

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #265 - Sides A & B & C

Subject: Claude & Audra Brennan Discuss Bill Brown

Place: Restaurant, Prineville, Oregon

Date: September 1979

Interviewer: Richard Cowan

Release Form: No

RICHARD COWAN: ... Well Charlie Spencer was raised right then too. See Charlie was over eighty when he died.

CLAUDE BRENNAN: Was he?

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: I thought maybe he was about my age. I didn't know whether he ---

RICHARD: I'm sure he was over eighty.

CLAUDE: Well, I'll be eighty in November.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

MAN: You eighty?

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Isn't that wonderful.

AUDRA BRENNAN: Eighty in November.

RICHARD: I'll be darned, that's great.

CLAUDE: Well, I've changed a lot though. I still can't get on a horse at all anymore. Haven't even tried.

RICHARD: Well ---

CLAUDE: I go up to brandings up at Post, and around that country all the time. But I don't get on

a horse, I just visit with them. Drink some of their beer.

RICHARD: Well, I can still get on a horse, but there are mornings I don't want to.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Was Bill Brown, was he much of, was he a horseman, a real horseman?

CLAUDE: No, no, he could barely ride a horse at all. No idea of what a horse could stand or anything.

RICHARD: Well, who handled his horses?

CLAUDE: Oh, he had buckaroos, buckaroo bosses.

RICHARD: Did he have a pretty good foreman?

CLAUDE: Well, one of the Morgan boys ... boy out there.

RICHARD: Mike Morgan's?

CLAUDE: Well, that's his dad that run the outfit.

RICHARD: Oh, Frank Morgan.

CLAUDE: Frank Morgan run the outfit when I worked there.

RICHARD: Well, Frank is still alive.

CLAUDE: Yes.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Yeah, I see him all the time.

RICHARD: Is he up here now?

CLAUDE: No, no he went back to California, he retired.

RICHARD: Uh huh. He ran --- was McCulloch's foreman for a lot of years.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Was until he retired here.

RICHARD: Well, I'll be darned. Well, did he know horses?

CLAUDE: No.

RICHARD: He was known as a horse and, sheep and horse king of Eastern Oregon.

CLAUDE: No, no. I've got some notes wrote down out here. I'll tell you about, something about his horses.

RICHARD: Well, he was an easterner originally, wasn't he?

CLAUDE: No, he come from Brownsville, Oregon.

RICHARD: Well, where did I get the idea he was from the east?

CLAUDE: Well, he might originally come from there, I don't know.

AUDRA: I think the family was from Brownsville.

CLAUDE: Uh huh. I wondered if maybe, if Brownsville was named after him.

RICHARD: Well yeah, might be if the family --- How did he happen to end up over here, do you know?

CLAUDE: Yeah. Yeah, he had an education from some college down there. And he didn't like it down there, and him and his brother, I don't remember what his brother's name was, but they came up here in the '80's sometime. Landed out there on the desert. And he picked up a few bumper lambs, and he and his brother stayed out there on the desert, somewhere around Wagontire I think, out in that area, all winter long, without a camp, without a camp. He stayed in kind of a cave there, to break the ... off of it. Just one year did it for his brother. He went back, he took off. Then he started buying little bunches of sheep, and buying a horse here and there. Somebody wanted to sell their horses, he'd buy them.

RICHARD: Did he headquarter at Wagontire for a while then?

CLAUDE: No, no, his only headquarters were there at Buck Creek. When he was going good, he controlled all that country --- controlled all the water in that country out there.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

CLAUDE: Every bit of it. But he didn't fence the water. Everybody used it.

RICHARD: Didn't try to squeeze other people out.

CLAUDE: No, no he didn't.

RICHARD: How did he control it, by homesteading on it?

CLAUDE: No, buying up homesteads and things like that. He bought a lot of BLM land. Not

BLM, but the state stabilization land. He bought a lot of that land. In fact, the stabilization company is the one that sold him out.

RICHARD: Well, how come --- why didn't he keep other people off this water? You know everybody else was doing it at that time.

CLAUDE: Everybody else was, yeah. Having a lot of trouble. No, he was ---

AUDRA: He just let somebody use it.

CLAUDE: ...

RICHARD: People take advantage of him?

CLAUDE: Well, not in that way, no. Everybody took advantage of him, lots of those homesteaders, you know.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Steal his horses. Steal his camp outfit and things like that.

AUDRA: Sell him his own horse.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Steal one of his range horses, then sell it back to him?

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Did he know this, or was it just his way of ---

CLAUDE: No, no, he never did know it. I know one fellow that sold him the same horse three or four times. (Laughter) Some of those buckaroos, those buckaroos they'd come along and wasn't even working for him and milk the money off of him. Yeah, he didn't know who was working for him.

RICHARD: Oh, is that right?

CLAUDE: Oh, yeah, he'd just write them out a check. Tell him his name. Well, doggone it, I guess I got it wrote down here someplace. He'd just give them what they wanted. Money never meant nothing to him whatever, he didn't care whether he had a penny or not. Nothing ... him.

RICHARD: Well, did people like him, or did they make fun of him, or ---

CLAUDE: Oh yeah, yeah, they --- everybody liked him. They might tease him or make fun of

him, you know. Tell lots of stories on him. Some of them true, some of them weren't.

RICHARD: Well, this is what surprised me, you know, he got to be such a big operator at one time, so wealthy, that it seems like people were always taking advantage of him.

CLAUDE: Yeah, wealthy in land and stock.

RICHARD: Yeah, that's what I mean.

CLAUDE: Nobody knows how many horses he had. Nobody to count them.

RICHARD: They talk about ten thousand horses. Did he have that many?

CLAUDE: Yes, yes, I think so. He had horses in five counties at one time.

RICHARD: Boy, it looked like people just stole him blind.

CLAUDE: Why he sent several of them up to the penitentiary, stealing horses. In a year or two he'd get them out.

RICHARD: Felt sorry for him and their family?

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: I'll be darned.

AUDRA: Give them a job.

RICHARD: Give them a job too?

CLAUDE: Oh, yeah.

RICHARD: Then they turn around and steal from him again, I suppose.

CLAUDE: Yeah. Well, he dealt in big money.

AUDRA: He walked everyplace he went, all over the ---

RICHARD: He what?

AUDRA: He walked everyplace he went.

RICHARD: Never tied his shoes, huh? Is this right? He walked with his shoelaces untied?

CLAUDE: Rode with them, rode with them.

RICHARD: Oh, rode with them.

CLAUDE: Yeah. I put that down on my notes there.

RICHARD: Okay.

CLAUDE: Yeah. That one old horse, he called him Farewell. Used to be a place out here on the desert they called Farewell, and I presume that he got that horse around there somewhere.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

CLAUDE: He'd get on, he had a McClellan saddle, you know what they are?

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: He'd get on that old horse with his shoelaces untied. He could whip him over and under until he run out of breath. Didn't have any idea what a horse could stand at all.

RICHARD: Huh.

AUDRA: Didn't get off and walk the rest of the way.

RICHARD: Did he know anything about sheep? Was he a pretty good sheep man?

CLAUDE: Well, in a way, yes. He believed in survival of the fittest. And he liked sheep that just actually took care of themselves. He'd get in trouble with his herders. He didn't like them for something, he'd fire all of them and take them himself and go to the desert with them. They'd just scatter far and wide. Coyotes would get some of them. They were rugged. They'd look after themselves. Yeah, he had good sheep.

RICHARD: Yeah.

AUDRA: You sheared for him once.

CLAUDE: I guess I sheared for him twice, didn't I?

AUDRA: Maybe, I don't remember.

RICHARD: There at Buck Creek? Was that --- he'd bring them in there to shear.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Would he winter them on the desert?

CLAUDE: Oh, yes, you bet. Feed a little corn, concentrate or something.

AUDRA: You lambed at the Gap Ranch, didn't you?

CLAUDE: Yeah, I lambed for him at the Gap Ranch one year.

RICHARD: Did they have sheds there, or did you lamb in the field?

CLAUDE: Oh, no. Out in the hills. Started in lambing there in ... And we had eight or nine

thousand in a dock bed, that's the one that's lambing, you know. Called it dock bed.

RICHARD: Yeah. Uh huh.

CLAUDE: Turned them out of the corral there at Buck Creek in the morning. And they'd eat all the grass. Well, it was March; there wasn't any grass yet. They wouldn't stop for running for oh, three or four miles, you know out there before they found any grass. Yeah, I picked, picked rock on horseback. Had to.

RICHARD: Well, I suppose this is a question we've always had, I mean how could he accumulate so much land and livestock with such a loose operation?

CLAUDE: Well, at that time you could do it. But you couldn't do it ---

RICHARD: No, no.

CLAUDE: That's what ---

AUDRA: Be impossible now.

CLAUDE: That's what got him originally there in the end, you know, was the loose operation.

RICHARD: Yeah.

AUDRA: Just open range, and inexpensive.

RICHARD: Well, did he --- how about --- did he have a good foreman for his sheep operation?

You say he just hired ---

CLAUDE: Well, he didn't have any sheep foreman. No. ... whoever he could pick up, anybody, everybody. He always had a buckaroo boss for the horses.

RICHARD: Didn't run any cattle to amount to anything?

CLAUDE: Run cattle for two or three years. Ran with a horseshoe bar on the jaw, both jaws.

Yeah, the neighbors, homesteaders ate all of his cattle. He quit that, he didn't want to ---

AUDRA: ... operation that he had a freight outfit ... hauling freight for him.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: He had a freight outfit hauling in freight?

CLAUDE: Yeah.

AUDRA: ... for supplies, just kept ... freighters man ... Ivey.

CLAUDE: Ivey.

RICHARD: Ivey.

CLAUDE: He was a homesteader out on the desert.

AUDRA: Tell him about the new mowing machine he bought for ...

CLAUDE: Yeah, he bought a new mowing machine, had about forty acres in that little meadow there. You know where ... is?

RICHARD: Uh huh.

CLAUDE: And so, he mowed that for days, right there early in the morning. Mowed that forty acres in a day. My cousin was raking for him there. He never put a drop of oil on that mowing machine. He just got through, and she froze up, locked up tight.

AUDRA: ...

CLAUDE: ... with ... oil.

RICHARD: Well, what about his store there? Did he keep it stocked pretty well?

CLAUDE: Yeah. He had a sister there with him about that time. Sarah, Sarah was her name. She wasn't married. She come and kept books for him. Sometimes she worked in the store. He run that just like everything else. He spent more time --- people were honest, but they could come in here ... for a while. Come in here and get what they wanted out of the store, and put their money in the cash register.

AUDRA: Make your own change, or write down their charge.

CLAUDE: Make change, or charge it. Write it down. You know how that turned out. (Laughter)  
Yeah, we got his old ledgers.

RICHARD: Oh, you do?

CLAUDE: Yeah. People over here at Redmond got it now. Pick out quite a few names. Streets, Streets got some names in there, the Street boys. ... McCullough, Frank McCullough worked for him when he was just a boy. Do you know Frank?

RICHARD: No.

CLAUDE: He buckarood there when ... You know Chubby ...

RICHARD: Yeah, sure.

CLAUDE: They're cousins of mine, he married ...

RICHARD: Oh, I see. Is Sid living here in Prineville now?

CLAUDE: Sedrick

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: No, he's up there in the same old place.

RICHARD: He sold it, I thought.

CLAUDE: No, he won't never leave there, he'll die right there.

RICHARD: Well, that's kind of what I figured. But at one time he was going to sell it I thought.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Same time that Chris sold.

CLAUDE: Yeah. Chris lives here.

RICHARD: I know he does. Yeah.

AUDRA: Tell him about the time Bill accused you of stealing his socks.

CLAUDE: Huh?

AUDRA: Tell him about the time Bill accused you of stealing his socks.

CLAUDE: Well, we was there at Twelve Mile, you know where Twelve Mile is located?

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Well, we were working on the reservoirs, and Bill got up one morning and was getting dressed, and he accused me of stealing his socks. "Brennan, what'd you do with my socks?" I said, "I never touched your socks, Bill." "Dad gum it," he said, "you have too, I can't find them."

Everybody played pranks on him all right. I didn't have his socks. He wore a fourteen shoe. An enormous foot. He used to walk from, used to walk from Buck Creek Ranch to Burns in eight to ten hours.

RICHARD: He did?

CLAUDE: Yes sir.

RICHARD: Gee whiz.

CLAUDE: Oh, he was a walker.

AUDRA: He finally stopped ... didn't he?

RICHARD: Were you staying with him there at Buck Creek, in the big house at the time?

CLAUDE: Yeah. That was really his headquarters for everything, Buck Creek, only headquarters he ever had that I know of.

RICHARD: What was the reason for the stairway to the upstairs in that house; is a big stairway on the backside of the house?

CLAUDE: That was put in there later.

RICHARD: Oh, I see. Bill didn't, he didn't put ---

CLAUDE: Dominique Verges put that in.

RICHARD: Oh.

CLAUDE: Yeah. Dominique cut the house in two, really.

AUDRA: It was a big stairway that went up out of the front room, and upstairs.

RICHARD: Oh, I see.

AUDRA: It was an open stairway with a real pretty banister.

RICHARD: Yeah, inside.

AUDRA: Uh huh. Oh, the house isn't, it's just about half the size it was when Bill had it.

RICHARD: Oh, I had no idea about that. And that's, and that stairway was in the living room then?

AUDRA: Uh huh.

RICHARD: It must have been a big house.

AUDRA: It was.

CLAUDE: He had a nursery upstairs. The east, the east end of the house.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

AUDRA: I think there was about seven bedrooms.

CLAUDE: And they had, right off the kitchen was a kind of a storeroom. It was --- it had a basement under that. Yeah, he was going to get married and raise a large family.

RICHARD: Never did marry, did he?

CLAUDE: No, he never did.

RICHARD: Did he have any girlfriends out there?

CLAUDE: Oh, yeah. He had girlfriends ever once in awhile. Had lots of dreams about them.

AUDRA: He did have quite a crush on Pat ... sister, didn't he?

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Oh, is that right?

CLAUDE: Preacher's daughter, too.

RICHARD: I heard he wanted to marry Virgil Shields' sister at one time too.

CLAUDE: ...

RICHARD: Oh, I forget her married name. This is a long time ago, because she was only fifteen at the time. And Bill was an older man then, I guess.

CLAUDE: Yeah. Well you can cut it off or put it in there, because doggone it I'm going to get married and raise a large family. And I'll breed her every month, and if she don't stick I'll breed her again the next month. (Laughter)

RICHARD: More power to him.

CLAUDE: That's the truth.

RICHARD: Is that right?

CLAUDE: Yeah. That's the way he felt about it.

AUDRA: There has been a poem written about him. Did you ever hear of it, or get it?

RICHARD: No.

CLAUDE: We've got it, but it's over at these people over there.

AUDRA: ...

CLAUDE: A fellow that worked out there by the name of Lester Wilson wrote it. A character in his own right. Yeah.

AUDRA: He gave an organ to the church here in town.

RICHARD: Here in Prineville?

AUDRA: Uh huh. He was an easy mark for any charitable thing.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

AUDRA: We had the letter for a long time that was written to him from the Methodist Old People's Home in Salem where he had given them quite a sizeable contribution.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

AUDRA: Saying that he could have a home there any time he chose. And that's where he died.

RICHARD: Where he ended up isn't it? Uh huh.

AUDRA: We had the letter thanking him for his contribution. We found it in the house when we moved in. We had quite a box of things that we just picked up off the floor there. And when we were here in town running the hotel that box disappeared from up at the ranch.

RICHARD: I'll be darned.

AUDRA: Never, don't know what become of it.

RICHARD: That's too bad.

AUDRA: But we had the papers where he registered his first brand. Where he registered the horseshoe bar as his brand. I hope someday they come to life for the historical value, not that we care. But just for the historical value.

RICHARD: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah.

CLAUDE: Yeah, I think some day --- give his old ledger to the historical society.

RICHARD: Oh, I think, yeah, sure, sure. Give it all to them.

AUDRA: Oh, I think that's where it should go.

RICHARD: Yeah, that's where it should go.

CLAUDE: I doubt that he's got any relatives left at all, I don't know. He did have a nephew. He's probably dead at this time.

AUDRA: And he had a brother that was a doctor in Portland. And when he retired, his idea of retirement was to go to the hospital. And he went to the Emanuel Hospital and had a special nurse. And so, he got to be taken out for a ride, and what not, you know. And that's the way he spent his last years in retirement, was from the hospital.

RICHARD: Huh. The family then was not a poor family. It was an educated ---

AUDRA: Yes.

RICHARD: --- family.

AUDRA: He was a teacher, Bill was. A schoolteacher.

RICHARD: Well, you don't know what brought him over here. Whether it was a disappointed love affair, or ---

CLAUDE: I don't know. As far as I know he just wanted to get out in the wild open spaces. And -  
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AUDRA: You probably wouldn't have occasion to know Cleon Parker, forest supervisor here?

RICHARD: Sure, yeah.

AUDRA: Well, Cleon's wife is doing an article on Bill.

RICHARD: Oh.

AUDRA: And she is the one who has all of our literature and information on --- Everything that I have collected over the years why we have turned over to her.

RICHARD: Is Cleon still alive?

AUDRA: Uh huh. We went out to Redmond and ---

RICHARD: Well, I'll make a note of that to see him over there. Well, I was, you know, I certainly can't be an authority or anything, but what I'm interested in is these stories about Bill Brown being such a nice guy. And about people, kind of taking advantage of him. It's kind of unusual with a wealthy man.

AUDRA: Like Claude was saying, that people who weren't even working for him they'd run across him out on the desert someplace where he was with his sheep, and say well Bill, I'm going to quit, it's about time we're settling up. Bill would write him out a check.

CLAUDE: How long he'd been here, and he'd write him out a check.

Well, they got a check, you know, of his over there in the bank in Burns. You knew about that.

RICHARD: Yeah, yeah.

CLAUDE: Wrote on a chip, or a tomato can wrapper.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh.

CLAUDE: Yeah, he'd write them on anything.

RICHARD: And they honored them huh?

CLAUDE: Oh, you betcha they honored them.

RICHARD: Well, he must have been marketing; he must have been selling some horses and sheep all the time.

CLAUDE: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah.

AUDRA: Or lambs, or wool.

CLAUDE: During the First World War he sold a thousand geldings for a hundred dollars a head.

RICHARD: Oh, boy.

CLAUDE: And the next year he didn't have a nickel.

RICHARD: Where did it all go?

CLAUDE: Oh, built reservoirs all over the desert. You've seen a lot of his reservoirs. That one there above the Gap Ranch up the canyon there, he built that.

RICHARD: Sure. Uh huh.

CLAUDE: No spillways in any of them.

RICHARD: Yeah, that's right.

CLAUDE: They'd wash out, get full of water and wash out. If they didn't wash out, they got pretty full, why --- that reservoir there around Twelve Mile, he just up and cut a hole in them and let the water go.

RICHARD: Huh.

AUDRA: So, they wouldn't wash out.

CLAUDE: And they'd work. We'd go in there and repair them every year. I only worked on the reservoirs twice I think.

RICHARD: Well, you know, I always thought he was kind of a man with a lot of vision as far as water goes.

CLAUDE: Well he was, he ... water all over the desert that was a wonderful thing to do, you know.

Stock and horses didn't have so far to go. Any old dry lakebed out there, he'd put a reservoir in it so it'd hold more water, every place.

RICHARD: Well, you know there at the Gap Ranch he pulled water in from the north, and from the south both into those lakebeds, and then irrigated with it.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

AUDRA: At one time he had a good alfalfa field there.

CLAUDE: At the Gap Ranch ... East Lake is it?

RICHARD: Yeah, that's reservoir ... that's part of my allotment now.

CLAUDE: Yeah, yeah, sure. Yeah, I was over there one year when he had eleven big stacks of hay there on the Gap Ranch.

RICHARD: The Gap?

CLAUDE: And they were big ones. They weren't twenty-five or thirty ton. Every one of them was oh, sixty, seventy ton.

RICHARD: Is that right?

CLAUDE: Drag it up, you know, the old method we used to do. Drag it up on poles and ride on the hay itself. Big. And about every other year he'd drown his alfalfa out and have to re-seed it. Did his own irrigating. He'd go out there and turn the water on and let her go.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

AUDRA: His help must have been something else. They must have been marvelous help!

CLAUDE: ... at Gap Ranch, had a mouse in the reservoir that old ... Creek Reservoir. I don't know whether it's still there or not.

RICHARD: Yeah, the big circle. Yeah.

CLAUDE: Round. It had a cover on it then, a round shape cover. But they couldn't keep the rats out of it. And it got so bad we couldn't drink it. Oh, it was terrible. So, couldn't make old Bill believe there was anything wrong with it. So, I took him out there with a ladder one day, and we drained the water out, oh down a foot or so of water in there I guess. Showed him the rats, rats floating around every place. Said, "Bill, we're going to quit. Every one of us is going to quit if you

don't get some water." Well, he did start to hauling us some water from a windmill down below the Gap, a fellow by the name of Charlie --- I can't think of it now. He was a bartender from up here from Portland a long time ago.

RICHARD: I think I know where the place is, yeah.

CLAUDE: I don't know whether it's still there anymore.

RICHARD: No, it's gone.

CLAUDE: He hauled water up from down there. But I told him, rat water is terrible. Oh, dad gum it, one little old rat won't hurt nothing! (Laughter) He was used to drinking that lake water, anything that would come along.

RICHARD: Well, that's what amazed me about him, that he could do so much with such poor help. You know lambing at the Gap, farming there. Headquarters in Buck Creek, and sheep on the desert, horses everywhere.

CLAUDE: Yeah. Well, they started the horse riding; oh they'd wait until the grass got good enough for the saddle horses to eat. That went on into the, well into winter most of the time. In the spring of the year, they'd brand the colts. They missed lots of them. You just couldn't get into the corral with all of them.

RICHARD: Oh, I'm sure.

CLAUDE: Impossible. Then the wild studs once in awhile, and castrate them. Maybe leave a head or two here or there. And he didn't sell lambs like you do now days. He kept his; he kept all of his ewe lambs. And he had a wethers band ... three or four or five thousand. Wethers lambs, he run them as yearlings. Sold them when they were yearlings. There wasn't any market for lambs then.

RICHARD: Lamb, yeah, uh huh.

CLAUDE: Just yearlings and the wool. ...

AUDRA: Well he'd get one more crop of wool off of them that way. Selling them when they were

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RICHARD: Uh huh, uh huh. Where would he market them? Would he bring them down here to

Prineville? Who bought his lambs, his sheep?

CLAUDE: I don't know, I can't answer that. I don't know.

SIDE B

RICHARD: ... Well I was trying to think where it was. I can't think of who that might have been. I've had so much help out there, out there over the years.

AUDRA: Where were you at the time that you cooked all of the rolled oats, and Bill ate them all, and told them there wasn't anymore --- cook them.

CLAUDE: Yeah, we were camped there at Twelve Mile building reservoirs. And old Bill come in ... We didn't have a cook. And I was doing the cooking along with working. So, I got up in the morning and cooked the --- oh I don't know, there was about ten or twelve of us working on the reservoir there. And I cooked enough oats for everybody for breakfast. Well, I had the oats cooked, and so Bill sat down at the table. So, the other boys were due in any minute, so I set the kettle of oats on there. And old Bill just took the kettle and --- he didn't use milk, put a lot of sugar on there and put a bunch of water on top and ate the whole kettle full. (Laughter) Kind of burnt me up. I said, "Bill, some of the other boys might want some oats too." "Well god dang it, I guess you can cook some more," he said. He'd furnish anything you wanted to eat. He wasn't stingy that way. If you wanted strawberry jam three times a day, that was all right with Bill. He didn't care.

RICHARD: Did he pay his help reasonably well for the time?

CLAUDE: Well we got, I think we were getting three dollars a day then.

RICHARD: Pretty good.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Yeah, sure.

CLAUDE: Yeah, he paid good.

RICHARD: Well, where did he get his help? Did they, mostly people stopping through?

CLAUDE: Yeah, neighbors around there, ranchers, or anybody that wanted a job.

AUDRA: The desert was covered with homesteaders then, and they all needed work.

RICHARD: Uh huh. They all kind of figured he was an easy mark, huh?

CLAUDE: Yeah. He come in one day for dinner, same time this other happened. Bill was still there, and he didn't, Bill didn't carry a watch. He was a pretty shrewd guesser too on the time of day now believe me. I had a watch, and we quit, had dinner about twelve o'clock. And then we didn't go out until one o'clock. Took an hour noon. And so, Bill he got restless and said, "Doggone it, why don't you fellows get out to work?" And I said, "Well," I said, "it's not one o'clock yet." "Oh, doggone it, it is too." Said --- so he got out there and held his hand up and down this way. "Yeah," he said, "it's one o'clock, you better get to work." I don't know whether it was quarter to one or something. And I was pretty fired, I flew off the handle, and I told him to take it and shove it. I said we was going by my clock, what's the difference what the sun is. "Doggone it, Brennan," he said, "don't get angry." I sat around there two days before he paid me. He thought I'd go back to work, but I didn't.

RICHARD: Huh.

CLAUDE: Hell, we'd set there and eat and visit.

RICHARD: He was just hoping that you'd go back to work for him, huh?

CLAUDE: Yeah, hoping I'd go back to work for him. I didn't do it.

AUDRA: Somebody disagreed with him, or called him some name or something, he said, "You're saying don't make it so."

CLAUDE: Tell him ... doggone it, it don't make it so.

RICHARD: ... it's true.

CLAUDE: Being called that a lot. He --- they were lambing there at Buck Creek, or at the Gap Ranch and he had an older man and two boys, and the old man and the older boy worked with the sheep there, helped with the sheep. And so, one morning he sent this older boy out to catch a mutton, that was their meat. That's all they had. So, the kid went out there, and he didn't know anything about catching a mutton, like anybody that worked around sheep, you know. He took after that sheep and run it all over that big lot there at the Gap Ranch. Around and around, and he about run down, and finally he stepped on a rock or some darn thing, and sprained his ankle. And so, he

was in the bunkhouse there, and we wrapped his ankle up a little with something. It swelled up, swelled pretty bad, right away quick. So, Bill he didn't believe there was anything wrong with the kid. Said, "Doggone it, there ain't nothing wrong with you." He said, "Chances are your dad or mother had the clap some time." (Laughter) It made me so mad, I'd have clobbered him with a rock or something. Oh, he'd say anything like that.

RICHARD: Was he serious about it, or just kind of ---

CLAUDE: Oh yes, oh yes.

AUDRA: Don't think he was inclined to joking or anything. He was always a serious ---

RICHARD: Whatever he said he was serious about huh?

CLAUDE: Well, he'd forget who was working for him. I don't know whether it was before that or after that. I --- told me to catch a mutton before I went out to pick ... Of course, I could fool around there a little while, because the sheep didn't quit running until they got out there two or three miles and got to where there was some feed. I'd get on my horse and ride out there. "Brennan catch a mutton." So, we had some mutton around there he kept separate. So, I run one in the shoot and was going to put a little pigging rope we called them, where we tied the ewe's feet together. If they wouldn't claim their lambs out on the range, why we'd put a rope around one front foot and the opposite hind foot see, so they couldn't run. They'd have to stay there. And I had a little loop in it. I had a bunch of them you see, and I always carried them on my belt. If I wanted, I'd catch a ewe I'd just hobble her and go on. I always kept a little loop already to go. Oh, it was about eight, ten foot of them. So, Bill come along, "What are you doing?" I said, "Well, I'm trying to catch a mutton." Said, "You working here?" "Oh," I said, "I've been drawing my pay here for a while." "Oh, doggone it," he said, "get out there and start to picking drop." And I said, "You told me to catch this mutton." "I didn't do no such a thing," he said. I got mad, and I had this loop and I just throwed it around his neck and give it a yank like that. "Oh, doggone it, don't get angry now, Brennan." Oh, he was a caution.

AUDRA: But I think through giving employment to the homesteaders and all, why he really kept things going on the desert, you know.

RICHARD: Yeah.

AUDRA: Couldn't have been otherwise.

RICHARD: Did he keep them going with his store pretty much? In their bad years did he help them a lot with groceries?

CLAUDE: The people around the area?

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Oh, yeah, a lot of people. Suplee, lots of people from Suplee come over there.

RICHARD: Came that far, huh?

CLAUDE: Down as far as Barnes up here.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Come here with a wagon and get their groceries. I know some of them; they just marked it paid themselves. Because it wasn't anybody else's writing. I got that old book there, know it. Some of them paid him.

RICHARD: They just went in the store and wrote it out, wrote it down if they wanted to.

CLAUDE: Yeah, uh huh. I know one incident, I forgot what it was now, it was --- I believe he bought a wagon there, some pretty good-sized article. And it was big too. And Bill helped him load it with groceries. And he just got in the wagon and drove off. And Bill never did get the money. (Laughter)

RICHARD: Well, did Bill know people were doing this to him?

CLAUDE: Well, I don't know.

RICHARD: It sounds like a lot of people did it over the years.

CLAUDE: Yeah, they did it for a long time.

AUDRA: He was such a trusting person.

CLAUDE: He used to furnish blankets. Well, he got smart on that. Everybody was stealing his blankets, you know. He furnished two or three blankets for your bed.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: And they were good blankets. People stole them all the time. But he didn't have any,

so he got to putting his brand on them out of lead, white lead. Stamped it right on there. You couldn't get it off. It was ---

RICHARD: Did that stop them from stealing?

CLAUDE: That stopped them from stealing, yeah.

RICHARD: Well, a guy once told me that the Buck Creek Ranch was kind of on the main road from Burns to Prineville.

CLAUDE: Just off of the main road. Right at the end of the Buck Creek Ranch, the road forked and went up over Buck Mountain.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

CLAUDE: ... meadow. I don't know whether that old road is open anymore or not.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh. Well, it's passable with a four-wheel drive.

CLAUDE: Is it?

RICHARD: If you can get across the meadow.

CLAUDE: We often think we'll go up there and look around, but we never get up there.

RICHARD: Well, it's pretty bad, bad shape. But the hard part is getting across the meadow now. The old --- it's ---

CLAUDE: There wasn't a meadow there; it was above the fence where you crossed it. That became BLM land, when they made all that trade up there.

RICHARD: Oh, yeah.

CLAUDE: But you had some bad places going up the creek there, from the Buck Creek house, going up the creek there was some muddy places there. And in certain times of the year you couldn't get through.

RICHARD: I haven't been above the house in years, so I don't know.

AUDRA: Well, it was on above the house about, well up in the meadow at the end of the field, is where the road went through there.

RICHARD: Well that was kind of the main road then?

CLAUDE: Oh, yes.

RICHARD: So, you had a lot of people ---

CLAUDE: Her uncle had the stage lines clear into Burns from Shaniko.

RICHARD: Oh, that's the road they took?

CLAUDE: Yeah, that's the way they went.

RICHARD: Well, did they just change horses there, or stay over night there?

CLAUDE: Well, I'm not too sure about that.

AUDRA: At Barney's was an overnight stop.

CLAUDE: Right above Grant Barney's place there, the Street place.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Balfour's had that place. See they were the first ones there, Balfours. And I kind of think that they had kind of a place there. Either a post office or place there where the neighbors could go in there and pick up their mail.

RICHARD: I see, uh huh.

CLAUDE: Another one of the Street's, Wesley's dad's brother had a homestead just above the, just above the Buck Creek fence here. The road that starts up Buck Mountain. You turned left there and come back over to the head of Twelve Mile Creek.

AUDRA: There was a post office at Harney.

RICHARD: Yeah, that's what I heard. Uh huh.

CLAUDE: Yeah. I looked that up, got the exact date on it.

AUDRA: I think I have a letter that was postmarked Harney.

RICHARD: Is that right? Well now did people, did they stay over night at Bill's house sometimes when they were traveling through?

CLAUDE: Oh, they could if they wanted to. Anybody could stay there if they wanted to.

RICHARD: I always heard they stayed there and he charged them for it or something.

CLAUDE: No. I don't ---

RICHARD: They wouldn't. Is that right?

CLAUDE: No. His sister, she might.

AUDRA: She would have charged them. She probably did.

CLAUDE: Not Bill himself, no.

AUDRA: Cause if they stayed there, I bet she did.

CLAUDE: Everybody lived off of him. Come along any place Bill had, why you could help yourself to whatever you want.

RICHARD: I'll be darned.

AUDRA: ... negatives of this --- of course we probably have the picture packed someplace of the store and the house, before the house was torn down.

RICHARD: Well, I didn't know this. I thought that was the original house there, the whole thing.

AUDRA: No, huh uh. It's just about half of it.

CLAUDE: Well, that was built in 19 --- that house was built in 1911 or '12, and the store about a year after.

RICHARD: The store was that building out in back of it?

AUDRA: No, it was in front of it.

CLAUDE: No, the store was right across the road.

RICHARD: Across the road.

CLAUDE: Right north.

RICHARD: Oh, okay.

AUDRA: Big horseshoe bar on the front of it.

CLAUDE: We've got some pictures of it.

RICHARD: Yeah. What happened, it burned down?

CLAUDE: No, I tore it down when we were living there. See Dominique Verges had the place then, and he wanted to build a cabin over at Twelve Mile. And one winter I couldn't get any money, and we lived there, and I tore the thing down, what good lumber I could get out of it and hauled it over to Twelve Mile and they built that cabin out there in the middle of the field.

RICHARD: I see, uh huh.

AUDRA: In the Glenn house there wasn't a knot in any of that, not a knot to be had, to see.

RICHARD: ... lumber.

AUDRA: ... lumber, and the inside, the ceiling and the walls were all sealed with cut and grooved -

--

CLAUDE: The lumber all come from up there on Buck Mountain, it was milled.

RICHARD: Uh huh. Well, you leased it from Dominique then?

CLAUDE: No, we had it on a share.

RICHARD: On a share?

CLAUDE: Yeah, Dominique wanted somebody to kind of look after it.

RICHARD: Did you still have the big house there then?

CLAUDE: Yeah, the house was in tact then, before they cut it in two.

RICHARD: Oh, I see.

AUDRA: Can you imagine the two of us living in that?

RICHARD: Oh, boy.

CLAUDE: It didn't have, when they went there ---

AUDRA: I think it was seventeen rooms.

CLAUDE: When we went there it didn't have any windows in it.

AUDRA: A few.

CLAUDE: Shepherders come in there and they just, nobody would bring them any wood, so they just --- well they tore the stairway down, tore the railing down on the stairway and used it for wood. And they took all the drawers out of the things and used them for wood.

AUDRA: The pantry was ... a beautiful pantry at one time, but all the cupboard doors were gone. And all the bins underneath, and all the drawers were all gone.

CLAUDE: We cut up some old pasteboard boxes and made windows. We didn't have any money either. (Laughter)

AUDRA: Just had a few windows in it.

CLAUDE: Yeah, I think there was a glass or two in the bay window there, wasn't they?

AUDRA: Yes, and the kitchen window was there, pantry window.

RICHARD: And the shepherders came in and ---

CLAUDE: Well yeah, whenever they were there, they, sure they stayed in the house.

RICHARD: Yeah, they just tore it up and took what they needed, huh?

CLAUDE: Well, they used it for wood.

RICHARD: Yeah, that's what I mean.

CLAUDE: The camp tender wasn't bringing them any wood, so they just burned ---

RICHARD: Couldn't go outside and cut it?

CLAUDE: No, oh no. That's standard, you know. They were, their hands were allergic to an axe or ---

RICHARD: Oh, yeah, yeah.

CLAUDE: --- saw or like that. Because the shepherders didn't have time. Wouldn't do it anyway.

AUDRA: We raised a lovely garden there.

RICHARD: How long were you there?

CLAUDE: Five years.

RICHARD: Five years.

AUDRA: Loved every bit of it.

RICHARD: How often did you get out? How often did you go to town?

CLAUDE: Oh, when we wanted some groceries or something. Oh, once a month.

AUDRA: One time it was about three months.

CLAUDE: We went to Burns for part of our groceries. We had to come down to Prineville, why we'd get groceries down this way.

AUDRA: Sometimes we'd go about three months before we'd go to town.

RICHARD: Well, did Bill consider himself as a resident of Prineville or Burns? What did he consider home?

CLAUDE: I haven't any idea. I don't know. He had some holdings in, quite a lot of holdings in Lake County.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: And he had the Deschutes County, Crook County, and Harney County.

RICHARD: Uh huh, yeah.

AUDRA: But he seemed to be connected, like donations to the church here. And then I have always heard that this Dr. Bellmacher (sp.?), lived here. He had what, five sons? And they all five became doctors. And that Bill helped ---

RICHARD: Bill helped them?

AUDRA: --- helped the five to school, medical school. I have always heard that.

RICHARD: Guess he was a real nice guy, wasn't he?

CLAUDE: Yeah, he was, he really was. ...

AUDRA: Aside from being ---

CLAUDE: I don't think he ever went to church, but he wasn't around where there was any church. He give that old Fife schoolhouse down there, well they had a church there too, but he give them an organ. Got them an organ.

AUDRA: I have a songbook that we picked up down there where, when all the rat leavings ... It was Presbyterian Church ...

RICHARD: Presbyterian Church?

AUDRA: Uh huh. And the songbook was presented by W. W. Brown. Written right in the flyleaf of it.

RICHARD: Is there a date on it?

AUDRA: I don't remember whether there is.

CLAUDE: I don't believe there is.

RICHARD: Where do you suppose they held the church down at Fife?

AUDRA: At the school. In the Buck Creek School.

RICHARD: Buck Creek School.

CLAUDE: Yeah. Sat on the east side of the flat there, above the G.I. Ranch, and before you get up to Barneys and his field ... there. No sign of it around there anymore. I can't spot it from the road anyway. I guess you could go down there and look around. Somebody hauled the lumber off.

AUDRA: So, you know he was interested in things like that. Buck Creek Presbyterian Church.

RICHARD: Huh. Now, I remember who Virgil Shield's sister was. She married Henry Street.

And she taught school at Buck Creek. Sure.

CLAUDE: Oh, yeah, sure. Why of course, sure.

RICHARD: Yeah, and apparently when she and Henry were married why that was her first school over there. I don't know why I couldn't think of that. Have we had enough --- shall we go out and -- I'm sorry, I thought you were done.

CLAUDE: Yeah, gosh yeah. We got a little coffee here yet.

RICHARD: We'll ---

AUDRA: I have quite a little information we gathered here and there. And quite a few stories written down that we have heard here and there. This one that these two fellows wrote that worked for Bill.

RICHARD: As I said, what fascinates me is the fact that here is this great big wealthy landowner and everything, and people took advantage of him. They made fun of him all the time. I was just wondering what these stories ---

AUDRA: You know the range was open, and free. And ---

CLAUDE: Bill was an odd guy in a way. Because he, oh you know, these characters were pretty rough around out that way, you know.

RICHARD: Yeah, yeah.

CLAUDE: They'd naturally tease him a lot, and take advantage of him. These cowboys and sheepherders, you know, they weren't too clean in their thinking.

AUDRA: I bet Bill never uttered a swear word in his life.

CLAUDE: Shucks, confound it, about the worst I ever heard him say.

RICHARD: Yet it is inconsistent that he'd be like this, the same time tell that kid that his mother had ---

CLAUDE: Oh, he was a character, that's right. Well, where do we want to start?

RICHARD: Oh, just right at the beginning there.

AUDRA: Some of it we've covered.

RICHARD: Well, we can cover it again.

CLAUDE: Well, he came from down in Brownsville, Oregon, in the '80's sometime. And landed out there on the desert, I think around Wagontire, or maybe Benjamin.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: You know where Benjamin is?

RICHARD: Yeah, yeah.

CLAUDE: And he picked up a few bummer lambs, and then he got to buying horses. Buy a horse there, maybe a bunch of mares and colts, or anything he could find. He could see a future in them I guess. And he just kept increasing his herd until he had ten, twelve thousand head of horses. And I've heard up as high as fifteen thousand sheep. But I really don't know. But he, when we were around out there, he had eight, ten thousand sheep then.

RICHARD: What years were you there Claude?

CLAUDE: We were there in --- well see I was born and raised down there at the big stone house there, between Paulina and Suplee. I wasn't borned there, but I come over there when I was two years old. And he was just the same as a neighbor to us. We run our sheep side by side. And my dad had sheep and cattle both. And I've known Bill ever since I can remember. And my dad used to send me out there; oh, we had a few horses running all around over the country. I remember the first time I was out there on a horse riding, going on, was about 1911, I think. And I went out to Buck Creek, Twelve Mile then. So, I've known him all my life practically.

RICHARD: Yeah, sure.

CLAUDE: And a bunch of loafers and people come by took advantage of him like I said a while ago. They come by there and tell him well we want to draw a little money, or I want to quit, or something. Maybe they had never worked there. And he'd just --- yeah, I guess I got it down someplace. And you say it is, why he'd give you a check.

RICHARD: Just trusted people, huh?

CLAUDE: Yeah, yeah. One old fellow that used to tend camp for him some, he wasn't as right in

his mind. He was kind of a crazy old devil. Had a squatter's homestead up there in the canyon below the Pickett Ranch. Old Crooked River, you know where the Pickett Ranch is?

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: And he fooled around with old Bill, and Bill paid him wages all the time for nothing. And Bill was always fighting with him, getting in a quarrel with him. So, they got into it one time, I think it happened around, either Long Hollow or right in that area some place, and they got into an argument. So, Billy Pavell (sp.?) was his name, and he carried a gun all the time, some kind of a gun. So, he got to shooting at Bill. Bill was telling about it, said, "Doggone it," he said, "I had sense enough to kind of zig and zag when I was running so he couldn't hit me." (Laughter) And he went to the camp and got a rifle and he'd have killed old Billy. Somebody else come along and took the gun away from him. That would have been his second victim. He wasn't afraid of anything, nothing. No man, no beast, or anything. He had no fear of anything.

RICHARD: I'll be darned.

CLAUDE: Yeah. But he wasn't quarrelsome. Took so much.

RICHARD: Yeah, it's kind of funny, I mean these people do this to him and I guess when he is pushed so far, why that is about as far as he'd go?

CLAUDE: Yeah.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

AUDRA: Like that fellow that made him get down and eat grass, why ---

CLAUDE: Why that was the fellow he killed out there at Wagontire.

RICHARD: Well, what was the story on that?

CLAUDE: Well, I don't know whether this fellow, I don't think he had sheep, but anyway he got into an argument out there over the range. I think it was the range. It was Bill's. But this fellow claimed that there was something --- He caught old Bill out there in the spring of the year, and the grass was short and he made old Bill get down on his hands and knees and eat grass.

AUDRA: At gunpoint.

CLAUDE: Yeah, yeah. Bill went and got his gun and come back and shot him. Put an end to that.

RICHARD: Yeah. Well that's when he went and turned himself ---

CLAUDE: They tried him in the court there ---

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: --- at Burns there. I don't know where, I think it was Burns. Maybe ---

RICHARD: Canyon City I think.

CLAUDE: Canyon City, yeah.

RICHARD: Yeah. That's when Virgil Shields told me that he came right --- old Tommy Shields was judge then.

CLAUDE: Oh, is that right.

RICHARD: Said he came right to, he came right over to his house and turned himself in.

AUDRA: That would be a little hard to take, wouldn't it?

RICHARD: You bet.

CLAUDE: One of those, oh darn, I can't call their names now. They were mixed up in that war out around Wagontire, you know.

RICHARD: Hutton's?

CLAUDE: Hutton's.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: One of the Hutton's. We did some ... clearing him.

RICHARD: Yeah, I think ---

CLAUDE: Turned states evidence. Oh, he was a staunch friend of old Bill up until he died. You bet. And I suppose you heard that old story about him packing raisins and strychnine in the same pocket.

RICHARD: Well, Barney's mentioned it a time or two. Why don't you go ahead and ---

CLAUDE: I don't know that he carried them in the same pocket, but he could have. He used to buy these big muskrat raisins in a fifteen-pound box. They came in a box like that. They were, oh they were about so deep, and yea long, and so wide. And he kept them around --- wherever Bill was, or anybody working, he kept those boxes of them. Just, not only one box, but just lots of

them. And he ate raisins continually. He'd go out there on the desert and eat; he'd live on raisins, nothing else, day after day. And coyotes around the country, you know, and they'd get into his sheep once in awhile, kill them. And he'd always pack strychnine with him, that was the main poison deal in those days. And he'd open up a sheep and put some strychnine in it. Probably just started, somebody started it as a joke. Bill carried his raisins and strychnine in the same pocket. They said he'd take a handful of raisins out of his pocket, and he'd level the strychnine off with the raisins.

(Laughter) Yeah, I used to eat his raisins, I liked them, they are good foods.

RICHARD: Yeah, unless they got a little strychnine on them.

CLAUDE: Yeah, unless they got strychnine on them. (Laughter) And at one time he, there at Buck Creek he decided he'd fatten out some hogs. And he bought a whole mess of hogs, and raised them and fed them out there. This one ---

RICHARD: Get his grain from the neighbors?

TAPE 2 - SIDE A

RICHARD: Okay.

CLAUDE: Well he, he fed these hogs out and butchered them there at Buck Creek, and the only way they had of hauling them out was a freight wagon. So, they loaded them in this freight wagon and started out, I presumed they had to go to Bend or someplace down there for a market. And the second morning out they couldn't get the horses up to the freight wagon, because the hogs had all spoiled. It was in August, is what it was, and I guess the smell was terrific. That was the end of his hog business. (Laughter)

AUDRA: To think he was so impractical, because he just didn't use logic or anything.

CLAUDE: He had his store stocked there with oh, a little of everything. You could get anything there you wanted. And one time he bought a --- oh hundreds and hundreds of pairs of shoes down I suppose The Dalles or someplace. And they came up by freight. Same old freight driver, I guess, they was talking about him, his name was Ivey. And someplace down the line why the wagon tipped over, and these shoes were all the same size, all women's shoes, and the same size.

AUDRA: He took an average.

CLAUDE: And they just scattered shoes all over everyplace. So, they just round them up and put them in gunnysacks, or any place they could get them and brought them on up there. I never heard whether, who bought the shoes or anything about it. They were probably all button tops.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Yeah, I was telling you about people were all honest, they went into the store there and buy whatever they want, make their own change if they paid. Put it on the books if they wanted to, and marked it paid. Which a lot of them did. Took advantage of him that way. And he wrote checks on anything he could get a hold of, piece of bark ---

RICHARD: Seemed to me where I read he wrote one on a shingle once.

CLAUDE: Yeah, he wrote it on a shingle, yeah. Piece of bark, or a wrapper off a tomato can.

They were all honored everyplace, honored. They were good.

AUDRA: ...

CLAUDE: And he was a great hand to walk. He liked to walk, and that's the way he went most of the time, was walking. At one time, however, a long about in 1910, or '11, or in there sometime, he had an old Stanley White Steamer, an old timer. And he had a driver to drive it. He'd buzz around in that. He was over there at our place one time in it, with his driver. And he'd walk; I guess it wasn't anything unusual for him to walk fifty miles in a day, fifty, sixty. And as I said he built reservoirs all over the country.

RICHARD: Did he have a surveyor or anything on these? Did he ---

CLAUDE: No.

RICHARD: He just went ahead with them, his own ---

CLAUDE: Yeah, before he died.

RICHARD: Pretty sharp that old fellow, wasn't he?

CLAUDE: You bet, very sharp. Yeah. He built them good, but he made no allowances for spillways or anything like that. He didn't put a spillway in them. Those big reservoirs around Twelve Mile, and up Long Hollow, and up towards the McIntosh place, you know where that is?

RICHARD: Sure, yeah.

CLAUDE: Big spillway --- big reservoir up there, no spillways in them. Wash out every spring.

RICHARD: Then go back and fix them up again.

CLAUDE: Go back and fix them up. Kept a lot of us fellows working there.

RICHARD: Yeah. Kind of W.P.A., make work, huh?

CLAUDE: Yeah. That Twelve Mile field, they used to be about twelve hundred and forty, sixty acres in that Twelve Mile field.

RICHARD: Uh huh.

CLAUDE: All irrigated. And then he had it; times he had it seeded to alfalfa and so forth. Always drowned it out every year. And like the Gap Ranch, I've seen the, oh fifteen, sixteen big stacks of hay there, in Twelve Mile field, big ones. But he never fed that hay out in the wintertime. He'd, if he needed it for anything, he'd just turn his sheep into it.

RICHARD: Into the stacks?

CLAUDE: Into the stacks, yeah. And if he had to feed grain he'd just grab a sack and take out across the field and just scatter it out. Sheep would eat the grain right off the ground, which they will do. Wasted a lot of it. I remember one time he had turned his sheep into a stack there in Twelve Mile. And they, I don't know whether --- they were around that stack for quite awhile. They ate around the bottom of it, and kind of undermined it, and the stack finally tipped over and smothered it. Pretty near all the sheep on that side. Right on top of them.

AUDRA: But he sold pelts. (Laughter)

CLAUDE: And he wore a big old sheepskin coat, you know what those old sheepskin coats looked liked?

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: They had a big collar, clear up to the top of your head. And he wore that thing winter and summer. No matter how hot it was, he'd wear that sheepskin coat. Never put it off. And he never owned a bed in his life. He'd sleep with somebody else. If they'd --- they got so nobody would sleep with him, including me. He was a wild man to sleep with. But he'd go to bed with that

sheepskin coat on. And sometimes he wore a hat, and sometimes he didn't. Generally, he didn't have a hat. And he never owned, told me he never owned a pair of overshoes in his life, and he never had a cold in his life. Never! And he'd get wet, and he'd just dry his clothes right on his body.

RICHARD: Well, he must have been tough.

CLAUDE: Well, he was just used to it, just like ---

AUDRA: He was ... wonderful.

CLAUDE: Just like all of us, you know.

RICHARD: Well, I suppose.

CLAUDE: People live, you know, we live kind of sheltered.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh.

CLAUDE: And he didn't, he was right out there in the weather every day. If he got wet, why what of it. He just dried off with his clothes on. ... get his feet awful wet too, you know.

RICHARD: Yeah, wet and cold.

CLAUDE: Never pulled his shoes off, just keep them on. He didn't have a bed; he didn't own a bed at all. I remember one time there at Twelve Mile he come in there, oh late in the fall, it was getting pretty cold. And there was an old tarpaulin, or an old tent or something out in there, had kind of a little old boat house there right next to the other house, both small. He'd just wrap up in there and he just raised that up where he could crawl in under it, and just crawled in there with his coat and shoes and all. And there the next morning I went out and called him for breakfast.

(Laughter)

RICHARD: Well, did he have a bedroom in there at Buck Creek, his headquarters? Did he have a bedroom and bed there?

CLAUDE: Well, he had a bedroom there, but I don't think he ever had a bed.

Richard: Uh huh.

AUDRA: He must have had one there, surely.

CLAUDE: If it was, it probably belonged to somebody else.

RICHARD: Shared it with someone, huh?

CLAUDE: Yeah. The First World War, he had lots of horses then. And there was a great demand for Calvary horses. And this is a fact; he sold a thousand head of geldings for a hundred dollars a head. That was about the standard price for them, because we sold some at the same time. And a hundred thousand dollars, and the next year he didn't have a dime of it.

RICHARD: All went into the ranch, and ---

CLAUDE: Well, it went someplace.

RICHARD: Someplace, huh?

CLAUDE: It went into the ranch or reservoirs, or something, or paid his hired help. Donation someplace.

RICHARD: Well, did he ever go to town and live it up? I mean go to the big city and get himself -  
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CLAUDE: No, no, no, no, oh no.

RICHARD: --- a fancy apartment and some --- Just stayed right there, huh?

CLAUDE: You bet.

AUDRA: He never took a drop of liquor.

RICHARD: Uh huh. He was a Methodist, wasn't he?

CLAUDE: Yeah.

AUDRA: A Methodist. I often wondered about that because that songbook was a --- Presbyterian Church, but he was a Methodist.

RICHARD: And the home he went to was the Methodist Home, wasn't it?

CLAUDE: Well this, he helped both the Presbyterian and the Methodist here in Prineville.

AUDRA: Yes, both churches, he was a heavy contributor to them.

CLAUDE: Yeah, anybody come along like that and want a thousand dollars, or five thousand dollars, he'd just write them out a check. No questions. Never say no. And as I said before, money meant nothing to him whatever. He didn't care whether he had a dime. And I don't think he ever carried any money with him.

RICHARD: He didn't travel; I mean did he ever go to say Portland, or somewhere? Or just ---

CLAUDE: Oh, not while I was around.

RICHARD: Always stayed on the ranch.

CLAUDE: Yeah, he stayed on the ranch or out on the desert. He came back once after we were living there, he was living down at the Methodist Old People's Home. And he took the bus out of Bend, come out there to, where the road used to turn off there next to Glass Buttes where it says --- And he hiked in there to the ranch ... while we were there. And I think I took him back out when he got ready to leave. It was the last time we saw Bill. He died then.

RICHARD: That was a short hike for him then, only twelve, fourteen miles. (Laughter)

CLAUDE: Oh, yeah, just an hour's walk.

AUDRA: He was an old man then.

CLAUDE: Yeah, he was way up there in years then. As I said a while ago, he controlled all the water all over the country, buying homesteads or deeded land one way or another. Bought lots of colonization land.

AUDRA: And he fenced it, if somebody might need it.

RICHARD: Yeah, well did these people crowd him on the range? I mean ---

CLAUDE: Oh, they just run right with him. Yeah. You have often heard that sheep and cattle wouldn't mix, you know. That's what some of the old timers used to think. But they run right together.

RICHARD: Right together.

CLAUDE: Uh huh. And like in your lambing operations on the range, you know, you take a days drop of lambs, and at night you'll bunch them, put them in a bunch, as near, as much as you can or all together or little bunches here and there. Then you'll flag them or build some fires around them or something to keep the coyotes off. And oh, customary procedure is to leave those lambs there for two or three days, till they get big enough to travel. Well, Bill wouldn't do that. Take the days drop today, he'd move those ewes and lambs tomorrow. He'd just kill them off like's flies.

RICHARD: Sure.

CLAUDE: He lambed right close to a hundred percent right there at the Gap Ranch that year I helped him lamb out there. And he ended up with about fifty or sixty percent.

RICHARD: Is that right?

CLAUDE: He was moving a bunch of sheep in place of feeding them someplace, why he'd just get behind them and sick the hogs on them and away they'd go.

RICHARD: Lambs and everything, huh?

CLAUDE: Oh, he'd go from a, he'd go from Buck Creek there clear out to his windmill there at Glass Buttes. That was an easy day's drive for him. Ordinarily you'd make five or six miles a day.

RICHARD: Sure.

CLAUDE: Just let them graze along. Well, that's about all the notes I have written down. I was still writing when you called, and I just quit.

RICHARD: Oh, well --- Well, I'll come back over.

AUDRA: Are you going to type all this up? Is that your ---

RICHARD: Well, I want to talk to; I want to talk to Grant, and to Sammy Boyce. And I heard of a fellow by the name of Al Leudi in Burns. Did you ever know him?

CLAUDE: Who?

RICHARD: Al Leudi, who either worked for Bill, or knew him quite well. And just ---

CLAUDE: How do you spell that?

RICHARD: L E U D I. And then, did you know Jessie Cecil, Pat's wife?

CLAUDE: Oh, yes.

RICHARD: Well, Jessie is in Burns this weekend, and so I ---

CLAUDE: I thought she was, I thought she passed away.

RICHARD: No, no, she's still sharp and bright. And I thought I'd talk to her. She said she knew Bill Brown. And so --- Okay.

CLAUDE: They took Bill over to some of the horse riders or something; Frank Houston was one of them. I wasn't along, so --- They took Bill over to Burns to the ... shop over there. And they made it up with the girls there ahead of time, and so they got up to the room there and one of these

girls went to sit down on old Bill's lap. And she got to monkeying with old Bill, and boy he just knocked her off with his arm. And they locked the door on him so he couldn't get out. And he took the door with him when he left. (Laughter) Just run right in and took it right off of the hinges. He -

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RICHARD: Wanted no part of that.

CLAUDE: Another real dirty one --- He used to have lots of dogs with him all the time. And he'd go out to do his duty, like at night you know, before he'd go to bed. Why these dogs would always go with him. And he'd get squatted down there and they'd get around and lick him, you know. And he'd just giggle and laugh, say nice doggy, nice doggy. Now, that was the truth, I know that to be a truth, because I saw it happen. They told me about it, and I slipped out there one night and watched him. Oh, shucks.

RICHARD: Well apparently, he didn't feel any bashfulness, or shame about ---

CLAUDE: No, no. Everybody was always --- bored him with things like that, you know. He'd get mad at them. "Doggone it," he said, "tain't so. Fool!" About as bad as he would call anybody.

RICHARD: Well, I'm just trying to figure out how this guy could amass such a, you know, so much material goods, and still be kind of a fall guy to everybody.

CLAUDE: Yeah.

AUDRA: Range was free. And range was lots better than it is now days.

RICHARD: Yeah.

CLAUDE: Bill was a good man. Told lots of stories on him, but he was a good man.

RICHARD: Did he recognize the problems that were coming up in the range? I mean too many sheep, and too many ---

CLAUDE: No.

RICHARD: Did he have any idea?

CLAUDE: No, no.

RICHARD: I don't suppose anybody did in those days, did they?

Thought the grass would be here forever.

CLAUDE: Yeah. Bill didn't hurt the grass. He never run out of grass. Always lots of grass. All those horses, and all those sheep, he never run out of grass.

AUDRA: I heard Claude's dad say that, you know, they'd ride and the grass would come up to their stirrups. And he said cattle would be laying down and you couldn't see them, just ---

CLAUDE: Ride right up on them.

AUDRA: The grass used to be that good. It's hard for us to imagine.

RICHARD: It is hard to imagine, isn't it?

AUDRA: ... isn't it?

CLAUDE: Those horses out there of course they ranged out there in the wintertime, and as long as nobody disturbed them, they'd go through the winter pretty good. They'd eat sagebrush. They eat sagebrush that big around. Eat it right into the ground. Had a few warm days in the spring of the year, and then you couldn't catch them again. That was the end of them. Pick right up.

RICHARD: Well, you two have been married how long?

CLAUDE: Well, we've been married forty-eight years.

RICHARD: Forty-eight years, huh? That's a long time, isn't it?

CLAUDE: That's quite awhile with one woman.

RICHARD: Yeah, I guess. Well, you're the exception these days I'll tell you.

CLAUDE: Yeah, yeah, that's for sure.

RICHARD: I know we've been married thirty --- almost, well thirty-two years. And gosh, we look at all our friends; it's kind of surprising, you know.

AUDRA: It really is.

CLAUDE: We never even had a quarrel so far.

RICHARD: Oh, I've had to straighten my wife out a time or two!

CLAUDE: Well, you bet your life. I've straightened her out too.

AUDRA: It isn't normal to not to fight, but we just haven't. ... now and then. We haven't, so --- I understand when people do now and then have a word. I think it's probably a healthy situation, but

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CLAUDE: Yeah, the question comes up, I take the opposite point of view, you know, and argue. She always wins it.

RICHARD: Well, you were almost newlyweds when you moved out to Buck Creek, weren't you?

CLAUDE: Well ---

RICHARD: You hadn't been married too long.

CLAUDE: Six or seven years.

RICHARD: Yeah, uh huh. Any children?

AUDRA: No. We were married forty-eight years last March.

RICHARD: That's great.

CLAUDE: We went to Portland, then on over to Vancouver to get married. And we left here at four o'clock in the morning, and we went down at Maupin and had breakfast. Went on down there and got married that day. Stayed all night in Portland, come back the next day. She was working at Rod's here then. And I was up at the ranch, and she came up there. I had a little bunch of sheep, and we put them in with --- Culpit (sp.?) boys had sheep up there too. And we were out there at the windmill, just north of Twelve Mile field, about four or five miles. My dad used to own it. He had eleven sections fenced in there together in one field. A little old cabin there, windmill, water tank. So that's where we spent our honeymoon. Kind of rough on her, but I don't know, she stayed with me.

RICHARD: She doesn't look the worst for wear. Neither of you do, neither of you do. You look like you got along together pretty well over the years.

AUDRA: Maybe the rough going and the hard part of it is what makes one stick, I don't know.

RICHARD: Well, I kind of think that's a lot to it.

AUDRA: Seems like now days though when things get rough why they go their own way. Each one goes away.

RICHARD: Well, you kind of got to fight to make a marriage last, I think at times.

AUDRA: I think so.

RICHARD: People aren't willing to fight anymore.

CLAUDE: You got to give a little, you know, sure.

RICHARD: That's right. Well, I'll get back to the ranch, you get back to your moving, and ---

CLAUDE: Yeah, we probably won't do any more moving today. Rest a little bit. I ---

(END OF TAPE)

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