

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #233C - Side B (Middle)

Subject: Naomi Walter

Place: Elks Lodge, Burns, Oregon

Date: 1979

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

BOB SMITH: I'll introduce Pauline --- Kay is not here, she stepped out for just a minute. I'm having a domestic relations problem. It has to do with this Ray Hansen business. You see my problem is that each time Kay comes down the hill and gets stuck in the mud, she wants to know why her road isn't paved to our house. And I say, "Call the judge." She calls Judge Dale White, and he says, "I don't know, call Ray Hansen." (Laughter) Now my problem is frankly this, if Ray Hansen is elected judge, will I get my road paved? No! If Ray Hansen isn't elected judge, will I get my road paved? No! I have a domestic relations problem. (Laughter) Pauline Braymen please come.

PAULINE BRAYMEN: Thank you Bob. It gives me great pleasure to be able to present this award tonight. The lady that is the 1979 woman --- Senior Woman of the Year, taught me what community service is all about. I think everyone who is active in the community has people that they saw when they were growing up that they wanted to be like. And so tonight, this is really a big moment for me to be able to make this award. You can't say in the few minutes allotted everything there is to say about this lady. She is 74 years old, I think, if I did my subtraction right. And to do seventy --- 74 years worth of activity we'd be here all night. I have written in complete detail about her life, and that will be filed in various places for history purposes, and I'm going to briefly summarize for you.

She came here in 1908, when she was two years old. Her mother was a widow.

She had an older brother; eight years old --- or eight, yes eight years old, who homesteaded in the Double O country. This lady went to school there, and also to grade school in Burns. Graduated from the Burns High School, went to Normal School at Ashland, and taught school in Harney County upon her reaching her teacher's certificate. She married in Burns, has celebrated her fiftieth wedding anniversary in Burns. She has many memories of a good life in this county. There was a hardship and tenderness of love and sadness as are so many of the memories of our pioneer folk. She remembers being bundled so tight in a feather tick on a ride to Lawen from Ontario in a freight wagon when she was two years old, that she still doesn't like to have her hands and feet tucked under the covers.

She remembers playing in a corner of the kitchen of the old French Hotel in Burns where her mother cooked, and her brother built fires and did odd jobs. She remembers the terror she and her brother felt when her mother fell in the well. Can you imagine! She was very small, and neither her nor her brother were big enough to be of any help at all, and her mother was in the bottom of the well. A buckaroo came along several hours later and saved her mother, the relief she felt I'm sure could not be expressed.

She was nearly bitten by a rattlesnake at one time. And she has been chased by a rabid coyote. She remembers her first car, a Ford Roadster. And what it was like to set up housekeeping in a buckaroo camp, while her husband and the crew rounded up wild horses. She remembers losing all her possessions in a fire, in deep snow in below zero weather. She remembers her dog named Teddy, who was a constant companion, and back seat driver, except when they were nearly home, when he wanted out to race with her.

She had another race too, this time it was with the stork, so that her daughter

wouldn't be born on Wright's Point. She helped her son snare rabbits to get a bounty of five cents apiece. And set beside his bed while he lay unconscious from the kick in the head by a horse. The doctors were doubtful that he would live through the night. But she had faith, saying he will wake up at six o'clock, because that's when he always wakes up. At six the next morning, he opened his eyes.

This lady has given so much of herself to the county and the community through her contributions of time, talent, and patience. You can name an organization in the community, and she belongs to it. I'm not going to read the list; we'd be here all night. Everything from the Hospital Auxiliary to Sagebrush Embroidery Club, you name it. Burns Mother's Club, she's done it all.

She's known for her cooking. She spent 27 years as cook at the Burns Grade School, and every kid that could get his nose over the counter knew her and loved her. She still has her hand in, because at the Senior Citizen's Center when they eat there, this lady's there to help prepare the food. This lady was here tonight helping with the food.

One of the big things that this woman should be remembered for is her devoted service to the Harney County Fair Association. She's worked with this for 28 years, and it was really with her idea, along with two or three other ladies in textile and needlework department, who came up with the idea that we needed an exhibit building, an all purpose building at the fairgrounds. They started a fund; they began to try to raise money. And now this idea has caught on, and the fund is growing, and the county is getting behind and support of it. And it's --- this lady is one of those who had the farsightedness to see this need several years ago.

Her children never knew what a babysitter was. Having expected and received support for every activity from high school and college football and basketball, to

Rainbow, 4-H, and Drill Team. Her family includes her son Ray V. Walter, a civil engineer of Eugene. And his daughters Linda and Lee Ann. Her daughter Helen Landers who is a beautician in Burns. And her children Irene and Cyrene of Burns, and Raymond of Salem. Her nephew Joe Moon, and his son Geran of Double O. And who else, but her husband Red Walter, Harney County's Fair Grand Marshall of 1978. Red and the rest of the family, would you please escort the 1979 Senior Woman of the Year, Naomi ... Walter to the microphone. (Applause)

BOB SMITH: To receive this award ---

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