

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #26 - Sides A/B

Subject: Wallace & Esther (Pease) Baker & Ida (Baker) Cross

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date: June 10, 1973

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

Wallace Baker was born in Harney County in 1907, and is a brother to Ida Cross and Alvon Baker, who give more information about the Baker family in other interviews on file. This interview deals with Wallace's memories of his life in Harney County, and details of his wife's family, William Henry and Ida Pease.

...

PAULINE BRAYMEN: Well what did this fellow look like?

WALLACE BAKER: Well, I'm not too proud to tell you what he looked like. He was a fairly big man, and I'd seen him go back from school, you know, or see him going out of a morning. Or meet him; he was a mail packer or something.

PAULINE: And he drove a big white horse.

WALLACE: Yeah. Just one horse, and an old kind of a hack outfit. He had quite a little bed behind on that wagon that he could ... But what he done with it, I don't know.

IDA CROSS: Well I can't ever remember of any --- well Bessie never remembered of anybody ever hauling mail with one horse. Because if they went very far, they had to have, they drove two horses, and four horses too, you know, those old stagecoaches and things.

WALLACE: That's been a lot of moons back, you know. You had to count them up from

AV-ORAL HISTORY #26 - WALLACE & ESTHER BAKER - IDA CROSS PAGE 2

the time; I'm trying to think what he done. He just ... stop talking. There he is right there this morning, I woke up with him on my mind this morning.

PAULINE: Well that sometimes happens that way. And he lived out in the Rye Grass ---

WALLACE: Yes, you turned to go down where Woods did, you know. You go on down there, I'll give it a mile or less, where his little old shack sets on the right of the highway there. If I was there I could show you exactly where he lives. But I just --- I can't think of his name at all. I can see the horse, the dog, and the man, and again I can't think what his name is.

IDA: Well just like me, Twyla asked me what, if I knew what the old man and old lady Bowen's name was, you know, where Alvon and Emma was married at the old Bowen place. Well I couldn't think of it. Well finally I thought it was Sarah, so I called up Ida Whiting and I said, "Do you know what old man and old lady Bowen's names was?" Well we always called them Mother Bowen and Daddy Bowen. Well I remembered that. When Wallace was born, she was the midwife, and she helped to deliver him, you know. Then Henry, so --- well I said, "Was Sarah the, was Sarah Mrs. Bowen's name?" "Yeah, that was right." But she couldn't think of his name, so Eric got to digging in and --- no, not Eric, but Seth got to sticking in my mind, that his name was Seth. So I called her up again, and nope that wasn't it. But she says, "I believe it was John." Well anyhow, she say, "You call up Clarence Young, maybe he could know." So I called up them, and Zella --- well she found it in that big black book, you know, and she says, "Well I think his name was John." So anyway Clarence was going to go up to the courthouse so he looked it up or something, well he called me back, so I guess his name was John.

PAULINE: When were you born, Wallace?

WALLACE: 1907.

PAULINE: 1907.

AV-ORAL HISTORY #26 - WALLACE & ESTHER BAKER - IDA CROSS PAGE 3

IDA: Out to the ranch.

PAULINE: You started to say something you remembered about. I remember my dad and Uncle Frank Whiting talking about old John Bowen. I know that was his name ...

IDA: Well after, when they said it was John, well he said he just remembered ---

PAULINE: Well now he, this was the place up here, up the road to John Day, where the apple tree is.

WALLACE: Yeah.

PAULINE: And he was the one that settled there first.

IDA: Yeah, they had their property there. I don't know if they, if it was the homestead or what. But anyway Clarence Young said to me, he said, "Did they separate, because it seemed like they divided the property." I can never remember that. But Mr. Bowen, I just don't hardly anymore than remember him. But he passed away, you know, and she was -- well that was the horse and buggy days. She come down there to the ranch when Mom had Henry Wallace. She was the midwife there. So anyway, but --- Sarah, I did get that right. But this John still don't --- but then I --- that's the way you'll just get something on your mind and you can't seem to get it off. But I don't know if they ---

PAULINE: Well did they have a stage stop there or something?

IDA: No, not that I know of.

WALLACE: I just don't figure out what ... maybe he wasn't the mailman. But I don't know what he was a hauling, but I think he was the mail carrier with that old horse and buggy. I'm sure that he was. But ---

IDA: Well did you say Alvon thought he was?

WALLACE: Yeah, Alvon he kind of got a ...

IDA: Can't think of his name.

PAULINE: You see him going by Poison Creek there.

AV-ORAL HISTORY #26 - WALLACE & ESTHER BAKER - IDA CROSS PAGE 4

IDA: Pine Creek School out there, where Wes ---

PAULINE: Where Wes lives now.

WALLACE: Well then I don't know that he was a mail carrier, but he done something.

PAULINE: Because he come by every day or two.

WALLACE: Every other day or so, why we'd see him, you know. I'm sure that he was a hauling mail. Maybe he just went to Harney.

PAULINE: Well he had some purpose, because people wouldn't just ordinarily travel all that distance, just for no reason at all.

WALLACE: Oh, no. He had something. But you just never forgot that old dog. ...

PAULINE: Must have been a bulldog.

WALLACE: No, it wasn't a bull hound. He was just a dog. But then he ---

IDA: Little black dog.

WALLACE: That lower jaw broke ... I guess. I don't know ...

IDA: Well as kid, you know, he remembered that dog deal.

WALLACE: It's been a lot of moons back though. I don't know how many times it changed; I didn't keep track of it. It's been a lot of moons ago.

PAULINE: Yeah. What do you remember about going to school at Poison Creek?

WALLACE: Well I remember getting lickings down there once in awhile. You get jerked up on the mat for something, you know. And the cold coming from home down there, I've had my feet get awful cold coming down there. We would go down, had this old horse and buggy. And that Lucille and I would take a notion to go down on saddle horses, you know. So we'd, my dad go down and get the horses and we'd ride to school a horseback, and then we'd come back. So one morning we was going to school and there was a coyote out there. ... I says I guess I'll out run him. So I took in after that coyote, and I was getting close enough that he was a commencing to look back at me. Well there was a

bank about that high on this, just sloping down. And the dog was looking back at me. Well he hit that bank, you know, and he just howled when he hit her. But it was getting time, I had to quit him and go on and go to school, I couldn't go any further. But I never forgot that, that was so comical. He was looking back, and that bank was up about so high, and he just ... his old head right into that. It was a wonder he wasn't killed. It was wintertime, you know.

I don't know, I was never very smart a going or a coming to school. There was always something else, you know. I remember that awful plain. And there's a lot of junk you remember, you know, as a kid. I used to skate from home, plumb to school once in awhile when it would get cold enough. About a mile and a half through the field, right out through there. And getting around kids when you got there ...

PAULINE: Yeah. When did you learn to play the violin? How did you happen to start the fiddle?

WALLACE: Well now that there is kind of a thing I don't know. I'm pretty proud of that deal. I had appendicitis, I don't know, how old was I?

IDA: Well I can tell you when you had it, it was 1923.

WALLACE: Yeah.

IDA: Yeah, 1923. And you're 66 years old now, so figure out how old you was there.

PAULINE: Well let's see, you would have been about 16, would be.

WALLACE: Well, that's about right. I had that, and it busted on me.

IDA: You had peritonitis, yeah.

WALLACE: Pretty near to die, and I stayed up at my grandmothers on the hill when I had it.

PAULINE: That was Grandma Dixon?

WALLACE: Yes.

AV-ORAL HISTORY #26 - WALLACE & ESTHER BAKER - IDA CROSS PAGE 6

IDA: We didn't have any hospital, you see. So how I remember it so well, Albert (Cross) had an appendix operation too, so he come

--- Mama, she'd been in here with Wallace, and I stayed out to the ranch. Well then she decided then she would go out and I could come in and stay and help Grandma with Wallace, he'd got better, you know. So Albert come up to, he come up to see Wallace. And then he asked me if I wanted to go to the show. And we got married in June 1923, so you see how I remember all that. Yeah.

WALLACE: And I stayed there with my Grandmother. I was, what was it; there was several days around there that I didn't know they even come in and fed me or nothing. Yeah, I was acute, or whatever you called it.

IDA: Peritonitis.

WALLACE: Peritonitis, I guess. Anyhow it was eating me up, and I didn't remember nothing about that. When I got back out home, why I told my mother, I said, "I'd like to have a fiddle, I believe I could lay here on this couch and learn to play that." So she said, "Look in the Montgomery Ward, or Sears and Rawhide, one of them, and got me a \$14 fiddle." I remember the price and everything. Well, I was tickled over that fiddle as a kid ... would have been with a new dog, you know. So I laid there, and I could lay there and I could screech that thing anytime of the day and night, and got a little better, and a little better. And I'd go in the parlor and I'd set in there from 7 or 8 o'clock of a night, until way along 3 or 4 in the morning until my mother got enough of it and come in and run me out of there. And that's the way that happened.

PAULINE: You just taught yourself to play then.

WALLACE: It's all by ear. There ain't a note in my fiddling at all, not a one. There ain't nobody can find one on it. Because it just ... But that's the, is about the way I done that.

PAULINE: Have you played for a lot of dance?

AV-ORAL HISTORY #26 - WALLACE & ESTHER BAKER - IDA CROSS PAGE 7

WALLACE: Well I have. Yes, I've played for dances. And then I was over there in LaGrande, and I got to playing for these old folk's homes, and the old senior citizens. And there is nothing more enjoyable today. I'd rather play for one of these old folk's homes than to play for a dance. Because you see them sitting there, with their head hung over, well it looks like the last of the Mahicans. You get to playing that, and they'll start working their hands --- they don't look like they can even pick them up. And they get them up and get them to going, and feet a going. And I tell you that gives me quite a spark to see.

PAULINE: Well I would, I would think it would.

WALLACE: I can see old people that looks like they're just about ready to go on by. How it will revive them and bring them up, you know. So I don't know, I kind of miss that up there. But I'm about to get hooked up down there where I'm at now.

PAULINE: Now where are you living now?

WALLACE: Down below Parma, in Ereno Valley. I'm watching a big community hall there, you know. So one of the women there in the Circle Club told me her brother was a playing in these old folk's homes, and one place and another. And he told me I was very welcome to come and join him. So when we get home, if I find slack between trying to catch a salmon tomorrow and something else, I'm going to hunt him up. I'd like to get back on that. That just pacifies the time pretty good to me.

PAULINE: Well I can see that, that would be really be quite a thrill to do that.

WALLACE: Well we had quite a big hall up there at the old folk's home in LaGrande. Oh, it would be 100 or maybe 200 of them in there.

IDA: Come on in. (Doorbell rings.)

WALLACE: And so we'd get in there, you know, and get set so you could look right off out through the hall, you know, and you'd see this start in picking on their hands and patting their feet. And they'd get well enough they'd go to clapping their hands when you

AV-ORAL HISTORY #26 - WALLACE & ESTHER BAKER - IDA CROSS PAGE 8

quit, and a hollering. I tell you, it works on you. That works on me worse than that fellow on this here mail-carrying outfit. But he's right there, where we got ...

PAULINE: Well I'll ask around, maybe I can come up with a name for you.

WALLACE: I hope you find a handle for him.

IDA: I can't seem to --- I can't ---

ESTHER BAKER: What are you talking about?

WALLACE: That's it, we don't know.

PAULINE: We don't know.

ESTHER: Dorothy and I was trying to think of old-time people's names this morning.

WALLACE: You met my wife, I guess.

PAULINE: Yes, I just met her. But I don't believe I know what her name is.

ESTHER: Esther.

PAULINE: Esther.

ESTHER: I used to be a Pease.

PAULINE: A Pease. Well I know that name.

IDA: This is Pauline Braymen; this is Inez Ausmus' daughter.

ESTHER: Yeah, I know, you know the name. I'm Dorothy Jones' sister, and Viola Jennings' sister.

PAULINE: Yeah, well sure.

ESTHER: And Ivy Joy and May Wilbur's sister. You knew May, didn't you?

PAULINE: I'm not sure.

ESTHER: You're not sure.

PAULINE: Yeah, I'm not sure. Some of these people that knew me when I was little, I don't remember, you know.

ESTHER: Yeah, they probably don't remember her. Yeah.

AV-ORAL HISTORY #26 - WALLACE & ESTHER BAKER - IDA CROSS PAGE 9

IDA: I can remember when you was born.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ESTHER: Our mother and dad came to this country in 1910.

Brought part of us kids down here in that year.

PAULINE: What was your folk's name?

ESTHER: Henry Pease, William Henry Pease and Ida Pease.

PAULINE: Where did they settle?

ESTHER: Out around, out towards The Narrows.

PAULINE: Out to The Narrows. Sunset Valley area?

ESTHER: Oh, just about that. You know where the Jones, the old Jones place is?

PAULINE: Yeah, yeah.

ESTHER: It's not too far from there.

PAULINE: Yeah. Well I'm glad to find that out, because I'm trying to gather up quite a bit of information about that area. How long were they down there?

ESTHER: Oh, jiminy, let's see, they lived there until I was 10. We went to school out there in that country, us girls, until I was 10 years old. And we went down to Venator then and spent one summer and one winter down there not far from Venator Siding. Then they moved up here to Burns, and Daddy worked at the bakery, Page's Bakery.

PAULINE: This is about when you met up with Wallace then?

ESTHER: Oh, I never met up with Wallace until I got up there a little ways farther, and I got to going to the old time dances. And that's where I met him.

WALLACE: Well, I'll tell you how that occurred.

PAULINE: All right, I'd like to hear it.

WALLACE: It was down here in that ---

ESTHER: Oasis.

WALLACE: No, no, no, it was that where the Copeland's Lumber was. All right.

ESTHER: Yes, it was the old Oasis.

WALLACE: It was the ... can't say that name now, Copeland's. But there was a rodeo on around here, so I went to them rodeo dances. I could maneuver a little then. So I seen her setting over there on the bench, she looked pretty good to me. I says to myself, I'll go over and get her to dance, and I figured she'd turn me down. She jumped right up and got right on the ball with me. And her sister May was right there, and I danced with her several times straight, and I thought I was getting pretty close. So I asked her if she'd let me take her home. "No," May said, "she come with me, and we'll go home alone." Well, I said, "I'll haul you both home." "No, we walked, and we'll walk back." Well that shut that off, you see, right there. So I let it go. But I kept kind of sniffing around there, monkeying around, and catching up, you know. Well I monkeyed too long ...

PAULINE: Yeah, you just monkeyed around a little too long.

WALLACE: Yes. But that's how that happened. Now you got anything you want to learn about us, you just ask.

PAULINE: Well, I just intend to. Did you work in the hay field much?

WALLACE: Oh yes, that was my main hold out there at the ranch all the time, and for the neighbors and all around.

PAULINE: What was your specialty, did you have a job you did particular, did you do them all?

WALLACE: No, no I done them all. Broke broncos on the mowing machines. I done all of that. I wish I could do just a little of it now. But I'm not there yet.

PAULINE: Well Alvon was telling me about breaking broncos on mowing machines. I guess that's quite an experience.

WALLACE: Why yes, it is. But a five foot cycle bar out there, and that horse will look

back at you. I'll give you one that will kind of make your hair curl. Might, it did mine. We had an old horse on a single rake, you know. And whenever them rake teeth would get skimming over, I used to reach back on that handle and hold the teeth down, you know, until I could get maybe from here to you to the windrow. Well I looks back up, and the horse was looking back at me, the bridle had come off the top of his head, and he looked back, and I said, "Whoa." And he says, "No, I'm going to the house." Well I didn't have a thing, only to pull on the lines, on the breast here. So I says, "I'm quitting her." I just jumped off the back of the rake and he took her to the house. Well that's quite a thing to look at when you look back and there's that horse a looking back at you. I've often wondered how they kept them from running off, where they didn't have blinds on them at all, you know. But I've seem them workhorse with no blinds on them at all. But I don't want no more of it.

IDA: It throwed you in front of the rake and rolled you around.

WALLACE: Well, the teeth was a going up and down, he'd of got out I guess. Because he really moved her into the house. Run right up to the barn gate and stopped. I walked over there and got him. And there was nothing to it. My dad heard the rake a clattering, and he come out. "What the hell is going on out here?" That's the very words I remembered when he --- You want all the words, don't you?

PAULINE: You betcha, the authentic story.

WALLACE: And I said, "My bridle come unbuckled on top of his head, I guess." But he could see very plainly where the bridle hung. We got out there and fastened it up, and I went back to haying.

PAULINE: Well you usually put blinds on the driver, so that they couldn't ---

WALLACE: Yeah, you've seen them, you know what they are.

PAULINE: Yeah.

WALLACE: But when that dropped off, then when I looked back and see, well when I went back and I see it ... and he was looking back at me. And I says, "Whoa," and he says, "I'm not staying," I left. And he hadn't went much until I left. I wouldn't have rode that old rake in there for nothing.

PAULINE: That would have been quite a ride.

WALLACE: Oh, there was a ditch there, and it was about as wide as from here to that, and he hit that a little ... he'd have went off anyhow. That really was a burden.

PAULINE: Was it a horse that hadn't been broke too long.

WALLACE: No, no he was an old horse, but he was known to run away. Old Jack and Buster, it happened to be Buster, you know.

IDA: Old Jack, he never run a way.

WALLACE: Oh no.

IDA: He broke the horses with old Jack.

WALLACE: He wouldn't run away, because when you got that cart and the barn, and clean the barn out, you go out and get to pitching her, and you look and the first thing you know he run back down to the barn with that cart on you. Old Jack guilty for that. I've got pictures of that old swaybacked, boy it went way down. You didn't need a saddle on him.

IDA: You always, most always hooked him up to the wagon when you was going to hook a bronco up.

WALLACE: Yeah, yeah. But they had a manure cart, they called it. And it was just two shafts and then the wheels on the axle. And you put that on him, and every once in awhile why he'd run off. While you was even a loading it out there, if he take a notion to run, he'd do it in the loft, you know. But I remember him a scattering. We had a manure pile right in front of the house. And you drive out there ... you had to stay around. If you left, he'd leave too. That's before we had the new house, wasn't it ...

IDA: Oh yeah.

PAULINE: Well can you remember what the old house was like?

WALLACE: Very plainly, there it is, right there. See that finger?

PAULINE: Yeah.

WALLACE: I broke that with a stick of wood, my first year of school. My mother told me to run out and get a stick of wood before we went to school. So I was in a hurry to go do that, and they had them old steps, and they sloped a little, you know, in them days. And I dropped that stick of wood and it banged into that little finger. It was just a little old kind of a square deal, and went up to, two-story house.

IDA: They moved, they moved the front room and then one bedroom, and the upstairs from down here where Alvon lives. When dad bought the Water's place, they moved the front room up and attached it to our old home, up home, you know. Because they just had a three-room house when I was born there. A big kitchen, and a bedroom, and a front room.

WALLACE: Them steep stair steps, to get upstairs.

IDA: Well that's the one that they moved from down --- they moved the front room from down there, yeah. A front room and two bedrooms upstairs.

PAULINE: Is that where you kids slept then, was upstairs?

IDA: Well ---

WALLACE: Well I and my brothers was upstairs. I think Ida was---

IDA: We slept, Mabel and I slept downstairs, yeah. They cut a hole through to make another bedroom. I guess, well another, well they called it the old dining room, I guess, when we had the first old house, yeah.

PAULINE: Well the new house then is the house that George Purdy is living in now.

IDA: Yeah.

WALLACE: Yeah.

PAULINE: When did they build that, do you remember?

IDA: 1914.

PAULINE: Well that's a big old house.

IDA: Oh yes. Yeah, they built it in 1914, and we moved in there in January 1915.

PAULINE: Did they haul the lumber in, or was it ---

IDA: Oh yeah, from Perrington's Mill, way back ---

WALLACE: Back of Bald Mountain.

PAULINE: Back of Bald Mountain.

IDA: Yeah.

WALLACE: Or right on Bald Mountain, wasn't it?

IDA: Well right in, that, kind of down in --- Yeah, Perrington's Mill. Yeah, they hauled it with four horses and ---

WALLACE: A wagon.

IDA: Yeah. Dad had a hired man haul it there in the spring. They started that house in April 1914.

PAULINE: Do you remember who did the carpentry work?

IDA: Yeah, Henry Henke and that other ---

WALLACE: Big Dutchman, with a big mustache.

IDA: Well, old Herman ---

WALLACE: Herman Theis.

PAULINE: Herman Theis.

IDA: No.

WALLACE: No.

IDA: Not Herman Theis. Herman ---

WALLACE: Workman.

IDA: Workman, yes.

PAULINE: Workman.

IDA: Worthman.

WALLACE: Worthman, or Workman, one or the other.

IDA: Herman Worthman, and Henry Henke did the carpentry. And the old man Stahl, or Stott did the papering, did painting of the house.

WALLACE: Yeah.

IDA: Yeah.

WALLACE: And old Charlie Voegtly and his dad made the big cellar behind.

IDA: The foundation.

WALLACE: The foundation.

IDA: Yeah, Charlie Voegtly and his dad built the cellar and the foundation. I seen Gladys up there yesterday.

WALLACE: I seen Charlie too, up back in the corner.

IDA: Maybelle must be on my mind. Lucille said she seen Charlie, I didn't. Because I can't get around to see the people ...

WALLACE: Now what's the next one?

IDA: Now what's the question?

PAULINE: Yeah, what's the question. Where did you and your wife live after you were married? Did you live around Burns, or did you get out of this country?

WALLACE: Well we lived around it for a while on that lower place that Alvon's got down there now. Then we got to Frenchglen and milked some cows.

PAULINE: Were you milking cows down there with Alvon?

WALLACE: Yeah ---

AV-ORAL HISTORY #26 - WALLACE & ESTHER BAKER - IDA CROSS PAGE 16

IDA: You wasn't ---

WALLACE: Well now he wasn't with me when I ... No. But him and I had milked down there before.

ESTHER: He run Dad's cows down there at Frenchglen.

WALLACE: Yes.

ESTHER: Fed them down there that year.

IDA: What year was you married now?

ESTHER: 1930, August 16th.

IDA: Wallace was down there with --- well he come up --- I remember we went down there, and you come to town and get married. So when we come back, we said was congratulations in order. Well not just yet. So ---

WALLACE: Yeah, when it happened, I don't know.

PAULINE: Where did you go after you milked cows at Frenchglen? Did you have --- was this your own herd that you were milking, or were you working for someone?

WALLACE: No, it was ours. Yeah.

ESTHER: We came back up and went out and lived out at the Stewart place for three years.

IDA: And you lived out here where the Willa-Ray Dairy was too, didn't you?

ESTHER: Yeah we lived there. Oh I don't think we lived there only one year.

WALLACE: Just a year.

PAULINE: Where was the Stewart place?

WALLACE: When you go out the highway ...

IDA: You know where Warren Raymond lives, well that's close to it.

PAULINE: Yeah, yeah. That's the old Stewart place.

IDA: We went to dances. Wallace was borned, when we went to a dance over there at

that barn in the old Stewart place there, and Wallace was born. Yeah, because he was born the --- well it was Washington's Birthday Dance, the 22nd of February, and he was born a little after midnight, the 23rd of February.

WALLACE: I think my Aunt Susie Whiting helped me over a couple three minutes, so I wouldn't be on George Washington's see. That's the way I got it.

PAULINE: Stopped you up for awhile.

WALLACE: Yeah.

IDA: No, maybe it was Mrs. Bowen.

WALLACE: Or it could have been Mrs. Bowen, one of them.

IDA: Well Mrs. Bowen was there for ---

WALLACE: ... me there for about three minutes so I'd be on my own, I wouldn't be Washington's. Because they knew I wouldn't be as honest as he was. (Laughter)

ESTHER: Now that's for sure, you said a mouthful, didn't you.

WALLACE: Thank you there ... But he told about cutting the cherry tree down, and I don't know whether I would have, I might have told we was eating the cherries or something.

IDA: You was up to Stancliff when Lyman was born.

WALLACE: Yes.

IDA: Come in here with three, on about three flat tires, or two, something like that. I thought I wasn't going to get my clothes on before he was born.

WALLACE: Well that was about twenty miles from here. That was Grandma Dixon's place up in the hills.

PAULINE: Stanfield.

WALLACE: Stancliff.

PAULINE: Oh, Stancliff.

WALLACE: Yeah. And we milked cows and run sheep up there. Dad ... the sheep. We took care of them while we was staying there. We done that all summer. I don't know what ... when we come off of there, back to the Stewart place.

ESTHER: No, we went to the ranch for a while. Was out there at the ranch.

IDA: And you lived at the old Stewart place ...

ESTHER: We were there with Joe and Lucille, you know. We stayed right there during haying. And then we moved to the Stewart place and lived there.

IDA: And you lived at the old John Hogg place too.

ESTHER: Well we were in town when Moss was pulled off of the hayrack, you know, out there at Drinkwater place.

IDA: Yeah.

ESTHER: Yeah, and had that trouble that time. Had a concussion and quit yodeling. He used to yodel just as good as anybody until after that.

PAULINE: Well what happened?

ESTHER: Pulled off a haystack, got tangled up in the net some way.

WALLACE: Well I'll have to describe as near as I remember outside of about twenty-five feet up here, straight down. And we set one load right out here on the back, we was topping that stack out. Well we pulled the next one up, and this one we pulled up first broke off. So I lit underneath that load of hay, and down in between two rocks on my head, like that. So I don't remember much about that outside of Drinkwater brought me from his place in the mountains up there, down in twenty minutes and put me in the hospital up here. So that just killed the right half of me for about six months. I've outlived that on crutches, and this and that. So you take this old ... you see, much of it, it's very normal, it's all been overhauled. Starting from before that.

I got bucked off one time right in front of the granary there at home, and there was

gravel there, took the side of that head all out, looked like you'd peeled it, you know. But that all broke down.

IDA: My land, you should have seen Darrell Howser, have you seen him?

PAULINE: Oh, I saw him, yes.

IDA: Yeah, and he had a wreck with his bicycle.

PAULINE: That's terrible.

ESTHER: Oh is that what happened to him.

PAULINE: Yeah, and he's got stitches, and hide barked off.

IDA: I guess he hurt a knee. Somebody ... on the knee, and he just went to the roof about this.

WALLACE: You want to tell that kid to come in, maybe he's asleep.

ESTHER: Sleep.

WALLACE: Sleep.

ESTHER: Sleep.

WALLACE: Didn't she have any sleep?

ESTHER: We got to bed at 2 o'clock last night.

WALLACE: That's what I mean ... by now.

IDA: What did you do, play ---

ESTHER: No, we just went home, and then nobody wanted to go to bed.

IDA: Oh.

ESTHER: So we just --- we had a lunch and set around there and talked.

WALLACE: Well you might have phoned, this one might have come out and had a bite with you.

ESTHER: Well you could have had a grilled cheese sandwich with us. That's all we had.

IDA: It was twenty minutes after twelve, wasn't it when we --- he went right to bed, I went

AV-ORAL HISTORY #26 - WALLACE & ESTHER BAKER - IDA CROSS PAGE 20

to sleep. The wind was a blowing pretty good here earlier this morning too.

PAULINE: Yeah, it was.

ESTHER: Now there is a little breeze out.

PAULINE: Do you have children?

WALLACE: Yes, I've got three over here. I got one in Parma down there, and I got one in Union, and one at Cove there, 8 miles apart.

PAULINE: What are their names?

IDA: Lyman lives at Union.

WALLACE: Yeah, Lyman.

IDA: And Jeanette lives at Cove.

WALLACE: Go ahead, you're doing all right.

IDA: Betty out to Parma. Well no, I didn't want to take the words out of your mouth, but I did.

WALLACE: Pretty close.

ESTHER: Lyman is the oldest one.

PAULINE: Now he was born here.

ESTHER: He was born here in Ida's house, yes.

PAULINE: Ida's house, uh huh.

ESTHER: Then Betty and Katie --- well we call her Katie, but her right name is Jeanette. Her dad nicknamed her Kate a long time ago when she was real little, so she's gone by Katie all her life. They were born at my mother's. My mother lived up on the hill, right across from the old Shepard place. I can't think whose house that was.

IDA: Wasn't it the old Gowan house?

ESTHER: I don't remember, Ida. It was right across from Shepards. IDA: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well when did you leave Harney County then? I know you've been gone for a

while.

ESTHER: '49.

PAULINE: 1949. Well where did you go, to Idaho.

WALLACE: '48 was when it was. June of '48 we went to Union.

PAULINE: Union.

WALLACE: Yes. Then we got around out of that, and I got so as I couldn't take care of that. My boy work on it, Lyman.

ESTHER: Lyman's got that place. Him and his wife and two boys.

WALLACE: And then got around and finally left Parma. Lived in LaGrande for about nine years.

ESTHER: I've worked in restaurants.

PAULINE: Well I may ask you about when you and your folks were out there near The Narrows. Did your dad try to grow a crop, or did he have cattle, or ---

ESTHER: No, no, grain.

PAULINE: He tried to grow --- Well did he have any crops out there?

ESTHER: Oh yeah, good crops of grain. He had grain that stood up above our heads.

IDA: If the rains come and the weather was right.

ESTHER: Yeah. Well when we had, when the rains was good, you know, we really had good crops. He had alfalfa and grain. We never milked any more cows than just what we needed there. They never went in for cows, they had, we had chickens. We had enough for our own living, on cattle.

PAULINE: Well this is what --- I've talked to the Jones boys here about a year ago. This is what they said when they first came in, they came there about 1911 I think, or 1913, someplace along in there.

ESTHER: Shortly, I know it was shortly after. Well I don't really know, I was only two

years old when we came here. And, but I do remember one time that Mama got a rooster from the Jones boy's dad and mother, and we called him Jonesy. Well I didn't know Jones, you know, from anybody else. And we were kids out running around, and we used to run that old rooster and he'd crow. So I was a running him out in the yard one day, and I was saying, "Crow Jonesy, Crow." Floyd's mother, or dad set right there talking to my dad and I got bawled out for it. See my sister married Floyd Jones. But I didn't know that that was old man Jones sitting there. Knowing me it was just ---

PAULINE: Is this who you stayed with?

ESTHER: I stayed with Dorothy, yeah, with Dorothy. See Floyd has been gone now three, four years. And Ted passed away here just recently. Yeah.

PAULINE: Why did they move away then from there? Did they --- drought or ---

ESTHER: Well yeah, it was the drought that drove Mama and Dad away. They went down to Venator Siding then, down close to Venator Siding. And I know, seems like it was on part of Venator ... I'm not sure. I don't remember that for sure. I couldn't even go back to the place if I had to, I don't think, now. We lived one year down there, but then because there wasn't any school for us to go to why they moved to town.

And my dad, when he left Seattle, he didn't have, well they didn't think that he would live much longer because of his condition of heart trouble, and oh high blood pressure, and dropsy, and everything that he had.

IDA: Did you dad die right up here in this old brick house?

ESTHER: Yeah, yeah. He died right up here, right up the street in that brick house.

PAULINE: Well how did they, did you ever hear them tell why they happened to come to Harney County?

ESTHER: Well, let's see ---

PAULINE: Well you were pretty little, but I thought maybe you'd remember it if they ever

said why they came.

ESTHER: Why they left Seattle and came down here?

PAULINE: Yeah.

ESTHER: Well Dad came down here with a man by the name of Ringer, and this Ringer and him came down here looking around because --- I don't know how they come to come down. But they decided, both of them, to buy land out there. Oh, they thought it was a great deal because you see the ground wasn't pastured like it is now, and they had --- the grass grew really good in those days. Wasn't dry like it is. And they had deeper snows and that. And so they both bought a place right adjoining each other. And then Dad moved us down here, they sold out up there. Well afterwards I find out that the Negroes had started taking over that part of Seattle, up there where Mom and Dad lived. They didn't, I guess one part of it, they just didn't want to live close to those Niggers. And so they came down, tried that dry land farming, which a lot of people did try.

PAULINE: I guess there was a place on every 160 acres at one time.

ESTHER: Yeah.

IDA: It's too bad too.

ESTHER: I was trying to think a while ago who in the worlds got Mom and Dad's place. It's some local person that is out there now, got a trailer house out there. And he's got three wells down, Dorothy was telling me. And they raised an awful good crops last year.

WALLACE: That's what it takes is that water.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ESTHER: They put three wells down to irrigate it. Oh Ora Hayes was out talking to us, and him and Dorothy was talking about it there the other day. They sat there quite awhile and talking to Dot and I. And they were talking about what good crops this fellow had out there now. He raised potatoes; one of them raised potatoes out there.

PAULINE: Oh, would that be Leathers, do you suppose?

ESTHER: Who?

PAULINE: Leathers.

ESTHER: That don't sound right. No, it don't sound right.

PAULINE: Well where is it from Koeneman's, and the Jones. Now is it west, or --- you said, but I've forgot what you said.

ESTHER: Let's see ---

PAULINE: I know where the Jones boys live.

ESTHER: Now they lived kind of against Dog Mountain, don't they?

PAULINE: Well ---

SIDE B

PAULINE: Well can you think of anything else that we can talk about today?

WALLACE: What's the question now?

PAULINE: What is the question? Oh, I thought maybe you could think about something in particular that happened in Harney County that you would like to tell about, that I don't know to ask you about. That's kind of an open question.

WALLACE: I don't know what it would be.

ESTHER: Then after he gets home he'll think of it.

PAULINE: Oh, think of all kinds of things, this is the way it goes.

IDA: You did run over Kitty, didn't you?

WALLACE: Yes, that might be all right.

PAULINE: Well tell me about that.

ESTHER: You mentioned up there yesterday.

WALLACE: Yeah. I should have took the money on that deal up there. But I just never

think back after I get the thing going, I don't remember back ... But I'm the guilty person running over with that tractor. The kids come in from school, her and Betty, and they wanted a ride up to the house. So I says all right, but keep your feet off of that wheel, because it's hot. That oil just blow your breath, turn it right over, you know. So Kitty says, "I'll ride over here." So I put that other one on this other thing, where you put your feet, and they was setting there, holding on. Well if I'd have kicked them off when I got them up to the gate to go to the house, it would have been fine. They wanted to go around with me, so I said, "Put them lunch buckets off and keep your feet off of that wheel, and I'll take you around." So we got up on the hill, going along in that soft sand, that's the only thing that saved that kid today, I know. Why we was a going, and just all at once, like that, she was right down in front of that wheel, right square in front of it. And I was over her, and she lacked two sections of being on a harrow, of being out from under that tractor where the harrow --- before I could get stopped.

PAULINE: Oh my.

WALLACE: So my main thought was, now when I got stopped, and then she laid where them sections come, different ones, you had to pick two of them up to ... So I got off and went around there, and run my arm in under there and got a hold of the other one, the opposite one, and I picked that up and pulled that kid out of there. And I said, "You're hurt ain't you?" "No," she said, "I'm not hurt Uncle Wallace." Says, "I can go to the house now." I said, "You're going to have to walk if you get there, because I'm not hauling you." So she jumped up and run to the house, her and Betty. Of course they had me a little disturbed, I don't know why, I went right on around the patch as though nothing ever happened. And I got over there, and I thought well I'd better get her into the doctor, you know. Alvon and Emma was gone, they wasn't there. So I think a ... or something. We took her in; forget they come there to take her. I think I'm guilty for taking ... Smokey and

some of them was around there, I know. ... But I took her to the doctor. And I met Alvon and Emma or something, a coming out and told them what I had done. They might have turned around and took her to the doctor, I don't know.

But anyhow, I had a big rock laying on the trailer hitch on that tractor. Weighed 350 pounds, and that kid just like running over a stump or a post, you know. It just reared it right up. And when she got in there the next morning, them big diamond tracks and that tread on the tractor wheels was right across her hips, the whole thing.

PAULINE: She didn't have any broken bones or anything?

WALLACE: Never had a thing. ... went right in between the wheels. Oh, just enough to make it bleed.

IDA: Course I don't know how she ...

ESTHER: I don't either. But here's another thing, did you tell her about the girl that you brought down out of the hills that shot her toe off?

PAULINE: Well that sounds like an exciting story.

WALLACE: It was for a minute now. I was there in the hills riding for cattle. And we seen these kids coming off the hill, and it was hunting season. So they come right down off the hill and they got down, and we was just saddling our horse to leave. And they come around there, and I had that old 410 shotgun, you know, that ... was a packing. I looked over, and I said, "Is that gun cocked?" "No, no, it's alright." She stood it up on her toe and was whirling it around, ... laid back ready to shoot. And I didn't go over and look at it or nothing, I just let it go. She said, "No, it wasn't cocked." And in just a little bit that gun went off, and I turned around and I says, "What are you doing?" She said, "I shot my toe off." I said, "What's the idea?" I said, "You had that cocked, didn't you?" "Well I thought it wasn't on cock," she said. And that toe, next, right here, she just went right between them, it took the bone, but there was hide on each side of that, that held that toe. Well it

was such a shock to that toe, that it never bled until I got her plumb back down to Burns.

ESTHER: Oh, she was Bessie Kribs' girl, one of the twins.

WALLACE: I don't know what her name was; you do if you could think of it.

ESTHER: I can't think of it right now. But I know she was one of the twins.

WALLACE: Anyhow, I run in the house, and I picked up an old dishtowel. I said, "We'll wrap that around that." And she was ... she was a tough old girl, she rode right down ...

ESTHER: There was a puddle of blood in the car at that time.

WALLACE: Why yeah. But she stayed right in there. And I said, "Is it bleeding pretty bad?" "No, no." Well it was all soaked in, in all that dishtowel, you know. So I went down here, and I says, "Where do you live?" I don't know whether she was in Hines, or ---

ESTHER: No, right here in Burns, they lived right up above, back of where the old Bennett Garage used to be.

IDA: Nellie Kribs' old place.

ESTHER: Yeah, Nellie Kribs' old place.

WALLACE: Don't seem like the right place, where I took the kid.

ESTHER: Well I know where it was at, because they lived in a little square gray house.

IDA: The house is still up there, but the door is all knocked down, and the windows is all knocked out.

ESTHER: Are they?

WALLACE: She just got out of the car, and I says, "I'll go in and tell your mother about this, I don't want to shock her." So I walked over and I says to her, I says, "I got ---" She says, "What happened?" She knew it had, you know, because she seen that kid, you know. And I said, "Well your daughter shot her toe off." "Oh, I knew that." And the kid was right behind me; she followed me in there. Says, "I'm all right Mama, I'm all right, there ain't nothing wrong with me." I said, "I know your ..." So I said, "Do you want me to

take her to the doctor?" "No," she says, "well get there pretty quick." They took her up there. But the hide, that shotgun laid right on her shoe, and it just left hide over there, and hide over here. Well I guess it just stuck it together, or moved some mud in there.

PAULINE: Glued it back together.

WALLACE: ...

ESTHER: That was Mrs. Purdy's brother's, brother married this Bessie Kribs, and that was his girl.

IDA: ... Howard was there.

ESTHER: Howard.

WALLACE: Yeah, that's what it was.

ESTHER: Then he, the twins grew up with our kids, and later on when this girl was out to the ranch with my oldest boy, and she took her shoe off and showed Wallace where her toe was shot off.

WALLACE: Yeah, I just joked her about running down right here. She just come a running over that hill. And she --- they got to talking, she just set that gun down like so many of them do, on that toe, and it just plumb went off. She pulled the trigger I guess. Anyhow, she did lose a toe.

PAULINE: Oh, I know a question I wanted to ask you. Do you remember the first time you ever rode in a car?

WALLACE: That's been quite a few moons, I don't know whether I do or not. You get them all a going, Ida might remember.

IDA: Was you, was you, the first time did you ride in a car when Maybelle and Joe was married there in --- I think that was in June 1915 when that fellow come out to the ranch there with that big Leo car, and he was going to take all of us for a ride. So anyhow, well there was Dad and Mom and all of us, Maybelle and Joe. And we went up on the sand

hill, you know, how hard it was to ...

WALLACE: Yes, I was ...

IDA: Well we could get up from the other side pretty good, then go on this side. So anyway, this fellow --- there was a Ford coming, we passed a Ford, and this fellow says, "I'll show you how to overtake that Ford." And we come down off of that sand hill and an old cow run out in the road. So anyway, he run right over this old cow, and skidded her right on the road, you know. So anyhow they had to get out and lift --- We all had to get out of the car so we could lift the car off of that old cow. And he backed up, and that old cow, she was a belling under there, and just a wringing her tail. ... Dad says, "Why you know you could have killed all of our family right there." He told him to watch out for that cow, you know. Well anyhow, after they went on down there, Dad says, "Do you see your damn Ford going on down the road?" (Laughter) I don't know if that's the first time you ---

WALLACE: That's the first time I remember anything about it. But if you hadn't have got that cow under the car I'd never remember it, but I was there.

IDA: Yeah, yeah. Now I don't know whether ---

PAULINE: Did it kill the cow?

IDA: No, no. They backed off of her, and that old cow, all summer long she was in that lane out there, but she stayed over by the fence. Just tore all the hide off of her --- well you know when an old big car scooting that cow down the road. And she was just a belling and wringing her tail. Broke a headlight out on his car. This was a demonstrator too, this fellow had, you know. But we turned right around and drove it, took us home.

PAULINE: That was the end of your ride.

IDA: Yes, that was the end of the ride.

WALLACE: Well that was the first time I was ever in ---

IDA: Well I don't --- don't remember. But Dad didn't buy any car from him. The first car

he got was a Maxwell, and he bought that in 19--- well he bought that in --- Maybelle and Joe was married in 1915, in June, the 15th of June, and I think that fall was when Dad got the Maxwell.

WALLACE: ... I don't remember.

IDA: Yeah. I remember the first car I rode in, and that was Poujade's car. They had just like high wheels, you know, like they used to have. The cars, you saw the first old cars, just like a buggy.

PAULINE: Yeah, with a stick in it.

IDA: Yeah. And had an old rubber horn on the side, you know. Well the Fords did that too. It was a chain drive, I remember that was the first --- Drove down to the folks from Cow Creek, and took all of us a ride, and that was like climbing into a buggy.

PAULINE: Yeah.

IDA: But I'll never forget that old, you bet that old cow, she never got on the road anymore.

PAULINE: A smart old cow. Well, it's getting to be almost noon. I guess I had better get on home. Think about ...

WALLACE: Well I hope that what we give you helped you out.

PAULINE: Oh, this has been really, really great.

ESTHER: I think you ...

-pb-

bl