they drew up all these names, and then they went to choosing the oldest members to be the president and the queen mother.

EMMA: They always generally eat the dinner up on the lawn at the courthouse, too.

ALVON: Yeah, it used to be there, yeah, they used to meet there. They didn't have this building, see. They used to go to the courthouse there all right, for that. And Jimmy

Donegan, I can almost hear him open it, and he kinda had something to do with the head of it, you know. He'd open the meeting and close it, and talk about it and things like that. But there has been some changes in it, all right. I was just wondering, people that I know that would know, they're not here anymore. I don't know if Ida, she might remember some of that too. She could. See she is a little older than I am. And she ---

PAULINE: Well you were the youngest of the family, weren't you?

ALVON: Who me?

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Oh, no.

PAULINE: You weren't?

ALVON: She is the oldest. She was a twin see.

PAULINE: Yeah. Ida and Walter.

ALVON: Well then I'm next.

PAULINE: Oh.

ALVON: I'm next to her. And then May Belle.

PAULINE: And what's her last name now?

ALVON: McNott. N O T T. M c N O T T. She is married to her fifth husband right now.

PAULINE: Oh, that's why you had to stop and think of it.

ALVON: Yeah, just --- that's it. McNott. We seen him here a while back, they was up here. We went down to Roselle's and Lionel's and we went and seen him the first time. He's a retired dentist. Yeah.

EMMA: Then there was Henry, wasn't it?

ALVON: Huh?

EMMA: Then Henry came next, didn't he?

ALVON: Well let's see. We got Ida and myself, and May Belle, and then Henry, and then

Lucille and Wallace. There was three boys and three girls. My brother Henry is dead.

EMMA: Lucille is the youngest, isn't she?

ALVON: She's the youngest.

EMMA: Well, Wallace and then Lucille.

ALVON: Yeah, well did I say --- Yeah, Lucille is the youngest.

PAULINE: Now Wallace Baker.

ALVON: Wallace Baker. You know him?

PAULINE: I should. Is he here?

ALVON: He lives over here in Idaho, but he's going to come here and fiddle on this ---

PAULINE: He's the one that fiddles.

ALVON: He plays the fiddle.

PAULINE: Oh, I had it in my head ---

ALVON: He's crippled.

PAULINE: And Ida's twin ---

ALVON: He died.

PAULINE: He died.

ALVON: He died when he was just a little fella.

PAULINE: Yeah, okay.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well I had --- and I knew that too, but I got it mixed up.

ALVON: Had three boys and three girls.

PAULINE: Yeah. And Wallace is going to come fiddle?

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well May Belle will be here too, and what about Lucille, are they coming?

ALVON: Oh yes.

PAULINE: Yeah. What's Lucille's last name now?

ALVON: Hunt, Joe Hunt. H U N T.

PAULINE: Yeah. Where is she from?

ALVON: She's John Day.

PAULINE: John Day, yeah I remember now. The minute you say it I

ALVON: They lived around here, but ---

PAULINE: Where does May Belle live?

ALVON: She lives down here at Woodburn.

PAULINE: Woodburn. And Wallace is from ---

ALVON: He's over at Parma, ain't he? Parma, Idaho.

PAULINE: Okay. When he is here, I would sure like to interview him for the library history business.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: So is he going to come up a few days before, or ---

ALVON: Yes, he is. Yeah. Beulah Clemens is going to play the organ for him, piano. And he's going to play a few --- he did when Ida was in there, you remember him playing?

PAULINE: Yeah, I remember.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: He's quite a fiddler.

ALVON: Yeah. Our family, there ain't much music in them. I used to fiddle some, but I ain't had it in my hand so long. I tried it a while back, but I can't do nothing with it.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Yeah. But there isn't much music or anything in our family. They never happened to take it up. They didn't seem to have it. Now I could have learned it easy. I

used to go to a dance and hear a piece, go right home and play it. Anything I heard, I could play it. I never have picked up a piece of music instrument, in a little bit, I could play something, you could tell what it is, strings or anything.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: But I should have done it, and didn't do it.

PAULINE: Yeah. Too busy chasing cows.

ALVON: Yeah, I guess so. Well, I just never did it.

PAULINE: Well I sure want to talk to him while he is here, because he --- we ought to get him on tape too for the library.

ALVON: Yeah. Yeah, he will be over a few days ahead, so he can practice up a little bit with her. He played all the time over there for them folks at the Warm Springs up at LaGrande, them old folks. He used to go there and play for entertainment. He took lessons and learned it. I just played by ear. Yeah, but I could play anything that I heard. Yeah. I wish I'd have kept it up.

PAULINE: Well, it's a nice thing to be able to do.

ALVON: Yeah, I liked it. Yeah. I just as well had learned it.

I've never taken any lessons.

PAULINE: I've got, like I said, what Ida told me a couple years ago, and had a tape with her. And I've got the tape that you did with Jim Baker last winter, a year ago.

ALVON: With who?

PAULINE: Jim Baker, remember the fella that came and interviewed you about a year ago for the library?

ALVON: Oh yeah.

PAULINE: Of you and Ida.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah, I've got that.

ALVON: Oh, you got that.

PAULINE: So between that and Ida, and what you told me today, I'm going to really write up a story.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: I thought I'd warn you that I, that I've got all this extra information at my disposal.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: And so with your frog in your voice, I hate to keep you talking any longer.

ALVON: Well it ain't any worse only that it just gets so bad I can't hear. It don't hurt me a bit, it's just in the way, that's all. My throat isn't raspy, tender, or nothing, just a bubble in there.

EMMA: Tell him he just talks too much.

ALVON: Just spit it out. Just an aggravation.

PAULINE: You belonged to grange for years and years and years.

ALVON: I belonged to Grange ever since they had a grange. I don't know if they have my name, but we used to go out to Rye Grass there when the Grange was first organized.

PAULINE: Well I --- you mean they met out at Rye Grass?

ALVON: Oh yes.

PAULINE: I didn't know that.

ALVON: You didn't?

PAULINE: So it wasn't ---

ALVON: Down there where Cowings and Cawfield lived, used to be in the big schoolhouse right there.

PAULINE: Well did they call it Poison Creek Grange then?

ALVON: Oh no, Rye Grass.

PAULINE: It was Rye Grass.

ALVON: Rye Grass, you bet. You didn't, never get that?

PAULINE: No.

ALVON: That's where it first started.

PAULINE: Do you remember about what time? Just generally.

ALVON: Oh, I was just a young punk then. I imagine '12 or '13, I mean in the year of '12 and '13 I would think. 'Cause we was married in '17.

PAULINE: In '17.

ALVON: So, let's see. Yeah, that would take it way back --- Say if you talk to Bessie Duhaime, she ought to be able to tell you about it.

PAULINE: Yeah, I will ask her. I talked to her, but she never mentioned the Grange.

ALVON: She was a big girl there, going to Grange. I've known Bessie before she was ever married. I don't know who was the first, I don't know who the Master was. But I remember they appointed somebody all right. Them people, I've lost a lot of their names. But I think Bessie ---

PAULINE: Well Bessie would probably remember about it as well as anybody.

ALVON: She lived right down there. Yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah. Well we talked about a lot of things when I talked to her, but we didn't ever discuss about that.

ALVON: Oh yes, she knows them things. She come from down here at Dog Mountain, where her folks is at. And then Johnny has a homestead down here. But they lived over Wright's Point there. But they come there and they used to attend that. Yeah, I've danced with --- we used to have dances down there and everything.

PAULINE: And then --- well when Poison Creek started, did Rye Grass then move to

Poison Creek, or ---

ALVON: Yeah, they evidently did. Where was we when they got --- Well I think --- see we went in '30. No, they had it here at Poison Creek when we lived at Trout Creek, didn't they, after we were married? They had the Grange there. Who was the first Master there, Glen Clemens, was he?

PAULINE: I don't know.

ALVON: Somebody like that.

PAULINE: Yeah.

EMMA: I don't think it was Glen.

ALVON: I kind of think it is, until I know different. But then Glen can tell you a lot of that too. He's older than I am; he knows about that Rye Grass, I'm sure he does. Glen Clemens, you know him?

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Yeah, they used to hold that Grange out there, you bet they did. Oh, I've been a member to the Grange ever since I can remember. Seems like when it was first organized. Yeah.

PAULINE: Did you ever serve on the school board or anything like that? Cattleman's Association?

ALVON: Yes, I have a little. I never was on the election board. I've been on the jury a lot of times till I lost my hearing, and I got black balled off of that. I asked for it. But I never was on the grand jury, never was called on that. But I've been on the regular, as a witness and stuff like that, yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah. What about school board?

ALVON: Well, yes we did at Trout Creek. Yes, I was on the school board up at Trout Creek when we lived up there. Yeah. We went to a school board meeting there one time,

and a going back up to where we lived a water spout struck. And they used to have these, they're about 8 or 10 inches high, the back of them, a buggy. There was no cars then. And that just come down like that, like this, and run over the sideboards on that thing. It couldn't go through, it couldn't get out of there so fast.

PAULINE: Oh, for heavens sakes.

ALVON: And it was hub deep to a hack. And I had one of these umbrellas that they put on the seat, a big one. And that's all we had, and we huddled under that. And that water just poured off that hill. Yeah. That old umbrella, if we hadn't had it we'd have drowned right there.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Yeah, hail and rain. Yeah, I served on that up there, but I don't think I ever did any place else. No. But as far back as I can remember I've been a Grange member, yeah. I don't have no records or nothing to show it. I don't think --- well I guess they had a chart that they had names of the members. But it seemed to me like it went a while, and then they come up with that. Yeah.

PAULINE: Well I'll have to talk to Bessie about that, that would be really interesting to get that.

ALVON: Yeah, if she don't remember it, I'll go in and talk to her a little too. Yeah, might remember.

PAULINE: Yeah, I'll ask Glen Clemens about it too. I talk to --- well more to Beulah the other day when I talked to them, than Glen, and they're really willing to sit down and reminisce with me, so I'll be going back and talking to them.

ALVON: Well Glen was supposed to be the President this time, but his daughters coming back, moving back here, McCart.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: And he wanted her to be here when he was president, or he'd of been in that this time. Yeah. Yeah, and I'm sure that Glen knows about that out there, I'm sure he does. I know people that does, but they're not here, they've died off and gone. They had quite a little meetings out there. Yeah. That's, to my knowledge that's where it first started.

PAULINE: Yeah. That's, that's interesting.

ALVON: Yeah. That's ---

PAULINE: Well Emma, can you think of anything that he hasn't told that he ought to tell?

EMMA: No, I've been thinking, but my thinker ain't a working very good. You know I just haven't thought of things for so long.

PAULINE: Well I won't, you know, it's about, well it's nearly a month before this will be in the paper. So if you think of some-thing you think is important, call me.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: But I kind of wanted to get it done, you know, get it done early.

ALVON: Oh yes, not wait until the last minute.

PAULINE: Yeah, I probably will wait until the last minute to write it, but at least --- I usually do.

ALVON: Well if we had it so we could hand it to you, you could write all about it, but we don't have.

PAULINE: Well, that's quite all right. This is just perfectly satisfactory. And then Velfa's going back to Boston, I guess, to visit somebody, and she's going to be gone, so I needed to talk to her.

ALVON: Who is that?

PAULINE: Velfa Richardson.

ALVON: Oh, yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah. And so I needed to get her right away before she took off.

ALVON: She's going to some kind of a meeting or reunion, or some-thing.

PAULINE: Yeah, or something, I don't know just what.

ALVON: I heard too, but I don't know either. They didn't think for a while that she would be back in time to be the queen mother.

PAULINE: I guess she's just going to make it, just barely.

ALVON: If she has good luck.

PAULINE: Yeah, if the connections work out.

ALVON: Yeah, that's right.

PAULINE: If her plane is late, she may not make it.

ALVON: She might not.

EMMA: See Ida Whiting had it. She's getting pretty old.

ALVON: Yeah. Twyla, she's helping us out on this.

PAULINE: I wasn't at the meeting when they chose. I don't know how they're lined up. But they, what they do, they pick the oldest year, and then the oldest person of that year, so evidently Velfa has been here longer than Ida. She's not older than Ida.

ALVON: Yeah. Ida wasn't born here, see.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: She isn't as old as Ida is, is she?

PAULINE: No, she's not as old as Ida, but Ida hasn't been here as long.

ALVON: She hasn't been here that 30 years, see. She wasn't born here.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ALVON: Yeah.

PAULINE: And they, you go on the date that you come, and then they chose the oldest one. Like if it is 1900, why the oldest one from that year will be it. It's complicated, but it

makes sense. But it does, you know, somebody like Ida, why --- By the time that her year comes up, why she may not be able to do it.

ALVON: That's right, she might not be able to ---

(END OF TAPE)

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