

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #301 - Side A

Subject: William Dunn

Place: Dunn Home - Burns, Oregon

Date: 1985

Interviewer: Marcus Haines

MARCUS HAINES: ... I went out here and visited with Dell Witzel a while ago.

WILLIAM DUNN: My gosh, I haven't seen Dell for quite awhile.

MARCUS: Yeah, that's what he told me, he hadn't seen you in quite awhile. And he was telling me about you fellows going to school together there at the end of the lane there.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah. And Mrs. Harrison was your teacher, I think?

WILLIAM: Uh huh.

MARCUS: Harrison or Harris?

WILLIAM: Mrs. Harris.

MARCUS: And then Judy Wise, Judy McKenzie taught you there?

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: I'm trying to get some information together, William, they're going to try to get a TV crew in here when they move the schoolhouse out.

WILLIAM: Oh, they are?

MARCUS: And so they need to tell some stories about the Sod House

School, you see.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: He figured that he --- see, what year did you start to school?

WILLIAM: I don't know for sure, but I think it was about 1908. I was about eight years old.

MARCUS: You were born in 1900?

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah.

WILLIAM: I think that's about right, I don't know for sure.

MARCUS: And he was born in 1901.

WILLIAM: In 1901.

MARCUS: Yeah. And he went two years there, he told me. And then the schoolhouse was burned down.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: Did your mother let them have school in your house, the old Curtis house then?

WILLIAM: Yeah, yeah, they had school there, pretty near a year.

MARCUS: They did, uh huh.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: And then they got around and built the schoolhouse where it is now, William.

WILLIAM: Yes, where it is now, yeah.

MARCUS: Well that would be probably about 1808 or '09 (1908 correction) there sometime, do you think?

WILLIAM: Doesn't seem like it was, guess maybe it might have been, yeah.

MARCUS: Along in that time there somewhere. You never did go to the school over the other side of the Springer place there where your mother taught the first school there?

WILLIAM: No, I never did go to school there.

MARCUS: No, she had gotten married and was raising kids by the time --- I don't know what happened to that school, did it burn down or they just abandon it, or what, do you remember?

WILLIAM: I don't know what happened to that school.

MARCUS: Uh huh.

MARY WARDELL: Daddy, which school was it that was burnt down, you was telling us a story about the other day?

WILLIAM: Huh?

MARY: That old school that your dad give them out there, that old house. Now it burnt down, didn't it?

WILLIAM: Yeah, it burnt down.

MARY: You was telling us a story about that.

WILLIAM: He was talking about another schoolhouse, old school. I don't remember it, do you?

MARCUS: Do you remember the old house there?

WILLIAM: Yeah, I remember the old house.

MARCUS: No, I don't remember it, William. Was that somebody's homestead house there that they had the school in? They didn't build it for a schoolhouse, did they?

WILLIAM: The old schoolhouse that burned up there?

MARCUS: Yeah.

WILLIAM: No, no, that was, Fred had a different house, back of the old, another old house. I don't know where they built it, you know. Dad built the house, and he gave them that house for the schoolhouse.

MARCUS: I see. Yeah, that's what I was telling somebody, I thought that it was a homestead shack is what it really was. It was never meant, never built for a schoolhouse there.

WILLIAM: Yeah, it wasn't built for a schoolhouse. It was a pretty big house though.

MARCUS: Was it?

WILLIAM: Yeah, it was a pretty big house.

MARCUS: It was more than one room was it, William?

WILLIAM: Oh yeah, it had two or three rooms.

MARCUS: Oh, it did? Oh. Yeah, I was born in 1907, and so I was pretty small about when it disappeared you see.

WILLIAM: 1907, yeah.

MARCUS: It seems to me like I can remember an old shack setting in there too, but I've got it confused with someplace else. It couldn't be, because it was burned down before I was old enough to remember I think.

WILLIAM: No, I don't remember any old shack after that was built.

MARCUS: Uh huh, yeah, I've got it mixed up with something else.

WILLIAM: Yeah, yeah.

MARCUS: Anyway, they are moving the schoolhouse up on top of the hill next Monday or Tuesday.

WILLIAM: Oh, they are?

MARCUS: Yeah. And right where you went into the center patrol road, you know, to go up to the Sod House Dam there. It's just off to the left there, just off, or south of the road right up in there. It cost four thousand dollars to move the schoolhouse.

WILLIAM: Four thousand dollars.

MARCUS: Time you get a well and ---

WILLIAM: I'll be darned.

MARCUS: --- get the foundation, and get it back down on there, they'll have more money in it than they did when they built it the first time. We built it for fourteen thousand dollars in 1955, you know.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah. (Laughter) Quite a difference there.

WILLIAM: Yeah, things have changed a whole lot, Marcus. I'd have to ---

MARCUS: Oh gosh, we'd never believe we'd ever see that lake built up like that.

WILLIAM: No, no, we'd never believe that.

MARCUS: No, no. My gosh, anything can happen anymore I guess, and does.

WILLIAM: There is snow out, seems like it.

MARCUS: Weather kind of changing around. And like Dell was

talking today, he said, "Well we used to have these big snows when we was kids going to school. We'd walk through snowdrifts over the fence and around." And we have too, but we never did have two or three of them right in a row.

WILLIAM: No, no.

MARCUS: We'd have a dry year or two, and that would give it a chance to go down. That's what he said, "Well what happened then, more evaporation or ---" Well I said, "I'm sure there was more evaporation than there was last summer. Because, you know, the last two summers it's rained all summer."

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: And then the highest water record, snow record, you know, on record was last year and the year before. So two of them in a row, and then you get a third one on top of that you don't know what's going to happen. You bet.

WILLIAM: Yeah they used to ... geese right down there at Mud Lake, you know.

MARCUS: Uh huh. When did your folks buy Mud Lake?

WILLIAM: Huh?

MARCUS: When did your dad buy Mud Lake from old Smith?

WILLIAM: Well he bought Mud Lake pretty early, you see. Well I guess I was only five or six years old when he bought that, yeah.

MARCUS: Uh huh. Well you kids used to live down there. When you lived there you went to The Narrows to the school, didn't you?

WILLIAM: Yeah, we went to The Narrows to school.

MARCUS: And then you'd move up to the lane, and then you'd go to the Sod House. Yeah. Dell was telling me that today. I didn't know that. I didn't realize that you had bought it that far back.

WILLIAM: Yeah, Dad bought the Mud Lake rights. I was pretty small. I don't remember really when he bought it.

MARCUS: Uh huh.

WILLIAM: I know he bought it when I was only six years old. I don't --- I might not have been that old.

MARCUS: I can remember going down to Mud Lake, down to your place with my mother in a buggy. And it had to be the channel there, I wasn't very big. That's about all I can remember about crossing that water. Scared the hell out of me. Got into the buggy.

WILLIAM: Oh yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah.

WILLIAM: Well ---

MARCUS: You didn't have a bridge in, in those days.

WILLIAM: No.

MARCUS: Crossed it there with a buggy. I don't know what she was doing down there, but anyway we were in a buggy across it. I thought I was a goner. (Laughter)

WILLIAM: They used to go a visiting, you know, quite a lot, you know.

MARCUS: No. It's a strange thing, William, that that channel cut out the way it has through there.

WILLIAM: Yeah ...

MARCUS: You can't figure out why that was done, what caused it, you know.

WILLIAM: No. Right out there in the last three years, you know.

MARCUS: Did what?

WILLIAM: It cut out there all in the last three years, you know.

MARCUS: It got deeper then?

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah, I suppose it has.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: 1948 was the first time I was ever down to the break in the channel there, when we cut that ditch through and plugged it, you know. Walked in there and damn near walked on a rattlesnake. I remember that down there pretty well.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: It was full of water then.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: But I took Fred Witzel down there, oh it's been ten or eleven years ago, and we went in on the lake bed over on the north side and drove right down to the break. And we got up there and looked over there to the east and why he said, "The last time I was here," he said, "it's been fifty years ago since I was here." He said, "There wasn't brush anywhere." He said, "This was all salt grass out in through here." He said, "This greasewood has grown back in there since I have been here."

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah, and I bet you can remember that too.

WILLIAM: Yeah, that's right. That was all salt grass there for a long time.

MARCUS: Yeah. I suppose that if this water ever goes down again, the same thing will happen. Because it's all killed there now, that brush is, you know, drowned it out.

WILLIAM: Probably would, it would still happen, you know.

MARCUS: Yeah, I bet it would too. Uh huh. But you know there is enough water there in Harney Lake now that the cattle are drinking it. And right there where the road turns off to the Hot Springs down there, there was quite a bunch of cattle watering back there, feeding back there, and they are coming right in there and getting water right there out of Harney Lake. First time I ever saw anything drink water out of Harney Lake.

WILLIAM: Yeah, yeah.

MARCUS: But it's diluted so much now, you know, it's so deep and all. There is quite a difference in it. But Larry was telling me, he's got his cattle down to Weed Lake, you know, he bought that hay from Hank Church.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: And they are feeding them down there. And he said Jack Creek is running there until, is --- put in a six foot culvert up there next to where the dam used to be. They moved it from down, in the lake there, because the water is back in there. And he said there is water enough running that it's filled that half-

full of water there. He said the lake is half-full of water there too.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: Where would water be coming into Jack Creek this time of year, William? That's what's got me puzzled.

WILLIAM: Gosh, I don't know. I don't remember seeing it.

MARCUS: Well no, you see, I just can't figure out where it is coming from. I know it is, because Allene nearly drowned there the other day. She and Ryan were down there feeding, and so she thought she would walk over to where the water was going through. She said she saw some calves licking snow around there, and was wondering why they weren't watering. And she got out there, and that ice broke off with her, and then she went up to about under her chin here.

WILLIAM: Oh gosh.

MARCUS: And she had on a pair of gloves, and she got them wet, but she put them out on the ice and they froze just that quick. And the only way she ever got out, she said. She got grip enough that she got back up on the ice. And those gloves being frozen and ---

WILLIAM: No, I don't remember ---

MARCUS: No, you just --- it seems impossible, you know, the water just comes from every direction there.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah, it sure is. When did you get this William? This

is pretty handy, isn't it?

WILLIAM: Well I think the Senior Center sent it to me free.

MARCUS: Uh huh.

WILLIAM: It was \$1500.

MARCUS: It was, huh?

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: Well it's worth it if it gets you on your feet and around, to help you get up.

MARY: Medicare got it.

WILLIAM: Got it at the Center. Jean, Jean Johnson, she's a nurse you know.

MARCUS: Oh, uh huh.

WILLIAM: Comes here every week to see me, you know.

MARCUS: Does she, uh huh.

WILLIAM: She's the one that got it for me.

MARCUS: Oh, yeah, well that's real good.

WILLIAM: She said she was going to get me a chair so it would raise up --- I said, "Okay." I didn't think she could manage, you know. First thing I knew here come a chair.

MARCUS: Well, I'll be darned. Well that was real nice of her.

WILLIAM: Yeah.

MARCUS: She is a real nice person.

WILLIAM: Oh yeah, real nice. She is a nice person.

MARCUS: She comes once a week to see you, William?

WILLIAM: Huh?

MARCUS: She comes once a week, you say, to see you?

WILLIAM: Once a week, yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah, uh huh. Well that's fine.

WILLIAM: Yeah, she comes once a week.

MARCUS: Have you been feeling pretty well?

WILLIAM: I've been feeling fairly good here lately.

MARCUS: I hear you coughing, have you had some flu or something, or cold?

WILLIAM: I think I've had the flu, yeah.

MARCUS: Uh huh. Yeah, there is quite a lot of it going around.

WILLIAM: Yeah, I know there is.

MARCUS: Yeah, you bet. Yeah.

(END OF TAPE)

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