

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #378 - Sides A/B

Subject: Audra Brennan

Place: Prineville, Oregon

Date: March 22, 1991

Interviewer: Edward Gray

EDWARD GRAY: This is Edward Gray with Audra Brennan on 3-22-1991. We're going to talk a little bit about Bill Brown. And you can say anything you want on it ... I'll edit it out if you cuss or something. (Laughter) There is some, there is three real important questions, maybe you can help. One, do you know when Bill Brown had that two-story house built, year, approximate year?

AUDRA BRENNAN: No I don't exactly, I think it is in some of this information that I have here.

EDWARD: Oh, okay.

AUDRA: I think it is in that.

EDWARD: Would you say about 1910, or before, or after?

AUDRA: I thought it was before. I think a lot of the lumber was hauled from the sawmill over on Snow Mountain.

EDWARD: Just what I was going to ask you, if you knew where the lumber came from.

AUDRA: A lot of it came from Snow Mountain. And it was all first grade lumber; there wasn't a knot in a single board in that place. And the walls were all tung and groove ---

EDWARD: Pine?

AUDRA: Uh huh. And the ceilings were tongue and groove.

EDWARD: So all the ---

AUDRA: The whole house inside was tongue and groove, and not a knot in it.

EDWARD: Now you lived in that house, you and Claude, your husband.

AUDRA: Uh huh, we lived there about four years.

EDWARD: From ---

AUDRA: '37 ---

EDWARD: To '41.

AUDRA: There about.

EDWARD: And what was your responsibilities between '37 and '41?

AUDRA: Well the place belonged to Dominique Verges and he wanted to have somebody there. And we were more or less sharecroppers, and we did improve and do a lot of things. It was in the depression and it was rough living about that time. And so we put up the hay for Dominique for a portion of the wheat. Had a, oh just a few head of cattle. We milked cows, and sold cream, and took it out to, down to Fife to send it into Prineville or out to the Bend-Burns Highway to send it into Bend.

EDWARD: Did you guys have electricity or a generator?

AUDRA: Oh no, no, huh uh.

EDWARD: What kind of lights, just gas --- or kerosene?

AUDRA: Kerosene and white gas that we burned in the lanterns. The gas lanterns, they had a mantle on them.

EDWARD: And a wood stove.

AUDRA: Wood stoves.

EDWARD: And an old jalopy.

AUDRA: Part of the time. We rode horseback many, many miles.

EDWARD: Did you see very many --- or first of all did you live there year around, in the winter?

AUDRA: Yes, uh huh.

EDWARD: And how did you --- did you draw your water out of Buck Creek all the time?

AUDRA: There was a spring that was piped across the creek and into the house. And we cleaned that out and got it to going after we moved in there.

EDWARD: That's one reason Bill Brown chose that place, was that spring.

AUDRA: Probably, uh huh.

EDWARD: It wouldn't seem like there would be any springs up there, but there is quite a few, I guess.

AUDRA: Yes, I believe there is. And part of the pipe that went under the creek to come over to the house was a long, I don't know whether it was a root or what, that had been bored the full length of that instead of a regular pipe. There as a --- I don't know how they put that hole in it, if they burned it or how they got that.

EDWARD: I don't know. And the water went through that root.

AUDRA: That was part of the plumbing.

EDWARD: I guess Bill was quite a hard worker, as we all know. The lumber probably came from Snow Mountain. Was that Thorn Mill, or something like that?

AUDRA: Yes.

EDWARD: I think that's the name of it.

AUDRA: I believe that is.

EDWARD: I think Joe Street had it for a while too, later on.

AUDRA: I think it was known as the Thorn Mill.

EDWARD: Yeah.

AUDRA: Because Claude's folks got some lumber there when they built their house too.

EDWARD: That's up over Buck --- on up the road, up Buck Creek and ---

AUDRA: Yes, uh huh. Quite a ways up there.

EDWARD: Did --- now of course Bill, did he ever come back while you and Claude were there?

AUDRA: No, huh uh. His nephew, Herb Winslow, came up a few times.

EDWARD: Came a couple times?

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: Of course you know Bill Brown died in January 1941. I just wondered if he ever came back.

AUDRA: No that I ---

EDWARD: Do you have any idea when Bill left that country on Buck Creek, and his house?

AUDRA: Probably around in '32, or there about, I don't know for sure. I think he went from there to the home.

EDWARD: Yes, I think you're right. He got into a little economic problem evidently.

AUDRA: Yeah, very much so.

EDWARD: Evidently --- what do you know about that, Audra, do you know anything about what happened with his money and ---

AUDRA: No, not really. He befriended everybody. If he had any-thing, and anybody come along why he helped them out and all. But of course times changed, and the depression came right about then. I think maybe the depression might have had a lot to do with it. Because he did have, still had sheep. Probably '32, '33, and '34 along in there he still had some sheep.

EDWARD: His horses were gone by then?

AUDRA: Yes, his horses were gone.

EDWARD: He got in trouble evidently with the, over credit with the Oregon Credit ---

AUDRA: Colonization Company.

EDWARD: That's one of them. And the Wool Grower's Association. And he couldn't pay them back, so they --- I don't know if I'm saying this right, Dominique?

AUDRA: Yes, Dominique Verges.

EDWARD: Verges. Was he the first one to buy, to get Bill Brown's house?

AUDRA: Yes, after Bill was gone.

EDWARD: After he was gone, I see. And where was he from, Audra?

AUDRA: His home ranch was on, down at Camp Creek.

EDWARD: Oh, he was nearby then?

AUDRA: Yes.

EDWARD: I see, I was thinking maybe he was from Idaho or some-thing.

AUDRA: He was a Basque, Basque sheep man.

EDWARD: And he was basically sheep?

AUDRA: Yes. A few cattle, but basically sheep.

EDWARD: Did you ever hear of the Brown Sheep Company?

AUDRA: Not as such ... Bill Brown and his sheep, and of course ---

EDWARD: Can't figure that one out. I don't know whether he, Bill ever called it the Brown Sheep Company or not.

AUDRA: He might have.

EDWARD: He may have. I've got to check down at the courthouse again. Did --- you met Bill Brown, haven't you?

AUDRA: Yes.

EDWARD: What did you think, what kind of a man was he in a woman's eye?

AUDRA: Well he was a very mannerly person, very gracious and all, but he was definitely different. He was an eccentric person.

EDWARD: Did he treat you well?

AUDRA: Yes. Bill treated everyone well. Up to --- like sometime he would accuse somebody of something and all. I know one time that they were staying all night at Twelvemile, and Claude was there. But Bill always slept with his clothes on mostly, and so he got up in the morning and couldn't find his socks. And he told Claude, he said, "Brennan you stole my socks." Claude said, "Bill, I didn't get your socks." "Brennan, I'm positively certain you have my socks." So finally Claude says, "Bill I wouldn't have your socks." And he found them where he had hung them across the rungs of a chair when he went to bed.

EDWARD: He always slept with ---

AUDRA: See he was abrupt like that, but just to meet and visit with he was very nice.

EDWARD: Did he ever talk; did he talk to women differently than he did men?

AUDRA: I don't know, probably. I wasn't around him that much. I just really didn't know Bill too well. Claude knew him very well, but I didn't.

EDWARD: What did Claude do for Bill Brown, work wise? What was his responsibilities?

AUDRA: Well mostly as buckaroo and gathering horses and all, he would rope the horses a lot.

EDWARD: He --- when did he work for Bill, do you recall, Audra?

AUDRA: I couldn't tell you, it was before we were married. Except he did shear for him after we were married.

EDWARD: Did he ever mention any stories of --- I mean, what did a buckaroo do for Bill Brown?

AUDRA: Well they always had to gather horses. They roamed from Lakeview clear through and --- so it took a lot of people. And these horses, a lot of them just run wild out over Hampton Butte and everywhere, you know. He'd just gather horses and sell some horses.

EDWARD: So Claude just run the --- rode the range?

AUDRA: Pretty much, uh huh.

EDWARD: And corralled horses?

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: And some of Bill's ---

AUDRA: And they'd move them from one location to another.

EDWARD: Now was this just during the summer? Or did they ---

AUDRA: I don't know, I couldn't tell you for sure. I do know that one time when they rounded up a lot of horses out there with some wild mules in the bunch. And they sorted those out, and I think there was about 20 head of those. And Claude and another fellow took those mules clear through into Idaho to a fellow, a trapper, who wanted those mules.

EDWARD: You mean they actually herded these 20 mules clear to Idaho, by horse?

AUDRA: Uh huh. They'd pack a new one every day, and by the time they got there with them they had them all broke to pack. Claude would last them; they'd tie them up.

EDWARD: What did, like your husband Claude, what did he like about that? Was it ---

AUDRA: Oh, I think everybody liked that type of life, you know, in that time. The young fellows they ---

EDWARD: The freedom, the ---

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: It was dusty and dirty.

AUDRA: Oh sure.

EDWARD: Oh man. And what about some of the ---

AUDRA: But anytime that you could outsmart a bunch of wild horses and get them in, you felt like you'd accomplished something, I'm sure.

EDWARD: Do you know what Claude got paid?

AUDRA: Have no idea.

EDWARD: Or if he ever got paid.

AUDRA: I think he did. Lots of fellows would get paid twice. They'd be riding out and catch Bill out with the sheep someplace, and they'd say, "Well Bill it is about time we were settling up, isn't it?" And so he said, Bill would say, "How much do I owe you?" And they'd say some amount, and he'd write them out a check.

EDWARD: What about the women? Now I know Lila ---

AUDRA: Lila.

EDWARD: --- Lila Houston Keith worked as a cook. There was some others that I can't recall right now. Did you ever work for Bill Brown?

AUDRA: No.

EDWARD: Okay, I had you down as a cook, Audra. Did you --- did Lila ever talk to you about her working with Bill Brown?

AUDRA: No, I don't remember that she did. I think he provided well for her.

EDWARD: Because I've often wanted to find out how, what it was like from the woman's viewpoint of that life.

AUDRA: I don't think I'd be of much help there.

EDWARD: Okay, that's fine Audra, don't worry about it. Let's get back to the store. There are so many stories about that store, you know, whether some of them are true or what, it's kind of --- I'll have to edit all that out. Do you have any idea when that store building was built? Ever mention ---

AUDRA: No, I don't. But this Newman was freighting to the store.

EDWARD: Newman?

AUDRA: I think it was ---

EDWARD: Yeah, Virge Newman.



AUDRA: I think he did a lot of freighting for Bill.

EDWARD: Yeah, Newman was a --- the third buckaroo boss, I guess. That's what Fred Houston said. But it was, when you and Claude went there in '37, the Horseshoe Bar Store was still there.

AUDRA: Yes. The windows were all gone and it was, nothing there but just an empty shell.

EDWARD: And it had two floors.

AUDRA: Yes, uh huh. The stairs from ---

EDWARD: Do you know what they used that top floor for by any chance?

AUDRA: Unless it was storage.

EDWARD: Storage.

AUDRA: Must have been.

EDWARD: I think that's what Fred Houston said, it was storage. And it was torn down in about 1942.

AUDRA: Approximately along in there.

EDWARD: Now what happened, now who tore it down and where did it go, I didn't ---

AUDRA: Dominique Verges tore it down and took the lumber over to the Twelvemile Ranch. There was no buildings on the Twelvemile except an old shack.

EDWARD: The old log cabin.

AUDRA: No.

EDWARD: Just a shack.

AUDRA: Loose board, rough boards.

EDWARD: And he built another little cabin with the wood?

AUDRA: Yes, uh huh.

EDWARD: You've been in that store, weren't you?

AUDRA: Oh yes. Not when it was in operation, but then ---

EDWARD: Right.

AUDRA: Oh yes, because I was in there lots of times.

EDWARD: Were there shelves inside of it, Audra, or a counter?

AUDRA: Not many. They were practically all torn out, people used them for fire.

EDWARD: For fire, right.

AUDRA: It was just pretty much of a shell.

EDWARD: It looks like it was painted still, real well.

AUDRA: Everything at the time we were there looked just in excellent condition. They must have used a wonderful quality of paint. Of course it was good lumber. I was amazed at how nice it looked.

EDWARD: Yeah.

AUDRA: You could tell from those pictures ---

EDWARD: Oh yeah, I can't believe those. When were those pictures taken, probably between when you were staying there ---

AUDRA: Yes, while we were there.

EDWARD: And, now when you and Claude lived in Bill Brown's two-story house, when you walked in was there any furniture inside of it, or was it just ---

AUDRA: No, it just had been ransacked completely; there was nothing there but the banisters to go upstairs. The stairs, well you went up out of the front room, they'd all been torn out and used for wood. Some of the doors were missing, all the doors from the cupboards --- and had a real nice pantry. The bins, and the drawers, and the doors had all been burned.

EDWARD: Was there any other buildings besides the store and the two-story house?

AUDRA: Yes, there was ---- we used it for a chicken house I guess it was, and then there

was another shed that must have been a garage. And then there was sort of a granary house. And then there was an old house that they had used for a barn. This, the one that we used for a chicken house was nicely painted; there was a sort of a garage building that was nicely painted. And the granary was nicely painted.

EDWARD: That must have been one heck of a paint. Because I think Bill was gone from there in about, at the latest 1933.

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: And it probably sat empty for four years, five years. You got --- now you mentioned that you and Claude stayed there from '37 to '41. What was a day like for you?

AUDRA: Well we worked hard. We did lots of irrigation; we fixed ditches, and all. It had been so run down, it hadn't been kept up. And we had the slip scrape, and I drove the horses, and Claude run the scrape. Or we, where we plowed ditches, why I drove while Claude run the plow, plowed ditches.

EDWARD: Oh one of those scraper ---

AUDRA: Yes. Slip scrape they called them, slip scrapers.

EDWARD: Did they?

AUDRA: We didn't even have a fresno, that was ---

EDWARD: Fresno, that's what I was thinking of.

AUDRA: That was the next one out.

EDWARD: Oh, was there ---

AUDRA: And I helped put up hay, I raked hay with a team.

EDWARD: You were in the late '20's, yeah, early '30's. Did, was George Barney there then?

AUDRA: Grant Barney.

EDWARD: Grant Barney, excuse me.

AUDRA: Yes. He was on the Street place below.

EDWARD: You guys were kind of neighbors.

AUDRA: Yes.

EDWARD: Grant and Doris.

AUDRA: Doris wasn't there.

EDWARD: Oh, she wasn't?

AUDRA: No.

EDWARD: There was a house between Bill Brown's and the old Street place.

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: The roof is kind of, now it is kind of caved, starting to cave in.

AUDRA: I haven't been there for quite awhile; I'm surprised it is even standing.

EDWARD: It is still standing. Do you know whose place that was?

AUDRA: No, not for sure. But I know that Tom Houston lived there at one time.

EDWARD: It was probably Balfour's place.

AUDRA: Probably was.

EDWARD: Probably.

AUDRA: Uh huh, probably was.

EDWARD: Paul Wilson, did you ever meet him?

AUDRA: No, I can't remember that I did. I might have, but I don't remember. I've heard of him, I remember hearing quite a little about him.

EDWARD: Yeah, he is coming in a month. He is 96.

AUDRA: Oh for heavens sake.

EDWARD: And Lena Street Wilson, his wife, she passed away last summer at a 101. That was Joseph Street's daughter, you know, she was born there. I want to mention ---

AUDRA: Wesley Street was the one that had the ranch when Barney got his.

EDWARD: Wesley, yeah that was Joseph's ---

AUDRA: Joseph's son.

EDWARD: --- son. Want to mention some names, and just, if they were good, bad, rotten, great people, whatever, and see what we can come up with. You mentioned, I mentioned Charlie Parrish.

AUDRA: He was a real nice person. And he moved to Powell Butte after he left that part of the country. And my folks had moved to Powell Butte, and they didn't live very far from us. They were real nice people. They had three boys.

EDWARD: Charlie did?

AUDRA: Yes.

EDWARD: He must have been an older man when you knew him, maybe not.

AUDRA: Oh no, not really. He was about the same age as my parents I would say. Their children were about the same age that we were.

EDWARD: He had three sons; maybe they're still around.

AUDRA: No, they're all --- no, now there is one that might still be living, and if he is, he lives here in town.

EDWARD: What about, did you ever hear anything about Bob, Robert, Bob Baker, Robert Baker?

AUDRA: No.

EDWARD: Virge Newman?

AUDRA: I've heard lots of stories about Newman, I didn't ---

EDWARD: What kind of stories did you hear about Virge Newman, Audra?

AUDRA: Well he was one of the cowboys, and then I think he was one of the freighters for Bill, did lots of freighting for Bill.

EDWARD: Like shipping out wool, or ---

AUDRA: Wool, and then bringing in supplies. You know it took a lot of supplies to maintain these ranches and everything. The cooking and camps and everything, took a lot.

EDWARD: He evidently, Virge --- what bad stories you hear about Virge?

AUDRA: I don't remember that I heard anything bad about him though. I've heard lots of funny things about him.

... (Phone rings)

AUDRA: ... and then get off, take off, and he'd just take off and walk.

EDWARD: Walk.

AUDRA: Uh huh. And he bought; he didn't know how to take care of machinery or anything like that.

EDWARD: I don't think he ever drove a vehicle.

AUDRA: Not that I know of.

EDWARD: You're about the fourth, fifth person that said he never drove.

AUDRA: Well there was a doctor here in town by the name of Belknap and he had, I've forgotten how many boys, and anyway Bill paid for sending those boys all through medical school, and they became good doctors.

EDWARD: Of course, you know, Bill had two of his brothers and one sister were doctors.

AUDRA: And I think it was the Methodist Church at that time, he bought an organ for the church. It was one of those that you had to keep those bellows filled, and somebody sat down there and cranked that when they played at the church.

EDWARD: He gave away so much.

AUDRA: Uh huh, yes. He was a very generous person.

EDWARD: Just thousands of dollars.

AUDRA: At the time we were living at Buck Creek, the bank in Burns had two or three of

his checks that were written on wrappers off of a tin can, or something like that. They must still have them over there.

EDWARD: I hope so. That's another one I wanted to find out. There is another question before I forget, Audra, is --- that's a pretty name. I wished they would have named my granddaughter Audra, I like that. The Overstreet killing, did you ever hear anything about that?

AUDRA: The main thing that I heard was that he never fenced in springs because he thought somebody might need them or whatnot. But anyway, it was over water from this spring or something. And so they had a gun, and so they made Bill get down on his hands and knees and eat grass. And so that's when that ---

EDWARD: I think I'd do some shooting too, wouldn't you?

AUDRA: I think so. I think --- (Laughter)

EDWARD: Yeah.

AUDRA: And I think the jury must have thought so.

EDWARD: Oh yeah, there was no problem. Okay.

AUDRA: That's about all I ever heard about it.

EDWARD: Charlie Couch, what kind of buckaroo was he?

AUDRA: I think he was supposed to be the outstanding buckaroo in the whole area. They said nothing could buck him off, it didn't make any difference what nor how, because he could --- He was good to help with the younger buckaroos and all. I've heard lots of comments about what a good buckaroo he was, and how he could handle horses.

EDWARD: Did he come from Prineville area?

AUDRA: I have no idea where he hailed from.

EDWARD: Then we got all the Houston's. There are Houston's scattered from one end of this county to the other.

AUDRA: Yes, there is lots of Houston's.

EDWARD: Sumner Houston, and Charlie was their father.

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: Right?

AUDRA: Right.

EDWARD: And then Fred.

AUDRA: That was Tom's son.

EDWARD: Okay, excuse me, yeah. Tom Houston, Martha's brother.

AUDRA: Right.

EDWARD: He must have been one heck of a guy.

AUDRA: He was a nice person, Fred was. I don't know as he was a real outstanding buckaroo, but he was a good worker.

EDWARD: Was there a Frank Houston too?

AUDRA: Yes. He was Charlie Houston's son.

EDWARD: Ira Brown, Bill Brown's nephew, told me that Frank Houston was the best cowboy that Bill Brown ever had.

AUDRA: Might have been.

EDWARD: There must have been a difference between --- there is a lot of difference between a cowman and a sheep man.

AUDRA: Yes. Bill found that out when he had those sheep wars.

EDWARD: Did the Brennan's ever get involved with those sheep wars around Paulina?

AUDRA: I don't know.

EDWARD: Oh Audra.

AUDRA: I do know that Claude wouldn't, or his dad wouldn't talk much about them. He was very close. I think that he probably knew a lot more than he was ---



AUDRA: You father's name was?

AUDRA: My father, James.

EDWARD: James Brennan?

AUDRA: James L.

EDWARD: James L. Brennan?

AUDRA: McDaniel. Oh, Claude's dad was Thomas H.

EDWARD: Claude's dad.

AUDRA: Claude's dad was Thomas H. Brennan.

EDWARD: Thomas H. Brennan. Your father was ---

AUDRA: McDaniel.

EDWARD: McDaniel.

AUDRA: He was never a cowboy or anything like that, he was just a rancher.

EDWARD: I've been up on Wolf Creek where these members of the Paulina Sheep Shooters met by that tree, and the tree is now on the ground.

AUDRA: Un huh.

EDWARD: Nobody will really talk about that much, still.

AUDRA: I am sure that Claude's dad knew a lot, but he never talked about it. Because shortly before he died why he talked to --- he asked to talk to a fellow that we had known for years who was sheriff at that time, when Claude's dad was sick. And he called and he wanted us to get him, he wanted to talk to him. So of course dad was in bed at that time, Dad Brennan, and so of course Claude and I left the room, because he wanted to talk to him. And what transpired I never knew, anything what he said, or anything about it, and that fellow is dead.

EDWARD: It wasn't Sheriff Yancey was it?

AUDRA: No, Booten.

EDWARD: Yancey was --- I guess he was something else. Oh, that reminds me, who was McIntosh. McIntosh ---

AUDRA: I don't know anything ---

EDWARD: Alexander McIntosh.

AUDRA: I don't know anything about him; I just know where the McIntosh place was. Like I said, we hayed there two or three different summers when Dominique Verges had it.

EDWARD: Okay, where was the McIntosh place, on Twelvemile Creek, on Long Hollow, do you recall, Audra? I've got maps ---

AUDRA: It wasn't Long Hollow.

EDWARD: It wasn't Long Hollow.

AUDRA: No, I'll have to think on that.

EDWARD: Was it from Bill's ---

AUDRA: It's the creek that came right down through the Lillard place. It was farther up the creek than the Lillard place.

EDWARD: Oh, up Buck Creek, or up Twelvemile? There is Coffee Creek ---

AUDRA: It must be Twelvemile.

EDWARD: There is Coffee Creek, there is Grindstone Creek, there is ---

AUDRA: Do you have the information where they put the dam in, at Norcross?

EDWARD: Norcross.

AUDRA: Was that it?

EDWARD: Yeah, yeah, there was a Norcross.

AUDRA: No, Norcross's were over --- I guess maybe it was Norcross.

EDWARD: Was there a house there?

AUDRA: I guess there had been at one time.

EDWARD: There had been, okay. I'm pretty sure you're right, Audra, Norcross.

AUDRA: I think it must be Norcross.

EDWARD: Norcross. Because there is a Norcross Creek.

AUDRA: Yeah, I think it was Norcross.

EDWARD: Bill ---

AUDRA: Norcross comes in at the upper end of --- or it comes into Twelvemile right there at Harding.

EDWARD: Did you ever hear of a Bill Berdell?

AUDRA: Billy Bedell?

EDWARD: Yeah.

AUDRA: Yes.

EDWARD: He took a couple shots at Bill Brown.

AUDRA: I've heard that he did. He was a, had a homestead on Crooked River, Billy Bedell did. I hear that --- you might want to turn that off.

EDWARD: No.

AUDRA: I've heard the story that he wore these long underwear, and had the drop parts in the back, across the back, and he was always afraid to go to the bathroom, afraid somebody would --- and he thought that way he could look around and see if somebody was coming. He always thought somebody was after him. He was a little strange. I've heard that story now.

EDWARD: He must have been a little strange. Yeah, I guess he took a couple shots at the --- at the McIntosh place.

AUDRA: I wouldn't be surprised. Could be.

EDWARD: That was between 1924 and 1928, but I don't think Bill pressed any charges or anything, because I looked and I couldn't find a thing.

AUDRA: No, Bill wouldn't, as long as he didn't hit him.

EDWARD: Right, right. (Laughter) Just didn't hit him. Maybe some of your reasons that, why Bill Brown lost his property, you mentioned depression, well that was part of it.

AUDRA: I think that was the main thing. And then just --- he wasn't a businessman. He came in at the time when things were lush and on the up and up, and I think that is what caused him to go into, you know, and have all the wealth and all that he did have. Because everything just went up, up, up, up, and then when the depression hit, why he couldn't handle it, he was no manager or anything. I think that it just caught up with him.

EDWARD: Did you --- was it, was it Sarah that came up to the ranch, Sarah his sister, to help him?

AUDRA: She was going to keep books for him.

EDWARD: Yeah. Do you know when that was by any chance, Audra? In later years?

AUDRA: Well it was --- I couldn't tell you the year, really.

EDWARD: I know she was up there.

AUDRA: It must have been --- uh huh; it must have been when things were really flourishing. I don't know whether it gives any dates in that poem or not.

EDWARD: I can't remember her married name, Sarah Brown ...

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EDWARD: ... those people down around, or Claude Brennan knew most of those people down around Wagontire.

AUDRA: Yes, uh huh.

EDWARD: Did he ever mention a Dobkins?

AUDRA: I've heard the name.

EDWARD: This Hutton ---

AUDRA: Yes.

EDWARD: What did you hear about this Hutton, do you recall?

AUDRA: Well he was kind of a renegade. I hate to say it in that method too, but that's, you know, he just wasn't, he was a little bit on the wrong side of the fence.

EDWARD: Yeah. And Jackson, did you ever hear of that name, R. B. Jackson?

AUDRA: I don't remember that name.

EDWARD: Now what happened to Claude with his horse, he jumped the ditch and ---

AUDRA: Uh huh, and it fell and broke its neck. He was way off out there, and --- One of the other cowboys come along and they took his saddle and --- They went on into camp, the two of them, and I think Claude walked most of the way, and they packed the saddle on the other horse too.

EDWARD: He really liked that.

AUDRA: All those fellows did.

EDWARD: Did he do that before you guys were married?

AUDRA: Yes, uh huh. Yes, that was before we were married.

EDWARD: When were you married, Audra?

AUDRA: We were married in '31.

EDWARD: 1931.

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: And what did you guys do between '31 and '37 when you went to Bill Browns?

AUDRA: Just anything we could find to do.

EDWARD: Anything.

AUDRA: Uh huh. And I was postmaster at Powell Butte for a while then. And Claude sheared; we'd just start in Southern California the first of March, and finish up in Montana the first part of July.

EDWARD: And you stayed at home?

AUDRA: No, I went with him part of the time. I cooked for shearers at the, if the place where we were shearing didn't happen to have somebody to cook or something. I was right straight out of an office to that kind of life. I didn't know people lived like that.

EDWARD: Do you think women would do that nowadays?

AUDRA: I don't think so.

EDWARD: No. (Laughter)

AUDRA: And Claude always said, he says, "I don't know how you stayed with me at all." But I guess maybe it was just the two of us working together, it took us just both of digging to exist. And I think that drew us closer together.

EDWARD: It sure doesn't happen nowadays.

AUDRA: I think really, if you'll endure hardships, it does bring you closer.

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

AUDRA: We just lacked a few months of being married 53 years when Claude passed away.

EDWARD: It's just amazing, you know, that you would stick by his side going from California to Montana. How many sheep camps would you go?

AUDRA: Oh, we'd --- about two weeks would be an average stay on one job. That would be a long job, two weeks would.

EDWARD: Well how as a --- you were at shearing camps?

AUDRA: Uh huh. They were always off out in the awfulest places. They didn't --- these range sheep, you know, it wasn't like these farm flocks.

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

AUDRA: Off, out in the range country.

EDWARD: Did Claude walk a lot when he was working in shearing camps to bring in

sheep?

AUDRA: No, he sheared.

EDWARD: He just sheared.

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: I see.

AUDRA: Yes, he just actually sheared. He learned to do that after, about the time of depression, because you would do anything.

EDWARD: And you cooked for these guys?

AUDRA: Occasionally.

EDWARD: Occasionally.

AUDRA: If they didn't already have a cook. One time there was so much garlic I couldn't stand him when he come back out to the tent. The crew was going to quit. And I said well, if there isn't anything to cook, I can at least leave the garlic out of the beans, or whatnot. (Laughter)

EDWARD: I was going to ask you, what did you guys eat in these shearing camp? Just beans all the time, or ---

AUDRA: No, some of them provided very well.

EDWARD: Oh, they did?

AUDRA: Of course I didn't cook for myself; I just stayed in the camp.

EDWARD: You lived in a --- did you live in a tent?

AUDRA: Uh huh. Take it down, move to the next job. Take it down and move to the next job.

EDWARD: Did you do this for many years, or during the ---

AUDRA: About three years.

EDWARD: About three years you did that.

AUDRA: Uh huh, three or four.

EDWARD: And then you'd go back to Powell Butte during the winter?

AUDRA: Well, and then they did contract haying in the summer. That's when I cooked for the haying crews up in the Twelvemile.

EDWARD: Oh, you were cooking up in that country?

AUDRA: Uh huh. And Claude had the contract haying.

EDWARD: For ---

AUDRA: For Dominique Verges when he had McIntosh and Twelvemile and Freezeout, and Buck Creek. Claude did the contract haying for him, and I cooked for the hay crew.

EDWARD: Did, money didn't mean much to you, did it?

AUDRA: We didn't have any.

EDWARD: Didn't have any. It was eating and shelter, that's what you worried about?

AUDRA: Uh huh. And like I said, I'd cook for this haying crew for over a week, right --- we had a pile of hay to put our bed on, and cooked out under a big willow tree on just a little tiny stove. We had to bake our own bread and everything. You didn't get to town very often.

EDWARD: Did you cook three meals a day?

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: Who washed the dishes?

AUDRA: I did.

EDWARD: Oh boy. And that was probably kind of like Bill Brown saying, same thing.

AUDRA: I suppose, uh huh.

EDWARD: Because I know Lila cooked for Bill Brown for quite a few years. Do you know any other --- before I forget, do you know any other women that worked for Bill Brown?

AUDRA: No, I didn't.



EDWARD: I know there were some others, but I can't ---

AUDRA: Well I'm sure there had been, lots of them. Probably some of the homesteader's wives cooked for him.

EDWARD: Did they ---

AUDRA: I didn't feel that we were being abused or something, we were just struggling trying to get ahead, and we eventually did. But it took two of us working together.

EDWARD: What did you and Claude, after you left Buck Creek Ranch in '41 I think it was, what did you guys eventually do?

AUDRA: We bought a, with some help, we made a down payment on a place at Powell Butte. Then a fellow come along and bought that. Then we bought a place up Mill Creek, and we eventually paid for it, and built a new home on it. I kept books, and drove back and forth into town, kept books all those years. The last 20 years was keeping books for Ochoco Lumber. I was office manager and head bookkeeper for Ochoco Lumber.

EDWARD: Oh, I see.

AUDRA: The last 20 years.

EDWARD: For some reason, the Brennan's came up to the Paulina area pretty early didn't they?

AUDRA: 1882 was when Claude's dad came. I think his mother came before that.

... (Phone rings)

EDWARD: Yeah, okay. Let's --- wait a minute. Claude went to college?

AUDRA: He had the opportunity to go to college, and he was drafted into the First World War, and so he trained at Corvallis.

EDWARD: Oregon State.

AUDRA: Uh huh. It was Oregon Agriculture College at that time. And so the Armistice was signed before they were called into active service, so he was out of the service.

Then he went back to ranching. And then he had this band of sheep at the time that we were married in the depression. I think he had a dollar or something against each head. And depression caught --- and so we just couldn't afford to keep them, and we turned them back. And so we just ---

EDWARD: It is just so hard to believe --- I mean what kind of money did they make off of sheep in the '20's and '30's?

AUDRA: Well up until the depression, people you know, made just average money like a farmer, a rancher would. Then the depression hit and the bottom fell out of everything, and you just ---

EDWARD: How did, you know, like Bill Brown, when I'm going through those courthouse records on the property he bought, it was thousands of dollars.

AUDRA: You couldn't afford to pay the taxes on it when the depression hit. You couldn't sell anything, it wasn't worth anything.

EDWARD: But boy, he sure had the money.

AUDRA: Uh huh, but it just ---

EDWARD: You know in 1920 he bought from Oregon Colonization --- Oregon and Washington ---

AUDRA: Colonization Company.

EDWARD: --- Company. I found down there in the deeds he bought, I forgot how many -- - 11,000 acres for \$50,000. I mean that was 1920, or 1919, that was a lot of money.

AUDRA: And things went up, and taxes went up, and ---

EDWARD: Most people didn't have that kind of money. Not even close to that.

AUDRA: No, huh uh.

EDWARD: That was just for 11,000 acres. You know he was paying \$4,000 here for 640 acres, and a \$1,000 for 160 acres, I don't --- boy. You guys didn't have that.

AUDRA: No.

EDWARD: Neither did the Houston's or ---

AUDRA: Nobody.

EDWARD: Nobody but Bill Brown.

AUDRA: He was wealthy, very. I don't think he ever knew what he was worth, really, I don't think he did.

EDWARD: That's when Sarah probably tried to come over there and straighten it out, and just gave up. I guess she just gave up.

AUDRA: But there is no way, because he never knew how much he had in the bank, you know, like he'd write checks just anywhere, and wherever.

EDWARD: He must of had to borrow money at the end too, and that's what broke him too.

AUDRA: That's what broke him, uh huh.

EDWARD: Yeah. Oregon Wool Growers Association, that's the name of the --- that got most --- mortgaged most of his land.

AUDRA: And he bought from Colonization, because see they --- Colonization Company they had every other section.

EDWARD: Yeah.

AUDRA: And then every so often there was a school section that was set aside for schools.

EDWARD: Yeah, I saw a lot of that; he bought a lot of school land.

AUDRA: Uh huh.

EDWARD: One was 320 acres for \$250 bucks.

AUDRA: See there was a schoolhouse down between the Buck Creek and Fife; it was called the Buck Creek School.

EDWARD: Was that below Joseph Street's place?

AUDRA: Yes, just a little ways below.

EDWARD: Just a little ways.

AUDRA: Uh huh. And they even had --- they called the Buck Creek Presbyterian Church, and I have one of the songbooks from there. It was presented by W. W. Brown, the songbooks for that Presbyterian Church.

EDWARD: Where in the world was the church at?

AUDRA: Held at the school.

EDWARD: Oh, in the schoolhouse.

AUDRA: Uh huh. And the old organ was still in there when we were up there. And I come so near taking it, I thought no, I shouldn't. But I don't know whatever became of it. Of course rats had nests in it, and it would probably have taken a fortune to have restored it.

EDWARD: That was probably somebody's homestead shack or something, the old schoolhouse.

AUDRA: No, it was a regular, a nice looking school. It was still ---

EDWARD: Oh, they built it for a schoolhouse?

AUDRA: Yes, uh huh.

EDWARD: Do you have any pictures of those?

AUDRA: I don't think I have a picture of the schoolhouse, except in my mind. (Laughter)

EDWARD: Let's see, what was I going to ask you. Oh ---

(END OF TAPE)

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