

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #433 Sides A/B

Subject: Bob Sitz

Place: Sitz Home – Burns, Oregon

Date: June 19, 2002

Interviewer: Sandra Crittenden

SANDRA CRITTENDEN: This is Sandra Crittenden, June 19th, 2002, and I'll be interviewing Bob Sitz.

BOB SITZ: I've got a better story to start with anyway.

SANDRA: Good. Okay, we're going to start with the Sitz family coming into the valley.

BOB: Well, I want to go a little bit further. I want to go to August Sitz who was the patriarch of the group. And I don't have the dates on him, but anyhow he came from Kansas to Douglas County, Oregon in the early 1900's with his wife and his family. And among the family was my grandfather, and ---

SANDRA: That would be Rudolph.

BOB: Rudolph, yes. I won't go into the others here, there was quite a bunch of them.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: Anyhow they stayed down there two or three years. He was a dairy farmer.

SANDRA: Do you know what part of Douglas County?

BOB: No, I don't think so.

SANDRA: How interesting.

BOB: But anyway they, he evidently came through here on his way down there. That's how they got back here.

SANDRA: They were familiar with the area on the trip going West to Douglas County.

BOB: Yeah. Well he got disgusted with the rains.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: And he says I'm going back to Kansas. And he is the only bunch of people that I know of that went the other way. They packed up and went back to Kansas.

SANDRA: But by then Rudolph was ---

BOB: Well Rudolph was of age, more or less, so he went to California. And he had experience in the dairy business and he got on as a dairy helper and laborer in a dairy farm down there. And he dairy farmed for a number of years, I'm not quite sure. And he had seen this country on his way through, so he decided that he would come up here and get into the free land deal.

SANDRA: With the homestead.

BOB: When Lewis, who was somewhat younger than Rudolph ---

SANDRA: And that was John Lewis.

BOB: John Lewis, had gone back to Kansas, because we have in these piles of things, the fact that his school record and some, and his religious record, they were staunch Lutherans. Then --- and another thing about August Sitz, he wouldn't teach any of his daughters to learn anything. He wouldn't send them to school, but he would the boys.

SANDRA: The girls weren't allowed to go to school, because that wasn't a woman's place.

BOB: Actually the eldest girl married when they were out here, and she was, had lived in Douglas County for years. Dad communicated with her some. Okay, now we got to Rudolph, and the fact that he died quite early in '21.

SANDRA: And Rudolph married here then?

BOB: He married here, yes. And we didn't discuss --- my grandfather, grandmother Blanche's --- Gray, and her father Avalonce were --- early on in the Lawen Hotel. And he is the one that moved the Lawen Store up to the, where it now sits. And Rudolph took a homestead just to the east of Lawen Lane, about a mile east. And his brother Lou had the house at the junction of the roads, the east road and the south road. And then Rudolph --- Robert's demise in '21. He had had several strokes, and it left the family strapped and the ranch went to the bank.

SANDRA: And this was Rudolph's homestead that he got, leaving Blanche ---

BOB: Blanche with the four sons.

SANDRA: The four boys.

BOB: We were Earl, Allen, Eldon and Leland.

SANDRA: And Leland?

BOB: Yeah. His name was Babe. I mean he went by Babe.

SANDRA: How did he come by that?

BOB: He was the baby.

SANDRA: Oh.

BOB: Okay.

SANDRA: So Blanche was alone with the four boys, one which was your dad.

BOB: And they didn't have money enough to operate the ranch. And he died, Rudolph Robert died in November '21, at which time my father Allen was a junior at Burns Union High School. And he had, he laid out a year to help on the ranch while they tried to put it together, but it wouldn't fit. So they had to give up the ranch. And then he came back into Burns and worked for the Reeds, they had a dairy farm up the river here, and he milked cows, and he went to school. Played football and basketball. And then come 1926 he married my mother, Evalin Lynn Miller. Evalin is spelled E V A L I N, which is different from most spellings.

SANDRA: Uh-huh, right, yes.

BOB: But then that's the Miller side of the family.

SANDRA: And she was a Harney County girl?

BOB: Yeah. She was the daughter of Charles Thomas Miller, who was the son of Isaac Miller.

SANDRA: And they lived --- where did these Millers live?

BOB: They had a homestead about half way between Crane and Buchanan, over next to the hill.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: Which was right with, nearly about a mile between their property and the rock and timber claim that Rube Sitz had taken out. So the families knew each other for a long period of time. Oh wait, we're missing out on the drought.

SANDRA: The drought was in the late '20's.

BOB: Well I think it began in the late teens, and it continued through into the '20's. I think it was about '24 or '25, well maybe later than that. It was when I was down there and saw that, when the water came back. And the fact that my mother's brothers had made it through by getting a piece of ground from the Ausmus boys who were the main farmers in the dried out lake bed. And they got so they could put up hay and they got through, because there wasn't any cattle feed around.

SANDRA: And is this the time you remember riding down there in the car?

BOB: In the car, yeah.

SANDRA: And seeing it ---

BOB: Well you had to look up out of a high wheel car to see the top of the rack. It was

SANDRA: And when you said the Ausmus boys ---

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: How do you spell that, Ausmus?

BOB: A U S.

SANDRA: M U S.

BOB: M U S. The same as Pauline at the paper.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: They were her ancestors. Well actually her father was one of them, but he was a young man at that time.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: He was in the marines in Guatemala or someplace. He later came back here. Now we got the Ausmus. Okay. Now we ---

SANDRA: You have your dad --- has, are we up to where your dad has the homestead?

BOB: Well he was only, he never did really have the homestead, it belonged to my grandmother. And it was gone before ---

SANDRA: Okay, so your dad ---

BOB: The boys were just trying to, I mean they were, needed to try to salvage it.

SANDRA: And so your dad was working out at whatever job he could find until he got married.

BOB: Well yeah. Right after high school, when he graduated from high school, evidently in about '22, he then made him --- he was a big man anyway. And they made him quite a football player. And rough house basketball --- evidently they played at that time. And out of high school he went to work for the Red and White Grocery, which is down where the Pine Room is now. It belonged to the Schroeders, who later, part of the family, well they built the Pine Room. And then the store in one half of it for awhile, and then they, finally the daughter took over the whole building. Well actually a man named Pete Obiague bought the building, and then they leased it back to run the bar, which was probably the hey day of the Pine Room. But the side effect was ---

Anyhow Dad worked for Standard Oil and ran the Crane plant for the Burns Garage. And evidently he wanted to take over the running of the whole plant and so he, and they wouldn't allow it, so he parted company with the Burns Garage. Then he and his brother Earl became, leased the Three Flags, it was a Three Flags highway. Three

Flags Service Station at the end of Main Street where Parr Lumber Company is now. And that lasted a couple, three years. Earl evidently made some monies --- he went gold mining, and became a --- and followed construction as a shovel operator. And after a few close calls that he --- when the mine caved in around he and Ed Koeneman he came back to Burns then.

Although he had worked, during this time he somehow got his name in with Morse and Knudsen early on, and he could get a job there any time that they were in this area. Also Earl had helped with the building of the railroad from Crane to Burns. The main contract belonged to Henry Otley, and they just hired people with fresnos to build the grade all the way to Burns.

SANDRA: Fresnos and teams.

BOB: Fresnos and teams. And then later on, somewhere shortly in there, the Otleys got probably their biggest road building job. The Otleys were a family in Lawen; they were droughted out like everybody else. And they got the right to build the railroad to Seneca.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: So they built that. And Earl worked for them all the way to Seneca. At this time they had elevating graders, elevating and grader type machines, and the fresnos and one thing and another. Well they had a shovel too, that he operated and loaded the stuff and they used the railroad itself. The only thing they didn't get was the tunnel job. There was a tunnel through the mountain at the summit up here. And they always would say the Swedes got the job, and they did. I don't know where the Swedes really came from, Minnesota I think. But anyhow they bid it as a rock job, and they found out it was just a

thin veneer of rock on top, and all the rest was dirt, and they could dig it out with pick and shovel.

SANDRA: Oh, dear.

BOB: And they really did well.

SANDRA: Well no doubt Mr. Otley was very upset about that.

BOB: The Otleys were quite a group. Old Henry and his wife Mary, they had a camp that moved with the, everything. And when they got up towards Silvies Valley it was in the wintertime, and they were building that railroad, and they had this crew of men. But they always said Henry got up real early in the morning and went up and put a match under the thermometer because most of the time it was below twenty below, and he didn't want the people thinking that --- (Laughter)

SANDRA: That it was too cold to work.

BOB: Yeah. Anyhow by '29 they got that railroad built. So ---

SANDRA: And was it in '29 they got the garage?

BOB: No, it was '35.

SANDRA: '35.

BOB: '35. So Earl had gathered a little money along his way, and he never married, so that let him have more money.

But anyhow we're up to the --- my father and mother's marriage in '26. And my sister was born in '27, and I was born in '29. And we're up to me. Anyhow one of the main experiences, probably had more effect on my life than anything else was the fact that on June the 11th, 1942, my father died of a heart attack over at Vale. We were with

him, he was working for the, what would have been the SCS now, although it was called something about grazing and --- it was a government agency anyway. And they mainly had a crew with a couple, three caterpillar bulldozers building waterholes out on the range at that time. And we really didn't know he was ill, although we knew he was failing some, because he was losing weight. But anyhow he had a heart attack down there at the camp, and he was dead by the time we got him to Vale.

SANDRA: You were living out at camp where the job was?

BOB: Yeah, yeah.

SANDRA: And how did you get him to Vale?

BOB: Well they had the, my mother sent me off on the bicycle. We had an old Ford pickup truck there that I had driven, with straight-cut transmission with a '39 --- yeah; it was a '39 Ford.

SANDRA: You were only 12 or 13.

BOB: Yes.

SANDRA: Okay.

BOB: And I really didn't think I was going to get to the nearest ranch that way. So I took off on my bicycle and I went to the first ranch, and the man I talked to wouldn't have anything to do with me. So I took another road and got to the next ranch, and the guy took his pickup, and evidently they put my bicycle in the back. We went back to the camp and loaded Dad in and hauled him to Vale. And then I ---

SANDRA: Why to Vale?

BOB: Because that was the nearest doctor.

SANDRA: Uh-huh. From where the job site was.

BOB: Yeah. And when I went to the doctor's office it was still quite early in the morning, but there was no one in the doctor's office that I could see. There was a shut door, so I started pounding on it, and the doctor was seeing a patient. And I impressed him with the fact that I was, it was an emergency. And he finally came down and pronounced Dad dead.

SANDRA: A difficult situation for a family.

BOB: Anyhow, we moved then back to, up here. And my mother had been to Links Business College in Boise, prior to her marriage. So we moved in with my two bachelor uncles, the Miller boys, Howard and Neil. And she cooked and we read the Saturday Evening Post --- well actually I got to do a little work. But, and learned, really learned how to drive. But anyhow she got out her shorthand books and an old typewriter and went to work and brushed up on her ---

SANDRA: Her skills.

BOB: Yeah, skills. Then she got a job with the Modern Laundry here in town, who was operated by Cawfield, Dave Cawfield. It had, and really they were operated by one of her brothers, Lee Miller. He had changed the deal and became partners with Morgan Timms, and they opened the Alpine Creamery, which is the Great Country Distributorship. Anyway, Mother worked there for, I don't know how long. We were through with what was left of grade school; I only had my eighth grade left. Actually the year before Dad died we'd moved down to Vale, down to Caldwell.

SANDRA: Caldwell, Idaho?

BOB: Yeah. And we went to school there, because Dad was working at Jordan Valley area. And there really was no good roads to commute between Burns and Jordan Valley at that time. I spent part of that summer, previous to his death, with him in the Jordan Valley country, and we just went out across alkali flats and one thing and another to Jordan Valley. (Laughter)

SANDRA: That had to be some trip.

BOB: Yeah. But anyhow I went there to seventh grade, and then I moved back here for the eighth grade. So I missed one year of my early education here.

SANDRA: So your mom put her shoulder to the old grinding stone, and she supported

BOB: The three of us.

SANDRA: The three of you. And you lived here in town?

BOB: Well the Millers had a house, it's the big, was yellow house, they just painted it, on Egan, close to the, what used to be the old hospital, and is now an apartment house. Well there is a newer house in-between. But --- so we could live fairly cheaply, they allowed us to live there, the rest of the Miller family.

SANDRA: And there was one older sister, and one younger sister. And you were in-between, the one in-between.

BOB: Uh-huh.

SANDRA: Did you finish high school then?

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: And just worked summers or part-time jobs when you could?

BOB: Well yeah, let's see. At about --- well I was 12, Earl was haying at Bell-A. Well Earl and Ed they began a haying deal, they had both worked for the 3C's as foremen.

SANDRA: That's the Civil Conservation Service.

BOB: ... And they had a lot of leave, they could accrue leave, and so they would take off, they could get about two months to three months leave between the two of them. So they had time to hay.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: Okay. They got the contract for the Bell-A Ranch, to mow all the hay on the Bell-A Ranch. And that Ranch was probably nearly ten sections at that time.

SANDRA: And they were mowing with tractor?

BOB: Yeah, they bought a tractor from Burns Lumber Company, was the dealer for John Deere. And they bought a tractor and mowing machine for eight hundred dollars, I think. I don't know how they got the eight hundred dollars, but they got, they had eight hundred dollars. And then the first summer really they evidently both got leave at the same time because they had one tractor and one bed, and a grindstone. And they put lights on the tractor, and they mowed the whole ranch.

SANDRA: Twenty-four hours a day.

BOB: Yeah. Anyhow they got that done. They also ---

SANDRA: They had the whole --- you said they had ten sections?

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: Okay. Now they got it mowed, they got to bail it?

BOB: No, this was loose hay.

SANDRA: Loose.

BOB: Loose hay. But they had only contracted the cutting, which is a real good deal. Because I'm not sure which year it was, it was about the time after Dad's death. That was probably '41 that they got all the hay cut, and they were cutting by the acre. And the Jutleys were doing the raking, bunching, and stacking.

SANDRA: Jutley?

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: Like J U T L E Y ?

BOB: Yeah. Which, they had been a fair size road construction outfit that had gone broke along the way. Actually one of them was an engineer. But they never got the hay up. It rained so much and it rotted in the ground. I can remember in my time with haying that there were the good rotten spots in the fields where these bunches of hay just rotted, and then it killed the grass.

SANDRA: Uh-huh. This was --- you found these, only you went to hay this field later on.

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: So they really lost a lot of hay.

BOB: Yeah. But also it put a bigger crimp in the Jutleys. The Sitz's were lucky they didn't do that until later. We finally took on the whole haying operation.

SANDRA: We being you and ---

BOB: And Earl.

SANDRA: And Earl.

BOB: Well Earl and --- No, we never did the whole operation in Dad's land --- time.

SANDRA: The whole operation being haying and bailing.

BOB: No, haying and stacking.

SANDRA: Haying --- or haying excuse me, haying and stacking.

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: And you and Earl did that after your dad had passed away, and this was still the ten sections, this is the Bell-A and ---

BOB: Well it had shrunk down some. But actually there was a period of time when we'd go to the Double O. The Bell-A owned the Double O Ranch.

SANDRA: This was all Mrs. Hanley?

BOB: Yeah. Well it was Bill Hanley. Well actually it wasn't Bill Hanley at all because he died. A year after he died they got the contract. So we continued the haying for 30 years, I think.

SANDRA: You and Earl?

BOB: Uh-huh.

SANDRA: Hayed on contract for 30 years?

BOB: Uh-huh.

SANDRA: You must have advanced through quite a lot of machinery in that 30 years from stacking it loose, to bailing it?

BOB: Well yes, but I never did bail anything on the Bell-A. I did get into bailed hay later.

SANDRA: Is there any way you can describe stacking it loose, so it could be understood?

BOB: Well there were some great movies, and I don't know what happened to them, of the, of our operation really.

SANDRA: Oh, really?

BOB: But I think they, the film all deteriorated.

SANDRA: And where was --- who took those movies?

BOB: The McCullochs. J. L. McCulloch, he had the McCulloch Garage. Okay, explain ---

SANDRA: We'll have to try and keep our eye out for those movies.

BOB: First of all you just mow the hay and lay it down. You let it cure and then you use dump rakes at that time. And early on they were teams of horses, and the dump rakes were ten to twelve feet in length with their teeth hanging down. And they would put it into windrows.

SANDRA: A person rides the dump rake, and manually releases it?

BOB: Well, actually they had dogs and a wheel.

SANDRA: Oh, okay.

BOB: You had to hold it down. You had a hold-down, but then --- you had to put your foot, pull your foot off the hold-down and hit the trip, and then put the dog in, and release the teeth.

SANDRA: But there was a man riding those rakes?

BOB: Well there is also --- they had the team of horses.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: Then they put tractors on them instead of the horses. And then they widened the rakes to 16, 18 feet.

SANDRA: And the first rakes were around 10 or 12 feet?

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: And how many horses did it take for that?

BOB: Well those were teams.

SANDRA: Teams.

BOB: And actually the wider rakes I think were still for teams, so I think they only used two horses.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: There were some one-horse rakes that I've seen, but I never did be around them. And then they come along with the sweep rake, or the buncher we called them. It was a bunch of teeth on the ground, and actually they had wheels on the front and they hooked a horse on each side of this machine, and the guy rode in the middle. And he had, he could put the teeth up and down. And he'd come down the windrows and make a bunch of all they could get on this machine and then park it. And they'd go and park it.

SANDRA: So you ended up with small stacks all over the field.

BOB: Those are the things that rotted then.

SANDRA: Uh-huh, when it rained.

BOB: But then the, we got up to 24 foot rakes finally with the tractors, were hinged in the middle so they were only 12 foot on a side.

And then we went to, I went to Montana and got a, what was called a Hughes buncher which was nothing but a big box with great big, bigger teeth to make the bunches instead of the horse bucks. In the meantime the horse bucks evolved into power bucks which were trucks with the differential turned over backwards so that the --- you steered them going backwards all the time. And you would put the seat on backwards then too, and the engine was behind you, and the load was in front. And we had some big tractor bucks --- well I missed a step.

They, the big sweep rakes turned out to be four-horse. I never was really involved in them, although I saw them. There were four-horse bucks, they were called, and they could haul much bigger loads than the two-horse spikes. And actually then you doubled and tripled these little bunches in, to make a bigger load.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: Okay, these bigger loads were then yarded usually toward the hay corral, and put in rows so that you could feed, our method of stacking, which was usually a slide and then a net, we called it. It was nothing but a pole with chains on it. And then, and a cable then went over the top of the stack to the pull-up, which in early times was four-horse teams there too. Although there were tractors by my time. And finally we went to the Cat to do that.

But anyhow you'd dig a trench, and this net had a pole in it where the chains joined. So we put the pole in the trench, you had four chains, long chains going one way. Then you had a cross chain on the lower side. And the hook and the cable, and you threw, over-throw a chain over the load, the net setters did, and then hooked it all on the

--- you would hook the over throw first and then you would hook the four other chains. And then you'd holler for the load to go to the stacker; people on the stacker would wave it on, and up it would go.

And then they had a trip that just released the cable from the pull-up. And then we had a pullback horse, which ended up being the only horse in the operation. And it was just a saddle horse with a, well usually the good pullback horse just took wraps on the rope that you pulled the net back by. The fact that you'd hook the over-throw chain first, when you pulled it back, well everything --- the other four chains fell off, but the load was on the hook so you'd get all of it back to the net.

Well you let the pole slide into the trench, and the net setter then and the pullback boy would select the rope, or he'd come up and set the net himself. And put the, those ... chains into the trench. And then they could bring another load and set up on the four chains that were laid out under the load. Then you turned the thing over again and over and over again you did it.

SANDRA: How many tons did you get to a stack?

BOB: Well I think about 120 is about any, as big as they ever got.

SANDRA: And how much to a --- when you threw that, how much hay was in one of those throws?

BOB: Well ---

SANDRA: How many trips did it take to make a stack?

BOB: Lots and lots.

SANDRA: Lots and lots.

BOB: We got so we could make three or four stacks a day.

SANDRA: Anyhow, you could make --- how many trips to a stack, to make a full stack?

BOB: Well actually these, the buck rakes that we were loading this stack with, they were 14 to 16 feet wide. So the loads were 14 to 16 feet wide that we were putting up at a time. And the stacks were double that, a little more than double. Well actually you would run a bottom in, just putting loads in side by side, and then start from there. And usually this was up against the back of what we called the slide, which was a ramp that fit on the front of it.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: Okay, then I suppose 20, 40 --- probably 40 loads to a layer, and probably it would take four or five hundred to make a stack.

SANDRA: And you got up to three stacks a day?

BOB: Yeah, when we really got to rolling. But these were --- some of them were smaller, some of them were only --- probably nothing under sixty ton. This was a measured ton; it was measured like cordwood.

SANDRA: And what is a measurement of a measured ton?

BOB: Well I can't remember --- should remember the formula, but I can't.

SANDRA: Is this hay just one cutting a year?

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: And what was, was it just native grass?

BOB: Just wild grass, native meadows.

SANDRA: So, and you were doing these --- and you were contracting by acres?

BOB: By tonnage.

SANDRA: By tonnage.

BOB: By the measured ton. Which I've tried to figure it out, we did bail out a stack that had a hundred ton in it, and I never did find out --- I think it only weighed out the next spring --- well it was probably two or three year old stack, at only 80 ton. I think we got paid for a 100, on our measured ton.

SANDRA: Did you eventually get to bailing, or did you ---

BOB: Well we did, on account of --- that's more of the story. First of all they got to get through haying there, and the fact that we worked for the Bell-A.

A piece of ground came up, prior to my coming along, while I was in high school; that Earl had an opportunity to buy a piece of ground to the east of the Bell-A. Actually it butted on one corner of it. And it had a little piece of water right, and it had been more or less abandoned. Well actually it came up county land; it was sold at auction.

Anyhow he bought, and then he --- and then I did quite a lot of work there, and got paid for it, clearing brush and doing the things around. And part of that, he was out there looking on an alkali knoll one day and he found some little pieces of gravel. And he wondered, with his highway work and one thing and another, he wondered how far it is to this gravel. So he dug test holes and he found out it was only about six, eight feet. So they opened a gravel pit, and it became Burns Sand and Gravel. And it was some sort of a reef through there, but it didn't have much gravel of any size, but had lots of sand. And sand was very hard to come by here. And the current contractors say you normally use --- the Snake River sand for the concrete here, but we made a lot of concrete

otherwise. Also we lost, a lot of concrete broke up too. But the fact that, it was mainly too much sand. And they did get into crushing rock up the river.

But anyhow Earl then got a way to get water to this piece of ground through the Bell-A; the fact that we could run ditches to the corner of the Bell-A and put a headgate in and get it across the road. I can't remember what our water right was on that piece, but it wasn't as good as the Bell-A's. But anyhow, it made it pretty handy. And as long as we got along with the Bell-A, well it was fine. And actually I never did have any trouble with the Bell-A, even after I quit the haying.

SANDRA: How many acres were you working there?

BOB: Well it was supposed to be a quarter, but it was a short quarter, it was only about 130. And then we bought, well another quarter, well another --- well it was a 80 and a quarter --- 240, so it was three hundred and something there.

SANDRA: And after you got water to it, what did you plant?

BOB: We mainly planted barley. Barley was the hot thing at that time. Anheuser Busch liked the idea. We get back to the Ausmus brothers who were farming a piece of the, that used to be the Island Ranch they bought down there, called the Vergo. And they were, had developed this real market for the ... barley, that Anheuser Busch thought they had to have, and they were willing to pay a premium for it.

So we hit it, or Earl hit a pretty good few years at that time. And then we planted alfalfa in the ground that would take it. There was quite a lot of alkali. Actually we made some mistakes, they weren't necessarily mine, I can always blame them on Earl, because he was making all the decisions at that time. (Laughter)

SANDRA: Yeah that's what happens when you make decisions.

BOB: But we kept trying to recycle the straw from the grain crops into the ground. And it, I was out there plowing one day and I was plowing straw back out of the ground. So the straw wasn't breaking down. So we had to quit trying to recycle the straw. Now I know all we probably had to do was just heavy fertilizer and get the straw to break down.

SANDRA: Heat it up a little bit.

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: That's a ---

BOB: But anyhow through the Bell-A --- Mrs. Hanley leased the Bell-A to --- no Jim Poteet was the guy that ran it. But O. D., O. D. somebody, now it was a man out of Portland that put up the money. Anyhow this --- have you heard of Jim Poteet?

SANDRA: I've heard the name, yes.

BOB: Yeah. Well anyhow he was, for years he ran the ranch for Mrs. Hanley. And we hayed ... at a time.

SANDRA: And you're still haying the Bell-A?

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: And you've got your own piece of property you're working.

BOB: Yeah, yeah.

SANDRA: Did you have, how big a crew did you have helping you through these haying seasons?

BOB: Well they would probably be --- there were 42 machines. No, 22 machines. There was probably close to 30 people. We ran a cookshack on wheels, and we camped in the fields.

SANDRA: Did you have trouble getting employees --- help?

BOB: Not at that time.

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SANDRA: ... without restrictions of --- the way you do it today.

BOB: Well --- and then the fact that, both Dad and Earl had been with the 3 C's. They had access to a bunch of the kids from the 3 C's. That they, somehow they got, they could have leave or something or other and they would come in for the earlier times when they were mowing and one thing or another. Also they used high school kids from Burns. And then later on we used high school kids from Burns. And then we had a bunch of Missourians that would come out every year. And we never asked them their age.

SANDRA: Missourians just came in to work, just for the season?

BOB: Yeah. It was seasonal people.

SANDRA: And they were all from Missouri?

BOB: Yeah, practically all of them. And they were all more or less related.

SANDRA: So like we know the Mexicans that come up as families, this was from Missouri and they came in as families to work.

BOB: Uh-huh.

SANDRA: Oh how interesting.

BOB: Some of them actually could take root here as far as that goes. Wayne Osley has a place down in the valley, and he was one of them.

SANDRA: So they must have had people here that made them aware that there was work here, available.

BOB: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

SANDRA: They knew to come in here.

BOB: Yeah, well Earl Johnson was here. Actually he lived across the street. But I didn't know Earl Johnson until somewhat later, but he was a cousin of some of them.

SANDRA: And you mentioned you were bound to have accidents. Did you have ---

BOB: We never had any serious accidents at all.

SANDRA: Oh how wonderful.

BOB: But a friend that, they had a thing called a trail mower on the regular mowing machine. We never used the trail mowers. It was just an old horse mower tied on behind another mowing machine, so that you had two sickle bars. In doing so, the only way to have a lift on the sickle you had to have somebody riding the trail mower. So there was a kid that lived a block away at that time, another hay contractor had him ride a trail mower and he got bounced off and he lit on one arm in front of the sickle, and it cut the arm off. So accidents do happen.

SANDRA: How about snake bites?

BOB: No.

SANDRA: No snake bites.

BOB: Nope.

SANDRA: And did you have sage rat problem back then that damaged the fields? Or did you ---

BOB: They were terrible in the alfalfa fields there.

SANDRA: But they didn't damage it to the point you couldn't use --- I see some of these fields now that are just really being infested.

BOB: Well, did you read today's paper?

SANDRA: No, I haven't gotten it yet.

BOB: Oh. Well they are protecting the sage rats and squirrels or whatever, in Washington, because they are endangered species. We just took a drive through Virginia Valley, what was it, Mother's Day? What were we doing? And the people --- there were hundreds all over down there shooting sage rats.

SANDRA: Sage rats. My goodness, my goodness.

BOB: (Laughter) Okay, back to the ---

SANDRA: Back to the --- No bad, no bad accidents which is wonderful when you think an operation of that size, that many workers in all age groups.

BOB: We did have one bad accident --- well two, come to think about it. But they weren't with kids. Earl had an old retainer that was with him, and he was a man in his 70's. And he leased a piece of ground himself and he farmed a little. But he always came and hayed, and he drove one of the big bucks. Anyhow when Jim Poteet was running the ranch they would gather, you always had fly problems. The flies were much worse than they are now, at that time. They would pasture about half the ranch, and we

hayed the other half. And they would gather these animals in the, one of the --- there was some big wash sloughs through there, and hold them. And then we had a weed spray rig that held 240 gallons in a power spray, and a power take-off pump and one thing and another. And they would spray these animals to cut down the fly deal. Well there was a sick animal around, so they decided they would rope him and doctor him. And old ... decided that he could throw that animal, and he went up there and he grabbed it and threw it on his leg, and broke his leg. His leg.

SANDRA: Oh my goodness.

BOB: So that bunged him up for better than a year. Getting his --- although he built an inner tube boot, tied it to a tractor and put in his crop. (Laughter)

SANDRA: Where there is a will there is a way.

BOB: Then the other accident that actually caused a death of a man was --- another fellow that just lived a block or two. Ardo Pruitt, he --- we had --- the son of the guy that Earl gold mined with, that was in the hole with him. And he was helping us, and we had two people over at our place putting the alfalfa up while we were over on the Bell-A. And they had a big dump rake over there, and the kid had run the dump rake all the time around the Bell-A, but he hadn't, he evidently hadn't learned to move it too well, or Ardo decided he would help him move it. Anyhow, it was chain driven with a clutch and one thing and another. But, so Ardo said he would jerk on that chain and he'd make the teeth come up, so he could lock it up and throw it, fix it so it would collapse so they could move it. Well his hand went into the sprocket, and he was diabetic, and in the long run it killed him.

SANDRA: Yeah. I know I'm missing some things on this ranching. Where did you store the grain after you had harvested it?

BOB: Well luckily it, early on a man named Tavner (Harry) out of Klamath where they had already --- into a hench and belly and one thing and another, came down and drove the little kind of elevator down here. And the ---

SANDRA: Down here at Burns?

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: Okay.

BOB: Along side the railroad, when there was a railroad.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: And he could get, this little lumber mill working here, agriculture products took precedent over lumber. So Tabner could always get cars, just go order cars. He didn't have to order them early, or anything else. And he didn't have to really pay any damage on, but he fixed it so actually it was a wrap up, and up, and took a truck up, and nobody had dump beds. And you stood the truck up on this thing, and then all the grain would run out into a hopper, and then the hopper would put it in the car.

SANDRA: So you just drove on a slanted ramp.

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: With the truck, and you just automatically dump out the back.

BOB: Uh-huh.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: And you had a little, well a pretty good-sized four cylinder Wisconsin motor that ran this ... Anyhow, he would then brokerage, broker the grain. And he always paid us well for it. John McAllister come in a little bit later. In the meantime Tavner had got tired of it all, I think.

SANDRA: How many years did you and Earl work the ranch?

BOB: 1951 until 1965.

SANDRA: So you were already married?

BOB: Yeah. Well I got married in '51.

SANDRA: In '51. And you and Peggy lived in town?

BOB: Uh-huh, right here.

SANDRA: Here at this house?

BOB: Yep.

SANDRA: And so you would go out there to work and live at camp out there in haying season.

BOB: Well most of the time I didn't live --- Earl lived there.

SANDRA: And you commuted back and forth.

BOB: And I commuted back and forth. Then there was usually, we usually had a bunch of kids that needed a bus.

SANDRA: You and the ...

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: And you had the cook out there on site.

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: And so the cook was cooking three meals a day.

BOB: Uh-huh.

SANDRA: For in the vicinity of 30 or 40 people.

BOB: Uh-huh.

SANDRA: And you only had one cook.

BOB: Yeah. Well everything was quite compressed too. The cook stove in one end of the cookhouse, which was on wheels, and then the table the full length. One thing it was quite warm in there, the crowd didn't stay in there very long. We usually had a full hour off at noon. And everybody would eat all they could, and then they would go out and the adults sleep under the cookhouse in the shade.

SANDRA: And you had an hour break?

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: What, just one day, what was a typical days meals that the cook would fix for the crew?

BOB: Well the meat was provided by the ranch all the time. So a good share of the time, well it was bacon and eggs, or steak for breakfast. And then usually roast beef for lunch, and then roast beef for supper too.

SANDRA: With all the potatoes and carrots and gravy. And did that cook have to make the bread too?

BOB: Well when we could get a cook that really could make the bread, yeah. That was a better time.

SANDRA: Did you have trouble keeping cooks? Was it hard to get a cook?

BOB: Sometimes. Earl's other cousin in Portland, actually she was raised with the four boys when she was quite a lot younger, and she'd come up about half the time, and she would cook through haying.

SANDRA: Was it almost always a woman cook?

BOB: Yeah, never a man that I can remember. There were sometime. The camp that Dad had in Jordan Valley the year before he died, it was a man cook there. He could really cook. Well he had run a restaurant here in town. But actually I did most of the shopping then every night here in town, in whichever grocery store. They really treated us good.

SANDRA: Yeah, I imagine it would take a lot of groceries.

BOB: Well yeah.

SANDRA: Because it was all you could eat, right, when it came to a meal?

BOB: Right. Anything you wanted. Well not anything you wanted, they couldn't order.

SANDRA: Place an order?

BOB: No.

SANDRA: But they got ---

BOB: We did have trouble that summer with the kids, the fact they had never really eaten.

SANDRA: Pardon me, what was that again?

BOB: They hadn't eaten a more or less balanced meal. They had had lettuce and bread and stuff like that, but they hadn't had meat.

SANDRA: So when they came to haying camp, and had this meal with this meat and gravy and potatoes, they had to learn how to eat this.

BOB: Meat and gravy --- Yes.

SANDRA: Where were these people from?

BOB: Here.

SANDRA: And they were just too poor, they didn't have ---

BOB: Well, we were coming out right after the war, and meat was kind of scarce. We always had access to meat through Mother's family or some. But a lot of people didn't have.

SANDRA: So this might of made haying camp real attractive to some people.

BOB: Well it was.

SANDRA: That was a job to covet, because you got these three squares a day.

BOB: Actually some of our better years in the hay field was the fact when the mill went on strike, and there were a lot of good men in the mill.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: And they weren't going to sit on their rear-ends.

SANDRA: Uh-huh.

BOB: They would come to the hay field immediately. And it made for a real good haying season, as long as the strike would last. But sometimes they would settle the strike.

SANDRA: Right in the middle of the field.

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: What was haying season? What length was it?

BOB: The Monday after the Fourth of July until we got done.

SANDRA: Which would be in the month of ---

BOB: It would be in September.

SANDRA: September.

BOB: Try to get done before fair time, which was the first week in September.

SANDRA: Glad you mentioned fair. What was fair like then? It used to be --- things I have known, fair used to be a lot more important than it is today.

BOB: Well evidently it got real poor here for a few years in the '30's. Anyhow when Dad and Earl came to town and went into the garage, well Dad got involved with the boosters club around town, and the boosters club got involved with the fair. And they decided that they had to make the fair pay. So it fell upon him, or he took the job of leaning on all the merchants all around town. And at that time there were a lot of whorehouses in Burns.

SANDRA: Spell that.

BOB: W H O R E.

SANDRA: Okay. (Laughter)

BOB: And Dad went to them, and they were very happy to kick in money for the fair. It brought in lots of ---

SANDRA: Bring a lot of people to town.

BOB: Lots of business. (Laughter) Anyhow, I was only about 7 or 8 at that time and we had thousands of dollars it seemed to me that he would have around the house that he had gathered, that went to the fair board from ---

SANDRA: For operation of the fair.

BOB: Yeah.

SANDRA: Wow.

BOB: And the fair really began to do well for awhile. But then they shut down the houses. (Laughter) My dad's brother became sheriff at the time.

SANDRA: (Laughter) Oh, this is wonderful. Oh, darn! But anyhow, fair was a real family thing.

BOB: Yeah and everybody went to the fair.

SANDRA: More or less everything shut down for fair time.

BOB: And now it's beginning to go, slow down again. It really isn't what it was. The fact that they didn't have any jockeys for the races last year really hurt things.

SANDRA: Oh my that, yeah. That would be ---

BOB: We don't go to the fair necessarily for the rodeo, we go for the races.

SANDRA: For the races.

BOB: And when there is no jockeys it makes it very difficult.

SANDRA: Yeah that's right. Almost stops things. (Laughter) Yeah, almost stops things.

BOB: But we have gotten into going to the state fair, which is a pretty good time too. Then two of our children have families down there that we usually gather, have time together.

SANDRA: Yeah. Well Bob, I'm probably way over your ---

BOB: You're probably way over your time.

SANDRA: No, my time is free. I just don't want to over-do you on this. I can come back and do this again from where I ---

BOB: Well let's not have to go over the whole thing.

SANDRA: No, we won't have to again.

BOB: Okay.

SANDRA: Thank you very much though.

BOB: Well thank you.

(END OF TAPE)

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