

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #454

Subject: Eldon Currey

Date: January 22, 2008

Place: Burns, Oregon

Interviewer: Ralph Dickenson

RALPH DICKENSON: Okay Eldon, we're ready to go. This is Eldon Currey, and he is going to tell us about some of his family, and his history, and some of the things that they did. Eldon, where were you born?

ELDON CURREY: I was born in, just west of Spokane, Washington, Reardan, Washington.

RALPH: Verden?

ELDON: Well R E A R D E N ---

RALPH: Reardan.

ELDON: --- I think.

RALPH: Uh huh. And when was that?

ELDON: In 1918, March 10, 1918. My --- I was born there because my mother's mother, my grandmother, lived there. And at that time my folks had taken up, had gotten --- well my dad had come to the country earlier and he had filed for a homestead in Road

Canyon, which is west of Fields. The road goes through Long Hollow Canyon now. But Road Canyon is another canyon that is just north of that. And the old road used to come up through there. And there were no doctors down there or anything at that time. So the folks went up to her mother's in Washington, and Dad worked there all winter. I was born in the spring. And he worked there. Then, well I guess they went up in the summer before, and he worked there that fall and in the winter. And then after I was born, I don't know, I was 5 or 6 months old I guess, they came back. They hadn't intended to stay up there or anything they just went up there so they would be closer to hospitals and doctors and everything.

RALPH: They just went up so that when you were born, you would be there where there is some better care.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: And at that time your dad was proving up on his place down South End.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: What was your father's name?

ELDON: H. C. Currey, Hiram Chester.

RALPH: H. C.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: And your mom?

ELDON: Alice.

RALPH: Alice.

ELDON: Alice was her name. And she was a Clayton.

RALPH: Where did they meet? Did they meet here?

ELDON: They met in Catlow Valley. Dad had been born and raised in Lake County. And in about --- now this date is just a, kind of a wild guess, about 1910. When Catlow Valley started opening up, well he decided well, that was new country and he had better come over and see. And of course he, all those people came in then. It was advertised as a great place to raise wheat, and oh going to be the bread basket of Oregon.

RALPH: Oregon.

ELDON: So he went up in Road Canyon and took up this homestead there, because it was nice, flat. Would look like it would be good ground. Well it was good ground for range grass, but it wasn't good ground for wheat. And so then my mother's folks, they had moved a few years earlier from Nebraska, came West, into Washington. And then they, I don't know if they had a place, or they were renting a place or something up there. And they heard about Catlow Valley. Well it was pretty highly advertised, I gather. Probably mouth to mouth, or mouth to ear advertising, but everybody was coming. And there was lots of people in Catlow Valley at that time, I guess. So they came down there, and that's where they met.

RALPH: And so apparently then your wife's folks, your mom's folks went back to Washington then?

ELDON: Yeah, yeah.

RALPH: They didn't stay long.

ELDON: They didn't stay too long. They had a homestead there, just a little south, or southeast of Blitzen. And, but they gave it up pretty quick. They came from grain

country back in Nebraska, and up in Washington was grain country too, so they saw it wasn't a paying enough proposition, so they went back.

RALPH: What were those homesteads, were they 160, or do you remember?

ELDON: Yeah, they were 160. Yeah they were 160 acres and --- then afterwards, and I can remember when that happened, I must have been 6 or 7 years old. The government opened up another, you could take another 160, make 320 acres of ---

RALPH: Uh huh. Was that, Eldon was that after you had already proved up the first?

ELDON: Yeah, he had already proved up. But all they had to do was apply for it, I think.

RALPH: Uh huh. Well did they, that's interesting, I never heard of that. Did they then have to prove up the second, or did it just attach to the first?

ELDON: Well I think, I think --- I can't swear to this, but I think if they were still in the country, and still using the original, well they just turned them over. As long as it was hooked to that original.

RALPH: So you just kind of tacked it on.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: So your dad, you said, came from Lake County. Was that where he was born, over in Lake County?

ELDON: Yeah, he was born over there.

RALPH: Uh huh. How about the rest of your family. Did you have any brothers and sisters?

ELDON: Well I had one brother, he is two years younger than me, and that was all of my family.

RALPH: Just the two of you.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: And what was his name?

ELDON: Lee Currey, William Lee.

RALPH: You had lots of extended family though, didn't you?

ELDON: Oh yeah. We had, I had uncles here --- Nolan Currey, he was --- you know Don don't you?

RALPH: Sure

ELDON: He was Don's granddad.

RALPH: Sure. Judd's dad.

ELDON: Yeah, Judd's dad.

RALPH: Uh huh.

ELDON: And he was in this country too. And then I had one aunt, and three or four brothers that were over in Lake County, they never came to this part of the country.

RALPH: What did you, what did you, where did you go to school, Eldon?

ELDON: I went to school at Andrews.

RALPH: Andrews school. That was ---

ELDON: Eighth grade.

RALPH: Uh huh.

ELDON: And then I went to Crane for high school.

RALPH: High school. Did they have the dormitory then?

ELDON: Yeah, I stayed in the dormitory one year. And then my brother was one year behind me and he came to high school then. And so the folks moved into Crane and we

stayed there in the wintertime, because we had a place in the South End and nothing much to do on it in the wintertime.

RALPH: That happened a lot, didn't it?

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: I can remember my aunt Ruby Temple, when those kids were going through school, they had a place and lived in Crane during, you know, when the kids got older, and they got more of them in school.

ELDON: Well there was a lot of them. Well it was handier, the kids were home then.

RALPH: Right.

ELDON: And there wasn't much to do. Dad stayed part of the time in the South End, most of the time in Crane too.

RALPH: Were you in the, were you in the military at all Eldon? Did you go, were you in the military service?

ELDON: Yes, I was in from '42 to '45. I'll brag a little now.

RALPH: Okay.

ELDON: I was in with the amphibian engineers. I'm one of the few people that made four D-Day landings in World War II.

RALPH: Four D-Day landings.

ELDON: Four --- North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and France. And ---

RALPH: What an experience that must have been.

ELDON: It was. I don't --- I never realized for a long time what --- very few people were in combat that much.

RALPH: That was very significant.

ELDON: Yeah. I drove a heavy equipment --- I drove a Caterpillar tractor ashore. And I came “H” hour plus 15 or 20 minutes every time. First equipment to come over the beach.

RALPH: Yeah. So that was U.S. Army.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: That’s very, very interesting.

ELDON: Well I --- some day I’ll tell you about that.

RALPH: That’s interesting Eldon, like you said there is not many people that can make that ---

ELDON: Well there is one old guy that used to be here, he hunted me up. He says I heard that you was in seven D-Day landings. And I said no, that’s wrong, they never had seven unless you went to the Pacific. But we were slated to go to the Pacific, and the day we --- or the night we landed on a ship at Belgium, Antwerp, we went on in the afternoon, and was loading up ready to go out. And in the middle of the night all of the ships in the whole harbor started blowing their whistles, and they turned on lights, and so somebody says well the Japs gave up. And that’s how close we came ---

RALPH: Well that was sure a happy time.

ELDON: Oh boy, we was sweating that --- them Japs out, I’ll tell you.

RALPH: Eldon, what did you, I’m really interested in that. What did you do? Obviously you weren’t building roads right away. So what was your initial ---

ELDON: We took chicken wire roads we called them, they were heavy woven wire, and then they sewed burlap to it, and then rolled it up. And we made sand sleds, and we loaded them on that. We loaded, or came off the landing craft --- we had it pretty well

figured out by the time we got, went to, when we went into North Africa. It was kind of a hap-hazard --- we didn't know what we was doing, or nobody knew what, else knew, or nobody knew what we was supposed to be doing.

RALPH: Kind of learning on the go.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Learning as you went.

ELDON: Yeah. But when we went into France, I pulled two sand sleds loaded with the chicken wire road. I had a D-7 then, I was on a D-7. It was waterproof for 10 feet of water. Now what I was going to be doing down there when that was under ---

RALPH: When it got over ten feet.

ELDON: Ten feet --- well they never told me about, what to do then. But anyhow, it was --- we had it so we were, knew what we were doing and how to do it. It was a --- actually it was not near as bad, our worst landing was Italy. Boy that was murder on Italy.

RALPH: So you were actually doing construction work of a type, while they were starting their battle.

ELDON: Yeah, well mostly what we done the first three or four days of a landing was salvage vessel, or vehicles that drowned out, get them out of the way. A boat that got sunk, get it out of the way.

RALPH: Pull it out.

ELDON: Push it back in the ocean. The first three or four days was, ... mostly that, then from then on it was salvaging vehicles.

RALPH: Oh, I see.



ELDON: Making roads. We made roads. Of course when we took them things ashore, then we unloaded the chicken wire roads when they got a place to salvage, for the landing craft to come up and land, you know. And we made that so the trucks wouldn't bury themselves in the sand. Of course when we went ashore then, from then on there was rigs that drowned out, and getting stuck in the sand, and getting hit too. And we would get them out, and keep the beach so they could land.

RALPH: Clear. So did you have to run some cable out to some of those rigs and actually drag them out of there?

ELDON: Sometimes, yeah, sometimes.

RALPH: That's really interesting. We'll have to get you to tell us about that whole thing. That's really interesting, that's really, really interesting. I guess, so I asked you were you in the military service, and I guess the answer to that is I guess I was, huh!  
(Laughter)

ELDON: I think so, yeah.

RALPH: Well after you got out of the service, did you come back here?

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Uh huh.

ELDON: Yeah, I came back here. Before I went to the service I had a little bunch of cows down there.

RALPH: On the home place?

ELDON: No. Sizemore's, do you remember Swede Sizemore?

RALPH: I remember Ray. But I ---

ELDON: Anyhow, they had the ranch at Trout Creek.. And I was just working around where I could get a job. And then I always had, at home Dad had some cows, and so I always had a job, a place to live, and a job. But then I got a few, well I had 3 or 4 head of cows. But then Swede, Ed Sizemore, him and his brother had bought, and his dad had bought a bigger place down at Trout Creek. And so he come by, and I knew him, well he'd take haying contracts from some of them ranchers down there. I worked for him one summer. And so he knew that I knew ranch work, you know, and well we'd known each other for a long time. And anyhow, he says if you can get somebody to buy you 30 head of cows, we'll run them with ours and we'll all fix it so we can put up our hay and then go hay somewhere else to make us a little cash every year. And so you can run your cows with ours, and you can keep your wages that you earned in the summertime, and we'll do the same thing, and we'll all build up a bunch of cows. They had more ranch than they had cows.

RALPH: Cattle.

ELDON: More hay than they needed. So that's what I did. I was there two years, about three years. And when I came out --- well I saw the army was going to get me, and so I leased my cows out and went to the army. And when I came out, a bunch of cows had --- I had about 50 head of cows and they were all paid for. And they were all young cows yet.

RALPH: Yeah. So that, so you went right back to that. How long did you stay with that Eldon?

ELDON: Not very long. It was hard to get a place, and I didn't feel like --- well I didn't have any deal like I had before. And Sizemore saved --- well the one brother had got

killed in the war, he was --- Us Harney County guys, never saw a boat, never been to the ocean hardly, and he was on a, he was on torpedo boats. And he got killed. And so, but they had enough cows that they didn't need me anymore. So, and I got married in the meantime, so I sold the cows. But I had a little over 50 head of nice young, good cows.

RALPH: It was a nice start.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Wasn't it. When you come back from the service it was something that most people didn't have. What did you go to doing then, Eldon?

ELDON: Well I went to school first, I went back to Chicago, went to electrical school. And I was going to be an electrician. Well I found out Oregon had laws against electricians. They didn't want new electricians. They want you to work five years for an established, or seven years for an established electrician. Then they'd give you a license. Well, I figured I had lost half of my life in the army, I didn't have seven years to throw, more to throw away. So I quit that.

RALPH: Isn't that funny. Because now you look back on seven years it seems like a pretty short span of time now from here doesn't it?

ELDON: Well, that was from here on out, you know.

RALPH: Sure, sure. How --- and then so you probably did a number of things. How long was it before you went to work for the post office, Eldon?

ELDON: Well, about five or six years. I worked for Les Schwab, or Les Swarthout for awhile at the gas station. Then I went to work for Hines, I worked for Hines awhile. Then while I was working for Hines they found I had went to electrical school, so they, the head electrician down there got me and we went up wiring houses up in Seneca for

awhile. I think we wired three or four houses up there. And then I couldn't get on as an electrician down here, I could have got on as an electrician up at Seneca, but I didn't want to move to Seneca. So then I worked for ... well I guess I worked at the mill, yeah. Then I got a chance to go out to Squaw Butte.

RALPH: For the state.

ELDON: So I worked there about four years. Then the boy got old enough, he had to go to school so I came in, I was still working for them, and worked down at Section 5 then. And then I was working --- I left there and was working for the Wolverine Mill down here. And they opened up, they started the --- routes here in town.

RALPH: Uh huh.

ELDON: And so I took the exam and passed it, and got on the route. And then I worked from then on at the post office.

RALPH: So that would have been early, mid '50's wouldn't it? You know, I was just trying to think about ---

ELDON: Yeah, yeah --- let's see, going by ---

RALPH: And it's not important, but it ---

ELDON: About '50, about '52 or '53 that I ---

RALPH: Yeah. So that early they had mail routes here. I didn't remember ---

ELDON: No, they didn't have them until then.

RALPH: Yeah, but I mean, say in the mid '50's they started the mail routes.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: I didn't remember them having them that early.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Eldon go back, because that's interesting, and it's something that I don't know.

Who owned the Wolverine? Do you remember who owned that?

ELDON: Yeah, it was a guy from Michigan. Oh, I imagine --- names anymore, I cannot think of them.

RALPH: Yeah, I don't ---

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: That was the mill that sat out there near the fairgrounds, towards the fairgrounds there.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Well you had a pretty darn interesting career and life didn't you?

ELDON: Yeah, yeah.

RALPH: I mean you did a lot of things, and ---

ELDON: Yeah, I done a lot of things. And I advanced in every one of them, a little.

RALPH: Yeah.

ELDON: Some of them not very far. Well they come, they heard I was looking for a job, the guy that was the supervisor out at Harney Branch. Come and hunted me up, wanted to know if I would be interested in going out there. And I said, "Yeah, yes, and no." I said, "I understand the cow business some." I figured it was all cows, see. And --- but I said, "I'm not a cowboy, and I don't have any desire to be one." Because I had done a lot of that earlier. And he says, "Well I want you." He says, "Everybody I talk to wants to be a cowboy," and he says, "that isn't what we want. We want somebody that can fix machinery, and do whatever needs to be done." And he hired me right there.

RALPH: And where was it you went to work?

ELDON: Out at Section 5 --- or at Squaw Butte.

RALPH: Oh, at Squaw Butte.

ELDON: Yeah, I worked there until the kids had to start school. So then they transferred me from Squaw Butte to Section 5, and I worked there a couple of years. And then this chance comes and goes when you work for the government. Well ---

RALPH: At that time was --- what was his name, Hibbard?

ELDON: Hibbard, yeah.

RALPH: He was, was he running the Section 5 thing at that time?

ELDON: Yeah. Sawyer was supervisor ---

RALPH: Over it all.

ELDON: Yeah, supervisor, was the head of it.

RALPH: Yeah.

ELDON: And he was a good guy to work for too. Both Hibbard and Art Sawyer both.

RALPH: Yeah, yeah, they're both pretty good fellows.

ELDON: They are good friends of mine, really. Was one of the best places I ever worked. Of course some of the things that they done would drive you crazy, but ---

RALPH: Yeah. Well, you know, those people, and it's kind of the same way now they're all college, they all got college degrees ---

ELDON: Yeah, they all got ---

RALPH: So they take everything from that educated point of view, and don't do it like you and I would do it.

ELDON: No. That Gale Starbuck, one time, and I out there following three steers around out on the graze, or on the hill there. We had to, every 15 minutes, take a reading

on them three steers. Which direction they were going, what they were eating, where they slept, laid down, were they chewing their cud. Which way was the wind blowing, was they grazing into the wind, or how the wind is ---

RALPH: Drive you nuts, wouldn't it?

ELDON: Gale and I, if they ever got anything out of our diaries, I don't think it was very much.

RALPH: Well that's really, really is interesting Eldon. That's been interesting talking about that. Let's --- I want you now to tell your stories about your granddad. What was your granddad's name, Eldon?

ELDON: Well my granddad was Montz, P. M. Currey he always went by.

RALPH: Monce, M O N C E.

ELDON: M O N T Z.

RALPH: M O N T Z, Montz Currey.

ELDON: Currey.

RALPH: And what was the initials?

ELDON: P. M.

RALPH: P. M.

ELDON: Providence was his first name.

RALPH: Providence?

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Where was he born, do you know?

ELDON: In Illinois. They came in 1852 or '53. They started from Illinois, and they came to Missouri. And my granddad said they rested there oxen in Missouri --- he used

to, I thought he said 7 years, but --- then my wife got interested in my family history and we found out they were 3 years in Missouri. But they had a place there, they stopped and they --- And then they came on out there.

RALPH: Where did they come to here, Eldon?

ELDON: Well they came first down by, not far from Salem, and took donation claims they called them there. If you came out and said you wanted to ranch, well the government gave you so many acres, and your wife so many acres. And she got into this and found the places that they had owned down there, and had taken up. And then, I don't know, they weren't happy there, or something, so they moved back to Lake County. And I don't know just when that was either.

RALPH: Uh huh.

ELDON: They raised their families in Lake County.

RALPH: And that is where your dad was from.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: So did your grandpa ever, did they ever take up any land in Harney, what is Harney County now?

ELDON: Yeah, they took up some land that was Pat Culp's out here, you know, where his place, just across the river was? Well in behind that was a pre-emption, they called it. You can take the land and improve it, and they give it to you. Government, pre-emption claim there.

RALPH: Now you're talking about out towards, towards the Bell A, out in ---

ELDON: Yeah. But the other side of the road, west of the road.

RALPH: Uh huh. And that's where he lived ---



ELDON: What?

RALPH: --- that's where he lived, was out there, your granddad?

ELDON: Huh? Well, I don't know. They lived all over. They lived up Currey Creek up

---

RALPH: Currey Garden Creek.

ELDON: Currey Garden Creek.

RALPH: Is that where the name came from?

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Well I'll be darned. Little Currey Garden Creek., uh huh.

ELDON: Yeah. He had a little, I guess all you had to do was just claim land and they give it to you if you lived on it awhile, or something.

RALPH: You know my, my --- I had a great uncle that owned a place right on Currey Garden Creek at one time.

ELDON: Oh.

RALPH: And he was the first of our family to come out here.

ELDON: Well I think the part that my granddad owned, Alice Baker owns it now up there. Some land that --- She don't live there, but she owns the land there.

RALPH: So how did you, do you remember how he started scouting, how that came about?

ELDON: Well no I don't really know that. One time I asked him and, about, well something had come up about scouting and I said, well you --- and he said, yeah. Well I thought he joined the army and they made a scout out of him. Well come to find out later

that wasn't so. He didn't, never joined the army at all. He had a brother that was in the army, and when they had this uprising here, the Indians ---

RALPH: The Bannocks.

ELDON: Yeah. This one brother --- well George Currey was in charge of the troops here I guess. And then this other brother, and I never did know his name, he was a smaller guy they said, and he was a dispatch rider. He rode between Fort Harney and Fort L. C. Smith at Whitehorse, and carried dispatches. And my granddad then, he was a scout. Now why he was a scout I don't know, if he was too young for the army, or if wages was better as a scout than --- Because I thought he was in the army, and when I began to get interested in later years about it, I wrote back, and no, he never was in the army at all. And the scouts were hired, and he scouted with Snake River Indians. He said, I forget, five or six of them. And they were all over this country. So I asked him one time, how I got started on this. I said, "My gosh just 5 or 6 of you riding out all by yourselves?" I said, "Indians could --- how could you do it?" And he said, "Indians never went in very big bunches. They always fought in five or six or eight or ten unless they get in a big rhubarb somewhere." And he said, I said, "Well it looked to me like it would be awful dangerous." And he said, "Well no," he said, "Indians didn't have any guns. They had some, but they always, the only way they had of getting guns was taking them away from Whites that they killed." And he said, "You could give an Indian the best gun in the world and after he had it once, you couldn't hit the inside of a barrel with it." He said, and I said, "Well why?" Well he said, "They didn't know how to load them, they didn't know how to have lead, they'd steal lead, and take what lead they could get with the gun, you know, and powder." And said they'd overload with powder, and said

then the first thing they'd do is run out of lead to make bullets, run out of bullets, because they didn't understand casting bullets either. So he said, "Then they'd put rocks that would go down the barrel again, and shoot the powder up that way." Or he said lots of time I'd, they'd get --- well a wagon had broke down some, you know, people come to this country, their wagon broke down they just left it, about all they could do. Said they'd take the rods out of the end gate and break them into little pieces and use them in the gun he said. After an Indian had the gun a month or two you didn't have to worry about the gun anymore. He couldn't hit you with it.

RALPH: Just abused it.

ELDON: Yeah. Which --- I often wondered how they could get away with that. But he said take four or five good men, that had good guns, and you could go anywhere you wanted to right during the worst of that.

RALPH: So he didn't feel any fear at all?

ELDON: Well I suppose there was ---

RALPH: Well yeah, that may be overstating it, but he ---

ELDON: But it wasn't an unreasonable thing to do.

RALPH: Thing to do. That's interesting, that's interesting. Did he tell you about any of his close calls, or scrapes or anything?

ELDON: Yeah, well he had some pretty close ones alright. He said one time he was making camp and doing something, and he felt something tug. He had a long overcoat on and he felt something tug at his overcoat. And an Indian had sneaked up. He was, there was two or three more of them around there. But this Indian sneaked up and he was out, I think he was chopping some, a tree down for some wood, or something. And that

Indian had shot at him with an arrow and it went through his overcoat, and pinned his overcoat to a tree. He said that was the nearest --- but he said you didn't have to worry about, if you knew an Indian was there, and you watched, and he shot at you with a bow and arrow, he said, an arrow you could see just a little thing with a little blur around it, well you wanted to step to one side. But if you could see the side of the arrow, you didn't even have to move. But he said, then that's when I asked him about the guns, and I thought them Indians would get some guns too. And he said, "Well you didn't have to worry about them very long, they always took care of them."

RALPH: He preferred, he preferred the Snake Indians to using the Paiutes or any of the other Indians I assume.

ELDON: Well apparently the Snakes and the Paiutes never got along. Even before White people came to the country. And the Snakes, they --- against the Paiutes. And he said, "They were good guys to be with," he said. And they would stay at these Forts, and then somebody would send them here or there, and they went all over. He said one time, I don't know if he came from, over Whitehorse, or Fort Harney, or --- but he came to, said the first time he ever come to Wild Horse Valley, or Wild Horse Creek, or he came from the East. And he said about where the old Serrano Point Ranch, the headquarters, the house was. And he said he crossed that flat till you got to the hills, he said the grass was high enough you could ride through there and reach out and take a turn on your saddle horse. Of course it was that old bunch grass probably, but that's pretty big bunch grass.

RALPH: Yeah, yeah, that's high.

ELDON: And he said that's the first time he ever went in that, come in that valley. He came in from over there about where that house was by that Serrano Point, little butte that was over there. He came in from there.

RALPH: And that was the first time he came into that country?

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Probably coming from the Lake country.

ELDON: Well I don't know, or from --- see they had the fort at the Whitehorse Ranch too. And I never thought to ask him which.

RALPH: So he worked around. Did he ever tell you about working, scouting in and out of these different forts? Did he ever talk to you, do you remember him ever ---

ELDON: He never mentioned much about forts. He did some, but I never remember him talking about the forts up here. He talked about forts in Lake County, see. And ---

RALPH: I meant the forts, the camps, like Camp Harney, and Camp C. F. Smith.

ELDON: Oh.

RALPH: And any of those. Did he ever talk about them, that you remember?

ELDON: No, not really. Now out here at Silver Creek, you know, Camp Currey was out there. And that was named after the other brother that was the head of the farming.

RALPH: Uh huh. So that Currey would have been an uncle of yours?

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Or a great uncle, a great uncle.

ELDON: Great uncle.

RALPH: A great uncle of yours.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Huh. He drowned, I think.

ELDON: I don't know. No I don't ---

RALPH: Yeah, it doesn't matter. We can find that out. But anyway, he was pretty, he was pretty high up.

ELDON: Yeah, yeah he was a career soldier.

RALPH: Yeah, yeah. Well those are interesting stories? Can you think of any other stories that you ---

ELDON: Well yeah, he was telling about one time that --- they were, I think they were camped there at Wildhorse Valley, around Andrews somewhere. And they had, at one time they had a camp up where the old Hoffman place was, at the mouth of Wildhorse Creek.

RALPH: Uh huh.

ELDON: And they could have been coming from there, I don't remember. But they were coming from that direction. Of course they'd send them over in Catlow Valley, and they'd scout around too. And anyhow, they were coming, and he said they came from the old road from Andrews. I don't know if you ---

RALPH: I don't know.

ELDON: Andrews you turned up, you got about a mile and a half, two miles north of Andrews. And you turned and went straight, almost due east, and you came over the little rise there to --- and the Alvord Desert was down below. And they came through there, him and the Indians. They were just scouting the country, seeing what they could find. And they got up there and they see this bunch on Alvord Desert. And there was a guy on a mule and he said he was out ahead and he was really a whipping that old mule

over and under. And there were about six or seven Paiutes after him. And so he said he was quite a ways ahead of him, ahead of the rest of them, so they just waited up there. And just as he got there they rode out onto the desert. And he said, the guy says, "I was just about ready to run out on the desert, see that ends there." He says, "I was just about ready to run out of desert and I didn't know what I was going to do." Says, "I think you guys saved my life."

RALPH: There wasn't any question about that, was there?

ELDON: No. Said as quick as some other Indians saw them ride out, well they high-tailed and went the other way. Yeah.

RALPH: That's a good story.

ELDON: Then he was telling one time he was on up between what would have been the Alvord Ranch now, and Mann Lake. And they were going, I don't know, they were going somewhere, or else they were just scouting around. And this one Indian he come out, and ahead of them. And I don't think he ever shot at them, or don't think he had a gun. But anyway they saw it was a Paiute, and so granddad said they were going that way anyhow, so they just followed him along. And he'd get out there, and said he had been around some shooting, because he knew just about how far their rifles would carry. I guess at that time they had, most of them had mussel loading rifles.

RALPH: A lot of them were, yeah.

ELDON: But he said that the new, he said --- it runs in my mind it was a Sharps Colt. It was a new rifle. And said this Snake Indian, he'd shot --- and they still had the older guns. But dad, or granddad had this new rifle. And he said that the Indian would ride, jump up on his pony and go up out of site in the brush of course. Then he'd get up there,

and he'd get up on a big rock, and then he'd wave his blanket at them. And he done that a time or two. They thought maybe he was trying to draw them in to, find some more of them, see. But they thought they'd see what happened anyhow. So ... stopped, and this Indian stopped, and was up on this big high rock between Alvord and Mann Lake there. And, doing a war dance up there. And the other Indian, the Snake Indian, says if I had one of them new rifles I could get him. And dad, granddad said, "Well do you want to try my new rifle?" "Yeah," he said, "I'd like that." So he said that old Indian was up there doing war dances, and other Indian drew a bead on him and he said, he started off and that Indian jumped as high as he could, and down he went and got on his pony and away he went. They couldn't see which way he went then. So they went up to that rock and said there was some blood on that rock. He had hit him somewhere, but he hadn't hit him very, mortally. And he said, he didn't stop to wave his blanket any more.

RALPH: So he learned, he learned that the distance he thought he was safe wasn't true.

ELDON: Yeah

RALPH: Yeah. That's a good story.

ELDON: Well government wasn't very honest with him. They run in a new gun.

RALPH: That's right, they weren't playing fair. Good story. I'll bet he had a hundred stories, didn't he?

ELDON: Probably did, yeah. But at that time, you know, gone, and he was an old guy. But he'd tell you about them, but we never paid any attention or anything.

RALPH: And probably, Eldon, you would have had to work at it to get him started, you know, a lot of times that's the way that worked too.

ELDON: Well yeah. But then we weren't interested always.



RALPH: Yeah. Had other things to do.

ELDON: But we were pretty small kids. I was a little bigger when I asked him about that. Because it kind of bothered me, I couldn't figure out, you could take five or six men, and it was a war, well I mean, you know they killed the Smyth's over there. And down around Diamond, you know, and everything.

RALPH: He was right in the middle of it, your grandpa.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Yeah.

ELDON: I just couldn't see how you, six or seven people could go around like that.

RALPH: But his explanation makes sense.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: When you stop and think about it, doesn't it.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Well and it's very, very interesting. Can you think of anything else you want to add?

ELDON: No, I can't, really. I wish, I wish I had inquired more now.

RALPH: Well, we all do, you know.

ELDON: John Henry Penland, he came to this country in about '27, or '28 or something. He said I used to, he used to come down and visit us all the time. Says I wanted to get your granddad to tell them stories, and listen to them, and you guys are always wanting to go ride, milk cows, calves, or ride some new loco horse you had, or do something else. He said he really would have liked to have got some of those stories too.

RALPH: Yeah, that's pretty normal. Eldon, about when did your granddad die, do you know.?

ELDON: In, yeah, '30 --- '39.

RALPH: And, he, is he buried here?

ELDON: He's buried in Lakeview.

RALPH: In Lakeview.

ELDON: His wife had died there, and ---in fact we, I hauled him back to Lakeview.

RALPH: Oh, you did.

ELDON: Yeah. I don't know, you'd probably be in jail if you done it now, like we did. When he died, well I borrowed a pickup, and we made a coffin and put it in, and I drove him to Lakeview. Then John Henry Penland his dad died in Crane, you know. We borrowed a pickup, him and I hauled him back down to Andrews and buried him.

RALPH: Sure.

ELDON: It was the thing, only thing, nobody thought anything of it, you know.

RALPH: Well you was taking care of your own people, you know.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: And that's kind of, that's gone by the --- heck, if they did that ---

ELDON: But now, can you imagine the questions you would have to answer if you did that?

RALPH: Well if you did that now, Eldon, the mortuaries couldn't make a living, you know. They wouldn't like that.

ELDON: Yeah.

RALPH: Well I'm going to see if I can figure out how, I guess right here. So you can't think of anything else. That was nice, that's almost an hour. That's a very good interview.

(End of DVD)

bl