

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #437 A/B

Subject: Ferne Cagle

Place: Hines, Oregon

Date: April 15, 2004

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen, and I'm at the home of Ferne Cagle in Hines. And I'm going to interview her today for the Oral History Project for the Harney County Library, and get her history for the Harney County Pioneer Association. She is going to be Queen Mother in June for the Harney County Pioneer Association. Okay, here we go. This is April the 15th, 2004, and I'm visiting with Ferne Cagle. Ferne, who were your parents?

FERNE CAGLE: My parents were Charles and Fanny Barnes.

PAULINE: And when did they come to Harney County?

FERNE: My dad probably came to Harney County maybe --- is that all right to ---

PAULINE: That's just fine.

FERNE: Maybe around 19--- between 1915 and 1918. And my mother came to Harney County probably about 1918 or 1920.

PAULINE: Did he come to ranch or did he do something else?

FERNE: He homesteaded.

PAULINE: He homesteaded.

FERNE: Which was ranching. And he worked for the Jenkins family at Diamond.

PAULINE: At Diamond. And so he ---

FERNE: Not the Diamond Ranch, but the Barton Lake Ranch.

PAULINE: Barton Lake Ranch. Where ... now. So his homestead was in that area too?

FERNE: Yes. There is nothing there now. That's where it was.

PAULINE: And what brought your mother to Harney County?

FERNE: She came from Tennessee to visit a cousin who lived in this area. And I never knew exactly where she lived. But it must have been in that area, and that was how she met my dad.

PAULINE: So she didn't go back to Tennessee?

FERNE: No, no she didn't. And they were married in 1920.

PAULINE: And where were you born?

FERNE: I was born in Burns, don't know exactly where, but there was a midwife in attendance.

PAULINE: What was the date?

FERNE: November 2nd, 1921.

PAULINE: Did you live in Burns, or did they just come in from the homestead?

FERNE: No, we lived out at the homestead. We just came in for that, I guess.

PAULINE: Can you describe where that was located?

FERNE: I don't know.

PAULINE: You don't know.

FERNE: No, I'm sure --- nothing that is still in existence I'm sure.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Did you go to the Diamond school to go to school?

FERNE: No, I went to the Frenchglen School.

PAULINE: You went to Frenchglen.

FERNE: To grade school. My parents eventually moved to a ranch just out of Burns for a short time. And when I was in the first grade we moved to Frenchglen to ranch.

PAULINE: Was the school in the same place it is today?

FERNE: Same school. It has just been added on a lot. It was a one-room school; it was for many years. Then it was a two-room school, and then they remodeled and it's a lot bigger building now. Built the gym.

PAULINE: What's your favorite memory of your school days? Did you have a favorite teacher, or favorite activity?

FERNE: Oh, just --- I think I liked recess like most kids. We played ball, and there were swings, we swang and the boys would get rough and knock us out of the swings. And we liked to play in the snow. And I always liked the Christmas programs that we did a lot of singing and --- We always had singing almost every morning, any school day. That was just part of the routine.

PAULINE: The Christmas program, was that a community event?

FERNE: Yes.

PAULINE: Santa Claus came?

FERNE: It was always a big event, yeah. Had Santa Claus and bags of candy for everybody, probably an orange.

PAULINE: Those oranges were so special then.

FERNE: Yes they were.

PAULINE: Kids today wouldn't think that was so special at all would they?

FERNE: No, it wouldn't be a treat at all for them now.

PAULINE: How many kids were in school with you? Did you have others your age, or were you the only one in that class?

FERNE: No, there were about, probably 15 or maybe 18 kids. It would vary from year to year.

PAULINE: Then did you go to Crane High School or did you come to Burns?

FERNE: Yes. I went to Crane. Graduated from Crane High School.

PAULINE: And what year was that?

FERNE: 1941.

PAULINE: Did you go on to school after that, or did you get a job or ---

FERNE: No. I got a job, different jobs around. I'm not sure what the first job was. I worked for a little while at the Frenchglen Store, and the Bradeens had the store. And Mrs. Bradeen had to be gone, and so they got me to work there. And I cooked the meals for Mr. Bradeen, just for --- I don't know, a couple months maybe. And sometime or other, two different times, I was a fill-in cook at the Roaring Springs Ranch. I can't remember just what years that was. It was right after I was out of school, but I don't know if it was the same year or the next year, or what.

PAULINE: Big hay crew, big buckaroo crew?

FERNE: Yeah, I cooked; well there was usually about 8 or 10. But one time I remember I had 45.

PAULINE: Wow.

FERNE: And I really didn't know --- well I knew how to cook, but not how to plan. So it was difficult, but I did all right. And then, let's see, I guess after World War II started I went to Portland and worked in the shipyard. Not building the ships, but the office work.

PAULINE: That was kind of an exciting time. And do you have any special memories of that time that you were in Portland?

FERNE: Well that was all really new to me, because I hadn't been in a big city before. And I lived with a friend's grandparents, so I wasn't totally on my own. But it was pretty exciting. I'd ride the bus, and it was always wet and cold and damp. It wasn't what I was used to.

PAULINE: Not like Harney County.

FERNE: No. But I enjoyed it, and looking back it was a good experience. And then in the summer I would come home always then, and cook for my dad's hay crew. Because he was the contractor on the P Ranch. One of my sisters and I would cook.

PAULINE: Okay. Well let's talk about your sisters, how many others were there in your family?

FERNE: There was six of us altogether.

PAULINE: And you were the oldest? Can you name your other brothers and sisters?

FERNE: Well one is deceased, you know.

PAULINE: That's okay. What were their names?

FERNE: I'll give them in the order. There is Jennie, Jennie Otley; Thelma Otley; and then Josephine Urizar.

PAULINE: And she is deceased.

FERNE: Uh huh. And Don Barnes, or Jiggs as everybody knows him, and Donna Jordan.

PAULINE: I don't think I know Donna.

FERNE: Well she hasn't lived here for a long time.

PAULINE: Where does she live?

FERNE: Pilot Rock.

PAULINE: At Pilot Rock. And Jiggs is ---

FERNE: Jiggs and Donna are twins.

PAULINE: Are they twins?

FERNE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Okay. Were you a horsewoman, did you like to ride horses and get involved with that kind of activity?

FERNE: Well I didn't much because, I guess because I was the oldest and they just started me out in the house. And I had to wash dishes, and work in the garden, and do all that. And Jen was the one that got to do the outside work. She was a little bigger than me, and so --- There is only 14 months difference in our age, and so she was supposed to have been a boy, so my dad put her to work.

PAULINE: He put her to work. (Laughter)

FERNE: So I didn't get to do that. I always wanted to, but I just --- they didn't let me do it.

PAULINE: Was the --- part of the time that you were cooking for the hay crews and on the ranches was during the wartime and the rationing. Can you tell a little bit about how it was to have supplies and one thing and another with the rationing and all?

FERNE: Well it just --- looking back I can't recall that it was, you know, anything difficult to manage. We had just, all the meat we wanted because of being on the ranch. And we used the vegetables from the garden. Mother always raised huge gardens. And I guess as far as sugar and the, you know, shortening and lard, those things were rationed. We got by all right. Always had desserts, so I guess we had enough.

PAULINE: Well if you had dessert, that was the important thing.

FERNE: Yeah.

PAULINE: So then at a certain point in time you met the young fellow that took your eye. Can you tell us about meeting your husband?

FERNE: Well Noel Cagle, was my husband.

PAULINE: And how do you spell Noel?

FERNE: N O E L.

PAULINE: N O E L. I have been trying to think all morning how he spelled that. It's N O E L.

FERNE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: And it's C A G L E.

FERNE: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Okay.

FERNE: He was from Arkansas. He came to Harney County with the CCC's. And they were in this part of the country, and he was stationed at the Sod House Camp. I didn't meet him until they had closed the camps and he was out of that program. But Joe Fine had hired him to do Cat work for the Roaring Springs Ranch, and that's when we met. And then he worked there for, probably about three years. And World War II came along and he joined the Marines, and spent all the time in the, around the different islands in the Pacific. And at the end of the war went to Japan. And then when he got out of the Marines and came back here, and we were married in 1946.

PAULINE: So you corresponded for a long time before ---

FERNE: Yeah.

PAULINE: You remember going to the movies at the Ideal Theater?

FERNE: I went to a few. I never got to go to movies much.

PAULINE: Do you remember the pictures of the service men on the wall as you came in the door?

FERNE: Yes, I remember that. I was not home a lot, you know, during the war. I didn't get to when I --- Later after working in Portland I got a job in Boise doing office work in a C. C. Anderson Department Store, which later became the Bon, Bon Marché.

PAULINE: Oh.

FERNE: It was the same type of store.

PAULINE: And that's before you were married?

FERNE: Uh huh. We were married in Salinas, California, because that was where Noel got a job after he got out of the service. And he had a sister living in that area. And we lived there for about two years, and that's where Charlie was born.

PAULINE: So he was born in about 19 ---

FERNE: '48.

PAULINE: '48. I was going to say '48.

FERNE: And when we left there --- well we came up, we came in to Frenchglen to visit my folks, and Charlie was just a few months old. And John Scharff asked Noel if he was still going to work for him on the Refuge. So we moved up a few months later, in November that year. Noel went to work at the Refuge, and was there until he retired in 1976.

PAULINE: And you lived at the Refuge Headquarters, or nearby?

FERNE: Part of the time.

PAULINE: Part of the time.

FERNE: We lived, actually three different places on the Refuge. We lived first, because there was no other place to live, we lived in an old house that was called the five-mile house. It was five miles from Frenchglen. It had no plumbing, no heat, except an oil stove that went out every time the wind blew, or the weather got cold.

PAULINE: Just when you needed the heat.

FERNE: Yeah. And we lived there for a year, and through almost the coldest winter Harney County has ever seen. It was 40 below zero, and the outside pump froze up. We

built a fire on it to thaw it out. And by the next winter we had moved to Buena Vista. And the people that had been there were transferred. And we lived there for nine years.

PAULINE: That's a beautiful spot.

FERNE: Yes it is. Then we moved to the headquarters at Sod House. And while we were there, about a year later Nancy was born in 1959.

PAULINE: So your children went to school at Sod House?

FERNE: Yeah. Well Charlie went, when we lived at Buena Vista, Charlie went to school for four years at Frenchglen.

PAULINE: At Frenchglen.

FERNE: I spent all my time on the road. Those four years ... and the other four years at Sod House. And Nancy went all through grade school at Sod House.

PAULINE: Now did they go to Crane?

FERNE: Charlie graduated from Crane High School. Nancy went there two and a half years I think it was. Then she transferred to Burns, because we had moved to Hines.

PAULINE: Well things haven't really changed a lot in that respect for mothers of school children in the rural areas. You spend a lot of time on the road.

FERNE: I was on the road, yeah.

PAULINE: Did you drive a pickup, or did you have a car?

FERNE: I had a car. The road wasn't paved then, so I got pretty good at changing flat tires. I had a lot of them.

PAULINE: Yeah, between Buena Vista and Frenchglen were the --- would get wash-boardy and --- the gravel ---

FERNE: The gravel --- full of nails and whatever got lost off of a load.

PAULINE: So you moved into Hines before he retired didn't you?

FERNE: Yes, we moved in 1975. And then Noel retired in 1976.

PAULINE: And you worked for the bank.

FERNE: Yeah.

PAULINE: U.S. Bank.

FERNE: Yes, I worked with U.S. Bank about twelve years. I retired and quit working in 1992, and spend all my time working in my yard at home, gardening, flowers and vegetable garden and all that.

PAULINE: Well you certainly have a beautiful, beautiful place. Your yard is gorgeous.

FERNE: Thank you.

PAULINE: I need to have you come to my house and ---

FERNE: I like doing that. I guess you would say it's my hobby. But it is a lot of hard work. I like the results, that's the reason I work so hard at it.

PAULINE: Well can you tell me about something really special and outstanding that has happened to you during your lifetime that you remember?

FERNE: Well there are a lot of special things. There isn't anything that I can think of right now that really stands out. I have a wonderful family. My kids, my grandkids, and I have three great-grandkids, and they are all just special to me. I have a lot of great friends, and I do things with them. I love the Steens Mountain. I go up there as often as I can in the summer, maybe five or six times in the summer.

PAULINE: Do you have a special spot on the Steens?

FERNE: I like looking over the east rim view. I like the Kiger Gorge, all the gorges. And I just like the peace and quiet and the scenery up there. The wild flowers.

PAULINE: Did you have an opportunity to go up there much before they paved the road? Oh, I've got to turn this over.

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PAULINE: Well I think when we came to the end of the tape I was asking her about Steens Mountain, and if she got to go up there much before they put the road in.

FERNE: I went up some, not that often, because the road was very rough, there were always ruts in the road. And I can remember, especially when I was in high school, going up there and sitting in a snow bank and swimming in the lake. But there wasn't near the travel up there then that there is now.

PAULINE: No. And the lakes that you swam in would be Fish Lake?

FERNE: Yeah. I kind of swam on the edges; I didn't get out very far. Nobody did.

PAULINE: Well I know that, myself, I had never been there until about, oh I think it was probably 1960 --- it was, it was 1964 I guess before I was up there the first time. People just didn't go because the road was so bad. And you just about had to have a four-wheel drive is what I've been told.

FERNE: Yeah, that was the way it was. Not everyone had a four-wheel drive, or not nearly as many as have them now. But you definitely needed a high-wheeled vehicle. But now the road is much better. It gets wash boardy in the summer, but you just drive a little slower.

PAULINE: But a lot more people.

FERNE: Yes, a great deal more people.

PAULINE: Do you want to name your grandchildren, and your great-grandchildren?

FERNE: Well my grandchildren, the oldest is Jason Cagle and Brian Cagle; they are Charlie's boys. And Nancy's boys are Wes Hall, Wesley Hall, and Clint Hall.

PAULINE: So it's Wesley Hall, H A L L?

FERNE: Uh huh. Yes.

PAULINE: And Clint Hall. Those are Nancy's boys. And where does Nancy live now?

FERNE: Bonanza, Bonanza, Oregon.

PAULINE: Okay.

FERNE: Her husband is an Ag teacher at Bonanza, and an FFA Advisor. And Nancy works with vision impaired students in Klamath Falls, in two different schools. And she Braille's all of their classroom assignments.

PAULINE: That's quite a job.

FERNE: Yes, it is. It's a pretty stressful job.

PAULINE: Uh huh. And of course Charlie is here in Hines --- he lives in Hines doesn't he?

FERNE: Burns.

PAULINE: He lives in Burns.

FERNE: Yes. I don't know if you want to know Charlie retired from the Forest Service, and since that time, about five years, he delivers motor homes for Monocho all over the U.S., and does trade shows as well. And Lorna, his wife, has joined him in the trade

shows since she retired from teaching. My great grandkids are, Jason's children, Kyrstin, K Y R S T I N, and Addyson, A D D Y S O N. And Brian's little boy is Aidan, A I D A N.

PAULINE: Okay.

FERNE: A I D A N.

PAULINE: That is an unusual name.

FERNE: There is a movie star by that name.

PAULINE: Huh. That goes to show how much I go to the movies.

FERNE: I didn't know that either.

PAULINE: Well is there anything else that you could think of that you would like to have made a part of this record?

FERNE: Oh, I might say back to my dad, he broke horses in the round barn.

PAULINE: Oh, let's do talk about that.

FERNE: I thought of that when we were talking about him, but didn't get to it.

PAULINE: I understand that they used the round barn to train the horses to do team work?

FERNE: Yes, just to break horses to work, work horses.

PAULINE: Yeah, they weren't breaking them for saddle horses, they were ---

FERNE: Well I think so, whatever the ranch needed.

PAULINE: Needed.

FERNE: Uh huh. He was a good horseman, he loved horses. He didn't like gasoline engines, is what he called them, he didn't understand them. So, he didn't like the

tractors. He didn't buy a tractor for the ranch until Jiggs was old enough to take care of it.

PAULINE: Well did he have a car, or pickup or ---

FERNE: He had a car.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

FERNE: Yeah. Well my dad, before he was married, he drove a freight team, and that's a picture up there.

PAULINE: Well I was thinking that I remembered something like that.

FERNE: That's at the old stone building at Diamond.

PAULINE: Where did he freight?

FERNE: From Vale.

PAULINE: From Vale.

FERNE: To Diamond.

PAULINE: Did he make a trip every week, or every month?

FERNE: I don't know, probably every --- maybe twice a month. I don't know how long each trip would take. But I remember him talking about sleeping in a snow bank. But I don't remember how many days it took, would take.

PAULINE: Did he haul wool?

FERNE: I think he did, you know, in the spring when they sheared the sheep. And there were a lot of sheep around, a lot of sheep on the Steens. And, but I think he just mainly hauled supplies.

PAULINE: Is there anything else that we need to touch on? That was an important thing. Was he involved in the Harney County Fair, or any of the ---

FERNE: No.

PAULINE: --- or any of the associations of cattlemen's or anything like that?

FERNE: No. That didn't seem to be a big thing, you know, way back then. He was on the Frenchglen School Board for a lot of years, I don't know how many years. And I was a school district clerk at Frenchglen for almost 30 years.

PAULINE: Are there any other organizations or jobs that you had?

FERNE: I worked on a lot of election boards.

PAULINE: Okay. Elections were a little different a few years ago, than they are today.

FERNE: Yes, they were. Yeah, I was still on the election board when they went completely by mail in Hines. So I was --- I did it for a lot of years. I didn't part of the time when I worked for the bank, but after that I did, and before that.

PAULINE: What do you think about vote by mail?

FERNE: I like it. I didn't really enjoy sitting on the election board.

PAULINE: It is a long sit.

FERNE: Yeah, it is a long sit, and nothing to do most of the time. And that was what I didn't like. I like to keep busy. So I like it fine.

PAULINE: Well I want to thank you so much for taking time, and for letting me practice on you today. Because this is the first oral history interview I have done for several years. And I had forgotten how to get all of this paraphernalia set up. So I hope it turns out good.

FERNE: Well, can you take out stuff that --- like when we were just talking, you and I or

PAULINE: Yeah. This, what we do is, we have a transcript done of what is on the tape. And then I will write up something for the paper based on our talk. And for Pioneer Day, someone in your family will probably be giving your history. And they're sure welcome to use material from what I've gathered. But I think they probably will be coming up with some things that we didn't talk about today.

FERNE: Well, I'll probably think of a lot more when you leave.

PAULINE: Yeah, yeah. So I always like for the piece that's in the paper to be different than what is read at the Pioneer Day. Because I think it's, I think it's more interesting to people if they haven't already read it in the paper when they hear it at Pioneer Day. So, so that his ---

FERNE: Probably that would be Nancy. I don't think Charlie can even be here.

PAULINE: Oh that's too bad.

FERNE: He has a trade show in Kansas, I think, somewhere.

PAULINE: Yeah.

FERNE: So he won't even be here. I think he leaves on the 10th.

PAULINE: Anyway, Nancy will be picking your brains for ---

FERNE: She will probably want me to write it.

PAULINE: Well that's all ---

FERNE: What I would like to do is have a copy of what you put in the paper, and then I can re-do it.

PAULINE: Okay, we can work that out. So I want to take a picture of, the picture of your dad and his freight wagon up there. And I was going to take a picture of you today, and you look fine to me, but if you don't feel like you want to ---

FERNE: I don't like my pictures.

PAULINE: Well ---

FERNE: But I was going to say if you insisted I would want to okay the picture.

PAULINE: Well that is fine too.

FERNE: Because I take horrible pictures. It shows all my wrinkles.

PAULINE: I'm a good photographer. I can take a picture ---

FERNE: I'm sure, the kind of camera you have takes better pictures than ---

PAULINE: I think I'll take a picture of you, if you --- I can't make your wrinkles go away, but I can ---

FERNE: I don't like my pictures.

PAULINE: If I could make yours go away, I'd make mine go away too. But we can do that today, or I can come back and do that another day. Because I know you're not feeling very well today.

FERNE: Well I got my hair fixed today.

PAULINE: All right, let's do it then.

FERNE: When I'm working in the yard I wear a hat and ---

END OF TAPE

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