

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #386 - Side B

Subject: Don Miller

Date: July 3, 1994

Place: Miller Ranch - Harney County

Interviewer: Edward Gray

Release Form: No

EDWARD GRAY: This is Edward Gray with Don Miller at Don's ranch on the west side of Harney Lake, Don? Are we on the west side of Harney Lake?

DON MILLER: Northwest.

EDWARD: Northwest end of Harney Lake.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: And Don is, how old are you Don, 70---

DON: 72.

EDWARD: 72. Oh, thank you. And we're going to discuss a little bit about Pete French, and a few other folk, if I can remember them all. Don, where were you born?

DON: September 19th, 1922.

EDWARD: And, Harney County?

DON: Yeah, Burns.

EDWARD: Burns. Your dad was Taft?

DON: Miller.

EDWARD: Taft Miller. Who was George Miller, any relation to you?

DON: He was my granddad.

EDWARD: And George Miller was Taft's dad?

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: I see, okay. When did the Millers come to Harney County, do you know?

DON: Nope.

EDWARD: Did they first settle in Lake County?

DON: I don't know, I don't think so.

EDWARD: George Calderwood, did you ever hear of the Calderwoods?

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: George Calderwood is 85, and he thought that the Millers settled in Lake, and then kind of spread out, but that's all right. Your father ---

DON: Well they could have, but I don't know.

EDWARD: How old was your father when he passed away, Don?

DON: Well you'd have to ask Janet when he died. It was, he would have been 101, if he was living. And he died about 12 years ago or something like that.

EDWARD: Did anybody ever talk; interview him about history, your father?

DON: Not very many. He never told us much.

EDWARD: Your dad was a pretty tough guy?

DON: Oh, I don't know if he was or not. My granddad, I guess, was pretty tough. I never crossed him, but he was a good man they all ...

MAN: Taft was kind of a quiet guy, wasn't he?

DON: Huh?

MAN: Whenever I was around him he was kind of quiet.

DON: Yeah, he never said much.

MAN: When he come up here.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: But he died at a 100 years old.

DON: No, he wasn't a 100.

EDWARD: Oh.

DON: He would have been a 100 if he was alive now. He died 10, 12 years ago.

EDWARD: I see, okay.

DON: 80---

EDWARD: Yeah, he was up there.

DON: 80 something.

EDWARD: I want to just, a couple things about your dad, Taft Miller. How did he end up with the Rock Creek Ranch?

DON: Bought it from Swift and Company.

EDWARD: And Swift and Company owned part of the Frenchglen.

DON: Yeah, they owned it all.

EDWARD: They owned it all, I see.

DON: They owned Roaring Springs, and Home Creek, and Three Mile.

EDWARD: Did your father own Three Mile, or just Rock Creek?

DON: Just Rock Creek.

EDWARD: Okay. Was, do you know anything about Rock Creek Ranch,

if Pete French owned that by himself in the 1890's?

DON: I don't know how --- I've asked a lot of people about that. When Pete French come, you know, with the cattle from --- by the book, and I don't know if anybody told me this, by the book. He come to Rock Creek and then it was a good year, you know, and lots of grass out all through there. He wanted to stay there, he had, I think he said by the book 1,200 cattle and these horses, and all the Mexican buckaroos. But this guy says no, he says, go one more day, and the P Ranch is better. So they went down there to the P Ranch and this, there was a guy up the river there that had a few cows, and they got wild on him, he was a mining. His name was Porter, he branded with this P. So he was mad at his cows, and everything, so French just bought the cows and started branding with the P.

EDWARD: That's where that came from.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: Okay, this is real important, now what you're saying, Don, is that the P brand didn't come from Peter, it came from ---

DON: Porter.

EDWARD: Porter.

DON: Yeah, he bought Porter's cows, that's what they tell me.

EDWARD: Bought the iron, so to speak.

DON: Bought the cows and the iron. This old guy, he was a miner, and they got wild on him, and he was mad at them. I don't know if he had 15 or 20, or whatever he had, but, so he just sold them to

him. Pete French just bought them, I guess.

EDWARD: Back to the Rock Creek Ranch. Did you ever hear of a man named Chico?

DON: Of what?

EDWARD: A man named Chico?

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: Frank ---

DON: I know Chico, Chico, Mexican.

EDWARD: Right.

DON: I didn't know him, but I've heard of Chico. Yeah, ... he was a buckaroo. I think he was a, buckarood in Warner quite a bit, Chico did. Cogg (sp.?) McKee was telling me about him being over there.

EDWARD: Right.

DON: I don't know how long he was over there.

EDWARD: What about Chappo?

DON: Chappo was right here at, worked for Hanley for years, over at the Double O.

EDWARD: At the Double O.

DON: Yeah. But he come, I think he come with French, but I ain't sure. But he --- I never, don't remember Chappo, but I remember his wife. She was a tough old woman, you know, smoked cigarettes. And when I was just that high, and no woman smoked then ... And we used to go to Burns, and she had a place in there, and we'd just camp out them days, you know, it was summertime.

EDWARD: Sure.

DON: She'd roll them old bull Durham cigarettes. And she had a, a lot of cats. They lived right down there this side of the schoolhouse, old Chappo did. She had old Chappo hauling them dead cows in, and everything, for them goddamn cats. She must have had a 100 of the sons-of-bitches. So when my mother told me this, I remember this --- I think his name was Wintergreen or something, he was kind of a nice feller, you know, all dressy. And he'd come by going to town, and --- I think he was chopping her some wood or something, she was going to get him something to eat, or something, and these cats was all around. And she says, he says, "My Mrs. Chappo, how do you feed all them cats?" She says, "You're the second son-of-a-bitch that has asked me that today." (Laughter)

EDWARD: There were some tough women around, tough women.

DON: Yeah, but old Chappo, they said they had him --- And then old Chappo when he'd get drunk, he'd get mean, you know. And he'd beat her up two or three times, so she --- he got drunk and was laid out, and she sewed him in the god damned sheets, sewed him up and just beat the Christ out of the old fellow, damned near killed him.

MAN: I never heard of that before.

EDWARD: You better not tell your wife that.

DON: Yeah. Went to a dance or something at The Narrows and old Chappo got drunk, you know, and a fighting and everything. So

some way or another she got him, a rope around him, and tied it to the buggy and just drug him for several miles. (Laughter) I guess he was --- But anyhow, hell the buckaroos told me that Elmer Dunn and them talked to the timers, and old Chappo was buckarooing, why he'd get drunk, why they'd just tie him up. Just tie the old son-of-a-bitch up. Because he was ornery, he was an ornery old son-of-a-bitch. Oh, they'd just tie him up. He was a little old short guy, they ...

EDWARD: Like Two-Gun-Sue up here, old Harry Arnold's wife, you know, she was like that.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: Man, she was --- Jesus, Jesus, criminy.

DON: Old Bob, well you know Bob, you know. He is kind of a nice guy, you know, and he went out there one day and she was a chopping her wood, you know, she was going to feed him dinner. She was a tough old gal.

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

DON: Goddamn he brought in a load of wood and it was a little too long. She says, "God damn it," she says, "what the hell you measuring that by your ..." (Laughter) Old Two-Gun-Sue said.

EDWARD: She was at Wagontire.

DON: She was ... old Arnold. She'd come in there; I don't think they was ever married.

EDWARD: Oh yeah. Yeah, they were.

DON: Did they finally get married?

EDWARD: Yeah, yeah. I got the marriage certificate.

DON: Two-Gun-Sue ---

EDWARD: She was from hell, man. Why, get down to business, why was Pete French killed, in your estimation, Mr. Don Miller?

DON: Well ---

EDWARD: What have you heard, or what's your thoughts, your theories?

DON: What I --- anybody that comes into a country and does all right, whatever he does, the ordinary person is jealous of him, right? You know, you might have noticed it, see. Well when French come here, of course they all say he crowded them, which he crowded them; there was lots of homesteaders. And so then they all got to thinking that he was a crowding him, but he was a big man, see.

EDWARD: A lot of money, he had a lot of money.

DON: Yeah, old Glenn behind him had a lot of money.

EDWARD: Yeah.

DON: But he, old Cogg told me, Cogg McKee told me, Caldwell, and Oliver, and somebody else. Oliver lived at Rocky Ford Lane, and Pete French, he had a family, and he took his cows to Winnemucca, and helped him, you know, a lot.

EDWARD: Now who helped who, Don?

DON: Pete French helped Oliver.

EDWARD: Helped Ed Oliver.

DON: Ed Oliver, he helped him a lot, you know. But anyway they,



this Caldwell and them, I think Caldwell must have been kind of a ornery bastard anyway.

EDWARD: They were related.

DON: Oliver and Caldwell were?

EDWARD: Yeah.

DON: Were they, I don't know.

EDWARD: Yeah.

DON: But anyway, old Cogg told me that there was another guy there too, or maybe two more, three or four of them, and they met down there. These settlers was mad at French, you see, even though he --- hell he trailed their cows to Winnemucca and sell them for them, and give them the money. Or he did Oliver and some of them guys. They only had a few, you know. And they drawed straws as to who was going to kill French, and Oliver got the short one. Now that's what old Cogg told me.

EDWARD: Now Cogg is who, Don, Cogg McKee.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: M c K E E.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: McKee.

DON: Yeah. And he was an old timer. His dad owned that place in Diamond, and he owned that place in, over at Warner Valley, the Hart Ranch. He finally got that Hart Ranch.

EDWARD: Oh yeah, yeah.

DON: Seven D's had it, his brother. Deke died just about a year

ago. Cogg died about 6 or 8 years ago. But anyway old Cogg was from Diamond. See old Cogg, he couldn't write his name, but he was a smart old son-of-a-bitch. He'd squint that one eye, and he knew what he was talking about that old boy. That's what he told me about French.

EDWARD: Did, was Ed Oliver in your estimation, from the people you've heard and that --- you've talked to a lot of old timers that are now gone, you know, and it just hurts every time I lose one. It just hurts a historian immensely. But what did, what have you heard from the old timers you've talked to, about Ed Oliver's character, what type of person he was. Was he good, bad, or what?

DON: I don't know. When I was a kid they said that when Oliver won the, they didn't send him up, they had all them settlers on there, they didn't hang him or anything.

EDWARD: Oh, the trial.

DON: The trial. And then nobody ever heard of him, except they always told me he run off with a whore, and left that, well left his wife down here that old Pete Petersen married.

EDWARD: Right.

DON: And then two boys, well Dale knows, he went to school with ---

EDWARD: Burt and Roy.

DON: Yeah, he went to school with one of their daughters; I don't know which one, whether it was Lola. But now I don't know, the

character of him or a damn thing.

EDWARD: He, you're exactly right, the court records state in 1899 he run off with what they called a common whore, saloon lady. Her name was Anna Ward, Ward.

DON: Yeah. And then I heard that he did go crazy afterwards, you know. Probably working on him, shooting a man that had helped him, I would say. I've heard that, but I don't know if that is right or not, you know, that he finally went to the insane asylum.

EDWARD: I'm a thorough, thorough researcher, and I'm going to find out, I hope, what happened to Edward Lee Oliver. Nobody seems to know.

DON: I don't know, that's all I know. And then two little boys, old Pete Petersen married the woman.

EDWARD: Yeah, Ida Simmons Oliver.

DON: And dad, my dad was raised down here at the Moon place, you know, and he said that he played with them little kids all the time. And they'd go out and gather up all them old bones, them little Oliver boys, and they'd make a big old pile and then they'd have a big branding. They'd build a fire and burn them. The little kids didn't have so much to play with in them days, you know.

EDWARD: Was where Helen Moon lives now, that was your dad's place?

DON: My granddad's.

EDWARD: Your granddad's.

DON: My dad was raised there.

EDWARD: That was George Miller's place.

DON: Yep.

EDWARD: Do you know who bought that George Miller's place?

DON: Sizemore.

EDWARD: Sizemore, right.

DON: Otis, not Otis, Efe (sp.?) Sizemore.

EDWARD: Efe.

DON: Efe. And then Moon's mother, she died here 20 years ago.

EDWARD: Right.

DON: She had a homestead out there, and then she come in, and old Efe, well I guess finally married her, she, and then she got the ranch.

EDWARD: Yeah.

DON: He was an old man.

EDWARD: We've talked about that stuff with Helen Moon.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: What about Billy Dunn, did you know Billy J. Dunn?

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: What kind of character was this guy?

DON: He was a good man.

EDWARD: He owned a lot of property down there on the south side of Malheur Lake.

DON: Yeah, he did, quite a lot.

EDWARD: Died in 1945.

DON: I think so.

EDWARD: Yeah. He --- what role did he play, do you know, in this Pete French death, if any?

DON: I didn't know that he played any in it. I don't know. Dave Crow, Johnny's dad ---

EDWARD: Right.

DON: --- told Georgia and she wrote it down, told them all the guys that, the buckaroos that was there when Pete was killed.

EDWARD: Right.

DON: She's got it wrote down, all of them there.

EDWARD: Got that, yeah.

DON: You got that.

EDWARD: I'm going to be talking to Johnny in a couple days, yeah.

DON: And Georgia has got all that. And then --- but of course, see this Oliver, after Pete had helped him a lot, really helped him a lot, then Oliver he started --- I don't know, he was stealing his cows, and wouldn't let him go through his land or something. So then Pete French told him never to come back when he was a working cattle or, on his land I guess, I've heard that. So he come back and Pete French always worked cattle with a buggy whip, you know, on his horse. That's what ... So he told Oliver to leave, and he didn't leave, and he started running him off with that buggy whip, I heard, with his saddle whip ...

EDWARD: With a buggy whip.

DON: That's what I heard.

EDWARD: Is that what Taft told you, your father told you?

DON: Yeah, that's what he told me.

EDWARD: Do you know where that murder occurred?

DON: In the Wright Field, right down there below the Sod House.

EDWARD: Do you know exactly, the exact spot, Don?

DON: No, I don't. And I don't know who would know.

EDWARD: John Crow does, but the trouble is, it's approximately a mile walk from the nearest road, and I don't know whether John could make that, you know. And John Scharff knows too. I'm going to get John Crow, John Scharff --- Dee, Dee Swisher --- Bill Swisher and Harold Gibson, and we're all going to get together and go down there and find that place.

DON: The exact spot. I don't know where it is. I know it is the Wright Field, but ---

EDWARD: Right.

DON: I know about where the Wright Field was.

EDWARD: Yeah, it's hard to calculate the difference from the Big Sagebrush Field, and the Wright Field. And the fences may have been changed. I don't even know if the fences are there anymore. I don't think they are.

DON: Yeah, I don't know, I just know where the Wright Field, about where it is. I've been up there some, but I ---

EDWARD: What about, did you ever meet --- you were born in 1922.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: Alva Springer?

DON: No.

EDWARD: He died in 1935, so that's, that would be pushing it.

DON: Yeah. He left the country, and left Wilbur and ---

EDWARD: That's right.

DON: --- and Billy Tucke's wife.

EDWARD: Eddy.

DON: Clara, wasn't it.

EDWARD: Clara I'm seeing Wednesday. Clara Springer Tucke.

DON: Oh, is she alive yet, Clara?

EDWARD: Yeah, yeah, she is coming down from Caldwell, Idaho, with one of her daughters and we're going to meet at the Burns Library Thursday. She has a bunch of photographs too, yeah.

DON: She would be real old, that's Billy Tucke's wife.

EDWARD: She is 80---, going on 86.

DON: Well she must be that. Wilbur was younger than ... and I think he died.

EDWARD: Wilbur was older.

DON: Was Wilbur older than Clara?

EDWARD: Wilbur was born in 1906. I talked to Elva Springer, who married Wilbur in Salem, two weeks ago. He died two years ago.

DON: Wilbur did.

EDWARD: Yeah, and he knew all of this stuff. He was a historian, and he loved to talk about Pete French. See French, Pete French sued the Springer's, took them to court to try to get them off the land.

DON: They owned that big spring where the refuge is.

EDWARD: That's right.

DON: Yeah, that's where they was.

EDWARD: Lewis Springer and Alva Springer. And French took them to court and he went to the Supreme Court with it, and then he was killed, you know, in the meantime.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: And Frenchglen, of course, took over. Well they had taken over before that, but anyway, they lost, Springer's won.

DON: I knew they had a lot of lawsuits down there over that Malheur Lake, the meander rights and all that.

EDWARD: Right. Just one after another.

DON: Yeah, they, all them settlers, you know, claimed meander rights to the center of the lake, you know, they was living around it.

EDWARD: It was a battle.

DON: And they all had lots of lawsuits. And French was, I think wanted to run cattle in there or something. And I don't know how it ever come out.

EDWARD: Well finally they all lost.

DON: Yeah, they probably did.

EDWARD: Yeah. The government said, you're out of here, 1935, get out of here. Wilbur just about had a fit. I don't blame him. A couple other names, Don, Reineman.

DON: I didn't know him, no.



EDWARD: Okay.

DON: The Reineman place sits down there.

EDWARD: Simmons.

DON: Simmons was the man that, Oliver's wife was a Simmons.

EDWARD: Correct. Did you know any of the Simmons, like Burt Simmons, James Simmons? That's all I can think of right now.

DON: I ---

EDWARD: Nancy Simmons, no she died.

DON: I knew one Simmons that was related to ... maybe a brother to --- its been 40 years ago though, would he be a brother to Oliver's wife at that time or not.

EDWARD: Probably was. There were a lot of them.

DON: Yeah. Their dad was a barber in town.

EDWARD: Yeah, he was related to Ida.

DON: A barber.

EDWARD: Yeah. And I forgot, George, was it George? Oh, that was George Cawlfieid. The Cawlfieid's were married to Simmons too, that's how they were related, yeah.

DON: I knew old George Cawlfieid real good.

EDWARD: Let's see, you told me something on the phone that was real interesting, now I just forgot it, Don. Gad dang it. About something your father had told you about Pete French, and now I'll be doggone if I can remember it. I think it had to do with what your dad told you about Tebo. Do you recall Tebo?

DON: Yeah, I knew him good.

EDWARD: Maybe that was it.

DON: Old Tebo was sold with the ranches, you know. The old man, when Swift bought the estate from Frenchglen, the estate --- old Tebo went with, they had to buy Tebo just like they had to buy old Lou Willard down here at the Double O when Hanley sold the Double O to the refuge. Well they had to keep old Lou Willard on, I don't know, \$20.00 a month, \$30.00, or whatever they was paying, and Tebo the same way. They had to, you know.

EDWARD: When did, approximately when did Tebo die, and where, do you have any idea? That I don't know.

DON: He died in Burns.

EDWARD: Oh, he did?

DON: After the government took over Tebo stayed there ---

EDWARD: That would have been '35 approximately. So he stayed there.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: Was he still there during World War II?

DON: When did they, the government bought it in '34, didn't they?

EDWARD: '34, '35, yeah, right in there.

DON: Tebo stayed there and camped. I think he just bached there. Because they put a man there, I think, Arthur Page was there, at the big house working for the government. And he died in that winter of; I think it was '37 and '38.

EDWARD: '37, '38, okay.

DON: When they had all that --- everybody in Harney County, it

was a tough son-of-a-bitching winter, and they all got pneumonia and died. Vickers died ---

EDWARD: Vickers, oh boy.

DON: And Arthur Page, and the butcher in Burns got it and died, old Schroder. He was a young man. And there was just a whole lot of them died. And my sister had pneumonia, and Joe had pneumonia, and he damn near died. He was worse, he was only 2 or 3 years old ... was born, I think. We was at Voltage then, leased a place from old --- well I don't know whether it was that Alfred Marshall or ---

EDWARD: Probably.

DON: --- or ... Owned a house up there, at old Voltage, you know. We was leasing pasture from Elmer Dunn's, it was a dry year and had our cows and horses, saddle horses down there. And then we stayed there until we had to move back with the cows. And then we got a little hay from the Company. Then ---

EDWARD: When did you come here, you, yourself, Don, to this place?

DON: '58.

EDWARD: And where was the home ranch before that? I know it wasn't over there.

DON: Right here. This is the Obiago place.

EDWARD: The whose?

DON: Obiago.

EDWARD: Obiago.

DON: French Basque. I bought the ranch and the sheep.

EDWARD: Whose place is that on down?

DON: That's the old Tyler place.

EDWARD: Tyler.

DON: And this --- Tylers and Parkers was related. This is the old Parker place before Obiago had it.

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

DON: And they were related someway.

EDWARD: Parker and Tyler, the Tyler that is in Burns now?

DON: Well them boys, them young ones, Lester ---

EDWARD: Right.

DON: --- Lester's dad. Lester has been dead ... and I think some way or another the mother or the brother was a Parker, and they were related.

EDWARD: Well didn't, wasn't it May Parker married Link Hutton?

DON: Maybe.

EDWARD: Yeah. May Parker Tyler Hutton, that's where all that came from.

DON: After, in later years after Link killed that Bradley boy.

EDWARD: Yeah.

DON: He married the Parker girl.

EDWARD: Yeah. Hattie May was the mother of the Tyler kids over there. That's where I got the ---

DON: In Burns?

EDWARD: Yeah. That's where I got the pictures of the ---

DON: No, not the mother of them, because that was old Lester's wife. She lived with him till he died.

EDWARD: Oh this relative stuff gets over my head.

DON: No, it wasn't her.

EDWARD: Okay. She was a Parker.

DON: Might have been Lester's sister.

EDWARD: Yeah, could have been.

DON: Must have been.

EDWARD: They're all related around here somehow. Well, anyway, it is in there someplace.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: Anything else, Don, about old Pete French and Ed Oliver, and all the other things that occurred down there, do you recall? The old south side of Malheur Lake? I can't think --- I brought all that stuff in here, and I ---

DON: I don't know any more about it, only that Indian uprising, Corey told me, old Corey Smyth told me about that. You already know about that.

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

DON: Coon Smyth and ---

EDWARD: Yeah, that's pretty well documented. And when they left here, they came up through here and went up to Wagontire, some of them, just slaughtered the cows that were up there, they run on Wagontire, 1878. In fact ---

DON: The Indians did?

EDWARD: Yeah. Rube Long's dad ---

DON: Oh that was the battleground of ---

EDWARD: No, they went over, some of those Indians went over to Wagontire and killed a bunch of cattle. Then they went back to where ... Cecil's place was, you know, and had that mess. Yeah, they killed a bunch of cattle on Wagontire, 1878. That's in here too, and it's pretty verified.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: Read the appendix. Because there was a Tim Allen, Tim Allen --- an old name, he worked for Bill Hanley for years. He was here in 1878.

DON: Bill Allen that worked for the Company out there.

EDWARD: Bill Allen, Tim Allen, Bill Allen. It's all in here, I can't remember for sure, but ---

DON: Yeah, you were ---

EDWARD: But he states, he went out there. You know where Boneyard Corral is on the east side of Wagontire Mountain?

DON: No.

EDWARD: No. Well that's how it got its name. And he went out there after the Indians came through here in 1878 and killed all the cattle. It states clearly what happened, which is kind of surprising.

DON: Well what --- and French was alive then, huh?

EDWARD: Oh yeah.

DON: Well Bill Allen didn't run the outfit only a long time

after, for Swift.

EDWARD: Yeah, I think the guy's name was Tim Allen. He was here in 1870's, this Allen guy.

DON: Oh yeah.

EDWARD: That's, Don, that's all I can think of right now.

DON: Okay.

EDWARD: I've been talking all day.

DON: Who you been talking about?

EDWARD: Oh Pete French, this book.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: With the Marshall's, with the O'Connor's.

DON: Did they talk about old Alfred Marshall?

EDWARD: Oh yeah. Gary and Georgia have Alfred Marshall's wife's stuff, just historical things. A lot of historical information. Diaries, papers from Voltage ---

DON: Did they have about him stealing the money out of the post office and all that?

EDWARD: Oh no, they just got part of it. Gary's dad, yeah I've read about that.

DON: Uh huh, he was an ornery old fellow.

EDWARD: Oh by the way, Don, I forgot something. This George Miller guy, why did he --- did he shoot old poor Warren Curtis?

DON: He killed Curtis.

EDWARD: What the hell was that all about?

DON: Yeah, he killed Curtis. Curtis stole his horses, and my

aunt told me this. I didn't know this until after I come here from the Double O. My Aunt Frankie, the oldest girl, told me.

EDWARD: What did she tell you, Don?

DON: She told me that my granddad went to Curtis and told him that you got two of my colts in there.

EDWARD: What, in the corral?

DON: Yeah, they weaned them off of the mares, they was yearlings, and Curtis --- and then they got to talking they was going to have, my granddad said he had to bring them back or something, and get the sheriff to get them back. Curtis told my granddad, he said, "You can do anything you want to, but you can't do nothing to me because I'm a Mason."

EDWARD: Oh, the fraternity thing?

DON: Huh?

EDWARD: The Club.

DON: Yeah, he figured all the guys in town, the law people, was ---

EDWARD: All Masons?

DON: --- Masons or something, the lawyers or something. And so then he went to the D.A., and the D.A. told him, and he went to the sheriff, and the sheriff told him the same thing, to take the mares back and put them with the colts.

EDWARD: They told George that.

DON: Someway, yes. And that's what he was a doing. And that night that he took the mares back over there, and he went to the



gate to let the colts out, old Curtis had them in the corral. Curtis opened the door and just shooting right past him. My Aunt Frankie said went right by a big gatepost, just knocked the bark right off of it. So then my granddad was a pretty good shot so --- it was night, but I guess Curtis was in the ... way of the light. And my granddad killed him.

EDWARD: Not guilty, self-defense.

DON: I think he was --- somebody stole something from me, I think you ought to have his side of the story too, whether it was, whether he --- I don't know, if somebody --- I'd probably shoot somebody too if he stole something from me. And then maybe they'd just say I was wrong, and give me away. But nobody --- my granddad probably killed a lot of people. He was a scout in the Modoc War, and killed maybe lots of Indians.

EDWARD: Yeah.

DON: But he didn't just kill, go out and kill people without a reason.

EDWARD: Right.

DON: And that a lot of people blame him --- and old Marcus Haines was, his mother was a Curtis, married a Curtis, talked about how bad he was, and how he was a Pete French man and all that. But of course him and Pete French was together when they was, that Indian uprising and ---

EDWARD: Right.

DON: --- and went out there to get them horses one night. And I

guess they got the horses, but ---

EDWARD: Yeah, they got most of them, yeah. When did that, when did that occur? Was it right after 1900?

DON: God I wouldn't know, I don't know a damn thing. I didn't even know about it until my aunt told me about it. I guess she thought I was dumb as hell. I was dumb as hell, I ---

EDWARD: Did your aunt tell you where it was? Was it on the south side of Malheur Lake, do you know, where the killing, where the shooting took place?

DON: Right at The Narrows, I think.

EDWARD: You think? Yeah, I'm not sure.

DON: Or else it was at --- Curtis had that ranch right down below, the old Curtis place. Now it might have been at that, right at that ranch, I don't know.

EDWARD: George Curtis, you know Ed Oliver went to George Curtis' house to have lunch before he went out and shot Pete French.

DON: Oh, is that right?

EDWARD: Yeah.

DON: Was Curtis mad at French too?

EDWARD: Oh, evidently.

DON: They was ---

EDWARD: Yeah.

DON: Because old Cogg told me --- maybe he was one of them that drew the straws, because that's what old Cogg told me.

EDWARD: You think Cogg is pretty darn accurate, huh?

DON: Yeah, old Cogg, he wasn't there but he knew --- if a guy told him something he knew whether he was lying or not. So if somebody told him that he probably figured ---

EDWARD: Well we've got only one problem ---

DON: ...

EDWARD: --- with that. And I don't know how in the world you work this out. You just give the facts and let people make up their own minds. I don't have one thing against Oliver, French, whatever, I don't care much about that. I just want to get some pictures and such, but ---

Elizabeth Wood wrote a book on Pete French in 1951. Now it wasn't by any means an accurate book, it was more like a novel, kind of a Lonesome Dove type thing. And what she wrote, a lot of it was total B.S.

DON: Oh, yeah.

EDWARD: For example, she says that Pete French was scared to death of Link Hutton in 1878. Link Hutton in 1878 was 6 years old. (Laughter)

DON: Well now ---

EDWARD: You know, it goes on and on. She is the one that states in that book, that's the first Pete French book, okay. There is only two Pete French books, that was the first one. And she also states in there that the men got together at a, all the settlers got together and they drew straws on who was going to kill Pete French.

DON: Did she say that in the book too?

EDWARD: Yeah, yeah.

DON: Old Cogg never read a book, somebody told him that.

EDWARD: Okay, that's what I'm looking for. Because she is now dead, of course.

DON: Well there was a whole bunch of guys got together, and they was three of them I know, but they could have been a dozen of them drawing straws, and Oliver got the short end of it.

EDWARD: But you're, and what you're saying Don is, this Cogg he didn't read nothing, but he knew what the hell was going on.

DON: No he didn't --- Yeah, yeah, that's what I think ...

EDWARD: Well you're the third person that has said this.

DON: He was pretty much an old timer, old Cogg, you know. Of course he was in Warner more than he was ---

EDWARD: Warner Valley?

DON: Warner Valley. But then he lived here in later years on that ranch there. Dad had it for years and years, and then he'd come feed cattle and everything. But what I mean he was at Warner a lot too.

EDWARD: He was down there with those Calderwoods. Calderwoods owned a, they had the Hart Ranch for a while; they had a pile of land down in there. Not the MC or anything like that, but --- Kittredge.

DON: Well the 7T had the Hart Ranch and ... Fine, I don't know whether he owned it, or had it. And then Bollen got killed over

there, drowned in that slough. I guess they'd swum that quite a bit, but --- Cogg said that he didn't know, that he didn't know but what the guy that was with him might have hit him over the head, but he didn't know.

EDWARD: Oh, it was a mess.

DON: Old Bollen Kline.

EDWARD: It was a mess back in those days.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: There was a murder a week in Harney County.

DON: Probably more than ---

EDWARD: I don't know how many are buried out there in Wagontire.

DON: Five killings there.

EDWARD: Yeah.

DON: And there is only about five people that live there.

EDWARD: There is five known killings.

DON: Yeah, five known killings.

EDWARD: And there is three people that disappeared off the face of the earth too, but I didn't say much about that.

DON: ...

EDWARD: You can't believe how many people told me, seriously, if you're going to kill somebody just take them out to Wagontire and throw them off there. Well you can do that anywhere out here. My god almighty ... just drop them off out there. Jesus, criminy.

Photos, photos Don, do you happen by any chance to have any photographs of the old Sod House Ranch?

DON: No.

EDWARD: Goddamn. I am not having any luck with that at all. I don't know what --- Emanuel Clark was there for a long time.

DON: Yeah, Emanuel Clark was there when French was killed.

EDWARD: Oh, that reminds me. Do you know if any kids of Emanuel Clark are around?

DON: No, I think they're all dead. I think he only had one boy, Roy.

EDWARD: Oh, they had three kids, I think. It is in the census, but I can't remember off the top of my head.

DON: There was a girl that married a Cleveland ---

EDWARD: There was a girl.

DON: --- over at Drewsey. I think that was Roy's sister. And then maybe he had a sister that married ---

EDWARD: He had two, yeah that's right.

DON: --- a guy that owned the Colony Ranch.

EDWARD: But they're all gone.

DON: I think they're all gone now. And Roy's wife just died, Ethel, just died not very long ago.

EDWARD: Oh, geeze.

DON: But she wouldn't have helped you any, because she didn't even know me when I went to visit.

EDWARD: Oh, no.

DON: Her mind was gone.

EDWARD: We cannot find any old pictures of the Sod House Ranch.

I don't know why, it's crazy. Okay, that's it for now, Don, I appreciate it.

DON: Yeah.

EDWARD: Appreciate it.

(END OF TAPE)

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