

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #386 - Side A

Subject: Bob, Bertha & Mary Forbes

Date: June 30, 1994

Place: Madras, Oregon

Interviewer: Edward Gray

EDWARD GRAY: This is Edward Gray with Bob Forbes, 6-30-1994, at Bertha and Mary Forbes' house. Bob's mom is Bertha Forbes who is 102. Bob was born in 1927 in Bend?

BOB FORBES: Yes.

EDWARD: And his father was Percy L. Forbes who lived out at Lost Creek Valley, beginning in 1911, and left in 1935, and worked for Bill Brown. Bob, as I said a while ago, your dad talked to you about Pete French?

BOB: Yes.

EDWARD: Can you just --- oh by the way Bob, say anything you want to, you know, anything. And what are some of the things he told you about Pete French?

BOB: Well mainly, a couple times we went over there he told me that Pete French was murdered, and that for whatever reason they let him, they let his killer off. And my father thought that was kind of a shame that a murderer got away with murder. But that was the situation. We went over there when I was probably 7, 8 years old.

EDWARD: You went over to ---

BOB: To Frenchglen. And I remember the big house, dual house it was. Everything in the high desert is always unpainted, weather beaten, and here was this big two-story double house, white, actually probably hadn't been painted for 40 years, but it was still nice and white looking. And it had a little house in between, and then the two big houses,

and big windows. And as a 7 or 8-year-old boy I was quite fascinated with this big house.

Pete French was dead at that time. Not there, but down a ways was a big round barn that he built, and he used that round barn --- I used to think that he raced horses in it, but I found out later that was just where he broke horses. But it was a horse barn, and he had an outer track, and an inside place to keep the horses in an outer track. And as a boy I thought that's where he raced horses. But I heard him talk about racehorses. But it was just where he broke horses.

EDWARD: Did you go inside of that Pete French, or P Ranch house?

BOB: No.

EDWARD: You didn't?

BOB: If I did, I don't recall it. The only thing that sticks in my mind is the big house being all white out there where nothing else is white. And that --- and I remember the tall windows, I'd never seen such tall windows. I might have been in it. I honest, but I honest don't recall that. The only thing I really recall is the house. My father explained how Pete French was a very successful cattleman. He had a good valley there with water flowing through it, and he had diverted some of it to irrigate more grasslands. And my father always explained how he was a good cattleman, because he really raised a lot of cattle. And that he could, and that valley that he had there he could run a lot of, a lot more cattle than he could over at Lost Creek, and that always impressed my father, you know. My father had rangeland; he ran 180 head on about 10,000 acres. And Pete French ran 10,000 head on less land.

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

BOB: And so that was --- I can remember my father was kind of envious of that good grassland, and that. But what I really knew of Pete French was that he came from California, and he built this big white house, my father said, for his bride. But that, I don't

know whether she ever --- she wouldn't live in it. Whether she ever saw it or not, I don't know.

EDWARD: Do you know when, did your father ever, Percy Forbes ever mention to you, if you recall, when that house was built, the P Ranch house?

BOB: Yes.

EDWARD: That's a kind of an unknown fact. It's all guesses.

BOB: It would be ---

EDWARD: I know that's difficult.

BOB: Only I --- I think, as I recall, my father told me that Pete French was murdered like 1897.

EDWARD: December 26th, 1897.

BOB: And I remember --- that he had built this house 15, 20 years before that for his bride, and she wouldn't live there. And that's about all I can really tell you, to pin it down. And I'm--- my father had been there before this time. But the only time I can remember was that one time. And whether he took me there before, I'm really not sure. But when we went there my father knew the area, he knew where to go.

EDWARD: The roads weren't too great in those days either.

BOB: No. We actually had to come over to Burns for some business, and then my father said, well he wanted to show me this very successful cattle rancher that got murdered. And that's what I really know of it. We had gone to Burns for some other business. I don't know whether my father selling cattle, or buying hay, or selling hay, I'm not just sure what the other business was, because we went to Bend and Burns periodically. And occasionally as a boy I'd go along, to get an ice cream cone. And this one time why he said, well we'd go out, a half a day or something, you know.

It was typical of the roads out there. If you met a car, one of you had to get off the

two-wheel tracks, and one of you pull out in the sagebrush. And we had the Model-T that my father always drove around in.

EDWARD: What happened to that, by the way, is it out there in the desert?

BOB: No, my father converted it into a sawmill.

EDWARD: (Laughter) He used the rear axle, right?

BOB: And the engine block was actually the gear, I mean the bearings for the saw, he put a special rod through the, I mean in place of the crankshaft, just a straight rod. But, what the bearings that held the crankshaft is what held the saw.

EDWARD: I've seen those before. My god they worked, I mean.

BOB: My father was quite handy. He had been a tool and dye maker machinist as a boy by trade. And worked as a machinist in World War I in ... Navy Yard, instead of going to the army. And then went back to Lost Creek after World War I. But with that training he could always make everything mechanically work.

EDWARD: Did you ever see --- well anything else about Pete French, Bob, you recall?

BOB: Well that he went, that he --- I can remember some discussion that Pete French used to have cattle drives down to Winnemucca. But I --- that's really all I can tell you. I can remember discussion, my father and somebody else; I'm not just sure. But they talked about, I knew my father was talking about one time joining with some other group, maybe they would have a cattle drive. But they just never had enough cattle to make it worthwhile. But I can remember they talked about Pete French taking 10,000 head and driving them down to Winnemucca ---

EDWARD: The railroad was there.

BOB: And ---

EDWARD: What --- over there in Lost Creek Valley, Bill Brown owned basically all of Lost Creek, if you want to call it. At Bradley Meadows now it kind of poops out, it doesn't reach

the valley any more.

BOB: All of that, I call it the Sink area.

EDWARD: The Sink.

BOB: Yeah, Bill Brown owned that, that was all his area over there.

EDWARD: Oh. And he owned ---

BOB: And out over by Wagontire, he owned quite a lot over by Wagontire.

EDWARD: Yeah, on the east side of Wagontire. All the west side, he owned South Creek Spring, Bradley Spring, Lost Creek Spring, and Bradley Meadows. Did you, were you ever at Bradley Meadows?

BOB: Yes. I'm trying to remember the --- I've heard the name, but I can't really place it.

EDWARD: Did your father ever talk to you about where Pete French kind of --- did your father ever, Percy Forbes, ever talk to you about the murder of Ira Bradley?

BOB: Yes.

EDWARD: What did he say about it, do you remember? Oh, this is hard going back, we're going back a few years' folks. But you lived in Lost Creek Valley until '35. Ira Bradley was murdered when you were 3 years old.

BOB: Well the thing that kind of sticks in my mind is the fact that there were some people over on Wagontire that my father said, you know, they're kind of bad dudes, we kind of stay away from there. And we could always see Wagontire Mountain ---

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

BOB: --- but my father would never go over there.

EDWARD: (Laughter) And were these ---

BOB: And that, I thought, I think he said two or three murders over there, I'm not just --- So as a boy I can remember that we stayed around Glass Buttes, or we went around by Riley over to Burns. Or we went down to, through Christmas Valley to Silver Lake, and

Paisley down to Lakeview, but we never went --- I was never at Wagontire until, as an adult, driving up 395 just to see what it was like. And then driving over from Wagontire into Lost Creek Valley, through the Sinks, had driven that area. But as a boy, my father would never go over there.

EDWARD: I don't blame him. Does the Hutton ring a bell.

BOB: Yeah, he talked about Link Hutton.

EDWARD: Was Link Hutton in your dad's estimation one mean dude?

... (Pause in tape)

EDWARD: I can just see --- I can't, you know, I've been out there in that desert, and I've been out with damn rattlesnakes and no water. You know the only water out there now is that well at the Dewitt place. And then there is some ---

BOB: Well no, the well, just a half-mile north of Stauffer is still in operation. That was my father's deep well.

EDWARD: Is that ---

BOB: Was a half-mile north of where the house was.

EDWARD: Where the house was.

BOB: Yeah. And now they got electricity to it, and it is still pumping.

EDWARD: Yeah, but there is some crazy guy out there.

BOB: Yeah, but that was my father's well.

EDWARD: I'll be damned.

BOB: That's what he watered his stock from.

EDWARD: I don't know who that guy is that lives out there now. I mean this guy is weird.

BOB: Yeah. I stopped to see him one time, and he wouldn't have anything --- get out of here.

EDWARD: Oh no, oh no.

BOB: So I've never been --- I've driven out there, but I never bothered him anymore.

EDWARD: I heard there are some guys that he shot at. I mean that's how bad it is. I don't know what he is doing, who knows? Anyway, did he ever mention Harry Arnold?

BOB: That name doesn't ---

EDWARD: Doesn't ring a bell. But then again, you never went up to Wagontire until you became an adult. Okay. I've been just wondering if you were ever over there.

BOB: Only as an adult, and not, and really not much. I've driven it, and just one time I went through that back road and came out there by the Dewitt place, it wound around.

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

BOB: We had a four-wheel drive.

EDWARD: That's a bad road now too.

BOB: And it was kind of a slow road. We went to Wagontire --- just out of Wagontire, we cut across there. And, but oh that was again, 20 years ago now or more.

EDWARD: That road is no better. That's the old mail route.

BOB: Yeah.

EDWARD: From Stauffer ---

BOB: Yeah, that was the mail route.

EDWARD: --- to Egli, then Wagontire Post Office. Oh my god, it's horrible!

BOB: Yeah, I can remember Ernie Bembree (sp.?) and the different mail carriers. They would stay all night at our house there in Stauffer and go on to Wagontire. And then they'd come back from Wagontire. But I can remember as a boy, you know, I don't remember real particulars, other than we just never went there. And I can remember that they were just bad dudes over there, is all I can tell you.

EDWARD: Yeah, they were. On the east side of the mountain they were pretty tough bunch of boys. Do you --- were you, the Forbes family about the only ones out there

except for Dewitt and Musser and Perry? Was there anybody else in the '30's?

BOB: No. Mussers were our closest neighbors up the hill.

EDWARD: Yeah. They were up there on that little spring, which has dried up.

BOB: Dry now. But they were up there.

EDWARD: And their house is all gone.

BOB: Gone.

EDWARD: What about Wipple, kind of on the side hill of Glass Buttes, but over towards the east from Mussers? No? I never did make it there. There was supposed to be a big house up there. But I don't think they associated with anybody either.

BOB: No, that doesn't ring a bell with me. I don't recall ---

EDWARD: So you had Perry, Perry, Musser, Dewitt, and Forbes, basically in the '30's.

BOB: Uh huh.

EDWARD: Who ---

BOB: And actually I think Musser's left before we did. Yeah, they left.

EDWARD: They left too.

BOB: Yeah, the last couple years I was there they had gone. And like I say, and the Perry's, of the ones you mentioned, Perry's left first. And then ---

EDWARD: Munsor's.

BOB: I always called them Musser's, you call them Munsor's. Maybe as a boy I didn't pronounce it right.

EDWARD: M U S S E R. I don't know which way it is, Bob.

BOB: Okay. And then I think down there by Brown's Well there was somebody down in there, but whose name again I don't remember now. EDWARD: Good god. Geeze.

BOB: But I remember a couple times, going, driving that back road down below Benjamin Lake with my father going to Silver Lake, and maybe even to Lakeview, why we stopped



and visited some people there, and I think it was near Brown's Well. But again, that was only one time, and I --- their name wasn't Brown, but I can't tell you what their name was.

EDWARD: Did you ever see Lost Creek Valley cleared of sagebrush?

BOB: Not completely.

EDWARD: Not completely.

BOB: Though there was 40-acre sections here and there that had been cleared, and was growing up, some of it in sagebrush, and lighter sagebrush, and in later years was all heavy sagebrush until they sprayed it a little. Now my father had several 40-acre plots that he dry land farmed, that is, every other year. That plus Chicago Valley, but Chicago Valley was his main crop. But he had, right near the house was two 40-acre plots that he alternated. And down not too far from the school was another 40-acre plot.

EDWARD: The old Stauffer School?

BOB: Uh huh.

EDWARD: I know where it was, was.

BOB: Well close to that was another section that was 40 acres that my father, every other year, worked on, for dry land rye. But ---

EDWARD: Well I seen a picture in 1951, rye grass this high. Now maybe they had a good winter, or something, or a lot of rain or something, I don't know. And they were actually cutting ---

BOB: Well they were in Chicago Valley. I was out there in the '50's, and they had a good crop.

EDWARD: I'll be darned, was it the ZX?

BOB: No, I think that was Painters (sp.?).

EDWARD: And they got their water from your dad's irrigation from Benjamin Lake?

BOB: I assume.

EDWARD: Geeze.

BOB: Well maybe they didn't. Well they may not have. Well no, I --- it was maybe the late '50's or '60's I was out there a couple times and it was not in operation anymore. The last time --- my father kept it in operation until about '40--- well he sold it in '48, and he kept it in operation about '44, '45, and then I think for two or three years there he just, you know, he didn't do any-thing with it. Well it was for sale, and he sold it then.

EDWARD: It's all just ---

BOB: It's all grown up in sagebrush now.

EDWARD: --- desolate, is all it is now. Nobody has ever taken care of it. Why did your dad stay in Lost Creek Valley, do you know, Bob? Did he ever tell you --- that's all he had? It's unbelievable.

BOB: Well he liked the area, that's why he went back to it. And he liked the rocks. He had placer mining claims on Glass Buttes.

EDWARD: Yeah, I've seen ---

BOB: And he --- east of Stauffer is Glass Buttes.

EDWARD: Yeah, I'm not thinking Glass Buttes. There is another place you can see it on Highway ---

BOB: Highway 20.

EDWARD: --- just holes.

BOB: Well that's the Cinnabar Mine.

EDWARD: Yeah.

BOB: My father found cinnabar there, and he put placer claims on it. That's what we had to go to Lakeview on. But he didn't have the money to develop it, so he sold it to Henry Miller. There is Miller Lumber Company Stores around here; Henry Miller was the owner of Miller Lumber Company. My father sold his placer mining claims on the Cinnabar to

Henry Miller. And Henry Miller mined them and --- And during World War II, quicksilver, mercury was in demand, and then at the end of that war they, where there was no more market for it, there wasn't a price --- they claim the ore isn't rich enough to pay unless the price is real good.

EDWARD: If you go east of Glass Buttes you can turn off of Highway 20 you'll see a whole --- on the south side of the highway a whole mess of those. Have you ever been to the ... ranch?

BOB: Well there is a ranch right in there. I don't know what it is called.

EDWARD: Yeah, okay.

BOB: Yeah, I've been in there. They have cattle there, and ---

EDWARD: Yeah.

BOB: Yeah they own all around that there now. But the area --- I can again, my father sold that in probably '34 to Henry Miller. Because I still lived there when Henry Miller would come by. A time or two we went over there with my father. My father helped him get a retort. They had a couple people hired, they cleared juniper for miles around there to retort that ---

EDWARD: ... burn, for firewood.

BOB: Firewood, to heat up the cinnabar to get the mercury to flow out of it, you know, melt it out. They called retorting.

EDWARD: You can just see those things. I never had time to go up to them, most of them are just empty now, you know; they are just standing there.

BOB: I don't know what's going on.

EDWARD: What time, I have no idea what time it is.

BOB: 12:30.

EDWARD: Mary has disappeared.

BOB: You can never find her.

WOMAN: No. ... (Unrelated)

... (Unrelated) (Pause in tape)

MARY FORBES: We were going back to Pennsylvania, Mother was taking the three kids, Bob and myself and my little sister, who just took me out to the fairgrounds, the three of us. We were going back on the plane, on the train, on the train, and we looked out and says, "What is that, you know." And then we called them Zepplins, dirigible, you know.

EDWARD: Dirigibles.

MARY: Yeah, we called it a Zeppelin, dirigible.

EDWARD: Probably scared you to death.

MARY: Oh, it was something this big thing in the sky, just following along that train. I never forgot it. I was about 5.

EDWARD: Ask her, do you want me to go through you, Mary?

MARY: It might be the best. This is her good ear, you're in the right side of her, this is her good ear. I just turned it up a little bit, squeal, there.

EDWARD: Ask her --- do you remember the Bradley's, Bertha, at Lost Creek Valley?

BERTHA FORBES: Ira, and Hosmer.

EDWARD: Ira.

BERTHA: Hosmer was the, the one that was killed, what was his name?

EDWARD: Ira.

BERTHA: Ira was the father.

EDWARD: Correct.

BERTHA: And Link Hutton killed the son.

EDWARD: Harold.

BERTHA: Harold.

EDWARD: Harold.

BERTHA: And then there was Hosmer, then there was some girls.

EDWARD: And three of them are still alive.

BERTHA: ...

EDWARD: Yeah. Lena ---

BERTHA: Leah, Leah.

EDWARD: Okay. The one in Redmond. Can't remember the one that lives in Redmond.

Anyway, did you ever go up to their, Bradley Meadows, Bertha?

BERTHA: Don't remember, don't think so.

MARY: Daddy would have been more apt to have done it. Mom was always the homebody.

EDWARD: Yeah.

MARY: Yeah, she always took care of the home, and did the work around. Milked the cows and things like that.

EDWARD: Did you ever hear of Peter French?

BERTHA: Pete French, I've heard of him.

EDWARD: Okay.

BERTHA: They called him Pete, Pete French.

EDWARD: How come you lived on the desert, Bertha?

BERTHA: Huh?

EDWARD: How come you lived out there on the desert?

BERTHA: I don't know.

MARY: They never know, they never know.

EDWARD: Did you just do it because your husband lived there?

BERTHA: I don't know. I liked it, I liked it.

EDWARD: You liked --- what did you like about Lost Creek Valley? What did you like about the desert?

BERTHA: I'd have to think. I don't know just what I would like about it.

EDWARD: Did you raise your two children out there?

BERTHA: Three.

EDWARD: Three children.

MARY: Raised three kids, uh huh. A boy and two daughters, I'm the middle one. Bob is the oldest, uh huh. Then there is Frances, and she lives right here, about six blocks from us.

EDWARD: Okay, I see. What did you do every day out there in the desert?

MARY: Did you cook, Mama, did you cook? You baked bread, did you bake bread and ... soup, pancakes, and waffles. She had an old cook stove, wood cook stove, and she had one of those waffle irons, you take off the lid and put the waffles over there. And occasionally we'd get waffles, and that was a great day. Daddy had a wind charger.

EDWARD: Yeah, I've heard of those.

MARY: Yes. And a little windmill that made electricity, so we had electricity. About the only farmer out there that did for many years. And we had a little phonograph too.

EDWARD: Well thank heavens I have that ... you know, I just happened to find that thing.

MARY: Yes, that helps.

EDWARD: That's why I didn't come over, because I know I talked to Bertha on the phone. She says we'll just, that's what I know is what was in that book. I think that was Bertha. That was about two years ago.

MARY: And I think --- I didn't tell her you were coming until this morning. I said, "Now Ed Gray is coming," and I said he may --- "He is the man you remember that wrote that book and told about Bill Brown." "Oh, oh."

EDWARD: Bill Brown, Bertha ---

BERTHA: Yeah.

EDWARD: What about Bill Brown? Was he a nice guy?

BERTHA: I thought he was pretty good. I thought he was fair. I thought he treated his ---

MARY: Employees.

BERTHA: --- employees fair. I thought he was fair. And they'd take advantage of him, they would. He would allow it. I thought that was all right.

EDWARD: Did you ever work for Bill Brown, Bertha?

BERTHA: Me?

EDWARD: Yeah.

BERTHA: No, I didn't work for him. My husband did, I think he did, didn't he?

MARY: Yeah, before you were married he worked for him.

EDWARD: Yeah. Does the Gap Ranch; do you remember the Gap Ranch?

BERTHA: Uh huh, yeah.

EDWARD: You stayed there?

BERTHA: Huh uh.

EDWARD: No. What did your husband, what did Percy do for Bill Brown? That was a pretty tough question.

BERTHA: Well didn't he take care of his sheep, sheep?

MARY: Yeah, took care of the sheep, uh huh, and horses.

EDWARD: Did you like that, Bertha?

MARY: That was before you were married.

BERTHA: I don't remember.

MARY: That was before you were married. Because you were married in '21, and he brought you out, then you had your own ranch. You took out a homestead over there

near Benjamin Lake, so you had the two.

BERTHA: Benjamin Lake, Benjamin and ---

MARY: Uh huh. And that gave you more land for your cattle, more grazing.

EDWARD: She wasn't married until 1921?

BERTHA: And Chicago Valley, and somebody talked about Chicago Valley.

MARY: Yeah, that's where you took out your homestead. Greer (sp.?) Valley, Chicago Valley.

BERTHA: And we had to drill, we had a well that was drilled there.

EDWARD: Did you like living out there, Bertha?

BERTHA: Yeah, I liked it.

MARY: You loved the solitude, didn't you? Quietness?

EDWARD: What was the hardest thing for you, Bertha?

BERTHA: I don't know there was anything very hard. I don't know.

MARY: You wrote to your family in Pennsylvania. And for a while you were the postmistress, remember, you had the post office at Stauffer.

BERTHA: Yeah.

MARY: And the settlers would come in and get their mail.

BERTHA: Yeah.

MARY: And if Bill Brown came in you fed him. And he washed his hands, and he couldn't find the towel, so what did he do?

BERTHA: Well there was a window right there, the one by the window, there was a table and washbowl, washbowl was a pitcher with water in it. And there was a window that had two curtains in the window. Well he ... didn't see any towels, so he just wiped his hands on the towel ---

MARY: On the window curtain.



BERTHA: On the window curtain.

EDWARD: On the curtains.

MARY: On the window curtain, yeah.

BERTHA: I couldn't blame him; he had to do something with his wet hands.

EDWARD: Did ---

BERTHA: I thought Bill Brown was a pretty good man. I didn't see anything wrong with him.

MARY: Now when he became nearly penniless, and he was going to go over to Salem, you know, to that old folks home where he had contributed so much, who bought the ticket for him to go on the bus?

BERTHA: Your dad.

MARY: My daddy.

BERTHA: Your dad got the ticket for him, yeah.

EDWARD: I can see Bill Brown leaving; in fact I did a drawing of it when he left the Buck Creek Ranch. And he probably walked from there to Hampton to catch that stage, the stage as they called it in those days, I betcha. And Percy Forbes, your husband, bought the ticket for Bill to go to Salem.

BERTHA: Yes.

EDWARD: Didn't know that.

MARY: Uh huh. Would you like a cup of coffee?

EDWARD: No thanks.

MARY: You sure?

EDWARD: I just had lunch.

MARY: Ice water.

EDWARD: Ice water. Did, Bertha ---

BERTHA: Yeah.

EDWARD: --- did Bill stop by your house a lot, Bill Brown?

BERTHA: It couldn't have been a lot, I don't know.

MARY: Not very much.

EDWARD: Did he walk, did he walk to your house, Bertha, or did he ride a horse?

BERTHA: I think he walked. He was a very active man. I suppose he walked. Funny I don't remember; don't remember what he looked like.

EDWARD: Tall man, tall, about as tall as I am. Did he have any hair, or was he bald?

BERTHA: I don't remember.

EDWARD: Don't remember. But what are some of the things you had to do out there every day? You got up in the morning, and what is the first thing you did? Thanks, Mary.

Cooked --- Did you cook breakfast, make breakfast?

BERTHA: Yeah, I must have. Can't remember though what I had for breakfast.

EDWARD: Did you ever eat sagehens?

MARY: Yes.

BERTHA: I don't think so.

MARY: Yes, Mama. I can remember Daddy bringing home a sagehen, and you would cook it, uh huh. And you would always say it is tougher than turkey, you had to cook longer, yeah.

EDWARD: What about rabbits?

MARY: Oh yes, she loved rabbits.

BERTHA: We liked rabbits. Cottontails, liked it. Didn't like the jackrabbits, liked the cottontails.

EDWARD: Oh, the cottontails, oh yeah.

MARY: Yeah, she liked rabbit.

EDWARD: Did Percy, did he slaughter his own beef? Did you eat a lot of cows? Did you eat a lot of beef?

MARY: Uh huh. You had cattle, remember you had beef cattle.

BERTHA: Uh huh.

MARY: And you would butcher, and you had that cellar, and you would dry the carcasses down in the cellar and cut off the beef, remember? And you canned some too, and you jerked some.

EDWARD: Oh, that's better.

MARY: Uh huh.

EDWARD: Canned beef, Bertha? You had canned beef?

BERTHA: Uh huh. Yeah, I did lots of things.

MARY: And neighbors would share with one another too when they ---

BERTHA: It's strange that I don't remember the things.

EDWARD: Oh sure, we understand. But see what gets me is I've talked to people that lived on the desert before, and most of the time they were just stuck there, they had no choice, they were just there. I had forgotten --- Bertha, when did you come to Oregon, do you remember? 19---

MARY: '21.

EDWARD: '21.

MARY: July of 1921.

EDWARD: I thought it was 1911.

MARY: Daddy, Daddy came in 19---

EDWARD: Oh, that's where I got it.

BERTHA: People by the name of Ben Rhodes lived at Stauffer.

EDWARD: Ben?

BERTHA: Ben Rhodes.

EDWARD: Loyal Rhodes.

MARY: Yeah, that's his son.

BERTHA: Had a son Loyal.

MARY: He lives in Bend.

EDWARD: Yeah, I interviewed him.

BERTHA: And Perry, Bertha Perry had the Rolyat, Taylor spelled backwards. Rolyat Post Office, Taylor spelled backwards. When we landed there we stayed all night at Perry's, the first night, until I got my things gathered together. Musser's lived up on the hill --- till I got things together we stayed one night at Musser's, I think.

EDWARD: What did you --- did you like the desert when you saw it, after you left Musser's?

BERTHA: I can't remember.

MARY: One thing that she said to me back, years ago, she said they were haying. And Daddy said there were no rattlesnakes. And they were unloading the wagon, out came a rattlesnake. And Daddy said, "She thinks I was, thought I was a liar." He had never seen one. But they were scarce around there.

EDWARD: They are all over there now, they're bad.

MARY: Bad, uh huh.

EDWARD: Well you are right, Bertha, because Perry's --- that place is still standing, but it's about gone.

MARY: About gone, yeah.

EDWARD: Yeah. And it had a rock cistern, big rock ---

MARY: Uh huh, big rock cistern.

EDWARD: That's still standing.

MARY: Uh huh.

EDWARD: Musser's place is gone, it's all laying on the ground, and the well dried up, the spring dried up. And your place is gone. And you can't even find the school anymore. Remember the schoolhouse?

MARY: Yeah, we know where it is. We know, having been there, we can go right to it every time. Just enough of a place that we know.

EDWARD: It's down from the Dewitt place, isn't it?

MARY: Uh huh.

EDWARD: Right.

MARY: And just a mile from our homestead there, a mile.

EDWARD: What did you like about your homestead, Bertha? I'm trying to get whether she liked it or ---

BERTHA: Well ---

EDWARD: Because people ---

BERTHA: Well we could grow things, and we had cattle. You could do things, you know.

MARY: And Daddy could trap, there were lots of coyotes, he was a good trapper. And he flint knapped, he made arrowheads. And he --- Glass Buttes, he shipped out, he was a mineralogist, he took out the mineralogy magazine, and he put ads in there. And people would write to him, they want some of that beautiful rainbow obsidian.

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

MARY: And he'd ship that out, all around, even over to Germany. So they always made it, even in the depression they made it.

EDWARD: Why is it that the Forbes were the last ones, next to the last ones, to leave?

MARY: I think what I'm telling you is a secret. Daddy was very enterprising, he was an entrepreneur. He could make things; he was a machinist by trade. So he could fix all of his equipment. He'd go to town for spare parts now and then, but he could just fix things, keep things going. Where some didn't have the smarts up here, he had the smarts, he could make things go. Very good manager. Make things last, wear it out, use it up. You know what I mean?

EDWARD: That's what ---

MARY: Don't go in debt.

EDWARD: That's like the ranch.

MARY: Those models, they were one of the last to leave.

EDWARD: Dewitt was the last one.

MARY: But they thought of the kids in the school, you see.

EDWARD: That's what I was getting to.

MARY: See Daddy could trap, he could flint knap, he could cut rocks. See he had his own little saw. In that one little shed that's still standing there, that was his place to cut his rocks.

EDWARD: And they left in '30--- you guys left in '35.

MARY: '35, '35.

EDWARD: Yeah school, school was gone then.

MARY: Because see there was no teacher then.

EDWARD: No.

MARY: No, when no teacher replaced Mrs. Pratt, no other teacher would come. Savina Pratt, she died in the nursing home up here.

EDWARD: Yeah, that's what you ---

MARY: Two years ago, she was 107. But the last seven years of her life, not too lucid.

EDWARD: Yeah.

MARY: Uh huh.

BERTHA: Well Bertha is doing great.

MARY: Isn't she doing well? She is doing well.

EDWARD: You smile too, don't you Bertha.

MARY: Yeah she does. Yeah, she laughs too.

EDWARD: Yeah.

MARY: We'll get her laughing. Always had a good outlook on life. Always forgiving.

EDWARD: How did she come from Pennsylvania and live ---

MARY: See, that's right.

EDWARD: --- out there.

MARY: We're the only ones out here. All the relatives are back there.

EDWARD: Yeah.

MARY: But she always was a worker.

EDWARD: This might be a stupid question, Bertha, but how, what makes you live so long?

BERTHA: I was born and raised near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

MARY: I think her faith in God, Ed.

EDWARD: Think so?

MARY: Her forgiving heart, her mercy, every little quality, she is a very merciful person. She never holds anything against anyone, never.

EDWARD: Sounds like my dad.

MARY: Uh huh. And she has always worked hard.

EDWARD: See my dad was a minister all his life.

MARY: Is that right? Uh huh. Now that Chicago Valley Ranch that was hers, they lived

there for a while, but then it burned. The house burned when she was burning brush. The wind whipped it and caught the woodpile, and it took the house.

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

MARY: Daddy was on the trap line. Bobby was just about a year old.

EDWARD: Yeah, Bobby was mentioning that.

MARY: Yeah.

EDWARD: What was your maiden name, Bertha?

BERTHA: Gettman.

EDWARD: Gettman.

BERTHA: G E T T M A N.

EDWARD: I'm trying to remember whether I saw that on the --- because Bill Brown owned a lot of Chicago, all that.

MARY: Uh huh.

BERTHA: I had a brother that --- I forget now what ---

MARY: Albert was a minister; your brother Albert was a minister, Presbyterian minister. Irving was a well driller for oil wells.

EDWARD: Oh, for oil.

MARY: And Herman, Herman had a gas station.

EDWARD: What a mixture.

MARY: And Russell had a bad injury in college, in football, and it crippled him mentally. His mind, his mind went and he had to go to a nursing home, in one of those homes.

EDWARD: I was thinking, I've had six knee operations.

MARY: My goodness.

EDWARD: That's crippled my mind sometimes, I get sick of it. Bertha, is there anything you want to tell me about Lost Creek Valley? Did you work hard?



BERTHA: I suppose I did, I always liked to work.

MARY: Daddy would cut the hay with the mower, and you would rake it into windrows. Remember how you had the rake, the big rake, you know the big tines? And you had an old horse, Blackie, that was kind of stubborn. And he was pulling the rake one day, and this one little rein came off, and he knew it, so he started to run, remember? And you had a wild run, didn't you? And you fell off of the rake, and the old tine was just a bouncing like this, and bouncing like this, and it came right down through your straw hat and just scraped the top of your head, remember? She was carrying my baby sister Frances; she lived through the whole thing. She is tough, tough little thing. (Laughter) Well Daddy, Daddy got rid of that horse. Was more than he could take.

EDWARD: See, I wondered. I've interviewed four old timers, I've asked them some pretty serious questions, even in relation to sex and how they dealt with that, and how they --- what little, one shack, you know how big those shacks were. How they worried about food, and why they stayed there. And this is in ...

MARY: Yeah, sure.

EDWARD: And the woman's viewpoint of that life has never been written about, nobody cares about ---

MARY: But they are the cement that keeps the family together.

EDWARD: Oh sure.

MARY: The women, the women, yeah. The men dream, and they do their things, and the women go along. They help that man secure his dream.

EDWARD: Is that, Bertha has told you, or have you just seen that?

MARY: Well she's --- I've seen that, yeah I've seen that in women.

EDWARD: By the way tape recorder, this is --- we're talking with Bertha, what's her maiden name?

MARY: Gettman.

EDWARD: Detman.

MARY: Gettman.

EDWARD: Gettman.

MARY: G E T T M A N.

EDWARD: Bertha Gettman Forbes, that was born in 1892 in Pennsylvania, who married Percy L. Forbes in 1921. Went to Lost Creek Valley. Where did they get married?

MARY: They were married right there in Harmony, Pennsylvania.

EDWARD: Okay, in Pennsylvania. Bertha had never seen Lost Creek Valley, or the desert. I bet you that was a shock, Bertha.

MARY: Their honeymoon was in a Model-T car coming from the west. And my Aunt Florence, Daddy's sister, has a great sense of humor; she was a teacher, a spinster like me. And when they went to bed that night in the car, they looked up, and she had put up there, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, send Lizzie, the car, home for Pappy's sake." Because the father had learned to drive the car, and he is going to miss it when his son took the car away on the wedding trip. (Laughter)

EDWARD: But nobody has ever heard the viewpoint of the ladies that lived that life, and it is kind of sad. And sometimes ---

MARY: Uh huh. Well, you know, in some ways it is kind of a man's world.

EDWARD: It is.

MARY: And that's why you have, you have now, and you have this over reaction of women. But if they were smart, they wouldn't over react so much.

EDWARD: I don't like what's going on.

MARY: No, I don't like it.

EDWARD: Nobody has a point. Nobody seems to know what the hell they're doing.

MARY: No, no, we women have to realize that the men are God given authority over the family, and they are the priests of the home. And they're not supposed to be doing the men's work. And I'm against women in combat, I'm against that whole bit. That's just wild, it's just crazy.

EDWARD: Nobody, you know 54% of the children go to school from the State of Oregon live with a single parent. It's a zoo, because nobody knows what they're supposed to do. I knew my role raising my children, and I did not want my wife to work.

MARY: Uh huh.

EDWARD: And, oh, I don't want to get into it.

(END OF TAPE)

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