

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #396 - Sides A/B

Subject: Francis & Laurence Miller

Date: May 1989

Place:

Interviewers: Anne & Norm Clark

(Note: Sound quality on this tape is very, very poor. Cannot pick up most of the conversations. Pick up a little on Side B with some of the stories. Tape available for listening. Do not know which Miller is which in the conversations.)

SIDE A

... (Unable to transcribe)

SIDE B

... (Unable to transcribe the beginning.)

ANNE CLARK: ... I'd had been there all night. It was 10:30 or something before I left.

MILLER 1: Remember that outfit that came to the ranch, we were just kids, about 4 or 5 years old? And they had an old Studebaker touring car, and they left there, and they came over, and they wrecked that over there right before they got to the Johnson place.

MILLER 2: ... Old Amos ...

MILLER 1: No.

MILLER 2: No, he turned his car around, stood it right on end in that slough going up there, out by Johnny Sword's.

MILLER 1: Yeah. There were three or four guys in there, and they were all drunk.

MILLER 2: Oh, that was the same outfit.

MILLER 1: What was the name of that old buzzard, one of those guys that was in there? I never will forget him. He used to be around the ranch over there some. Can't remember his name, was trying to think of it yesterday. But anyway, he run that old Studebaker right over the bank there, about 10 feet down. Didn't hurt any of them, I guess they were too pickled. (Laughter) Just tore the top off the Studebaker, and they got it set up some way and kept a going.

MILLER 2: Yeah, I remember. I saw the thing, and you did too.

MILLER 1: Oh, I did too, yeah. That old top laid there for years, down in the bottom of that ... Old Claude ... Wonder it hadn't killed them all.

ANNE: It's a wonder. There is probably enough wrecks and stuff that ...

MILLER 2: They was too drunk to get killed.

ANNE: Yeah. It's a wonder there weren't more, changing from horses to cars. It's a good thing they didn't start out with cars like we have now, or they really would have killed themselves.

MILLER 2: They said that Howard come to town with a load of family, his family in the car, down there one time. Drove up to the store and hollered whoa, and it didn't stop. (Laughter)

ANNE: He ran into the store?

MILLER 2: He run into the sidewalk.

ANNE: Oh no.

MILLER 1: Well I'll tell you what, our dad was about as a poor a driver as I've ever seen.

MILLER 2: Oh boy, he sure ---

MILLER 1: He never did learn to slow up. He'd come up to stop; he'd come up and stop. If he had brakes he'd stop, if he didn't, he didn't.

NORM CLARK: I can remember him driving around here when I was a

MILLER 2: I was taking a bunch of cows down the road out here one time, and around this turn down here, the sharp turn, he come a barreling along down behind me and run over a cow. (Laughter)

ANNE: Didn't stop him then?

MILLER 2: Didn't stop him.

MILLER 1: What was the name of that old carpenter that used to do work around the ranch there sometimes? Anyway, Bill ---

MILLER 2: Oh, Andy Anderson.

MILLER 1: Andy Anderson. Wasn't he in that car that tipped over?

MILLER 2: Yeah, I think he was.

MILLER 1: Yeah, I think so. That's the guy I was trying to think of. But anyway ---

MILLER 2: He built Joe's little house up there.

MILLER 1: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's the guy. And he was in that Studebaker that wrecked over there. But anyway, he built Dad a real nice little old garage there. And he had this, first got this Model-T and the old man drove up and went right out the back of it. (Laughter) About the first time he went in there ---

MILLER 2: When I tore that garage down, well the back was still just a hanging back in there.

MILLER 1: But that was the guy, old Andy Anderson.

ANNE: Well you guys are just getting warmed up good on stories now. That's a lot more entertaining than ---

MILLER 2: One time a raking, old Bill ... came up, they was going up the hill to have a dance. They was having a Fourth of July celebration up there. They got right down here

this side of the Sitz cut, you know, and they went right down over the bank into the, tore the fence down there.

MILLER 1: Yeah, down in those willows.

MILLER 2: Didn't hurt them a bit. I don't know how in the heck they ...

MILLER 1: I think that was that old Whippet they run off there.

NORM: That the one Dad talked about helping them out of down there?

MILLER 2: Probably is.

MILLER 1: Probably.

NORM: They said that car laid there for a long time after that. They said he had to go down and back out their case of beer for them. They had to wade out in the water waist deep to get that case of beer.

ANNE: They didn't care about anything but the beer.

NORM: Was that ... Meyers?

MILLER 1: Yeah.

NORM: Yeah, that's who it was.

MILLER 1: Yeah, we went and seen that off of there. Boy that was headed right straight down off the bank.

MILLER 2: Well Joe Boy Lillard done just the same thing down there. He come up here to the head of Sitz's ditch and he didn't make the turn and he went right out in the dam up there.

MILLER 1: Kenny Bentz done the same thing about three or four years ago right there.

MILLER 2: Kenny did?

MILLER 1: Yeah.

ANNE: ... if it is icy.

MILLER 2: Joe Lillard and Nadine, I don't know, there was another ... cars ...

ANNE: What did you guys do for entertainment when you were growing up around here?

MILLER 1: We kind of made our own.

NORM: You shouldn't have asked them that. (Laughter)

ANNE: They won't say it in front of their wives. (Laughter)

MILLER 1: Well, we had a lot of fun though.

MILLER 2: Yeah, we did. We even run a bunch of wild horses. We ride horses until they give out.

ANNE: Yeah.

MILLER 2: It's a wonder somebody hadn't gotten killed. Never rode in the corral, we led them outside and got on outside.

ANNE: Oh, dear.

MILLER 1: When they got tired we got back to the corral.

MILLER 2: Put a saddle and a halter on and we'd take off.

ANNE: How about, Wilma and Claire said something about sledding and skating and stuff there in Drewsey.

MILLER 1: Oh yeah.

MILLER 2: Yeah, we had lots of fun over there at Christmas time, you know.

ANNE: Oh.

MILLER 1: They --- that one this side of town, that used to be a good one before they had that gravel pit at the bottom ... that was a good one. The snow would get deep, and we'd go up there and get us a good track built. We'd work all afternoon, you know, to get enough wood up there to make a little bonfire, and then we'd stay up there about, midnight, you know.

MILLER 2: One time Jessie Cramer started to --- I was on, laying on my belly on the sled, and she got on my back, and down the hill we went. We got down there, and I just rode

her down the --- just skid the hide off of her face, she just looked like ---

MILLER 1: Yeah, I remember that too.

MILLER 2: You remember that?

MILLER 1: Yeah.

MILLER 2: She was sure hard looking for about a week.

ANNE: I bet so.

WOMAN: Claire said they used to go fishing down here at the creek, and put stovepipes on their legs to keep the snakes from biting them.

ANNE: Oh, heavens.

MILLER 2: That was over on the north fork, when she, after she married George.

WOMAN: Oh was it?

MILLER 2: Yeah.

WOMAN: I thought it was when she was a kid.

ANNE: Yeah. Well that's ---

MILLER 1: Well we used to, down there below the river bridge, flood that water out over there, on top of that ice, and had a lot of snow or something, and flood that out and it would be just as slick as glass, you know. And go down there and skate there half the night.

MILLER 2: There would be 40 or 50 people out of town there.

MILLER 1: Yeah.

MILLER 2: Out there skating.

MILLER 1: Young and old, whatever. Everybody had a good time.

ANNE: That would be fun.

MILLER 2: We didn't have televisions to watch in those days.

ANNE: Yeah, it has ruined us ... How about dances and things like that? Did the kids go

to the dances?

MILLER 2: Never missed one.

MILLER 1: Oh yeah.

MILLER 2: Never missed one.

MILLER 1: If it wasn't for the kids though, they wouldn't have a dance ... These kids they'd go to sleep, you know, they'd lay them over here in the corner and cover them up. They'd get pretty deep in there, you know, before morning.

WOMAN: Somebody changed clothes on the kids asleep. Was that him?

MILLER 2: I never heard of that.

WOMAN: Didn't you tell me that?

MILLER 2: You are thinking about some other kids.

MILLER 1: But we used to have some good dances, just about every two weeks. They had lots of dances in those days.

WOMAN: Yeah.

MILLER 2: Cass and Stell Smith ---

MILLER 1: Yeah.

MILLER 2: Cassie Drinkwater and Stell why they put on the dances.

MILLER 1: Just about every two weeks, by golly. Everybody would go.

MILLER 2: We'd saddle up a horse from up here at the ranch ---

ANNE: Yeah.

MILLER 2: --- and we'd ... down the road we'd go.

MILLER 1: Come out and get on the old road, and a path broke clean and ride him home.

ANNE: Did they dance all night?

MILLER 1: Oh yeah.

ANNE: Oh really?

MILLER 1: Until ---

MILLER 2: Daylight.

MILLER 1: They'd either dance all night, or until the fight broke up the dance. Like the old boy, like the old boy that used to dance at Alturas, he says they danced until 2 o'clock in the morning, or until the cops got there, whichever come first.

ANNE: Come first. (Laughter) Did they have lots of fights around the dances, or did they pretty well keep them outside?

MILLER 2: Well they would fight inside too.

MILLER 1: ... broke up a fistfight. We had some dandy fights.

WOMAN: Dandy. ...

MILLER 1: Yeah, they ...

ANNE: Well any other thing you can think of that you guys did for fun?

MILLER 1: We used to go fishing some.

MILLER 2: Then we'd go up on that ... and we'd go up on, north of town there and go walk off of those ---

MILLER 1: All day sometimes, we'd stay over there.

MILLER 2: --- hills up there, and until the ditch company stopped us, we was knocking the bank out in the ditch down there.

WOMAN: ...

MILLER 2: ...

WOMAN: What did you and Delmer ...

MILLER 2: We drank it.

MILLER 1: Yeah, we made quite a haul down there, in bonded whiskey one time during prohibition. We got, found a lot of whiskey.

ANNE: Oh did you?

MILLER 1: You bet.

MILLER 2: We took it home, and Dad took it away from us and he sold it for \$20.00 a quart.

MILLER 1: Didn't do us a bit of good.

NORM: You didn't even get the money out of it.

MILLER 2: No.

MILLER 1: You know old Edgar Wilson, you know ---

MILLER 2: God yeah, I know him.

MILLER 1: Bummer Maupin and Jimmy Capps got away with all of his, you know. They didn't bother us though.

MILLER 2: We lost ten bottles.

MILLER 1: Did they?

MILLER 2: Yeah.

MILLER: They were a little bit a, crazy ... They took old Edgar Wilson's whiskey away from him.

MILLER 2: We lost the first ten bottles we found.

ANNE: Did they, any of your family ever moonshine that you know of?

MILLER 1: I don't know.

MILLER 2: I don't know of any of them. But they sure drank a lot of it.

MILLER 1: No, I don't believe they ever did. As near as we ... Tom Dawson used to work for us and he had a cabin down there, and he used to moonshine back of the cabin there.

ANNE: Yeah.

MILLER 2: At the Dawson Spring, south of Pat O'Toole's there, you know. He homesteaded that piece of ground.

NORM: He had a still set up there at that spring?

MILLER 2: Yeah. I've been out there when the stills were operating.

MILLER 1: He used to have a little cabin there.

MILLER 2: One time when we went up here to the ranch, we hadn't been up there all spring, and Joe Miller was running it, taking care of the place. I walked down to the orchard --- Was you with me that time?

MILLER 1: It wasn't Joe; it was Ray, wasn't it?

MILLER 2: No, it was before Ray. Some guy was down in there and he was moonshining. We never did get down ... We could see his still, but he wouldn't let us go on down.

MILLER 1: Who was it that had the still over to ... canyon?

MILLER 2: I don't know.

MILLER 1: You know where I mean.

MILLER 2: I know where you mean.

MILLER 1: Right across the meadow there ... Wasn't Charlie Richardson mixed up in it?

MILLER 2: That's the one, that's the guy that had the still.

MILLER 1: He had a nice little cabin built in there, right on the, he was right on the ranch there. Well you couldn't see.

ANNE: Oh, really.

NORM: Yeah.

MILLER 1: It was right down in these trees.

ANNE: How about that one that, was it ... up there or somewhere?

MILLER 1: Probably old Jack ...

MILLER 2: Jack ... and old Bill. They sold moonshine all the time they were here.

ANNE: Did they? Plenty of it going around wasn't there? People made lots of money on

it.

MILLER 2: George ... made lots of moonshine out to Otis.

ANNE: Yeah.

MILLER 1: One time old ... drove over there, and he says, "I'd like to have you go with me over to Bates." I was just a kid, about 15 years old. So I said, "Alright, I'll go with you." He said, "We'll be gone over night." He had an old Star. And he said, "I want you to drive for me part of the time." So we went over there, and we stayed all night at a place ... Along about 4 o'clock the next morning he said, "We got to head back to Drewsey," he woke me up. Well god, this is an ungodly time to head back to Drewsey. When we drove out by an old schoolhouse and he stopped and went over there, and pulled a window open on the basement of that schoolhouse and started rolling out these little kegs of whiskey, five gallon kegs of whiskey. He loaded the back of that thing full of them. And that's what he wanted me for was to drive so people wouldn't be so suspicious they were running whiskey in that ... Heck it got hot and you could smell that thing, the stuff, for a hundred yards. I was about half ... Stopped at Blue Mountain Hot Springs, had breakfast, you know, and it would almost make you drunk to stand by that car. (Laughter) But we made it back to Drewsey.

MILLER 2: Do you remember when we all went to Blue Mountain Springs on the Fourth of July?

MILLER 1: Yeah, yeah. Which one was that, the first or the last?

MILLER 2: The first one.

MILLER 1: When they had the old Model-T?

MILLER 2: Yeah.

MILLER 1: Yeah.

MILLER 2: We came back around down in the canyon quick, and back up to Silvies, and

there wasn't any bridge across the river up there, we had to ford the river. You remember that?

MILLER 1: No, don't remember that part.

MILLER 2: We made it. We got stuck --- somebody come along there on horseback, tied onto the car with his riata, and we got out. Everybody unloaded it, I remember that.

MILLER 1: I remember going up to Julian and George Hill.

MILLER 2: I do too. ...

MILLER 1: I don't think the old man ever started up there but what he didn't kill the engine, and back down and run into the fence ...

ANNE: Oh no.

MILLER 2: They finally built a ... grade ...

MILLER 1: Then they rode around there just really ...

MILLER 2: ... that one too, sometimes.

NORM: Where was that at?

MILLER 2: Just up there from the old ---

MILLER 1: You know where the old Julian George house was?

NORM: Oh, it's been so long since I've been up that canyon.

MILLER 2: Well it used to be just above the ryegrass stable there, Norm.

MILLER 1: Used to be a road right straight across that field, and went right straight up that old sharp hill.

ANNE: Oh really?

NORM: Oh, on the north side of the creek?

MILLER 2: No, south side.

MILLER 1: The south side.

NORM: South side.

MILLER 2: It was really a sharp ... and there was a fence at the bottom, just right to back into.

ANNE: Didn't have enough oomph to get up the hill.

MILLER 1: Well it would have, he didn't know how to drive it ... and kill his engine. He didn't know how to stop it.

MILLER 2: He'd make us all go out there, they have to shift down into low gear ...

NORM: He couldn't get it in gear.

MILLER 2: He couldn't get it in gear.

ANNE: I bet you guys didn't go very many places in those days, really, huh, very far?

MILLER 2: Oh, we got to Drewsey and stay all night and maybe stay ...

MILLER 1: I think that's the biggest trip we ever took in the Model-T was to ...

MILLER 2: ...

NORM: How did you go to Blue Mountain ...

(END OF TAPE)

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