

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #290 - Side A

Subject: Byron Dunten - Discusses Drewsey Cemetery

Place: Drewsey, Oregon

Date: 1976 (?)

Interviewer: Marcus Haines

Release Form: No

This is Marcus Haines interviewing Byron Dunten over at Drewsey, at the Drewsey Cemetery, back here fifteen years ago, or such a matter. I don't remember the exact date. But anyway, we'll listen to Byron tell about who is buried there. And he has been in charge of the cemetery for many years.

BYRON DUNTEN: They all are all put on record just the same as unknown. But ---

MARCUS HAINES: That's a pretty darn good record. I was, I had occasion to go down to the Crane Cemetery last Monday, a week ago. And apparently, they fenced off an acre, looks like about an acre plot many, many years ago, wire netting fence, and cleaned the brush out. Sets right out in the sagebrush. But the second growth brush has grown up now, and people, some of the relatives have gone in and they have grubbed off about half of it. And they have the different plots fenced off, the Heinz, and Parkers, and some of those folks who lost so many people in 1918. But by in large, the fence is falling down, and the only marker that is around so many of these graves is just a half an inch pipe. Somebody stuck an artificial flower in it on Decoration Day some time or another. And other than the fence around it to keep the stock out, there just isn't too much progress made there. When you come into a cemetery like this, why you immediately realize what you folks are doing for your dead.

BYRON: You can get them markers, like we've got a lot of them; you can see them up here. ... you've got to move them. The names, ... you can get them through Bob Salladay, very reasonable. I

would venture to say they won't cost you a dollar apiece. And any cemetery that don't have a name, should get one of them. And if they know the parties name, get it and put it up. But after all, it's still a marker. Somebody knows ...

MARCUS: That's the thing of it, you never know whose relative might come into the country and would like to find a relative's grave, you know. And without some kind of identification, it's just impossible to do.

BYRON: Well, there was a girl here just about two weeks ago, said she was seven years old when she left here, and that's been --- must have been between thirty-five and forty years ago that she left here, and she was here looking for her dad. And he was --- I'm almost sure he was buried in Burns. But she was checking here.

MARCUS: She felt that ---

BYRON: They owned this ranch out here, this Dunlap place ... little place ... just below the road. ... used to have a trailer house.

MARCUS: Oh, that's where they lived.

BYRON: That's where they lived. ... from them.

MARCUS: Well, she'd been gone from here for quite awhile then, hadn't she?

BYRON: Yeah.

MARCUS: You bet.

BYRON: And I'm almost sure that he is buried in Burns. But she could check through the records over there to find out.

MARCUS: I have, I'm trying to locate a grave, that's the reason I was in Burns. There was a fellow killed in our community in the mid '20's, name of, called him Windy Thompson. Charlie Thompson was his name. He came in here from Texas when Craven came in and took over the operation of the, the old "P" Company up there, Blitzen Valley. And in talking to people about where Pete French was killed, that's the big issue we have now is trying to find out where he was killed. We're getting them confused with where Charlie Thompson was killed. So, I --- trying to find out the date so I can maybe find an account in the newspaper. It will tell a little bit more than

just --- You talk to one person, of course I was around when it happened, and others too of my vintage. And we all have a little bit different idea of when this happened.

BYRON: Sure, yeah, that's right.

MARCUS: So, it's --- I went to stop by Bob's this morning and talked to him. And he said, "Well you'll have to send \$3.00 down to Salem." And he gave me a form to fill out and all. And after I told him then what I was doing this for, well Bob said, "Well never mind, I'll get on the phone, I've got to call down there," and said, "I'll see if I can get something for you." But just a simple marker of some kind. He said Charlie Thompson, the date he was killed, it would simplify matters for what I'm trying to get done here.

BYRON: Sure. Yeah.

MARCUS: Because their records here in Burns that Salladays have only go back to 1929.

BYRON: That's all?

MARCUS: Yes. That is for the Crane, the Crane area. So, they are of no help at all. But to come in here though and see the work and care --- I go by here quite often, you know, going over to Pat and Susan's here. And it isn't uncommon to see people out here decorating graves in the middle of the year. They don't wait for Memorial Day to do this thing.

BYRON: Nope. Birthdays, and all different occasions like that.

MARCUS: Yes, you see folks in here most any time of the year. In the dead of the winter I've seen them here putting these plastic flowers on these graves here.

BYRON: Which I think they are a nice thing, because they stay and last for years.

MARCUS: That's right.

BYRON: The other flowers are more beautiful and have more perfume, in a place like this. And as it was, you could smell them from where we are standing. But the way it is, these will be here for three or four days as cold as it is now, and the others will be gone.

MARCUS: Right, right. Yeah, unless the wind blows some of these away, they will be here for quite a little while.

BYRON: You bet. There are flowers here that have been here for years. Those flowers right there

on that grave that's been here for a year or two.

MARCUS: I thought they was just put in.

BYRON: No, as I say ---

MARCUS: They are artificial, aren't they?

BYRON: No, they are artificial, and they just look nice.

MARCUS: You bet they look nice. Well Byron, it's been --- it hasn't been too many years here that you have had money to work with, such as the two hundred dollars in donations and that. You folks just depend upon volunteers.

BYRON: That's right.

MARCUS: Volunteer labor here. And like opening graves, you do that ---

BYRON: That's ...

MARCUS: That's ... here locally.

BYRON: And that's the reason, some of them wants it on the tax roll, and three percent of them don't. And that's why I say if you go on the tax roll, then you have to pay for a plot, and you've got to pay for everything.

MARCUS: Well, you know, when it is all said and done here, these folks are pretty much tied here through relationships. And you take the community of Drewsey, you don't have so many, you might say foreigners here.

BYRON: No, that's right.

MARCUS: You've got, a lot of the offspring are right here. And this thing is just going to continue on here just like with the Altnow's here. They have --- Joe has a couple of boys who will probably take over the operation up here someday. And with them, if they continue to raise boys this could go on for many years.

BYRON: That's right, that's right.

MARCUS: And the same thing is true of your family.

BYRON: Now there is two ... that spoke for plots right over there. To be brought back here and buried.

MARCUS: They ...

BYRON: No, one of them lives in Emmett.

MARCUS: Well, I'll be darned.

BYRON: She wants to be brought back here and buried by ---

MARCUS: She wants to be buried right back here.

BYRON: And then there is one that wants to be buried just above ... two years ago for a place there. And she was here today. She said she wanted to be brought back. Her husband said that he had been married before, and he would be buried by his other wife. And she would be brought back here and be buried alone. And no relatives or nothing, but she was a little girl raised out here on the Stinkingwater, and she said she always liked the country and she was going to be brought back here to be buried.

MARCUS: Well, I'll be darned. I guess --- you know it's kind of a --- just ride on to a grave out here by itself, or maybe two or three, and there is a lot of them around the country.

BYRON: You bet there is.

MARCUS: It gives you a lonely feeling.

BYRON: It sure does.

MARCUS: You bet. It certainly gives you a lonely feeling. There is quite a lot of work being done on cemeteries now. I mean getting them located and probably get the names ---

BYRON: Yeah.

MARCUS: The people here in Burns that's gone into --- well I was going to tell you his name, and I don't think I can. But it doesn't matter; he is doing a lot of work on this sort of thing.

BYRON: Well, we can get the names all off of these here. Now I guess I told you about ten days ago, two weeks, Charles and I did --- and walked through here and got all the names and turned them in. So, they will know who is who.

MARCUS: Uh huh.

BYRON: We just took them by rows. Started in and numbered the rows as we went through. So -- then we'd take another row and start over there and number it the next number. So, they have

everything just in line, in rows. For our plot, when we had --- we used to have a plot of the cemetery and it burnt up when the store burnt up. Well, we never did get a new one built.

MARCUS: Oh, that's what you are in the process of having done now?

BYRON: Yes, so we will have it done.

MARCUS: You bet. Well, that's a good idea. This is the Dunten plot up on the hill here, isn't it?

BYRON: ...

MARCUS: Well, there are a lot of graves there, Byron.

BYRON: Yeah. And there are some McMillan's up there too.

MARCUS: Uh huh.

BYRON: Yeah, there are quite a few graves up there.

MARCUS: Well the Dunten's were one of the pioneer families.

BYRON: Yeah. Well the cemetery's first fence around it was put out by my father and my uncle, ... Dunten, and Morgan and Homer Presley. That's the first fence around this cemetery.

MARCUS: Is that so?

BYRON: That's what Papa told me a good many times, that he put the first fence around the ... here.

MARCUS: Homer, now that, now Homer Presley that would be a brother of Morgan's?

BYRON: Yeah, that was a brother.

MARCUS: I've never heard of him. I knew Morgan well, and ---

BYRON: ...

MARCUS: He's buried here? Is Morgan buried here too?

BYRON: No, Morgan is buried in Crane.

MARCUS: In Crane there.

BYRON: Uh huh. But Morgan's --- Alice, Morgan's wife's mother is buried here. She was ...

Right there, right up there is Alice's mother's grave, Mrs. Parker. She always sends a bouquet of flowers over. I put them on there today.

MARCUS: By gosh Mrs. Presley is up there pretty well.

BYRON: You bet she is up there.

MARCUS: I haven't seen her for many years. By golly one of the finest women I believe I have ever known, Mrs. Presley.

BYRON: Yep, she was real nice. She was --- it's been a good year since I have seen her.

MARCUS: Well Byron, are you going to try to identify the seventeen here?

BYRON: Well we sure are, we are sure going to work for it.

MARCUS: You're going to try to get them identified and marked here.

BYRON: And anybody that has any idea, knows anything about, we would sure appreciate them sending us a note, or tell us, anyway to get the word to us.

MARCUS: Yes, people who know that they have had relatives buried here might help you out a great deal here.

BYRON: You bet. We've got more of them markers --- there is one of them little markers right up ...

MARCUS: Yes.

BYRON: We've got some more of them right here, and if they would just give us a name and stuff, we'll make them up and put them up to the graves so they will know.

MARCUS: Well by gosh Byron, thanks a lot here. I think this is going to be very interesting for people to read about here in later years. And I think I found the right fellow to get my information from here.

BYRON: Well ---

MARCUS: I know that you have taken a great interest in this cemetery, ever since I have known you anyway.

BYRON: Well, I've always said if I was going to donate, or work at anything, this is as good a place to donate as I knew of. There is plenty others donating to other places. Somebody has to go ahead with this.

(END OF TAPE)

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