

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #413 - Side A

Subject: Edward Gray

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Place: Burns, Oregon

Interviewer:

(Note: Edward Gray, author, gives a talk to the Harney County Historical Society Luncheon on his book, *William "Bill" W. Brown 1855-1941: Legend of Oregon's High Desert.*)

WOMAN: ... I think he probably knows part of the area better than we do. We probably haven't gone over as much of it as he has. And so I'm particularly interested in that area because my grandparents lived on Buck Creek when they were first married in 1888. They're not mentioned in the book because they weren't there very long. But anyway, I've always been interested in knowing more about that country, so we're going to let you tell us today. My grandfather was Joseph Williams, and my grandmother was ... They were married here in Hines.

EDWARD GRAY: They're all inter-related? (Laughter) You didn't hear that, did you? (Laughter) First of all I want to thank Dorothea, right?

DOROTHEA PURDY: Right.

EDWARD: Bethel, who I talked to on the phone. I never will forget, she calls, said, "Would you mind coming over?" And I said, "No, I won't charge you anything." That was cool. I just do this for you guys. Make sure --- Sharon Jones, I don't know.

WOMAN: She's not here.

EDWARD: Don't see Sharon. She was very helpful. But here is the people I really want to thank from Burns. This is a great place guys, great place, don't ruin it, please. Don't tell anybody either. Don't come to Eugene. Austa Carlon, I just talked to Austa Carlon, just interviewed her about something else, the woman's viewpoint of ranch life. Austa is in the hospital, if you didn't know that. Talked to her, great person. Bill Foster --- Harold, Harold who really helped and who knows that desert probably, much better than I do, and who knows the people that live there, and who also knows some of the ins and some of the outs. You can get lost out there, guys, you know, real easy. Marcus Haines, Eugene Luckey, Betty Morgan, Jack Peila. Is Jack here?

MAN: No, but his two daughters are.

DOROTHEA: His two daughters are.

EDWARD: Oh, oh, hi guys.

DOROTHEA: And his grandsons.

EDWARD: Jack Peila was super nice to allow me to roam around on Wagontire Mountain, and I don't blame him. I own ten little acres, I get P.O'd when somebody comes on that. But Jack allowed me to run around Wagontire and search out probably fifty percent of this history. Thanks to Jack, tell your dad --- Shelby Petersen, who I'm going to see tonight. Abe and Joan Rickman who now live on Buck Creek at the old Street place, they moved there. Dee Swisher, Dee --- you all know Dee Swisher don't you? Well, I won't say much more. Jim Tackman, Lyle and Mary Tyler, Pete and Arjetta (sp.?), Arjetta did I say that right?

ARJETTA WILLIAMS: Yes, for a change.

EDWARD: For a change, yeah. Williams, Wallace Welcome, and all of Burns. When I first came over here in 19--- oh god, '91, thank you Harold. I haven't been in this country,

and I was looking for something to write about. And when I went through the desert from Christmas Valley to Wagontire, I'm going, there ain't nothing out here, what am I doing here? Well you can see that's changed. And maybe I'll talk a little bit about that.

One thing I'm going to do, and I kind of mentioned this to Dorothea, there is a sack of tapes around here someplace, up there, those are the tapes of interviews I had for this book, and I'm going to give that to the Historical Society, project. Oral project?

DOROTHEA: Oral History Project. (Applause)

EDWARD: Anyway, if you're really interested in some of this information, which I'm just, pass on, you know, I got to do the editing so to speak. There is some very interesting tapes in there. I might have to go through them before I give a couple of them to Dorothea. She said she was going to transcribe them, so that should be very interesting. There is a lot of theories on some of this material, and my job is to sort all that information out and try to put it in some respectable order, and hopefully it worked.

And before I begin kind of talking, I guess, don't, don't --- somebody should go out to Silver Creek Cemetery and change John Overstreet's grave marker. I don't know if that is the Historical Society, but poor old Johnny Overstreet has 1885. He was shot by Bill Brown, as you probably know, in 1886. And here is where some of the fallacies occur. If you look back through, oh god, Rube Long, Jackman, Brogan, missing one, can't remember the other one. These writers that wrote about Bill Brown, most of it was pretty short information, and they went on what they had. And of course John Overstreet's grave marker says 1885. I don't know when that was put there, but that's what they went by. And one of my main jobs was to try to straighten all this information out. And if you've read the book, or plan on reading it, please look at the references, and please look at the material in the appendix because that will really, I think, help you out, I hope.

Generally I just --- why do I write? Boredom? I'm a schoolteacher, taught for 24 years. Have three sons, all college graduates, all work. I tore up my knees --- I was talking to Austa Carlon this morning, I tore up my knees playing football. And so when my knees starting hurting so bad, I had to quit coaching. After I got done, quit coaching in 1982, I was bored. So I started --- I always liked history, and the first book came out in '86, it was about a sawmill camp and the people. The second book was the History of Northern Klamath County, came out in '89.

And then this book, why this book? Well in 1990 a friend of mine, we left Eugene, spent two weeks in Central and Eastern Oregon. Now first of all, is this, this is Eastern Oregon, right? Some people don't --- A lot of people consider this part, Burns, as Central Oregon. Yeah, right, I kind of think it goes to about maybe Glass Buttes or something like that, but whatever. So we started searching out things, looking for old stuff. We had a tough time, went to Plush, nah, nah, nah. Went to Lakeview, possibility, the history of Lake County maybe, that's awfully big. So anyway we ended up at Bill Brown's, I think it is over here someplace, house on Buck Creek. And I go, you got to be kidding me, who built this, why, why here, when, where, you know, all those questions? And then I started searching out.

I was very fortunate to find a nephew of Bill Brown's, who is now 87. I interviewed him in January 1990, and he told me these stories about old Bill. Has anybody in this room ever worked for Bill Brown by any chance? Nobody?

BLANCHE HOUSTON: I sold Bill Brown eggs and chickens when I was only 10 years old.

EDWARD: What's your name?

BLANCHE HOUSTON: Blanche Houston.

EDWARD: Oh, Blanche, I can't ---

BLANCHE: ... I was married to Fred Houston for 55 years or better.

EDWARD: Her husband was Bill's next to last buckaroo boss, Fred Houston. There were seven Houston's that worked for Bill Brown.

BLANCHE: And they were all related.

EDWARD: Right. There is a story --- I'm going to fib on you Blanche, sorry. You're a Gibson, right?

BLANCHE: I was. My dad worked for Bill Brown for years ...

EDWARD: Hi Harold. Gibson. Anyway there were three Gibson's that worked for Bill Brown. But anyway, Fred, Fred Houston, super man, super man. Blanche, give me another story about Bill Brown. BLANCHE: I think ... you want to take time for today.

EDWARD: Okay, I'm going to tell you one. They didn't know whether it would be --- how did that go --- the Houston's or the rabbits would overtake the desert, is that right? (Laughter) You owe me one, don't you Blanche? (Laughter)

BLANCHE: Well the Houston's had a big family ...

EDWARD: Yeah. The Houston's were great people anyway. Oh, I think all the people on the desert knew Bill Brown.

BLANCHE: Bill Brown was a better man than a lot of them thought he was.

EDWARD: He never hurt anybody.

BLANCHE: Well my dad was injured seriously in May of 1914, or 1904, when he was working for Bill Brown. And he was eight weeks in the Burns Hotel in Burns; there was no hospital, before he was ever able to ride to camp. Bill Brown kept his wages for him all this time he was laid up, until he was ready to go back to work, and he paid the doctor bills and the hotel bills.

EDWARD: Yeah. Bill Brown at that time, for your information in 1914, was quite a wealthy man.

BLANCHE: In 1904.

EDWARD: I didn't hear you Blanche.

BLANCHE: In 1904.

EDWARD: '04. There was another one --- that was Tin Gibson. Anyway, seeing that house just makes you wonder, why did this guy build this place out here in the middle of, basically, nowhere. So after the interview with Ira Brown, Bill's nephew, things started to kind of rolling. And I think I talked to Van Houston, who worked for Bill Brown, and Ray Houston, who worked for Bill Brown, and you start picking up information. I know a couple people asked me, well how do you do that, word of mouth? Newspapers, hours and hours of research. The University of Oregon, which I live in Eugene, Oregon, happens to have all the Oregon collection of newspapers. But I'm the kind of guy that needs grassroots. I need to talk to people like Blanche. I need to talk to people like Wally Welcome on the phone. I need to talk to, oh god --- where is Arjetta, did I do that right, Arjetta and Pete Williams. I sit here and talk with Pete Williams, last summer, I think, and we're talking about Harry Arnold, the guy in this book. I get off on crazy things; excuse me, but talk about Harry Arnold. He goes out, wait a minute Ed; I got to go out in the barn. He goes out in the barn and gets these two coffee cans, and it has all these love letters written in 1913, you know, and things like that. You got to, you got to go out and work real hard to do this. And the people are there, and the people like you guys are so neat, so neat, so neat.

Anyway, some of my --- Harold, shut up --- I teach school --- throw erasers at him here. Well one of my main jobs was to clean up the name of Bill Brown. Now I don't think

there was much cleaning to do, except for some of these stories that got clear out of hand. You know if I talked to Dorothea, then she passed it on down the line, by the time it got back here it would be all blown out of shape, you know, and all that stuff. And this Ira Brown helped immensely, because he knew his uncle very, very well. And thank God for Ira Browns in the world, and the Houston's in the world.

But one of my main jobs was to straighten out his name. For example the death of John Overstreet, why Bill shot Johnny Overstreet, John A. Overstreet. Well one story was that John A. Overstreet was working with Ike Foster. Ike Foster is from Silver Creek. Ike Foster married America Hutton Foster Sutherland. Some of you people may have known America. Well Ike was running sheep on Wagontire, and John Overstreet was his sheepherder, and Ike tried to chase Bill off the mountain, and you know, that kind of stuff. Well that wasn't true.

Another story was that Bill went to kill John Overstreet in a suit, a black suit, like they bury you in, one of those things you know. And Bill was going to meet his death, and they just kind of put him in a grave right there in Wagontire. Well so, those kind of --- that's a little out, way out there, but that's the kind of stuff that kind of has gone around. Kind of coffee talk.

Well for example, how do you prove what happened? Well one is a coroner's report. I spent four and a half hours in the Grant County Courthouse in Canyon City, Oregon, next to the last box, and here is the coroner's report. So that's, you got to do that. The stories are great, but as a researcher, grassroots type of historian, you got to try to get it straight. And fortunately America Hutton Foster Sutherland, by the way, piled some rocks in which that shooting occurred on Wagontire Mountain. That is through Jack, your dad, Sam Boyce, and a few other people. Jack, Jack, Jack Jefferies.

Was the book difficult to write? Bill wasn't difficult to write. What was difficult to write was for me, was the buckaroos, their lifestyle, because I've been on a horse maybe twice in my life. But the most difficult thing to write about was the murders. I don't know how much of that I should talk about; I don't know how much those tapes are going to say. That kind of scares me a little bit, but oh well. I had, I did not know in 19-- the summer of 1990, that there had been five murders on Wagontire Mountain. I had read, I think Brogan said that Bill shot John Overstreet, a mention of that. But at that time I didn't know there were four other murders. And through the process of researching in 1992, I find out there were four other ones. And I even had people literally tell me, you got to be crazy to go out there on Wagontire Mountain and look up this stuff. Somebody is going to get you! I go, good luck, you know, whatever. And again Jack Peila allows me --- okay.

I tell you what is really tough, the Bradley's --- there were two Bradley's murdered on Wagontire. And not necessarily in this particular case, over land use, was other things. I think I mentioned that in there. But to talk to Grace Bradley Gowdy, who had her brother and father murdered on Wagontire, is really difficult. And she came there in 19--- she was born on Wagontire Mountain in 1917. So for me that kind of thing is really tough. So all you can do is put out the facts, and hopefully that came through, I hope. I hope I didn't hurt anybody, because that is not an easy thing to write about, particularly when the family, some of the families are still alive. So appreciate that when you do read that in that last, second part of that book. It's tough, that wasn't easy.

And by the way if there is not a retrial, the transcripts of the trials are thrown away. So you got to go by newspapers, and then you got to take all the people you talk to and edit it, put it together, and see what makes sense, and what doesn't, and it is difficult, real difficult.

There was one person that threatened me, basically with a lawsuit if I used their name. And just for your information that was taken out of the book. And it was kind of sad, I wished it could have stayed, but it didn't. Okay, anyway, so much for that B.S.

Bill Brown, big guy. You know he had --- he was six foot two Blanche?

BLANCHE: What?

EDWARD: About six foot two?

BLANCHE: That's what my dad told me, and that's what my husband told me.

EDWARD: Kind of a big wiry dude, about 180 pounds. Kind of had red hair?

BLANCHE: Well it wasn't when I knew him, it was almost white.

EDWARD: Oh yeah, excuse me, Blanche, yeah. The great nephew of Bill Brown did a watercolor for me of Bill in 1900, and he had red hair. But it was turning reddish-silver. Good man, raised with a very religious background. His mom, Hannah, taught him the ethics of the Bible. Although Bill himself wasn't really religious, but he followed that Biblical standard of never lie, cheat, or steal. And believe me he did say, "I'm morally certain you're full of", or something to that effect. He did say that, all the time. He called rustlers and thieves confound rascals. Never cussed in his life. Worked. And believe me he did walk from; you guys know where Gap Ranch is, most of you? He did, seriously, walk from there to here.

One time, I'll say it anyway, what the hay. One time he --- there used to be some girls of, ladies of ill repute in Burns, I guess. I don't know whether I can say this, but I guess I will anyway. And he was in one of the motels, and the boys were going to play a joke on him, so they sent one of these fine young ladies into his room, and Bill just about croaked, and left, and walked back to the Gap Ranch. That's the kind of person Bill --- he walked, he probably walked more than he rode a horse, which is unbelievable. He would

go from Buck Creek to Burns, take him a whole day. That's a, 50 miles, I think, at least, I'm not sure. More miles, 60 or 70 miles. Unbelievable man.

Some people wondered why he liked sheep. I'm not sure, to tell you the truth. When him and his two brothers first came to Wagontire in 1882, they brought sheep. I don't think I said any-thing about that. The reason being, I'm not sure. Why didn't he bring cattle? There were cattle on Wagontire Mountain in 1882. In fact Rube Long's father Alonzo, all of his cattle were killed by Indians, you remember the Bannocks came through here in 1878? They killed all the cattle on Wagontire, Boneyard Springs. Why he wasn't into cattle, I'm really not sure. I know that his father had sheep at the home farm in Canby, Oregon, so maybe that's why. Maybe there was a good market for it, I don't know.

But him and his two brothers, George and Bob, came to Wagon-tire Mountain on the west side in 1882. One thing I tried to straighten out too, when Bill and George and Bob Brown came to --- well that's Lake County, was this winter. A lot of the writers said that the bad winter was 1884-85. Well the bad winter was '89, 1890, and that's when the two brothers left Bill by himself out there in Wagontire.

Back to what I was going to say a long time ago. Bill had two brothers, to other brothers, excuse me, that were doctors. Had a sister that was a doctor, so their family background was very strong, they were to succeed no matter, in a way, for whatever reason. All his brothers and his sisters got ripped off. Bill got ripped off consistently, stolen from, consistently. So did his brothers. They were just good, nice people, and they gave things away, and then people turned around and stole from them, particularly Bill. But that's how they were raised.

After Bill's brothers left Wagontire in 1890, Bill broadened out, as you can tell, and

he ended up, I counted all this up, and boy it's not easy. I hope I added right, 34,000 some acres, I believe, is what he ended up owning by 1934. Which, I guess, that's a considerable amount, I would think. Pete French, who I found out yesterday morning, owned 59,000 acres by 1896, that's in the court records, the tax assessment rolls. So there is kind a comparison. Bill didn't own all of his acreage until the 1920's. Now he was competing, well not really, Bill Hanley, you know he was around. But I guess Bill was more east. But Bill stayed on, basically west of Wagontire Mountain, and north into Crook County. Now a lot of questions have been asked about the horses. Well he had some funny things about horses. I asked Ray Houston, I said, "Why in the world did Bill keep his horses until, into the depression years?" They didn't need horses; you know, the cars, automobiles. He said, Ray, if I recall right said something of the fact, he didn't want to see his animals killed. Well he lost his hind end because of those animals, in a way, but maybe not, maybe not.

In 1892 Bill started buying out brands, you know, buying out the brand, the iron, excuse me, the iron, of some of the ranchers around Silver Creek, some of the ranchers here in Burns. Because he had this great idea that horses would always be around, and he could sell them. Well fortunately for old Bill, when the Spanish American War came along, and you know they bought horses by the thousands from him. And there is some estimates in here about his horses, I think, it goes up to 14,000.

Now I don't know what the average ranch has today, I can't even imagine somebody having branded --- I think I said 12,000 horses. And they're running all over out there. I can't even imagine these buckaroos, like your husband, like Ray Houston, Lyle Woods, Charlie Couch, chasing these things out there. I can't even --- I've been out there, there is holes in the ground, there is badger holes, there is rocks, there is

washouts. My stupid pickup can't even go over some of that stuff. There is boulders, there is canyons, oh my god almighty. And here these guys are out there running --- but in some cases, now this is from word of mouth, and these guys know it, this is grassroots stuff. These guys know what they're talking about, they lived it. Five hundred horses, they would corral in the 1920's. Wasn't Ray Houston, it may have been Jess Gibson, maybe. They told me at South Creek Springs once they had 700 wild horses. I'm going, you got to be kidding me, you know.

So think about that, you know how dusty it gets out here. They're running, they can see this dust for 20 miles, and then they --- oh geeze. I can't --- it's so hard to imagine. Cows stand still, you know, don't they, sort of, I think. But horses don't, these things run, run, run. They said a good horse could take these guys 80 miles. Is that true? I think so. I mean a good horse, a good horse. That is trotting, that's not --- you know. But some of that is so unbelievable.

I don't know what pictures; I don't remember what photos are up here. But you look at some of that, that Lost Creek Valley. How many have been to Lost Creek Valley by chance, anybody? Wow, wow, not as many as I thought. I thought most of you had been there, maybe 10. There is a place. Old Bill Brown owned all of that, and believe me Bill Brown wasn't somebody I mentioned a while ago. He didn't run off homesteaders, he didn't choke them out, he treated them fairly. He bought --- my god he was, for a 160 acres one time in 1914 he paid a guy \$800. I mean he didn't push these guys. These poor, these poor homesteaders I call them, but they weren't poor. He did it fairly. He never hurt anybody. But out there in Lost Creek Valley he owned all of that, right up Lost Creek. And unfortunately for him he owned a lot of the land in which some of these later problems occurred. And he got out of all of that in 1932. He sold Wagontire

Mountain, all of his properties on Wagontire Mountain in 1932, to America Sutherland, and the Hutton's.

What else did Bill do? Oh, he tried raising hogs once. He thought that bacon cost too much. And that's a true story. Well you know what happened to the hogs, all of his employees stole them. So he told the last guy, he said why the hell, just take it. He was going to steal it anyway. He tried --- he had chickens. He had some chickens, didn't he Blanche?

BLANCHE: I don't know from the amount of eggs and chickens I sold to him, I don't know ...

EDWARD: Well god, he fed half the country. Never charged them a thing. Lena Street said he never charged anything at his Buck Creek Ranch. He --- he did some odd things. His own nephew said, "Well he was crazy." But --- he may have been crazy, he may have been eccentric, but I'll tell you one thing he sure saved a lot of people out there. Now whether he saved them righteously or legally, or they stole from him because he had everything, is another story. But he was a very helpful man.

Marriage, oh god, here is Bill --- you know, and this is true, he was going to have seven boys. Now how you plan that, I'm not sure guys. Let's see, Bill was born in 1855, graduated from San Jose Normal School in 1878, so --- Yeah, he was chasing Myra Shields when he was 51 and she was 16 or something. Oh, you want to hear that story? This is --- let me finish this. What the hell was I talking about?

DOROTHEA: He was getting married.

EDWARD: Oh, yeah marriage, oh geeze. He builds this place, and seriously he was going to have seven sons. I said, okay, yeah, all right Bill. And he built this beautiful nursery. Blanche were you ever in the nursery? No? Must have been beautiful.

BLANCHE: I've been in it one time, long after Bill Brown's death. No, it was before his death. But it was after the colonization company that had the other mortgage ... had taken over ...

EDWARD: 1935.

BLANCHE: They foreclosed on it ... 1931. My husband was working there, and at that time that's when he quit the outfit. When they foreclosed on Brown, he went to work for the Forest Service.

EDWARD: Beautiful nursery though, huge. And all these kids were going to be in there, and raised in there, and all that. Well old Bill had some problems. Number one, women scared him to death, basically. Number two; he didn't know how to talk to them. I think he thought they were a chicken or something, you know, some-thing that walked or something. And when somebody would come up to there, I mean literally there were ladies that came up there, they wanted to marry him, he had a lot of money. And ladies would come up there through the newspapers and stuff, and he'd take off. He'd go walk off, he'd go to Freezeout, or he'd go to Hardin or something, and catch you later honey, you know, and that was the end of it. And these people, these poor ladies, didn't want anything to do with him. Then he'd also tell them, what exactly his plan. Well see in 1900 Bill would be 45, yeah.

So as time went on Bill would tell his brother George, he says, "I don't think I have a chance to get married." Now he did build that nursery in that big house in 1910, so he still had some thoughts about it.

But he wanted to own every water hole, he wanted to own half the State of Oregon is what it really came down to, and he probably could have, if he would have had the children. But he was eccentric, and women, he just scared them to death. And that's

probably the basic reason he never did get married.

Now what was the other thing I was going to talk about ... Oh, Myra Shields, yeah? Well as you probably know --- yeah, thank you. Thomas Jefferson Shields was the first county judge for Harney County, 1889. They were out on Silver Creek. Well Bill went to Mr. Shields in 1886, when he shot John Overstreet, that's the first place he went to turn himself in, because Mr. Shields was the justice of the peace. And said look, I did this, I did a boo boo here, what am I going to do? You know he was kind enough to wait on the hill overlooking their cabin that morning until he saw smoke. That's from the, the exact words from Marie Shields Barrett, who is 90--- oh boy, 94, I think, I interviewed in Portland, Oregon. Marie is the only living child of Thomas, Judge Thomas Jefferson Shields. And she, again, she lives in Portland. But Marie remembers all of this very --- what her dad said to her about Bill Brown, and Overstreet. And she also remembers Myra Shields. Well Bill was in, madly, madly in love with Myra Shields. And there is a picture in there. Oh, by the way you guys, the pictures are reversed on Myra Shields and, oh god, yeah Vanderpool. Turn them around. Sorry, I just now remembered that.

Anyway, Bill always went to courting Myra in the finest wagon, the finest horses, and the finest candy. And Myra's sister would get really P.O.d about that because she was, Myra's sister, who I can't recall her name right now, was kind of in love with Bill too. Myra was, sort of. But see Myra was 16, and Bill would be, I goofed up, 46 I think.

So anyway, Bill had, and this a true story, this is another story that sometimes gets a little out of hand. And this is from Bill's relatives. Bill had a diamond horseshoe pendant, had one diamond in it. And it was in this, the broach, the necklace, was in the shape of a horseshoe with a diamond in the middle. No, it didn't have a bar in it. Huh uh. And so he takes that to Myra, put, literally --- Dorothea, you're Myra, puts this thing

around her neck, now you're mine forever, or something to that effect. She goes, oh yeah, whatever, and throws it on the floor. That's true. That was 1896. That necklace was in Canby, Oregon in 1988. I interviewed Ira in 1990; somebody had gone into this home of the Brown family and stole it. But that's true, that horseshoe necklace. He did do it.

So that's kind of the way --- he was, what would you call it? He was overbearing, sort of, hard headed, that type of person. But a great person. The country needs more of them.

Some of the other things about Bill, and I'll let you question anything you want here. I'm just taking this off the top of my head. Hope it isn't boring, it's probably boring. That's about all I got.

What did he do for Harney County? I think he really helped a heck of a lot of the homesteaders, and treated them very fairly. Although he did have, I think about 6,000 acres in north, northwestern Harney County, and he never had any in this area. That was taken up by Hanley and such and such and such. But he helped everybody. He opened up the eyes of a lot of people. And as you know a lot of the homesteaders did leave, but he helped those people as much as he could.

And he would hire, I don't know how many people worked for Bill Brown. There is a list in there I think of about, that I know of, about 150 names maybe. He must have hired twice that many. And that is a lot over the years. Blanche mentioned something about what happened. Well the family told me that the reason Bill went broke was basically, and this isn't really in there, is that he was stolen from so much that he had to re-invest what money he did have, and it got to the point that he ended up with very little equipment, very little everything. Even the motor out of his Model-T truck was stolen.

He'd go out there, he'd go over to his store --- oh yeah, the Buck Creek Store. He'd go out there, say well yeah, I got a wagon, and the wagon is gone. I mean it just goes on and on and on. I mean how do you manage that big of a place when you're constantly getting ripped off? It just got to him.

And he told his nephew once, well they're not, they don't steal from me, Ellis. They don't do that. Morally, everybody is morally right. Oh, I'm sorry Bill, didn't work out that way.

Oh, and the money he gave away. What's in this book is not even, probably one quarter of what he gave away. Gave it away. Now I don't know, I don't remember if I put that in there. He loved girls; he thought girl's schools were the best. He couldn't trust boys. He could trust girls. And he said, he said I'll build a school, it wasn't Pendleton, it was another place, I think Tacoma, Washington. If you put the girls school on one side of the tracks, of course the good side, and put the boys on the other side of the tracks, and I'll pay for it. Well that didn't work out. He gave away thousands, tens of thousands of dollars. I was never able to prove that, because the bank in Prineville --- I was going to look up their old records, and I got, Judge Dick Hoppes said, "Well I'll get it open for you." Well two weeks later I was back in Eugene, the bank burned down. Oh, by the way, if you're into writing, get as much information as you can, as soon as possible.

I interviewed twelve people over 90 years old. And they are the sweetest, neatest people. And keep your mouth shut, let them talk, if you do this kind of stuff. I mean they got great history. I'm nothing compared to them. But out of those twelve people, I think, we've lost five of them already, and that hurts, that hurts. I hate to see that.

Oh yeah, irrigation system. I got, Harold is helping me out here. Anybody ever seen his irrigation systems by any chance? Think about it. Unbelievable. He didn't use

all this fancy stuff like that tripod with that thingy bob on the top there. He didn't use all that, it was just eyes and the feel of the land. He, evidently, well he worked for a surveying crew, yeah that's right, that's right, excuse me, when he was about 17. But his irrigation systems, I know you ranchers know that stuff probably pretty well. But this guy, he just had it. Somebody said he was so good; he could grow roses on the desert, or something to that effect. Unbelievable.

The Buck Creek Store. Yes, there was a store. And I, about 1910 to the middle 1920's, late 1920's, and that is part of his downfall too, he just got ripped big time. They stole from him all the time. Sad. A lot of people said, I think Brogan said that people would just walk in there and put money in a cigar box and leave. Well I don't quite believe that, because there is an account book. It's a very, I think I called it an accountants nightmare. I mean it has got paid written all over the place. Some of the pages are missing. Bill didn't care about that stuff. In fact his sister got so P.O.'d at him she left the ranch, Buck Creek, in 1922. She give up trying to help him, you know. You take your store and --- whatever you want to do with it, Bill. But he did have a store. A lot of people think it didn't last very long, but it was going for about, oh 15 years. The account book is really something to look at, it's really interesting. And that's in Prineville, Oregon by the way.

I'm going to shut up here pretty soon. Any of it, if you have any questions I'll try to answer them. I didn't talk about Wagontire murders; I don't whether it is necessary. Any questions, I don't care, how tall I am, or whatever. (Laughter)

WOMAN: I don't have a question, but I'll tell you one thing about Bill Brown and the schools, that I know to be a fact.

EDWARD: Yeah, I forgot about that.

WOMAN: In ... Oregon they did not have a school there, and there was a lot of families moved in there. And he said ... morally certain ... Burns on Saturday night to get drunk. They can't work Sunday, and they can't work Monday. And he said I'll furnish all the material if you ranchers will build the school.

EDWARD: Which he did.

WOMAN: And let us have dances every other Saturday night in the school. And they did, and that building is still standing. It's been moved from the school ground, but it is in sight of the school ground. It is still standing. And Bill Brown paid for the materials ... I got 8 years of education in that school.

EDWARD: Yeah, Mr. Shields, I think, helped pay for that too, yeah. Bill was a very educated man, and he would have to be to live out there then. He was one of the very few, by the way, that survived. The only other two I can think of that survived the desert, coming that early, not like the Hutton's. The Hutton's came to Wagontire, the southeast side of Wagontire in 1884, they stayed. Bill was there in 1882, he stayed. Silver Creek, Cecil's, they stayed. There was one other one on Silver Creek. But Silver Creek was so much --- Williams, yeah. Silver Creek is so much better than Buck Creek. Buck Creek is, it's out there folks. Wagontire, try to go to Wagontire from Glass Buttes; it's out there, way out there. So actually the Hutton's and Bill Brown are basically it from Riley, Oregon, as you look left and right along Highway 20, clear to Brothers, Oregon. That's basically Bill Brown country, north and south, oh geeze, 40 miles.

If you get a chance, make sure you look at the maps in the book. I think Bill had approximately 30 some, 31, 32, horse and sheep camps out there in the high desert. And a lot of those were stocked with goods. I'm sure that if there is any ranchers in here, there have been ranchers, or retired ranchers, that you have stocked some of these line

shacks. Well Bill had his ripped off consistently. It wasn't his cowboys ...

(END OF TAPE)

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