

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #277 - Sides A & B

Subject: Bertha Solomon - With Video

Place: Solomon Home, Burns, Oregon

Date: August 7, 1990

Interviewers: Dorothea Purdy & Barbara Lofgren

Release Form: Yes

DOROTHEA PURDY: This is Dorothea Purdy and I'm at the home of Bertha Solomon in Burns, Oregon. And the date is August 7th, 1990. The transcript is #277. Bertha, can you speak into this and tell me your name?

BERTHA SOLOMON: Bertha M. Solomon.

DOROTHEA: Okay. You're doing fine.

BERTHA: I had a stroke, and it left me with hesitancy in my speech.

DOROTHEA: Oh, that's okay. That's okay, no problem. We're just glad to be able to do this with you, because we know you've got an exciting life to tell us. So --- I don't think that fan will hurt us any; I think we're going to record really good with it on. So --- and we need the coolness, so --- Can you tell us your maiden name?

BERTHA: Minor.

DOROTHEA: Can you spell that for us?

BERTHA: M I N O R.

DOROTHEA: Okay. And what were your parent's names?

BERTHA: Lish and Elizabeth Minor.

DOROTHEA: Okay. And when were you born?

BERTHA: There is ---

DOROTHEA: A little discrepancy on the date?

BERTHA: Yes. My family say that I was born in 1900. And my relatives say that I was born in 1980 ---

DOROTHEA: '89.

BERTHA: Yeah.

BARBARA LOFGREN: 18 ---

DOROTHEA: 1890. Well, whatever, you've lived a nice life. And you seem to be fairly healthy yet.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: What day were you born?

BERTHA: February the 9th.

BARBARA: That's my birthday too.

BERTHA: Oh!

DOROTHEA: Barbara, could you get me a chair?

BERTHA: I've never known anybody but Tommy Swisher.

BARBARA: That's right.

DOROTHEA: Has he got the same birthday?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Well, that's great. We don't know too many people that are born on the same day as we are. Sometimes I wish we did, I'd like to know what kind of a person they are. Because that

probably describes us too.

BARBARA: I found out Tommy Swisher's birthday was on the same day when I went out to renew my driver's license. He was out there the same day. So, that's how I found out.

BERTHA: He lived near me.

BARBARA: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: Okay, where were you born, what town?

BERTHA: Tullahoma.

DOROTHEA: And this was in the state of ---

BERTHA: Tennessee.

DOROTHEA: Tennessee.

BERTHA: Between Nashville and Chattanooga.

DOROTHEA: Can you tell us something about your childhood?

BERTHA: Well, there isn't much to tell, except that I was on the Keith Circuit for seven years.

DOROTHEA: What did you do?

BERTHA: Contortionist.

DOROTHEA: When you were a baby, you were in this circus?

BERTHA: Oh no, no. I was seven years old.

DOROTHEA: Oh, uh huh. So, you did some traveling afterwards?

BERTHA: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: Where did you spend a lot of your time while your parents were performing?

BERTHA: My parents? I was performing!

DOROTHEA: Oh, you were the performer. Okay, okay. What did you do then?

BERTHA: Contortionist.

DOROTHEA: Contortions. Can you tell us a little something about that? Whatever contortions are.

BERTHA: It's been so long ago, I've forgotten --- I'm still double jointed, you know.

DOROTHEA: You can still do the acts then.

BERTHA: I'm afraid to. (Laughter)

BARBARA: What did your parents do while you were traveling in the circus. What was their livelihood?

BERTHA: My --- went with me. My father went with me.

BARBARA: Uh huh. I see. Did your ---

BERTHA: I had a private teacher.

BARBARA: I see.

BERTHA: Mrs. McLamon.

BARBARA: Did your mother stay at home then?

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: While you traveled around?

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: I see. And what did she do, was she just a homemaker, or did she do chores?

BERTHA: Oh, she had two other children. They are both dead now.

BARBARA: What were your brother's and sister's names?

BERTHA: Alton and Robert Miller. (Corrected to Minor)

BARBARA: I see. So, for how many years did you travel around with the circus?

BERTHA: Seven years.

BARBARA: Seven years, that's a long time.

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: Did you get all over the United States pretty much?

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: What was the name of the circus that you were with?

BERTHA: Keith Circuit.

BARBARA: Keith.

BERTHA: Keith, it's a vaudeville house.

BARBARA: Oh, I see. K E I T H was it?

BERTHA: Yeah.

BARBARA: Okay. Well that's real interesting. Then they had other acts performing. Was it vocal, and that sort of thing besides that?

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh.

BARBARA: You performed in theaters, and that type of thing?

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: I see. It wasn't an outdoor circus; it was in theaters. I see. Oh, well that's really good.

DOROTHEA: And how many people was in this circus with you?

BERTHA: Different numbers.

DOROTHEA: Different numbers. You said at one time when we were visiting that you more or less lived out of your suitcases, or your trunks.

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

DOROTHEA: Can you tell us something, what that was like?

BERTHA: It's been so long ago, I've forgotten.

DOROTHEA: How old were you then when you left this?

BERTHA: Seven.

DOROTHEA: That's when you started?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: And you worked about seven years, so that makes you about fourteen.

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: What did you do then?

BERTHA: Fourteen. I went to school. I had a private teacher.

DOROTHEA: And you graduated then, or ---

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: How old were you when you married?

BERTHA: The first time --- or last time?

DOROTHEA: Well, anytime.

BERTHA: Eighteen.

DOROTHEA: And who were you married to?

BERTHA: Roy Harris.

DOROTHEA: Roy Harris. And then how long were you married to him?

BERTHA: I don't know.

DOROTHEA: Did you have any children?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: No children.

BARBARA: Where did you meet him? With the circus?

BERTHA: No.

BARBARA: It was after that.

BERTHA: Circuit.

BARBARA: Oh, circuit.

BERTHA: Circuit. C I R C U I T.

BARBARA: I see.

DOROTHEA: And then when you decided to come to Harney County, how did you decide this?

BERTHA: I came to see Crater Lake, and met a man that I couldn't forget. And I went back South and stayed a year.

DOROTHEA: And then you decided you'd like to come back to Oregon.

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And was this Red?

BERTHA: I was married --- we were married twelve, twenty-six, and thirty-six. (Corrected to twelve, twenty-two, and thirty-six.) And he died in '60.

DOROTHEA: And that was, what was his name?

BERTHA: Harold Solomon.

DOROTHEA: Harold Solomon.

BARBARA: So, you met him when you came out to visit Crater Lake?

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh.

BARBARA: I see.

BERTHA: And did you know that people who started this mill were from the South?

BARBARA: Yes, uh huh. Was Mr. Solomon, did he work for Edward Hines?

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: I see.

BERTHA: Yes. He was a conductor on the ---

BARBARA: Oh, on the railroad? Oh, I see.

BERTHA: --- train. And he died on the train.

BARBARA: Oh, for goodness sakes.

BERTHA: He had this heart attack, and he died on the train. He had his heart attack, and also died on the train.

DOROTHEA: Was he the conductor, you said?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: And you also lived here on this place. Did you build this house?

BERTHA: Oh, no, no. We lived in town. Because ---

BARBARA: So, if he was working for the railroad for Edward Hines, it was more convenient for you to live in town, and stay in town.

BERTHA: Oh, yes. And we bought the ranch ---

BARBARA: At a later time then?

BERTHA: When we had enough money saved up.

BARBARA: And then you bought your ranch. And then did he do a little ranching and continue to work for the railroad?

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh.

BARBARA: I see.

BERTHA: I did the ranching.

BARBARA: I see. He rode the train, and you rode the horse?

DOROTHEA: You had some hired men to help you do this. Can you remember some of their names?

BERTHA: Oh yes. Buck Davis, Fred --- he's married to --- works for Howard Otley.

DOROTHEA: Fred ---

BERTHA: Dickenson. He was --- we just kept one man.

DOROTHEA: Just one man.

BERTHA: Yeah, during the winter. But we had five men that worked during haying. No, he'd stand right along side of me and they'd ask me what to do.

DOROTHEA: So, you were able to more or less run the ranch this way.

BARBARA: You had cows, did you? You run cattle?

BERTHA: Yes, cattle.

BARBARA: How did you learn the cattle business then if you had grown up being a performer, and then you just ---

BERTHA: I didn't know which end gave milk. (Laughter)

BARBARA: By hit or miss, huh? Did your husband know anything about the cattle business?

BERTHA: Oh yes. He worked in, and buckarood ---

BARBARA: So, he kind of helped you, I see.

BERTHA: --- all of his life.

DOROTHEA: Do you remember something about his childhood? Had he grown up on a ranch, or ---

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: He worked on ranches? Don't know that? How long did you have the ranch before he died then?

BERTHA: From '36, we bought the ranch about a year later.

DOROTHEA: So, about 1937. So, you've lived ---

BERTHA: And Thad Geer was a babe in arms when they came to the wedding reception. That's

why I'm so close to him now.

DOROTHEA: Then he worked on the railroad too for a little while, didn't he?

BERTHA: Oh, no.

BARBARA: I think just in the summer.

DOROTHEA: In the summertime.

BERTHA: Henry did.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, Henry did.

BARBARA: I think Thad, during his summer breaks, would sometimes help on the railroad.

BERTHA: No, no.

BARBARA: Well, he has mentioned that he had worked out there on one ---

DOROTHEA: With the section camp.

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: He worked with the Ekis. Well then, you've known Thad for, all his life mostly.

BERTHA: Yes, all his life. But I never knew Joyce until they bought the Clemens Place.

DOROTHEA: Because I know you were a pretty active lady when we were here in 1956. So, I know you were pretty busy. Can you tell us something about your church life?

BERTHA: I'm a Catholic.

DOROTHEA: You've been pretty active in the church?

BERTHA: I've been, I've always filled every step of the way, up the ladder.

DOROTHEA: I know you've been pretty active with the church. Some of the activities that you do, and volunteer at, can you tell us something about that?

BERTHA: Oh, I've worked for the Cancer Society. I don't like to brag about it.

DOROTHEA: Well, we're not asking you to brag, we're just kind of interested in some of the

things that you have done. I know that --- do you work with the Hospital Society too, or have you?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: Because I know Clarabelle Houston has worked with you in some of these projects.

BERTHA: She's like my own child.

DOROTHEA: Is she?

BERTHA: They lived across the street from me in ---

DOROTHEA: When you were first married?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: She was a Parker?

BERTHA: Her mother taught me to can.

DOROTHEA: Oh, she did?

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: So, you have known Clarabelle for a long time too?

BERTHA: Yes. I watched her go to school the first day she went to school.

DOROTHEA: So, you knew Jim and Genevieve?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: They were nice people. You had a stroke here just recently, or ---

BERTHA: Five years ago.

DOROTHEA: Five years ago. You also had cancer. You have gotten over these both.

BERTHA: I had a stroke while I was taking treatments for cancer.

DOROTHEA: Oh, uh huh. So, this has kind of tied you down a little bit.

BERTHA: My god, I'm old enough to slow down.

DOROTHEA: Well, you're supposed to slow down.

BARBARA: You have a right, don't you? (Laughter) Do you have any children?

BERTHA: No.

BARBARA: No children.

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: Just the mother to all these other kids that you have adopted more or less. Do you work at the Senior Center a little bit? Do you help out there?

BERTHA: Oh, I've helped money wise. I've given fifteen thousand dollars. Give a thousand dollars a year.

DOROTHEA: Well, this is a lot of help. You know they need that help as well as the volunteer help. Right now, they are having big problems.

BERTHA: I'm not able to do any volunteer work.

DOROTHEA: Well I think, like you say it is time you were resting anyway.

BERTHA: Yeah. But I've been in that position. I've gone through the officers and all, except president.

DOROTHEA: You were on the board and you helped out that way.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Were you one of the ones that got it organized and got it started?

BERTHA: Yeah, uh huh. I was at the first meeting.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. Because I know that was one of the important jobs of the seniors. And they have really went a long way after they got started. You went from building to building until you were finally able to build a building of your own. Well did you take your own service, like your plates and silverware at the first meal they had at the Senior Center, before it was really a Senior Center?

BERTHA: I, the first meeting we had was at the Berneace Shelton--- invited me, you know.

DOROTHEA: Well, what do you think of this weather? Do you think that this is, reminding you of the older days? Isn't this great?

BERTHA: It's a getting to me.

DOROTHEA: Is it?

BARBARA: I think it is getting to everyone.

BERTHA: I lived here fifty-three years in all. And I thought I was acclimated to it.

BARBARA: Remind you of living in the South again, isn't it, where it gets so warm.

BERTHA: I wish I was there.

BARBARA: It's cooler there than it is here right now.

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: When you came to see Crater Lake, what did you think of it?

BERTHA: Oh, I thought golly what a gully.

DOROTHEA: What a gully, huh? Have you been to see it since?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: You haven't? It's a gorgeous place, it really is.

BERTHA: Yes, it is.

DOROTHEA: That water is so clear, and they take boat tours and things now, that you know, that they really show the people around. But you liked Oregon apparently, or the man decided that you were destined to come back to Oregon anyway.

BERTHA: Yeah, he met me in Boise, and we were married in Boise.

BARBARA: Did you write letters during this year that, after you came out to Crater Lake and then went home? Did you write to Mr. Solomon then?

BERTHA: I --- yes.

DOROTHEA: Must have, you got ---

BARBARA: Then he invited you to come out and get married.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: He must have liked what he met too. Can you tell us something about your early ranch life? What it was like?

BERTHA: Well, as I say, I didn't know which end of a cow gave milk.

DOROTHEA: But you knew enough about grass and stuff like this. That you knew they had to be fed, so this was part of the work. How many cattle did you start with?

BERTHA: Two hundred.

DOROTHEA: Two hundred.

BERTHA: A hundred, and we worked up to two hundred.

DOROTHEA: Two hundred. That's quite a bunch of cows. Did you ever buckaroo?

BERTHA: Oh yes.

DOROTHEA: You did a lot of that too, huh? Got to ride in the snowstorms, and --- Did you do any roping?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: You let the men do that. Well that was kind of me too. I caught my finger the first time I threw a rope, and I said that's enough for me. So ---

BARBARA: Did you have to cook for your help during the summertime?

BERTHA: Yes, yes.

DOROTHEA: Did you grow your own garden so you had your own vegetables and things?

BERTHA: Yeah, uh huh. I always had a garden, you know. Even after we built this house, I

gardened a little bit.

DOROTHEA: You built this house?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: What kind of a house was here before you built this one?

BERTHA: Oh, nothing.

DOROTHEA: Nothing. Not a shack?

BERTHA: The Williams brothers --- Williams, they were three brothers, and they each had their own house, you know. And the houses are still down there. Harold wanted to save them for this man who has the Good Eats. He was ---

DOROTHEA: Do you use the buildings for anything? Do you store things in there? They're just empty buildings.

BERTHA: No, they're stored full.

DOROTHEA: Rat infestation.

BARBARA: Did you have help with the cooking then when you had your help in the summer?

BERTHA: Yes, Clarabelle helped me.

BARBARA: Who taught you to cook? Did your Mother teach you to cook when you were growing up?

BERTHA: I don't care how poor you are in the South, you always find a Nigger that is poorer.

BARBARA: Oh, so they did all your cooking for you. And you didn't learn how to do that then. I see.

DOROTHEA: So, this was also quite an experience for you then.

BARBARA: When you came out here to get married, then you had to learn how to cook and keep house and everything?

BERTHA: Yeah. I couldn't ever remember having a broom in my hand.

BARBARA: Or make your own bed or anything?

BERTHA: No.

BARBARA: You were a spoiled young lady then, weren't you?

BERTHA: Spoiled brat!

BARBARA: So that was really kind of hard for you then when you first started out, to have to do all these chores.

BERTHA: Yes, and having a mother-in-law live with you.

BARBARA: Oh, dear. That's a new experience.

BERTHA: Yeah. And she was one of the best cooks in the world.

BARBARA: So, then she taught you mainly how to cook?

BERTHA: No, she didn't.

BARBARA: Oh, she didn't?

BERTHA: No. Genevieve helped me a lot.

BARBARA: I see.

DOROTHEA: Genevieve is always a busy person. So, I imagine she always found time to help other people. She had three children of her own, and helped other people learn to do things.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Like you said, she taught you how to can. So, you've learned quite a bit from her.

BERTHA: Yeah.

BARBARA: Did you do hand work, or like crocheting, and knitting and sewing when you were young?

BERTHA: Yes. I made this afghan. And I used the --- Gerber's Beauty Shop, I worked in for ten

years in all. And I'd pick up--- I used it for pick-up work, you know.

BARBARA: Well I just wondered, when you were a young girl, you didn't have to cook and clean and all that, if your mother taught you to play music, or ---

BERTHA: No, I was on the stage.

BARBARA: So, you didn't have time to do any of that at all then? Twelve months out of the year you were on the road?

BERTHA: Yeah.

BARBARA: Gosh, that must have wore you out pretty much didn't it?

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Well you said you did hair? How did you learn this?

BERTHA: I worked in a beauty shop. Taught two years, you know. I worked in Gerber's Beauty Shop.

DOROTHEA: Where was this at?

BERTHA: Memphis.

DOROTHEA: In Memphis. And that's, you say where you call your home, is Memphis. Did you do all these fancy hairdos that they used to wear?

BERTHA: I worked on a machine.

DOROTHEA: Oh.

BERTHA: Machine permanent.

BARBARA: Oh, those old things that really got hot.

BERTHA: Yes. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: Really curled your hair. Yeah.

BERTHA: Yeah, they ... and it's coming back now.

BARBARA: Oh, is that right?

DOROTHEA: They're starting to come back with a lot of things that they used in the older days.

How many customers did you have? Did they patronize the beauty shops then like they do now?

BERTHA: Oh, yes. The Gerber's was the swellest shop in town.

DOROTHEA: And then in the spare time then you did your crocheting.

BERTHA: Yeah, pick-up work between appointments.

DOROTHEA: Yeah. So that kept you busy. I never did learn how to crochet, so that is ---

BERTHA: And I took the scraps, left over for the three afghans I made. I gave them away. And I took the scraps, you know, and made my, one for myself.

BARBARA: Well, good for you.

DOROTHEA: It's a pretty color. You've made some pretty ones. What else do you do to keep yourself busy?

BERTHA: Well, it takes me a, slower --- I get ---

DOROTHEA: Takes you longer to do things?

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh. I read a lot.

DOROTHEA: Do you?

BERTHA: Yeah. And I watch TV.

BARBARA: Good company for you.

BERTHA: Yeah.

BARBARA: At least you can keep up on what's happening in our world.

DOROTHEA: When did you sell your ranch to Thad and Joyce?

BERTHA: I, well he had it leased five years before ---

DOROTHEA: Before he bought it? Did your place include the Williams field, up in the

mountains?

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh. And I have a thousand acres.

DOROTHEA: Down here?

BERTHA: Uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And that included some of this land across the highway?

BERTHA: Yeah, uh huh. I sold it to my sister-in-law.

DOROTHEA: Oh, did you?

BERTHA: But I still have the Red Barn Place. I gave Thad --- she was just here.

DOROTHEA: Joyce was?

BERTHA: Yeah. I gave her --- Red Barn Place, you know.

BARBARA: You sister-in-law?

BERTHA: No ---

DOROTHEA: Joyce and Thad?

BERTHA: Joyce and Thad.

BARBARA: Oh, I see, okay.

DOROTHEA: Now they have the Williams Place too?

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: So, yeah. That's where that fire is, pretty close to it, isn't it?

BERTHA: Yes. Thad went up there early this morning.

DOROTHEA: Did he?

BERTHA: You know he gets up at four o'clock in the ---

DOROTHEA: Yeah, I know. Yeah, he is a busy person. It's hard to catch him.

BERTHA: But he's always got time for me.

DOROTHEA: Well, that's good.

BARBARA: They're nice people.

BERTHA: Yes, they are.

DOROTHEA: He's had some problems with his health too, that's been pretty serious.

BERTHA: Yes. But he's, workman's compensation, and they have to go when they tell them to.

DOROTHEA: Get physicals and tests and things.

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh.

BARBARA: What was the town of Burns like when you got here?

What did you think of it?

BERTHA: I thought I'd come to the jumping off place.

BARBARA: The end of the world, huh?

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: It's changed a lot in the years that you've lived here.

BARBARA: How many people were in Burns about 1936, you say?

When you got here, when you got married.

BERTHA: Yes, the old Welcome Hotel burned the day after we came from Boise.

BARBARA: Oh, for goodness sakes.

BERTHA: We came from Boise.

DOROTHEA: Right before Christmas, or something like that?

BERTHA: Yes. Christmas Eve.

DOROTHEA: Christmas Eve.

BARBARA: Was it cold and snowy?

BERTHA: Yes. I thought, came in these feathery clothes, you know.

BARBARA: You didn't have any warm clothes.

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: So, your husband had to buy you new clothes to start off with to keep you warm?

BERTHA: I bought them myself.

BARBARA: So, you moved into your husband's home then, with his mother?

BERTHA: Yeah. He had the home place. And I've still got the home place. Pierce ---

DOROTHEA: In town?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Is it on North Egan?

BERTHA: No, it's on North --- right close to the Indian Village.

DOROTHEA: Oh, uh huh.

BARBARA: On Foley Drive?

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: I see.

DOROTHEA: And you still have that place then?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Is there a house still on it?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Someone live in it?

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh. They've lived there since 1962.

DOROTHEA: It's nice to have somebody move in and stay in one place. That's almost thirty years.

BERTHA: Yes. But, I only charge them fifty dollars a month.

DOROTHEA: Do they keep the place up pretty good?

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Well that's good. It's hard to find people that do that.

BERTHA: Yeah.

BARBARA: So, did your mother-in-law live with you all the time then?

BERTHA: No.

BARBARA: Just part of the time?

BERTHA: No. She --- John Solomon, she lived with him.

BARBARA: Oh, I see.

BERTHA: He bought a ranch from Julian Byrd.

DOROTHEA: Oh, he did?

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Is that the place that he had up on the river?

BERTHA: Yeah, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And Julian Byrd had owned that?

BERTHA: Yeah, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: That's interesting to know, because I didn't know that.

BARBARA: What did you do that first year then, before you bought your ranch land, in town?

What did you do with your time?

BERTHA: My god, there wasn't hours enough in the day for --- learn to cook, and keep house, you know.

BARBARA: Took all the time you had to get everything done. Did you go into town and do your shopping there? Did you have a car?

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

DOROTHEA: What kind of car was it?

BERTHA: A Chevrolet.

DOROTHEA: And did you use lots of gasoline, or was it hard to change tires in? Did it take you a long time to travel from place to place?

BERTHA: Oh ---

DOROTHEA: Not? Was it a pretty nice car? Was it enclosed, or did it have cloth doors, or ---

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

DOROTHEA: Can you remember the first automobile ride that you took?

BERTHA: Yeah. You're asking me the most ungodly questions. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: Well, I wanted to know something about what you can remember about the early days.

BERTHA: But ---

DOROTHEA: And the streets when you came to Burns were ---

BERTHA: Yes, walks ---

DOROTHEA: Sidewalks?

BARBARA: Boardwalks?

BERTHA: Sidewalks. Boardwalks.

BARBARA: Wooden sidewalks.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: And muddy roads? Did they at that time have the wells down Main Street to fight the fires and things?

BERTHA: Oh, no.

DOROTHEA: Oh, they didn't? What was it like, the main street?

BERTHA: Very short!

DOROTHEA: Very short. What kind of stores were there in town?

BERTHA: Maggie --- Aunt Maggie and Welcome, you know. She and her brother had the grocery.

DOROTHEA: Do you remember the Schroeder's Butcher Shop?

BERTHA: Oh, yes. Hattie and me traveled together. Marjorie isn't good.

DOROTHEA: She's not good, yeah. I heard she had a heart attack. Yeah.

BERTHA: But she makes fun of anybody who complains, you know.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, she's trying to keep up with Stocky, and that's keeping her busy.

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Well, tell us some about the trips that you and Hattie took.

BERTHA: We went to Mexico, and Hawaii. And we spent a month in Mexico. And Italy, and ---

DOROTHEA: How did you travel? Did you go by plane, or train?

BERTHA: By plane mostly.

DOROTHEA: Plane. Did you do any driving?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: You always went by plane? How about trains? Did you ever take the train?

BERTHA: Well, I came out here on a train.

DOROTHEA: Was that a long trip?

BERTHA: Yes. You spent the night on there.

DOROTHEA: And how long did it take you to come out?

BERTHA: Two days --- three days and two nights.

DOROTHEA: And that just took you to Boise?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: So, he had to meet you there. Were the --- have you been on a train lately?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: Not for years? I was wondering if the trains were different than they are today.

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

DOROTHEA: A lot more comfortable? They seem to go pretty fast. Yeah, I know it took me something like, almost twenty-two hours to come from Grand Junction, Colorado. It seemed like a long time. Because it took me a day and a night, and half the next day. So that was a long time just to drive eight hundred miles.

BARBARA: For sure.

DOROTHEA: What were some of the sights that you saw in, on your excursions with Hattie?

BERTHA: Oh ---

DOROTHEA: Just the regular sites of tourists?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Did you bring home any souvenirs?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Lots of souvenirs? Yeah. Hattie was a busy person. Did she run the Pine Room too?

BERTHA: Yes. They won't hire a cook. She and Bob Schroeder, they, he got her --- she was married when she was thirteen years old.

DOROTHEA: To Bob?

BERTHA: Yes. And Bob, boy he was a drinker.

DOROTHEA: Was he? Now did she also have a, kind of a grocery store there on that place?

BERTHA: Yes. And Abbie Mundy used to work for her.

DOROTHEA: And they used to, I know send groceries up on the train up to the Jap camps, section camp. And I think Mondays or so was their delivery day on that. When did they turn that into a restaurant?

BERTHA: Well, Marjorie was out here when Harold died, you know. And he used to ---

SIDE B

DOROTHEA: We're back on. So, tell us some of your dirty stories!

BERTHA: (Laughter) I don't know any.

DOROTHEA: Now you said you were going to tell us some, and we didn't get to hear any. You said something about Leonard Knight giving you vegetables.

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: And they canned your peaches, and ---

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh. Mildred cans my peaches.

DOROTHEA: Cans your peaches. That keeps you in fruit. They're nice people too.

BERTHA: Yes, they are.

DOROTHEA: They've retired now.

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Are they keeping busy?

BERTHA: Change, changes all over the place, you know.

DOROTHEA: What kind of changes can you tell us, that's happened to the City of Burns, and oh say Harney County since you came here? Has the town built up?

BERTHA: Oh, yes, you know.

DOROTHEA: A lot more people?

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Do you remember when the Air Force was here?

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

DOROTHEA: Can you tell us something about that time?

BERTHA: Dr. John married ---

DOROTHEA: His last wife?

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: And I can't think of her name either.

BARBARA: Nancy.

BERTHA: Nancy.

DOROTHEA: And they live in Arizona now, don't they?

BERTHA: Well, they're here.

BARBARA: They're back here now.

DOROTHEA: Oh, are they back here again? Are they moved back, or?

---

BARBARA: I think they're trying to sell their house here, aren't they?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Is that what they're doing?

BARBARA: It's too hot down there for them right now, I think.

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: It got hot there this summer. I think it was a hundred and twenty-three at one time.

So, they probably were glad to come back here at the hundred and two and three, something like

that.

BARBARA: My son is down in Phoenix too, so I know it's hot down there.

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

BARBARA: He said one day he went out on the flight line, he's an Air Force pilot, said it was a hundred and thirty-one on the flight line when he took off one day. So that's awful hot.

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: And they let them take off?

BARBARA: The commercial flights were grounded, but not the military. They were still able to fly. It gets warm.

DOROTHEA: Too warm for me. Some of the changes that have taken place in Harney County, say like cattle prices, can you remember some of the prices that you got for cattle?

BERTHA: Ten cents a pound for an old --- I've sold many a head of cow for ten cents. And George has too.

DOROTHEA: Yeah. Yeah, I think that's what they were selling for when Clinton and I first got married. And I can remember though in 1956 or so, we got forty-eight cents for a calf. And it was really, you know, high priced. And that's about what they're selling now for.

BERTHA: Oh?

DOROTHEA: Well not today, I should say. I shouldn't say today, because the prices are up pretty good. But just about a year ago.

BERTHA: Well no wonder prices are up. So many people ---

DOROTHEA: They won't eat beef anymore, a lot of it too. So, you know beef is hard to sell. But there is the middleman in there too that is making all the money. So, you know, there ---

BARBARA: Where did you sell your cattle to? Where were your buyers from?

BERTHA: Fritz Nosler. He's from Alturas, California.

BARBARA: Alturas, California. So, your buyers came up from California and bought your herds then? I see.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Didn't he have a stockyard in Burns at one time?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Did you sell to him at that place?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: And that's where Ted Howard took --- she bought that from Fritz? Did, Del Witzel's ex-wife --- You can't remember?

BERTHA: You know more than I do.

DOROTHEA: Yeah. Well, I remember Fritz Nosler had the place, and then she turned it into a --- she more or less built the stock-yards, and the weigh station, and kind of turned that into a restaurant there at first. And he just come in here with his trucks and bought cattle.

BERTHA: Madeline was his wife's name.

DOROTHEA: Uh huh. Have you thought of any stories that you want to share with us?

BERTHA: No, no. (Laughter)

BARBARA: What are some of the fun things that you remember as a youngster, some of the fun things that you used to do? Or times that you used to have, do you recall? Or, was it all work?

BERTHA: You caught me at a bad time. My voice is kind of --- went that way.

BARBARA: Well, it happens to all of us.

BERTHA: But, I'm glad that it left me --- the stroke.

BARBARA: You're still able to get around, so that's very important.

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: It really is.

DOROTHEA: You still drive your car.

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

DOROTHEA: Are able to do that yet. So, do you go into the Senior Center for dinners and ---

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

DOROTHEA: And so, you do enjoy those. And you still get your hair fixed. Go to church.

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: I see you on the highway a lot, so I know you get around.

BARBARA: You like to keep on the go then, don't you?

BERTHA: Yeah.

BARBARA: Do you visit friends in town, do you?

BERTHA: Huh?

BARBARA: Do you visit friends in town, do you?

BERTHA: No. I kind of slowed down.

BARBARA: Oh, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: Well, the Senior Center delivers meals on wheels. Would they bring one clear out here for you?

BERTHA: Oh, they would if I asked them to. Because I'm such a big donator.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, yeah. But I know they took them to Daddy for a long time.

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh. I knew your husband very well.

DOROTHEA: Clint?

BERTHA: Yes. Your dad ---

DOROTHEA: My dad, yeah. Yeah, he's joined the ranks of the aged I guess is what you'd say. He's existing. That's about all we can say about him. But he had a good life, so I guess we can't complain.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: He had a busy childhood too, but he won't tell us about it. I guess he thinks that he's going to carry that to the grave with him.

BARBARA: Have you enjoyed living in Harney County?

BERTHA: Yes. I had to come to Harney County to learn to be friendly.

BARBARA: Well, is that right?

BERTHA: Yeah. They talk about southern hospitality. It's not---

BARBARA: Not true?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: They are a bunch of stuck-ups, huh?

BARBARA: Well, I think they had more of the classes there, didn't they?

BERTHA: Yeah.

BARBARA: I mean you had the upper class ---

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh.

BARBARA: --- people to, you had the colored people to look after you, and do your chores. But out here, everyone had to kind of take care of themselves. And you were friendly with your neighbors, and you helped one another, and that's how it got started, I think.

BERTHA: Uh huh.

BARBARA: But it wasn't too hard to, was it, to be friendly with everyone?

BERTHA: No. Because they are friendly back, you know.

BARBARA: Right. It's pretty easy to be friends with somebody that enjoys your company too.

DOROTHEA: Do you remember some of your neighbors when you first moved here? Were they as close as they are now?

BERTHA: Don and --- McGee, and Clarabelle lived across the street. And ---

DOROTHEA: That was in town?

BERTHA: Yeah, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: How about it when you moved out here? Has this country built up a little?

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

DOROTHEA: Well I know, see you moved out here in '37 or so. Who lived at the Baker Place at that time, can you remember?

BERTHA: Oh, Baker.

DOROTHEA: Oh, was it still the Bakers?

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: It's gone through a lot of families since then.

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh.

DOROTHEA: The Otleys lived there for a while, and George and Mary lived there for a while. Mom and Dad lived there a little bit when George went to the Service. And Clinton and I lived there and moved away, and now we've moved back. And so, you lived here and had Glenn Clemens and Beulah as neighbors.

BERTHA: Yeah. We see more of each other than we did when we lived near each other.

DOROTHEA: You both go to the Center.

BERTHA: The Center.

DOROTHEA: The Center a lot to eat. Do you play cards?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: You don't play cards.

BERTHA: No. I don't have any use for cards.

DOROTHEA: How about dancing? Do you ever ---

BERTHA: Oh, I liked to dance.

DOROTHEA: Did you like to dance? Did you go to a lot of dances?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Did they have a lot of dances?

BERTHA: The Peabody Hotel. I've danced there many times. You dance under the stars.

BARBARA: Oh.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Did they have an orchestra, kind of a, or just old-time music?

BERTHA: Oh, yes.

DOROTHEA: Who played?

BERTHA: Oh ---

DOROTHEA: Some of the Burns musicians, or some sort.

BERTHA: The orchestra --- see the names --- they --- it was ---

DOROTHEA: I can't help you, because I can't remember any of the old-time musicians that was around here.

BARBARA: Did you dance at some of the grange halls too? Go to the grange dances?

BERTHA: No. They don't have grange in the South.

BARBARA: Oh, is that right?

BERTHA: Yeah. They don't --- at least they didn't. But I've lived here fifty-three years.

BARBARA: Do you have any relatives back in the South still, or are they all gone?

BERTHA: No. Only a nephew.

BARBARA: A nephew, uh huh.

BERTHA: And I didn't see him until he was forty years old.

BARBARA: Oh, my.

BERTHA: My brother passed away last year.

BARBARA: I see.

BERTHA: And he paid three thousand dollars a month, you know, at that home.

DOROTHEA: He was in a home?

BARBARA: Well that's about average anymore.

DOROTHEA: They're pretty expensive. Yeah. That's about what Daddy pays. He pays about forty-eight hundred, or something like that.

BARBARA: So, did you get back to visit any of your family during your early married life?

BERTHA: Oh, yes. I worked --- rode on passes.

BARBARA: Oh.

BERTHA: Yes.

BARBARA: Because your husband worked on the railroad, so you got passes to go visit your family. Well, that was nice.

BERTHA: Yeah. I've been back there. My brother has been out here, and he spent three months with me.

BARBARA: Oh, that's nice.

DOROTHEA: You had two brothers, you said?

BERTHA: Two brothers.

DOROTHEA: One was named ---

BARBARA: Robert.

DOROTHEA: Robert and ---

BERTHA: Robert and Alton.

DOROTHEA: Alton. Which one came out to visit with you?

BERTHA: Alton.

DOROTHEA: Alton.

BERTHA: They called him Red.

DOROTHEA: They called your husband Red too, didn't they?

BERTHA: Yeah. And I told him that I had two redheaded brothers, and we didn't get to see them until they --- oh quite awhile after we were married, you know. And they, both turned green ---

DOROTHEA: Their hair turned green?

BERTHA: Yeah. Gray!

BARBARA: They both were gray and weren't red anymore.

BERTHA: Yeah.

BARBARA: Well, I think that happens to all of us.

BERTHA: I interrupted you.

DOROTHEA: I was going to say; you said their last name was Miller, or Minor?

BERTHA: Minor.

DOROTHEA: Minor. Okay.

BARBARA: Did your parents ever get out here to visit you after you were married?

BERTHA: No.

BARBARA: No?

BERTHA: Both of them died.

BARBARA: Oh, is that right?

DOROTHEA: Were you just a young girl when they passed away, or---

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: How old were you?

BERTHA: Twelve, I think.

DOROTHEA: Somewhere around there. So, your brothers were young too then?

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Who raised them?

BERTHA: We raised --- my uncle raised me. What little bit of raising I had.

DOROTHEA: Did your brothers; were they raised by your uncle too, then? Or did you grow up together?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: Your brothers and you?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: You didn't?

BERTHA: They each one took one of the kids.

BARBARA: Were your brothers older than you, or younger?

BERTHA: One was younger --- older, and one was younger.

BARBARA: I see.

DOROTHEA: And they each had children then, and that's the nephew that you saw later?

BERTHA: Yes, uh huh. But all of Harold's kinfolks called me Aunt Bertha. I laid awake one night, and I counted a hundred and fifty people who call me Aunt.

BARBARA: Is that right? Well isn't that nice, to have so many people that care about you. That's super.

BERTHA: Yeah. I've ---

BARBARA: You've been blessed with a lot of good friends then, haven't you? That's nice.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: You have a nice home here too. Did you help build this, or did a carpenter come in and ---

BERTHA: Well, yes. Yes, and no. I cooked for the men.

DOROTHEA: Oh, as they built?

BERTHA: My husband, he was --- it was his heart attack that --- kept him off of the train two years.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, I know that he had been ---

BERTHA: Well, he went back to the --- I asked Dr. Cliff how long it would be, and he said ten years, you know. From the --- he lived ten years and three months.

DOROTHEA: From his first heart attack?

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: I knew he had had one, and just more or less ranched for a while before he went back on the train.

BERTHA: Yes.

DOROTHEA: Well, it was a good thing that he got to ride on the train then, because we don't have that anymore. That's some of our past. That is a part of the history that we have filed in the library. Have you worked with the Library Board or anything?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: No, okay.

BERTHA: I keep busy.

DOROTHEA: With your church and doing this kind of thing.

BERTHA: Doing ---

DOROTHEA: You've done a lot of traveling, have you done much traveling since Hattie has been gone?

BERTHA: No.

DOROTHEA: No, just more or less ---

BERTHA: Hattie and Pansy Mace and --- cancer, stroke, hit all in three months.

DOROTHEA: Within three months?

BERTHA: Three weeks of each other.

DOROTHEA: Oh, three weeks. Yeah.

BARBARA: My goodness.

BERTHA: That was quite a blow.

DOROTHEA: Yeah, that was hard for you.

BERTHA: Yeah.

DOROTHEA: Well, is there anything, it's getting hot, and I know that you're probably getting uncomfortable. So, we'd like to take a little video, Bertha. We've enjoyed this afternoon. Is there anything else that you would like to add to this before we ---?

BERTHA: No. I think you've asked questions enough. (Laughter)

DOROTHEA: You weren't prepared for all these questions, huh? Well, I told you we were going to get nose. So --- But we have enjoyed it. And now we'd like, if you would allow us, to put you on a video so we can store you in the library with this tape. So, we'll take a little time and do this

then. And thanks a lot, Bertha.

BERTHA: Yeah.

(END OF TAPE) b1