

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #438 – Side A

Subject: Roy Duhaime

Place: Duhaime Home

Date: May 14, 2004

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen. I'm at the home of Roy Duhaime on May 14th, 2004. Roy is going to be the Pioneer President for Harney County Pioneer Association this year. And he has written a very complete history of his family that we'll be using for background material to accompany this tape. But we thought we'd just talk about some things that might not be in the history part of his writings. And I have an unusual question to ask. I've never asked anybody this question before in an oral history interview. But you know the last few years we have had so many skunks.

ROY DUHAIME: Yeah, there is a few. There's one up the road somewhere ---

PAULINE: One up the road just as I drove in your driveway practically. When I was a kid growing up in the 1940's and 1950's, we never saw any skunks. Now you're just a little older than I am, so were there skunks here?

ROY: Well they probably were, we weren't bothered with them. Of course here a couple years ago I had one get in my --- where I feed my cats, and the cats all left. They didn't want nothing to do with him. When he left the cats come back.

PAULINE: I can imagine that.

ROY: No, we never noticed them. We had the beaver and stuff like that around.

PAULINE: Well that's another thing, there at our, where that old gravel pit is there at the corner where you come around the curve at airport road towards Crane on Highway 78, there used to be willows there, and beavers, until they ate themselves out of house and home.

ROY: They had to find someplace else, home. Yeah.

PAULINE: Were there beavers on out here in the valley?

ROY: Yeah, you see them occasionally. Not too many, but once in awhile you'll see one.

PAULINE: Clear out here in the Rye Grass area.

ROY: Yeah, out in Rye Grass.

PAULINE: Rye Grass is about 9 miles from --- well actually 6 miles from town, from Burns.

ROY: Well runs between 6 and 10 miles, around there.

PAULINE: You turn east off of Highway 78.

ROY: Yes.

PAULINE: Down Rye Grass Lane. What did that look like when you were a kid?

ROY: Well when I was a kid there was mostly --- there was a lot of sagebrush on the south side of the road, and the other was pretty much the same as it has been, same as it is now.

PAULINE: And you kind of describe that as grasslands and ---

ROY: Sagebrush pasture land. And all the places west, that's all it was when I was a kid, and big sagebrush.

PAULINE: Big sagebrush.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: And how big was big sagebrush?

ROY: Oh, 5 or 6 inches.

PAULINE: About 4, 5, 6 inches.

ROY: In the diameter, in the trunk.

PAULINE: In diameter. How tall?

ROY: Oh, 6 to 8 feet.

PAULINE: So you could ride a horse out through there and nobody would know you were there.

ROY: Yeah, you can lose a herd of cows in that kind of stuff, and never --- Until they decided to come home, you wouldn't find them.

PAULINE: Well I was reading in your history here about the fact that the Duhaimes raised cattle, and fed cattle and sold them in Portland.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

ROY: Well they'd keep them until they were two years old, feed them for 90 days and then ship them down to feedlots and the packing houses in Portland.

PAULINE: How did you get them to Portland?

ROY: Trucks.

PAULINE: Trucks. Did you go on some of those trips? Or did you hire a truck ---

ROY: No, I went down there once with them. It's a long trip in those days. That was when Oltman was hauling cattle.

PAULINE: What was his first name? Do you remember?

ROY: I don't. It was Oltman Truck Service, is all I remember.

PAULINE: That's all I can remember either.

ROY: I don't know what their first names were.

PAULINE: And Oltman is O L T M A N.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: How many head did you usually send?

ROY: Well we had about 30 on a truck, something like that. We usually had a couple truckloads.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

ROY: Then we got to shipping the leaders to different places.

PAULINE: Things are different today with winters than they used to be.

ROY: Well we like to think so. But they ain't changed.

PAULINE: They really haven't changed.

ROY: They are still 9 months long. (Laughter)

PAULINE: Well that's true.

ROY: You notice it still hasn't quit freezing out here.

PAULINE: No, it froze last night again. Yeah.

ROY: No, the climate hasn't changed to speak of. I'll never forget more water ...

PAULINE: Not so much.

ROY: Not so much. That's about the only thing that has changed. It's primarily a grass country, although we have raised a lot of hay. But it is primarily grass and cows.

PAULINE: But your family did a lot of farming. That wasn't too usual.

ROY: No, we farmed most of this --- up on the Brown place up above the river, clear down, and in 1934 they farmed on the lake. And wherever they found a place they could farm, why they farmed it.

PAULINE: Now you weren't very old at that time.

ROY: No, I was just getting in the way.

PAULINE: Yeah. So you were born in 1927.

ROY: Yeah. April the 26th, '27.

PAULINE: '27. Yeah. But in your history here you talk about you went down with the men and liked to play and did things. Can you remember those, what it was like, from your kid's eye view?

ROY: Oh not really too much. They didn't let us too much around where they was farming. They shoed me away.

PAULINE: They shoed you off huh?

ROY: But --- I started farming with my dad in '46, or '45 rather.

PAULINE: And that was mostly up here on Rye Grass?

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ROY: Well the different things we farmed around --- we didn't --- I stayed there with my mother and she took care of the chores, and the kids stayed there. We didn't get up to the places where they were working.

PAULINE: Where they were farming. What kind of crops did they put in?

ROY: Barley and hay, primarily barley.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

ROY: It's too cold in this country for wheat. Occasionally we'd make a crop of wheat, but chances are you won't. Seasons ain't quite long enough.

PAULINE: Well that's for sure. Like you said, winter is 9 months long. That doesn't leave much summer.

ROY: You got to get it --- when you figure that you got to have, you can't put your stuff in the ground before the first of June, why it doesn't give you a very long growing season. You get in there before that it will grow, but it gets to the right stage it will freeze, then you're out of luck.

PAULINE: According to your history, your family tried to drill irrigation wells in Rye Grass.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Weren't too successful at first.

ROY: No, at first they were, they didn't have heavy enough casings and it buckled on them, and they couldn't get down, couldn't get through the sands and stuff. They didn't know what they were doing to start with. The driller has to know what they're doing; otherwise you can get --- get in trouble.

PAULINE: So at that time the irrigation was just whatever water came in the spring.

ROY: Whatever come down the creek was what they used.

PAULINE: Uh huh. And then later on you did, you were successful in drilling wells and putting on pivots.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: When was that?

ROY: Oh, about 19--- in the 1960's.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

ROY: We did have some fairly good wells. I don't know what they're doing with them now. But when we had them they were all right.

PAULINE: Did you have wheel lines or pivots.

ROY: Hand moved.

PAULINE: Hand moved.

ROY: Yeah, we didn't get that fancy. They moved, we moved them.

PAULINE: Tell me about that. How many times a day did you move?

ROY: Just once.

PAULINE: Just once a day.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Morning or night?

ROY: Usually in the morning.

PAULINE: That meant going out and carrying each ---

ROY: Each 40-foot joint over 40 feet, or 60 feet.

PAULINE: Hooking it up.

ROY: Hooking it up and going. No, you didn't put enough water --- we started out putting, moving them three times a day, but we found we didn't get enough water on the ground. Didn't do any good to irrigate unless you get enough water on it, to do some good. So we went to 24, sometimes longer.

PAULINE: And your crop was alfalfa?

ROY: Alfalfa and barley.

PAULINE: And barley. Did you grow Henschen, malting barley?

ROY: No, it was just too risky in this country. It shatters so bad. You have a crop all up, ready to go, and the wind starts to blow and it will harvest itself.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ROY: So we went to the feed barley, which is, I think about a six row barley and it won't make malting quality, but it will sure make a lot of cow feed.

PAULINE: Did you feed then, use that to feed your own cows? Or did you --- or your own beef?

ROY: They did, and fed pigs and whatever. We sold a lot of it to local people. We sold a lot to Whittings and Hotchkisses and people like that. Kept us out of mischief.

PAULINE: Well it did do that, because you worked long hard hours.

ROY: We did. And there was a couple years we even farmed this place because until he decided to subdivide it.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ROY: But that wasn't very --- it wasn't a very good producing piece of ground.

PAULINE: When we talk about this place. This is the property ---

ROY: Brown place.

PAULINE: --- that belonged to Al Brown.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: And you have built your new home on a piece of that subdivision in the, what we call the triangle.

ROY: Yeah that's about all the ground is good for. You know in other places where we'd get two ton to the acre, we'd get, if we were lucky if we --- on good parts we could get a ton to the acre here.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

ROY: This soil just isn't the same quality that it is down, down the road.

PAULINE: Yeah. You've been kind of progressive in your life. You got interested in computers a long time before --- most people ever knew what they were. Tell me how you became interested in computers.

ROY: Well I got them for accounting primarily.

PAULINE: According to Alice that was about in the 1960's.

ROY: No, it was later than that.

PAULINE: It was later than that.

ROY: Probably 1980's, something like that.

PAULINE: Yeah, I thought that '60 was a little early.

ROY: '60 was way too early for that.

PAULINE: Yeah that's what I thought. So, in the 1980's sometime.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: What kind of a computer did you have?

ROY: I had Radio Shack, but they went out of business. Can't even get ribbons for them anymore.

PAULINE: That's right, they used a cassette tape.

ROY: Yeah, they went in there. I got the Dell in there right now. Two of them for that matter. One wasn't any good, and I found a man in town --- well he had an extra one he wasn't using, so he give it to me. So now I've got two computers, don't know how to run either one of them. (Laughter)

PAULINE: Well I don't believe that. Do you spend much time on the Internet?

ROY: I don't monkey with that.

PAULINE: You don't monkey with that.

ROY: All I got them for is accounting, and occasionally writing up these stories.

PAULINE: Yeah. If you ever get involved in the Internet you'll just have a blast, I'll tell you that.

ROY: I never got much interest in that part of it.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ROY: What I'm interested in is just woodworking and stuff. Have you been up to the museum lately?

PAULINE: Yes. Not lately, but I have been up since you did some work up there.

ROY: I've done a lot of case work for them.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ROY: I got a sign I'm building for them out here in the garage right now, to go out on their front lawn.

PAULINE: Will it be inside or outside?

ROY: Be outside.

PAULINE: Be outside. Good, they need a good sign up there. How did you get interested in woodworking?

ROY: Well I've done that ever since I was in school.

PAULINE: You took a class in high school?

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Who was your teacher?

ROY: Frasier, Charlie Frasier.

PAULINE: Charlie Frasier. I've heard the name. I didn't know him.

ROY: That's going back too far, isn't it?

PAULINE: That's going back too far for me. Well you went to school in Burns.

ROY: I'm really --- two years out here at Rye Grass, then we quit that. Because everybody, all the parents were pulling their kids out of there because it was a waste of time. Then we went, spent the rest of time in Burns schools. I spent one year down in California. I didn't learn nothing there either.

PAULINE: So you went to elementary school in the old elementary school?

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: The big stone building with the --- (The site of Slater Elementary School gymnasium.)

ROY: Yeah I went there, and graduated from there.

PAULINE: Then you went to high school, at the Burns High School.

ROY: Burns High School, and graduated from there.

PAULINE: Well the Burns High School was where Lincoln Junior High School is today.

ROY: Yeah, I worked in that building when I was going to school, just to get extra money, sweeping floors. I don't know how many times I've swept that building.

PAULINE: A lot of, beautiful wood floor.

ROY: There was a lot of floors in that thing to take care of, especially if you have to sweep them once or twice a day. When I was growing up they didn't have them streets paved up there, and of course there would be about a half an inch of dust come in, mud come in off the kid's feet and you had to keep them --- sweep them about twice a day.

PAULINE: Oh, I can't imagine. I think the street was paved by the time I was in high school. I can't imagine what it would be like then.

ROY: Boy, that was a mess.

PAULINE: Have that many students --- what, about 200 students when you were in school?

ROY: Approximately 200.

PAULINE: What kind of classes did you take in high school besides woodshop?

ROY: Oh, well just the normal classes that you take in a high school. Literature, math and all that stuff. I don't imagine it's changed much.

PAULINE: Well I don't know. It seems like reading, writing, and arithmetic ought to still be the main thing.

ROY: Yeah, that's pretty much what it was then.

PAULINE: Yeah. Did you play any --- go out for sports or anything like that?

ROY: No, I had a back injury that prevented me from doing that.

PAULINE: Did you ever learn to play a musical instrument?

ROY: I don't ... I learned to leave them alone. No I wasn't very musical. So I have done, most of my spare time, my extra period I had in the shop, doing shop work.

PAULINE: Well you learned well, because you do beautiful work.

ROY: Well in this house here, I know where every nail is buried.

PAULINE: Well you built your house.

ROY: Yeah. I rebuilt one on the ranch there a time or two. Then we decided we'd --- just when you get things where you want to, well then you decide to sell it and get rid of it. Don't do you much good to remodel.

PAULINE: That's true. I think about that too sometimes.

ROY: Now just where we got to where we could afford good equipment, why we decided it's time to sell it. You want to work with the new stuff.

PAULINE: Yeah. Well you worked with you dad, and then you worked with your brother-in-law.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Wallace Shepherd and ---

ROY: Yeah, I started with my dad --- well I started haying out there in about 19--- oh about 1944 or '45, something like that. That's in those pictures up there, they were taken in about 1945.

PAULINE: So, what do you think is the biggest change you've seen in your lifetime?

ROY: Oh golly, I haven't changed much.

PAULINE: You haven't changed much.

ROY: Oh, I think the biggest change is in the attitudes of the people, have changed more than anything. The county, the weather and all that stuff hasn't changed. You get an altogether different attitude with different people around. Good or bad, I don't know, but they just changed.

PAULINE: Yeah. Well I think we used to do things a lot more as a community.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: The Grange for instance was a community center, and everybody got together at least twice a month.

ROY: Now it's gone, so --- I was master there for about 6 months, until I give it up.

PAULINE: Yeah. Are they meeting --- they're not meeting at all now?

ROY: No, it's disbanded.

PAULINE: Yeah, that's the Poison Creek Grange.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well I was really interested too about the Rye Grass Grange. I guess maybe I knew that there was a Grange in that area.

ROY: Yeah Rye Grass Grange was --- oh just across from that, that little Rye Grass School. There was that place, Irv Smith had there, was on the northeast corner, a few acres on the south side of the road.

PAULINE: How long did that Grange last?

ROY: Oh, offhand I don't know, it wasn't too long.

PAULINE: Just a few years.

ROY: Just a few years. I've got those, I've got a lot of records of who was --- when that was formed and everything in that folder there. But I don't know offhand, I don't know just how long that was. There was one in Crane, and then one at Poison Creek there. That's where Poison Creek Grange --- and then they moved that to town where that old Tonawama building is. Do you know where that was?

PAULINE: Yeah.

ROY: They held it there for quite awhile, then they moved it out to where it is now.

PAULINE: The old Tonawama Building --- well maybe I better ask you, because --- Is that where the old Burns Department Store ---

ROY: It's where the Burnstowne Apartments is.

PAULINE: It's where Burnstowne Apartments --- Well I was a block off then. I thought it was down a block. The Burnstowne Apartments ---

ROY: It burned up here, that building burnt, and then they rebuilt it into that apartment.

PAULINE: Uh huh. And the Grange met there; the Poison Creek Grange met there for awhile.

ROY: Yeah, where that big hall --- on the second floor of that building. They had lawyer's offices and stuff right down below, I think, plus the Telephone Company.

PAULINE: Uh huh. Well they must have moved it out to the corner there, of Highway 205 and 78 sometime about 1940.

ROY: About 1937, something like that. '37 or '38 they moved that out there.

PAULINE: They moved the, in 1937.

ROY: In approximately, in that year, in those years.

PAULINE: In the 1940's and 1950's it was a pretty strong organization.

ROY: Well it was going pretty good then.

PAULINE: And you were ---

ROY: Everybody wants to watch television now, they don't want to go out at night.

PAULINE: It's true. What kinds of activities do you remember?

ROY: Well primarily the activities were Grange dances and stuff like that. Primarily what that was.

PAULINE: Christmas program.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: Did you ever play Santa Claus?

ROY: Once, but that was about the size of it. Well I wasn't very active in it until the last of it. There was too much squabbling going on, so I give it up too. This happens, I guess, in most of these organizations.

PAULINE: Okay, let's get back. I think I have my cough under control. If you had something that you really wanted to put down for history, what would that be? What should people remember about life in these times?

ROY: Well it's primarily in what I wrote in there on my, on that article I gave you.

PAULINE: Yeah. You had a good life in Harney County?

ROY: Yeah, I had a good life until last winter when I broke a leg and had to set in here for 109 days without going outside.

PAULINE: That was not your style was it?

ROY: Hardly.

PAULINE: But you are getting around all right now.

ROY: I can get around. I can't do the walking I used to. I can ride my bicycle, but I can't walk like I used to. I didn't want to for awhile.

PAULINE: So you're very active in the Historical Society. Doing a lot of work on the Museum, and take in those Senior Center lunches.

ROY: Yeah, that's the best part of it.

PAULINE: That's the best part.

ROY: Yeah.

PAULINE: But I bet you're a pretty good cook. You've had to cook for yourself for a lot of years.

ROY: That depends if the can opener is good. Getting to where you can't eat much. Everything I like to eat I can't, so --- That makes life more interesting, I guess. If you don't like it, you can always eat that. If you like it, you can't eat it. (Laughter) Well I think you're wasting tape there.

PAULINE: Well I don't know, I'm waiting for you to tell a funny story or something.

ROY: Well there ain't many funny stories around here. I suppose you have the job of typing these up.

PAULINE: No, I'm really lucky, I have someone that does that for me.

ROY: Oh.

PAULINE: So all I have to do is come and talk. That's the fun part. If there is one thing that you could change about your life, what would that be?

ROY: Oh, I don't think there would be too much I would want to change. That I could speak through, over that recorder.

PAULINE: That you could speak to the recorder. (Laughter) Well I really appreciate your taking time to talk to me today. We'll get your picture here so that we will have that for the paper.

ROY: Okay.

PAULINE: Then we'll --- I have all this, and what you gave Delcy and ---

End of Tape

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