

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #291 - Sides A & B

Subject: Eunice Jordan

Place: Drewsey, Oregon

Date: June 2, 1991

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

This is Pauline Braymen on June 2, 1991, I'm in Drewsey country near Van with Eunice Jordan. And she is going to be the Queen Mother for the Harney County Pioneer Association this year. So I guess we need to start at the beginning and find out who your parents were and where you were born.

LLOYD JORDAN: She's got the obituary already wrote up.

PAULINE BRAYMEN: When your parents first came to this country, they were one of the very first settlers in the Drewsey country, weren't they?

EUNICE JORDAN: Yes. My parents were Jessie C. Davis, and Louise Landing Davis. My father came in the 1880's, and my mother came in 1900 from California.

PAULINE: Was your dad from California too?

EUNICE: No, he was born in Missouri.

PAULINE: Did your mom come with her family, or did you ---

EUNICE: She had two brothers, Frank Landing and Elmer Inglee already here. And she and her mother, and a sister Gertrude Gearhart, came in 1900 to the Van country.

PAULINE: And of course that's where she met your dad.

EUNICE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: When were they married?

EUNICE: They were married June the 8th in 1901 at Van.

PAULINE: And where do you fit into the picture?

EUNICE: Well, I'm the third one, and the first daughter. And I was born October the 10th, 1908 at the ranch there at Van, what they call the Davis Place. And Terry Williams owns it now.

PAULINE: Well who were your older brothers?

EUNICE: My older brothers was Cecil, Lyston, and Clifford. And then I have one own sister, or did have, she passed away the 5th of February, she passed away, Etta Caviness. And then I had two half brothers, William and Charles Davis, and a half-sister Ethel Williams.

PAULINE: Let's see, William and Charles did you say?

EUNICE: Davis.

PAULINE: Davis. Okay, so none of those are still living?

EUNICE: No, I'm the last one.

PAULINE: The last one. That's what Walt said yesterday too, he's the ---

EUNICE: He is the last one?

PAULINE: Uh huh. He was the youngest in his family.

EUNICE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Well you grew up at Van, and went to school there.

EUNICE: Went to school at Van until the fifth grade. And then Mom moved to Drewsey and sent us kids to school in Drewsey. Lloyd and I were in the sixth grade at Drewsey.

PAULINE: At Van, did you have very far to walk to school, or do you remember?

EUNICE: Oh, it was a good mile and a half anyway. Sometimes we rode horseback. And then, oh Dad had an old Jack and when the boys were going to school, we drove him to school. Most of the time we walked.

PAULINE: Then when you lived in Drewsey, you lived right in town? EUNICE: Uh huh, yes.

PAULINE: So that wasn't very far at all.

EUNICE: Right close to the schoolhouse then, the big old schoolhouse.

PAULINE: It's not there anymore?

EUNICE: No.

PAULINE: How many kids were in school then?

EUNICE: Pauline, I just can't tell you for sure. Must have been about thirty.

PAULINE: Okay.

EUNICE: Maybe more. We had a big school.

LLOYD: There was forty when I went to school down there.

EUNICE: Well, must have been. And we had one teacher for all of them.

PAULINE: One teacher for all of those.

EUNICE: For all of them. Mrs. (Stella) McConnell, I think she taught the seventh grade, when I was in the seventh grade. And she was a good teacher.

PAULINE: And did you go to high school?

EUNICE: First year I went to Ontario. My sophomore year we got our credits from Crane. Miriam McConnell taught it then.

PAULINE: So you went to Van and ---

EUNICE: Un huh. My junior year I went to Burns, my senior year at Crane. Graduated May the 27th, in 1927 and I was valedictorian. I got a scholarship to Pacific University, and I left in June and went to Forest Grove and stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Fred Stephens for several years. Am I going too fast?

PAULINE: No. Did you study to be a teacher, or did you study to be something else?

EUNICE: No, a friend from Prairie City and I transferred from Pacific University to Monmouth. And then I studied to be a teacher. That was in 1928. Graduated from Monmouth in June 1929, then came back home to teach at the school where I started to school.

PAULINE: At Van?

EUNICE: At Van. And Mrs. Griffin, Mary Griffin, was county school superintendent when I started to school, and she was still superintendent when I taught my first school.

PAULINE: How long did you teach?

EUNICE: Nineteen years.

PAULINE: Did you have all grades then?

EUNICE: Uh huh, all grades, except one. In Burns I had the fifth grade, just the fifth grade.

PAULINE: So you taught one year in Burns?

EUNICE: One year in Burns. I taught three years in District 36 at Van; six years in District 21 at Wolf Creek; and nine years at Kimball Flat, District 44; and one year in Burns, the fifth grade under Mr. Sutton. A lot of people didn't like him, but I did.

PAULINE: I was just going to ask you, because I have heard so many comments about him. People --- he was kind of a terror to some people.

EUNICE: He could be. I went to --- into my room one morning and it was a disaster. Books everyplace, the kid's desks all messed up. And I went in to see him; he just did it to see what I'd do. And then after that I rang the bells whenever he was gone --- he was just across the hall from my room. He just messed up my room to see what kind of a disposition I had, I guess.

PAULINE: Oh, for heavens sakes.

EUNICE: One little boy, little Allen Dodson, every day, some part of that day he booted that little boy up and down the stairs. He's gone now, the little fellow. He could be ornery, and he could be good.

PAULINE: Yeah.

EUNICE: Two county school superintendents, Mrs. Weittenhiller, and Ches Dalton wanted me to run for county school superintendent. I didn't want that.

PAULINE: Well, when did you and Lloyd get married?

EUNICE: June the 17th, in 1933 in Boise.

PAULINE: Had you been childhood sweethearts, or did he discover you after you were grown?

EUNICE: No, never.

PAULINE: You never dreamed that that's what would happen.

EUNICE: No, I didn't like him, not one little bit when we were in school. He was in the same class I was in.

PAULINE: Well when you taught that year in Burns, did you live in, or did you drive some ---

EUNICE: No, I stayed over there.

PAULINE: You stayed in there, yeah.

EUNICE: And then my father was with me nearly all winter. Oh, he had his leg broken, and he was on crutches, and he couldn't do anything. I lived right in Burns, Jim Fellows Apartments.

PAULINE: Uh huh. When did you retire from teaching?

EUNICE: In '51, 1951.

PAULINE: 1951.

EUNICE: After we got this ranch.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EUNICE: We got it in February in '50.

PAULINE: Now let's see, you have Beverly ---

EUNICE: Beverly was born the 30th of June, in 1935 at Twin Falls, Idaho.

PAULINE: And she has how many children?

EUNICE: Beg your pardon?

PAULINE: Does she have some children?

EUNICE: She has one daughter, Penny Black. And she was born March the 11th, 1959. And she has two little ones, Mark and Scott Black. Mark didn't quite make it Pioneer Day when Lloyd was President. He came the third of July after.

PAULINE: He waited until after all the excitement was over.

EUNICE: Yeah. And Scotty was born the 25th of January, oh gee, in '86.

PAULINE: And that's the extent of your family?

EUNICE: Beg your pardon?

PAULINE: You just have Beverly?

EUNICE: Just Beverly. And she just has Penny. And Penny has the two little boys, that's all.

PAULINE: Can you remember the first time you ever rode in a car?

EUNICE: No, no I can't.

PAULINE: Did you learn to drive when you were a kid, or did you, or were you grown before you drove a car?

EUNICE: Must have been when I was a teenager. I drove my brother's car. And then I got my car, my first car when I, oh the first year I taught at Wolf Creek. Gosh, let's see,

that was in about 1930 I guess.

PAULINE: Well living out in this country most of your life, what kind of changes have you seen in ---

EUNICE: A lot of them.

PAULINE: What kinds of things?

EUNICE: Oh, you go back up home and the buildings are all torn down. And they haven't taken care of all the ranches like they did before. I don't know, the people aren't the same either. A lot of new people. No, the older people are gone.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Took a lot longer to get to Burns or to Juntura, or Ontario than it does now.

EUNICE: Oh, yeah.

PAULINE: If you went into Burns, like in the 1930's, how long did you figure to drive in?

EUNICE: Oh, about two hours.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

EUNICE: Now we go from here in about an hour, maybe a little over. PAULINE: You've been active in --- you were active in Rebekahs, and Grange.

EUNICE: I'm a Past Noble Grand in the Rebekahs, and I have also take the Chivalry Degree, that's the highest honor of the Rebekahs. And a Seventh Degree Granger, that's the national degree. And I belong to the Ladies Patriarch Militant organization at Prineville. We did belong at Baker. But oh, so many of the members have passed away, and then they transferred most of us to Prineville. And I belong to the Cow Belles, or the Cattle Women.

PAULINE: The Cattle Women. I want to call them the Stock Women, and I get in trouble for that. It's wonderful what your mind will do to play tricks on you.

EUNICE: Huh?

PAULINE: It's wonderful what your mind will do to play tricks on you.

EUNICE: Yes.

PAULINE: I was writing up about the Cattle Women and it got into the paper Stock Women, and they weren't very happy with me at all. EUNICE: Oh, I don't know, I think they still should call it the Cow Belles, that seems more --- That was quite a change to Cattle Women.

PAULINE: Yeah, yeah.

EUNICE: And I was secretary-treasurer when they were the Cow Belles. Oh yeah, and I belonged to, I don't know how many years I have been on this thing. I'll tell you, wait a minute. Oh, Lloyd and I have both been delegates to state Grange. And I was an assistant officer for the Rebekahs Assembly at Eugene in, I've forgotten what year. I didn't have it. In 1960 I was an assistant assembly officer at Eugene for the Rebekahs. In 1951, I took the, joined the Ladies Patriarch Militant. I belong to Harney County Pomona Grange. And then I chaperoned for the 4-H kids to summer school in 1948 down at Corvallis. That was fun. And I was the first 4-H leader in the Drewsey area under Mr. Art Sawyer, when he was county agent.

PAULINE: What club did you teach?

EUNICE: Huh?

PAULINE: What club did you lead, what was ---

EUNICE: I was just a chaperone.

PAULINE: Just a chaperone.

EUNICE: Oh, here?

PAULINE: Yeah.

EUNICE: Oh, we had an art club, and we had a health club. And then when they collected all those records and turned them in, that was one of our projects. I don't know, turned in, oh what was it, I think it was two hundred and fifty some records, when we were collecting those old records. The kids collected them. That was one of their projects.

PAULINE: What kind of records?

EUNICE: Phonograph records.

PAULINE: Oh, phonograph records.

EUNICE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: What was done with them?

EUNICE: I don't know what they did with them. Never did know what they did with them. Some I wish I had kept.

PAULINE: Well, I've never heard about this project.

EUNICE: And I was --- and I still am secretary and treasurer for the Drewsey Reclamation Company, and this is twenty-one years. For the Drewsey Community TV, thirteen years. I've been secretary for Harney County Pomona Grange thirty-one years. I was treasurer for the Drewsey Grange, twenty-three years.

PAULINE: How many years for Drewsey Grange?

EUNICE: Twenty-three.

PAULINE: Twenty-three, okay.

EUNICE: Then in 1985 and '90, the fifth grade class that I had in Burns had their reunions, and we were their honored guests.

PAULINE: Now what year was the reunion held?

EUNICE: In '85.

PAULINE: In '85.

EUNICE: And '90.

PAULINE: And '90.

EUNICE: '85 for their forty-fifth, and '90 was their fiftieth.

PAULINE: Okay.

EUNICE: And that was the class of '40, high school class of '40. Then May the 27th, in 1987 they kept calling me up; I had to go to Crane. And I said, "Well I don't have ---" I couldn't find out why I had to go to Crane. Well finally Ann Clark told me, so I had to go. And on May the 27th, in 1927 I graduated from Crane as valedictorian. And so he introduced me, and gave me a big bouquet of roses.

PAULINE: I remember that. I was there for that one.

EUNICE: That was quite a surprise.

PAULINE: That was a surprise.

EUNICE: Yeah, you were there, I remember.

PAULINE: Yeah, yeah. I didn't make it down there this year or last year.

EUNICE: We didn't go this time either. In '87 I was Senior Woman of the Year. I thought somebody else should have had that. This too ---

INEZ AUSMUS: Not on your life.

EUNICE: Huh?

INEZ: Not on your life.

PAULINE: There are just certain people that get to do that, and you're one of the ones that definitely should have, have the honor.

EUNICE: I don't know, Pauline, I just go. I just do what I have to do. I don't know.

PAULINE: Well you wrote the Drewsey News for the Times-Herald for a long time.

EUNICE: For a long time. Mr. (Douglas) Mullarky was editor, and I liked him. He was

awful good to me. Then Ereno had it. Who else after Ereno?

PAULINE: Dwight Hinshaw.

EUNICE: Hinshaw.

PAULINE: Heerwagen.

EUNICE: And I wrote until that last young fellow was in there that was so smart.

PAULINE: Mel Coulter.

EUNICE: Yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah.

EUNICE: Got himself into trouble.

PAULINE: Yeah.

EUNICE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Well people still tell me they miss the Drewsey News.

EUNICE: Well then we had the stage lines. See Lloyd had the stage line for forty-three years, and would see people along the stage line, downtown, and people --- But now I just don't see people. And then it's all so different, people are different. I don't know, they don't do what they did.

PAULINE: Yeah.

EUNICE: So, I don't do it.

PAULINE: Well it's changed, it's changed. The way we cover the news, and the things we report, it has changed. But I --- oh several times a year someone will say I sure do miss the Drewsey News. The young fellow that Janet works with over in McKenzie River for the Forest Service, Mike Cobb --- and she always takes the paper in so that everybody can read. Mike says, "I sure do miss the Drewsey News."

EUNICE: Well Drewsey isn't the same anymore. It's hard to write about anything around

here anymore. You don't --- I don't know, they just don't do things like they did.

PAULINE: Well Drewsey used to be a pretty bustling town at one point.

EUNICE: Yeah. People had more ambition then than they do now, I think.

PAULINE: Do you think that television has had something to do with that?

EUNICE: I think so. Yeah, I really do. And you can't, oh you used to be you, you know, you'd go visit. They don't do that anymore. And then it's kind of hard to get anybody out to do things that --- oh, to get a group to do anything anymore. They have programs they watch, and they just don't go.

PAULINE: Well that's, that's when I see the decline of, well like the Grange. Well it was just about the time that television came to town that ---

EUNICE: It hurt it.

PAULINE: Yeah, people just stopped going out to do stuff like that.

EUNICE: Yeah.

PAULINE: I think it's starting to change back. I think the younger people aren't so fascinated with it as we were when it was so new, that --- It was almost a ritual to watch all those programs, you know.

EUNICE: Oh, yeah. Lloyd watches it a lot. I don't know, I don't watch it too much. I like the news. But some of the programs I don't think are fit to watch.

PAULINE: Well, what else do you have on your paper there that we haven't talked about, that we should talk about today? I try to write mine up so it isn't exactly the same thing that you have at Pioneer Day.

EUNICE: Oh, I don't know. I've helped in the field, and I've helped with the cattle. And I drag the meadows, I like to do that. See Tom has got our place rented, but I drag our meadows every spring. Lloyd always kept the meadows clean and everything, and so we

try to keep them that way. I always helped when they took the cattle out, and when they brought them back in, in the fall.

PAULINE: Has the weather changed a lot?

EUNICE: Yes. See this last winter we didn't have any snow. And usually we do have quite a bit of snow. But not even, there wasn't much snow in the mountains even.

LLOYD: The wind blows all summer. We have had a lot of wind. The only thing that saves us here, a couple weeks ago it started to raining. Boy it sure saved the country.

SIDE B

PAULINE: Well we are all sitting here in our slacks today. When you were growing up and a young woman, what would people have thought if we had all been running around in our blue jeans and slacks?

EUNICE: Well just clear out of place. Whenever we went anyplace you dressed up. Even now at these dances, when we went to a dance, well we put on our best. Golly, they come in these old slacks, and some of them walking on the back of their pants and their heels dragging. That would have been a disgrace if we did that then.

PAULINE: Did you ride a side saddle when you rode horses, or ---EUNICE: No. I've still got my saddle horse. Lloyd doesn't like him, but I still have him.

PAULINE: How old were you when you learned how to ride?

EUNICE: Well, I must not have been very old, Pauline. Because sometimes we rode horseback to school up at Van.

LLOYD: She got so she could walk, and then they gave her a mule to ride.

EUNICE: Yeah, we had an old mule that we rode too.

INEZ: Well everybody laughs, but a mule makes a pretty good saddle horse.

EUNICE: Togo, Beverly's husband, has a mule, and she likes to ride him. The one Dad had was just an old Jack, but all of us rode.

PAULINE: When you were a young girl did you work out in the fields, or did you have to stay in the house and help Mom cook?

EUNICE: I had to stay in the house until we got this place. Oh, not this place, but up above. But at home us girls didn't belong out there until after --- We belonged in the house. We could milk cows, they had to help milk. My brother and I milked, and I had to feed the chickens. And after we got, what we called the Jenkins Place, why then I helped outside. Oh, we had a bunch of milk cows. And one thing I hated to do was to wash that separator ... But ---

PAULINE: Is there anyone in the world who liked to wash the separator? If you could find me anyone who liked that job ---

EUNICE: You didn't like it. The worst thing on the stage line, there was one or two that had these ten-gallon cans --- they shipped cream. That was a little hard to handle. The five, I could handle the five gallons pretty good, but those ten gallons was just a little too much. We shipped cream for a long time. Always had a bunch of chickens. You can't even sell eggs anymore. PAULINE: No, and that's hard to imagine. So many ranch women made their pocket money, or grocery money selling eggs.

EUNICE: Yeah.

PAULINE: And now you can't ---

EUNICE: Can't sell them. One year I had fifty-four pounds of butter I put in the freezer. Had good cream. Now we don't even have a milk cow.

PAULINE: Well is there anything else that we should put in the paper in particular that you can think about, that we haven't talked about?

EUNICE: I think they know enough about me, Pauline. I don't know.

PAULINE: Is Beverly going to be here to read your history, and do that?

EUNICE: And I'm awful afraid she is going to put something in it that ---

PAULINE: Oh, I'm sure she will. I'm not going to be here.

EUNICE: Oh, aren't you?

PAULINE: I have already made a commitment. They asked me if I wanted to go to Eugene with them way last winter, and I said, "Yes," not knowing when they were going to go.

EUNICE: What are you going to do?

PAULINE: Oh, I'm going to bowl in the State Women's Bowling Tournament.

EUNICE: Well good for you.

PAULINE: And I go with this bunch of girls every year, you know. EUNICE: Oh.

PAULINE: So they called me up this winter and said, "Are you going to go with us this year?" And I said, "Oh sure, I'll go."

EUNICE: Had a cousin, she lived at, down in Southern Oregon. She went every place bowling. She called me up oh, just, oh about three weeks before she passed away. Didn't know there was a thing wrong with her, and the next thing I knew she was gone. Don't know --- they found her dead in bed. They don't know whether she had a heart attack, or what happened. But she went all over bowling.

PAULINE: Yeah. Well you can, you can do that. But usually we just do this one trip every year.

EUNICE: You know if I was where I could, I'd bowl.

PAULINE: It's fun, it really is.

EUNICE: There is a fellow that lived, well they sold --- he had the place that we had first.

And he took us over to Burns several times, we bowled. I thought we had a lot of fun doing that. But gee, you can't get over there to do it.

PAULINE: No, that's kind of a long drive just to spend an hour or so throwing that ball down the alley. But I enjoy it. I get to meet some different people that, you know, you --- there is a wide cross-section of people that are on the teams. And since you bowl with a different team every week, why you kind of get to know some people that you wouldn't get to know otherwise. And that's been a good thing.

EUNICE: Well it's good exercise, and it's fun.

PAULINE: Yeah.

EUNICE: And you get to mix with people.

PAULINE: But anyway, I didn't know what date they were going to go, and come to find out its Pioneer Day, so I won't be here.

EUNICE: Who is going to take your place?

PAULINE: Walt Dickenson's son, Ralph, is going to be master of ceremonies. Yeah.

INEZ: Oh, Ralph ought to be good.

PAULINE: Oh, yeah. I hate to miss your's and Walt's, because I've known both of you ever since I was a little girl.

EUNICE: You won't miss much on my part.

PAULINE: But I --- in a way it is kind of neat to get somebody else up there to do it. You know I could just see myself doing that for the next hundred years.

EUNICE: You'll be back.

PAULINE: I'm sure. I'm sure I will. But at least they will find out that there is somebody else that could do it, you know. So, it's fun, I enjoy it. Well let's get your picture taken.

(END OF TAPE)

bl