

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #204 - Side A

Subject: Easter Blackburn

Place: Blackburn Home - Burns, Oregon

Date: June 4, 1986

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen, and I'm interviewing Easter Blackburn on June 4, 1986, at her home in Burns. She is going to be the 1986 Pioneer Day Queen Mother. Well where, we'll start I guess is where you were born.

EASTER BLACKBURN: I was born here in Burns, April 15th, 1906, down here at Copeland's Lumber Yard. That was I think, was Mrs. Savage's, oh, maternity home I believe is what they called it, I don't know.

PAULINE: A lot of people your age tell me the same thing.

EASTER: Right.

PAULINE: You were born where Copeland's Lumber Yard is now. Her name was Mrs. Savage.

EASTER: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Okay. And what were your parent's name?

EASTER: Jack Craddock, and Mamie Craddock, Mamie Wintermeier Craddock.

PAULINE: How do you spell Wintermeier?

EASTER: Winter --- M E I E R. All one word.

PAULINE: M E I E R.

EASTER: Uh huh.

PAULINE: And they ranched in the Silvies Valley area?

EASTER: You mean the Wintermeiers or the Craddocks? Both of them did.

PAULINE: Both of them. Uh huh.

EASTER: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Both of them.

EASTER: I think Dad came there in 1885, as near as I can recall.

PAULINE: Do you know when your mother's family came?

EASTER: Let's see, '76, no '70 --- '88, 19--- or 1888.

PAULINE: 1888.

EASTER: 'Cause she said she was 12 years old.

PAULINE: She was 12 when they came.

EASTER: And she was born in 17--- or 1876, 'cause she was 30 years older than I am. I think that figures out, doesn't it?

PAULINE: I think so. Yeah.

EASTER: Uh huh.

PAULINE: What about your dad, was he born in Harney County or ---

EASTER: No, he was born in Pennsylvania, but I don't know where.

PAULINE: Did his family come out --- did he come out with his family, or did he come out as a young man?

EASTER: No, his family moved to Kansas, I don't know what year. And then he came from Kansas, and he homesteaded up in Silvies Valley. And I don't know how many of the brothers came at that time, but several brothers and his dad came later. And then Dad and George Craddock, and Dave Craddock had --- oh; they had cattle ranches up there in the Silvies Valley.

PAULINE: Which Craddock became the judge?

EASTER: My brother, Chester Craddock.

PAULINE: Your brother Chester Craddock was the judge.

EASTER: Uh huh. He served two terms here.

PAULINE: That was county judge.

EASTER: Harney County Judge.

PAULINE: Okay. Were you the oldest in the family?

EASTER: No, I was the baby.

PAULINE: You were the baby of the family.

EASTER: And my brother and sister, they're both dead.

PAULINE: Okay, and that was Chester, and what was your sister's name?

EASTER: Ardath. A R D A T H.

PAULINE: Okay. I knew Ardath ---

EASTER: Well, I think you did too, because right --- she and mother and --- used to come out to see your grandmother, Pauline NeVore.

PAULINE: Yeah, I'm sure I met her.

EASTER: Uh huh, oh I'm sure you did. You were a little shaver then.

PAULINE: Yeah. I --- Grandma always thought Mamie was so special out there --- she enjoyed visiting with her so much.

EASTER: Mother liked her too, and Pauline would come in and they'd play pinochle. Spend the day together.

PAULINE: Well, that was to play cards --- my grandmother was always willing, it didn't make any difference --- just ---

EASTER: Oh, so was my mother. Yeah, she liked it.

PAULINE: --- like to do that. Well, did you go to school in Silvie's Valley then?

EASTER: Through the elementary, through eight grades. Then I went to high school in Corvallis. Then the University of Oregon, got my BBA Degree there in 1928. It's a BBA.

PAULINE: BBA.

EASTER: Bachelor of Business Administration.

PAULINE: Okay.

EASTER: And then I taught school, high school two years.

PAULINE: Now at Oregon State or University of Oregon?

EASTER: University of Oregon.

PAULINE: I thought that's what you said.

EASTER: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Okay, and you taught ---

EASTER: Taught high school two years, one in Sweet Home, and one in Farmington, Washington. Taught typing and home ec. And at the University, I was a member of the Delta Zeta Sorority.

PAULINE: Okay. That's ---

EASTER: Does that make sense?

PAULINE: D E L T A Z E T A.

EASTER: Uh huh. Then in --- let's see it was --- June the 25th, 1930, I got married to Jett Blackburn. We lived in Walla Walla, Washington. And we moved to California --- let's see, 1931, the Los Angeles area. Well let's see, then we moved back to Silvies Valley in 1939, and purchased a ranch up there. We were there until 1944, moved to Hines. Then in 1945, I went to work for Dr. Smith and Dr. John Weare at the old Valley View Hospital as a secretary and receptionist. Then in 1947, we purchased a ranch at Harney and lived there until 1950, when we sold out to Harry Withers, Jr. Then we moved into Burns, where Jett went into the real estate business.

PAULINE: Was he from Harney County before you were married, or did you meet him in Washington?

EASTER: I met him in Washington. He came from --- from there he came out from Wyoming.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: And then --- what else --- oh, I was a licensed real estate broker, worked in the office. I think, what else I've done --- not much.

PAULINE: Well, you had ---

EASTER: Well, I worked one summer --- I worked for Paul Stafford at that sales yard that they used to have down here, oh close to the fairgrounds. I worked in the office.

PAULINE: Was that a livestock sale yard? I don't remember about that.

EASTER: Yeah. Now ---

PAULINE: Do you know about what year that was?

EASTER: Well it was --- it was while we were on the ranch at Harney, it was sometime between '47 and '50. 'Cause I remember I had to come in from the ranch to work.

PAULINE: I don't remember there being a livestock sale yard at all. That ---

EASTER: Well, it didn't last too long.

PAULINE: Yeah, it was just a short ---

EASTER: Uh huh.

PAULINE: --- experiment.

EASTER: Well, they had a --- oh some kind of a cafe and night spot down there ahead of that, and I think they went broke and then they got their sales yard going.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: Oh, I'm a member of the Order of the Eastern Star. Valley Golf Club, if you want to know all of that.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Any other organizations?

EASTER: No, I don't think ---

PAULINE: And of course the pioneer association.

EASTER: Yes, pioneer ---

PAULINE: Obviously.

EASTER: Oh, and the senior center, when I pay my dues.

PAULINE: Okay, and then --- so you have just one child?

EASTER: Yes. But I have three; oh I guess you call them biological grandchildren, and six step-grandchildren. And then there is some step-great-grandchildren. One, two, three, four --- I think six step-grandchildren --- great-grandchildren.

PAULINE: Well, we were trying --- Mary and I were trying to decide how many children Jett had --- Craddock. I never know what to call Craddock.

EASTER: Well, just whatever you want to call him.

PAULINE: Jett, Craddock.

EASTER: Well ---

PAULINE: People call him ---

EASTER: They call him Muck a lot of times ---

PAULINE: Muck.

EASTER: And --- then in the office, it's usually Jett. Of course I always call him Craddock. Go ahead and bark Missy. (Dog barking) Oh, I was thinking of one little thing, I don't know whether it would be interesting or not, but when my dad --- shush --- I'll let you out. When Dad and Mother moved from the lower, what we called the lower ranch, that's where Dave Craddock lived, they moved --- they bought a ranch up in --- upper end of Silvies Valley, and it was a horrible house. Well, Dad eventually decided he'd build a sawmill along the Silvies River and cut lumber to build Mother a new house. Well he cut the lumber, but he built a barn!

PAULINE: Sounds like a typical Harney County rancher. (Laughter)

EASTER: Mother never did get the new house. Right behind you, that painting is a picture of the barn that --- I don't --- the light is shining on it maybe so you can't see it.

PAULINE: Is that barn still there?

EASTER: Yes.

PAULINE: Okay, I ---

EASTER: Upper end, before you go out of the valley into the canyon.

PAULINE: Uh huh, uh huh.

EASTER: Yeah, it's still there.

PAULINE: He did a good job. It's just standing there as pretty as you please.

EASTER: Well, my Grandfather Wintermeier helped, I don't know whether he built it or not. But anyway, he was a wheelwright, trained in Germany, and he lived in The Dalles and built stagecoaches and all that before he came up to Silvies Valley to ranch.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: I think he just got itchy feet and wanted to come --- ranching. Well the barn that he built on his ranch, I think, is still standing up there. And it doesn't have a nail in it.

PAULINE: All tung and groove?

EASTER: Well, it's something like that. I don't know just what it is, but he was a --- well as, precision work with him.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Where was the Wintermeier Ranch?

EASTER: Well, Dad's homestead, it joined Dad's homestead to the north. I don't know if you know anything about Silvies Valley.

PAULINE: A little bit, not enough, not enough ---

EASTER: I don't know who owns the homestead ranch. Once it was sold to John Scheckel.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: Then I think, well, I don't know.

PAULINE: Was that the northern end, at the northern end of Silvies Valley?

EASTER: No, it would be the south end.

PAULINE: South end.

EASTER: We lived up at the north end.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: Oh, and when I was ready to be born, Mother had my brother and my sister without benefit of a doctor, and she was determined she was going to come to Burns to have me.

PAULINE: Okay.

EASTER: Well when she got here, well they came with a team and buggy, snowstorm and whatever. And Dr. Marsden told her, said, "Well it's lucky that Easter wasn't born up there on Divine Ridge." You probably don't know where Divine Ridge is, but I do.

PAULINE: No, that's ---

EASTER: Where the old road ---

PAULINE: Oh, the old road going up instead of going up the canyon, you went up over the mountain.

EASTER: Uh huh. Well, hi Henry.

HENRY ?: Hello.

EASTER: Pauline, you know ---

PAULINE: Sure.

EASTER: You brought more ---

HENRY: Your phone must not be working, huh?

PAULINE: When you were going to school in Silvies Valley, can you tell me what it was



like? Did you have to walk to school, or did you ride a horse?

EASTER: Sometimes we rode a horse; sometimes we went in a sled.

PAULINE: How far was it?

EASTER: One school we went to was, oh about four or five miles I would say. Then they split up the district, they got in a row. And then we had a district up in our part of the valley. And then that was only about, oh a mile and a half, two miles, I guess. But we had to cross the river, and of course when it was frozen, that was great. But then in the spring of the year it would break up, and that's when we rode horses.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Then you'd ride right through water across, across the river to go to school?

EASTER: Well, in the spring of the year Dad would take us in what they called a box sled through the meadows, which was covered with water. And took us over to this old mill that he bought, or that he built, and we kept saddle horses there. And then we'd get on those and go to school.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: And then he'd meet us at night. But, in the wintertime, oh my, we'd get up --- well we'd have to leave home before daylight in the morning. It was cold, and it was dark when we'd get home. Some way to get an education.

PAULINE: Uh huh. It's a little different than it is today. The school bus picks up somebody up at their door.

EASTER: It's --- well, and then going to school up there --- and I was the only one in my grade, all through the eight grades. And then went to high school in Corvallis, and that was a shock. So many students, and ---

PAULINE: Did you stay with friends, or did your mom move up there?

EASTER: No, she didn't. There was a lady from Burns, Mrs. Cy Sweek, and she moved

down to Corvallis during the school year. 'Cause she had two students, two children who were students at Oregon Agricultural College, and we roomed and boarded with her. My sister, and my brother, and myself. Cy Sweek was a, he was an attorney. And then he would come down in the wintertime and stay with his wife.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: There are quite a few of their descendants in the Burns area, because --- oh shoot, they had I don't know how many children --- the Sweeks.

PAULINE: The Sweek field is the way I remember the name. That's still used today to describe that area.

EASTER: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Was, was the reason that you went to Corvallis simply because there was an opportunity for you to have someone to stay with there, and you would have had to board out to go to Burns High School anyway?

EASTER: Well, we had to be sent away from home to go to high school. And that was the best deal we had was to go down there. And my brother, he was going to college. So we just sent us all down there.

PAULINE: So the whole family could actually be together to go to school, and have a place to stay.

EASTER: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Did, did you like riding horses? Is that something you enjoyed doing all your life? Or did you give that up as a young adult?

EASTER: Well, I liked it when I was a young person. Did a lot of riding at home. But, right now I don't think I could get on a horse.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Do you remember the first car that you ever rode in?

EASTER: Well, I don't know what it was. Some neighbors --- well, they didn't have a car,

it was friends of theirs who were visiting, and they all came to see us up in Silvies Valley. I don't know how old I was, I can just barely remember. So, we got in this car and rode down, oh down the field someplace, and then walked back home, just for the opportunity to ride in the car. Then the first car my dad had, it was a Model-T Ford. I don't, I don't know what year that was. It was --- (Dog barking). He always thought he was the only one on the road; he couldn't drive for sour apples. When we got --- the first car he got, bought it in John Day, and took it home. The gentleman who sold it to him, some garage, I don't know what --- the Ford Garage evidently. And he bought --- this gentleman brought us home in the car. Well, Dad didn't know how to drive, but anyway I guess he watched this gentleman, what he did. Then Dad was on his own, and he kept the car up in this barn. So he decided to try it out one day, got it going around the barnyard, and around, and around, and around, and he couldn't stop it, and he'd say whoa, whoa, whoa! Used to driving horses. (Laughter) But evidently he didn't have an accident, but I wasn't very old then. I don't know what year it was.

PAULINE: How long did it take you to drive from Silvies Valley on to Burns on that old road?

EASTER: (Dog barking) I'll put her out again. Well, one time Dad had a toothache, and of course he wanted to get to Burns to the dentist, and we made it in three hours. So ---

PAULINE: And that was fast!

EASTER: Right. (Laughter) I remember him telling about that. But, you know, there is so much of this stuff I wish I'd have --- a lot of it I'd have written down, because I can't remember all of it. Some little things like that.

PAULINE: I think we're all that way. When you're younger, you remember everything in such great detail; you don't think you'll ever forget it.

EASTER: I know.

PAULINE: But as you get older your mind, your brain just has too many things in it to remember everything.

EASTER: Stop it --- (Talking to dog). I don't know if you can think of anything else or not. Well, all right, Missy!

PAULINE: She doesn't know whether she wants in or out.

EASTER: Restless little rat. Afraid she might --- going to miss something.

PAULINE: Somebody different is here today.

EASTER: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Well, as a ranch wife, did you cook for the hay crews and ---

EASTER: You mean when Jett and I lived ---

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: --- well, we traded work, and when the neighbors would come to help us, then I'd prepare the meals.

PAULINE: You didn't have a hired crew?

EASTER: No. No, like out here at Harney, the Withers --- we'd help them, and they'd help us. We didn't up in Silvies when Jett and I moved up there. Of course we didn't have running water, we didn't have lights. Harney, we didn't have either. That was rough. And the place we purchased out there at Harney, we got it from Julia Clark, she was an old timer.

PAULINE: Well even, let's see, the time that you were in Harney, I guess that Highway 20 was paved by then.

EASTER: Oh yes.

PAULINE: Wasn't it, yeah. The road off the highway into the ranch probably wasn't to ---

EASTER: It wasn't paved, no. And then in the wintertime, oh, it would drift full of snow, you know, and couldn't get through, and have a deuce of a time. That was in --- from '47

until 1950 ---

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: --- that we were there.

PAULINE: Well, that's about the time they started the school bus run out that way.

EASTER: Yeah, the school bus was running out there. Of course---

PAULINE: Every other week. One week, those of us that lived over on this side would go out to Harney and all around and back.

EASTER: Oh.

PAULINE: And the next week they would bring us home first, and take the Harney kids home. So I rode that school bus around that road a good many times.

EASTER: Well, I imagine you did too.

PAULINE: It was --- the nights that Harney went home first; it was well after dark when we got off the school bus there at the ranch

---

EASTER: Then up early the next morning to ---

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: I know Craddock took the school bus when he was in high school then.

PAULINE: Yeah, he went to school in Burns, and at the Burns High School, and then went on to college?

EASTER: Craddock?

PAULINE: Yeah.

EASTER: No, he didn't go to college.

PAULINE: He didn't go to college. Okay. Well, is there anything else that you can think of that you particularly want to have said for ---

EASTER: That I want to divulge? (Laughter)

PAULINE: In honor of this occasion.

EASTER: I can't think of anything.

PAULINE: I'll probably, when I go to write this, I'll probably think of something I forgot to ask you. I'll give you a call.

EASTER: Okay.

...

EASTER: --- jacket dress, well they called them ensembles in those days.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EASTER: Embroidered with wool embroidery on it. It wasn't a wedding dress; it was just a suit, silk suit.

PAULINE: Okay, and when was Craddock born?

EASTER: June the 15th, 1932, in Monterey Park, California. (Telephone rings.) I wonder if that's Henry?

--

bl