

AV-Oral History #456

Interviewee: Marcus Haines

Interviewers: Matt Simek and Colin Lamb

Date: March 19, 1992

Place: Burns, Oregon

Subject: Peter French

MATT SIMEK: Okay, I think we're ready to go. Okay, you go ahead and ask your questions, and I'll ask my questions.

COLIN LAMB: Get back a little bit so ---

MATT: A little more?

MARCUS HAINES: Well I've already asked mine.

MATT: Oh, okay. How is that?

MARCUS: I couldn't understand John (Scharff) sending you on to me.

MATT: Well he said you're a man in the know, and in fact I think just about everybody we've talked to has said you're the number one person to talk to about anything having to do with the P Ranch.

MARCUS: Well nobody around knows the truth about it you know. You can tell most anything and nobody can dispute you anymore when you get up to be 85 years old. John is 90.

MATT: Yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah. I worked with John for eight years there, we've been neighbors with him all these years until, well we moved into town. Sold out, out there in '79, moved into town. Prior to that time they were our nearest neighbors, the Scharff's, at the Refuge Headquarters. John left in '72. It was a different story of course when he left.

MATT: Yeah. Supposed to sit on the same side. I think we might do a little better rather than crossing back and forth. Let's scoot over here. Okay. I'm right behind you.

There were a number of things in reading this stuff that I want to know about. Especially some of the things from your --- you had a tour of the Historical Society, I think, that was transcribed into an oral history. And I read a number of the oral histories that were over there, and a lot of the other information. But I wonder if you might start off with just your sense of what Pete French was like as a man. Who was he, what was he like?

MARCUS: Well I have inquired about Pete French from people who knew him, and had encounters with him, and I've got the stories on tape here about the encounters that people has had with Peter French. And this is his characteristics --- if he had something that he wanted, that you had, he would go to any means to get it. It was just an obsession with him, and that was the end. Now if you worked for Pete French, finest fellow to work for you ever saw. All he wanted was your labor. But if you had a ranch down here, if you had a horse, why that was his goal to acquire that. And I can show, I'll show you a map here after awhile that led up to Pete French's death. And that was the reason why, he just couldn't let up on something that he desired.

MATT: And that was Ed Oliver's ranch?

MARCUS: Well not necessarily Ed Oliver, he was, he --- see Ed Oliver homesteaded --- Pete French just fenced everything. You went to the Refuge Headquarters this morning?

MATT: Tomorrow.

MARCUS: Well you'll go through the Sod House Lane.

MATT: Yes.

MARCUS: Now Pete French owned everything from above P Ranch, right down that valley to the Sod House Lane. And that's --- and then a lot of it he didn't own at all, he just fenced it and used it. Fixed it, rims, blocked the rims with a rock fence and right on down the line. And several people, up around the Busse Dam country there, went in there and homesteaded, and Oliver was one of them. And he homesteaded there, just 160 acres. And he had married a girl in a Simmons family, which was right near the Sod House Lane, just --- my mother's nearest neighbor. And so when --- he had taken the mother-in-law's cattle, she had a little bunch of cattle, and taken them up to this homestead and was feeding the cattle up there, taking care of them. He was up there alone. He had come down for Christmas. He spent Christmas with his family, and the next morning he started back up to take care of the cattle, up at the homestead there. And he run into Pete French, and Pete got to whipping him over the head with a fence stave and he shot him.

But he had this obsession. Oliver wasn't up to too much, but he wanted \$500 for this fellow to pay ingrates there. He was a mile and an eighth off the main road there, well he never saw \$500 in his life. You know back in those days that was a lot of money.

So Pete just kept threatening him there, and he --- the story goes that Pete French, well this was back, he had been to Chicago, and he came back to Burns the day before Christmas. And he got in his buggy and he came down to the Sod House Ranch, which is near the Refuge Headquarters, that was his headquarters for this end of the big operation there, and stayed all night. But the next morning then they were going to move cattle out of the Sagebrush Field into what they called the Wright Field. And Chino and the buckaroo outfit was camped back up by the Rockford Lane. Well Chino --- too much of the big-eyed-chick as he called it, he wasn't able to go. So Pete French give him his buggy and team and sent him on to the P Ranch, and he took his horse and took his place a buckarooing. And they gathered these cattle. And Pete French came up and opened the gate here, to let cattle into the Wright Field. And Oliver thought he was still in Chicago, and he just come riding up the field. He told him he would kill him if he ever caught him in his field. So Pete saw him coming, and he just took a stave out of the fence, went out and met him and got to whipping him over the head with this fence stave, and Oliver shot him. That was just that simple.

And --- but there was five or six buckaroos there and, that were driving these cattle. They were supposed to have three thousand head of cattle, and they heard the shots, and they saw this and they saw that, so that's quite a bunch of cattle and cows and calves ... a bawling. It crops up to hear it now from people who talked to some of these witnesses, and he said that they were just --- they were instructed to testify to this kind of information when they had the trial then. So that's kind of the story of Pete French's death there.

MATT: Now John Scharff said he interviewed all three of those guys. It was Emanuel Clark.

MARCUS: Yes.

MATT: And it was Bill Crow.

COLIN LAMB: David Crow.

MARCUS: Dave Crow.

MATT: Dave Crow. And Burt French was there. Of course Burt French was dead by that time, so ---

MARCUS: Yeah he died shortly after.

MATT: Yeah four years after Pete did. And that's a question I want to ask you about too. And I think there was somebody else there, but John said that he interviewed all three of the buckaroos that were with him, and their stories were all pretty consistent. And is it because they were coached?

MARCUS: Why of course they were coached. There is a fellow right down the street here, 90 years old, born and raised here in the country, telling me --- I was visiting just the other day --- and Dave Crow told him he said, "I was clear back with the cattle", he said. "I didn't know what had happened until I got up there at the gate." He said, "I didn't see any of it." But you read the testimony, and he saw the man that whipped him over the head, and all this stuff. But of course they were all Pete French's men there, there was nobody else to testify other than them that saw the actual thing happen.

MATT: Now of course they all said that he was unarmed, and I guess one word was that he had left his ---

MARCUS: Well he was unarmed, yes.

MATT: Okay.

MARCUS: He left his guns. He had two six-shooters and packed them right around here. But he left them in the buggy. And old Chino took them on to the P Ranch for him.

COLIN: Did he normally carry guns, Pete French?

MARCUS: What?

COLIN: Did Pete French normally carry guns?

MARCUS: Yes, yes. Yeah, you bet, they all packed guns in those days.

COLIN: Was it in a holster type?

MARCUS: Yeah, yeah.

COLIN: Now I'm real interested in the trial, and we looked at the transcript and it has a summary of the testimony of the witnesses, but it doesn't have the closing argument. Do you know of any record of that at all?

MARCUS: No. There --- part of that file has been lost I think. Something has happened to it. I don't know, we tried to find it here. There is an argument, got into some arguments here about where this actually happened. And there was a fellow by the name of J. H. Neal who was an engineer, was sent up there to locate the point for the trial. And it was lost out of there, it disappeared out of the file there. And finally we found the case, the county clerk had it in his desk. He had been looking at it, and a lot of this important part was lost, or taken out on purpose, I don't know which.

MATT: There was an article that I read where Rankin Crow was saying that his father pointed out to him, with photographs and so forth, exactly where the site was. And I think

the Oregon Historical Society has those photographs, and it shows in many different directions, you know, what the view from each different direction around the place where this supposedly took place. But I guess we still don't know exactly where that was.

MARCUS: Well the Wright Field is two miles long, and the fence runs north and south up here. And the Wright house was right up in the corner of the field, and then the Wright Field was --- that's out of the Sagebrush Field, and it went to the east and crossed the river there, and down on the other end too. And that's --- there was a gate there where they went in, and then halfway down was another gate. And then at the north end, within a half mile of the Job Corp down here was another gate. And they --- my mother always told me and Johnny Crow here, Dave's boy, tells it too, that it was the center gate that they were putting these cattle through. And then I get some other fellows that was around, and they say no, they were putting these cattle in up at the house.

And Manuel Clark was the foreman at the Sod House when John came here in '35. And John took, old Manuel took him over to this lowest gate here and there was a pole setting out there. And then Johnny Crow and John got together and was going to go up and locate the spot. And they always got along like a couple old tom cats, they got up in front of these two gates and John started at this one, and Johnny said, "No, it's this one up here. No, it's this one." They argued around there, and turned around and went back. That's the closest they ever got.

But I know what happened, I know what happened as well as anything with Manuel Clark. I knew him for years, he was kind of losing his marbles when John come in here. He died shortly afterwards.

In 1926, Manuel was on the Sod House at the time, and they had a fellow working there, they called him Windy Thompson. And he gathered up some cattle that belonged in the Catlow Valley country, to Dave Shirk is who they belonged to, and started up to the Buena Vista with them. Well he went out and went through this lower gate that Manuel took Pete French to, or John Scharff to. And he went through that gate, and he didn't show up at Buena Vista. And after a day or two --- they didn't have phones or anything --- they finally --- well old Windy didn't make it with the cattle --- well what happened to him. So they knew where he was going to go, and he put the cattle through this gate, and got off and shot it, and got on his horse. And they probably scattered around on him, and he jumped this old horse down and he fell down and killed old Windy. Fell on him or something, and he laid dead right there at the gate. And the old horse --- these fellows used split reins, the rein fell down and wrapped up in sagebrush, and the old horse was wrapped up in the sagebrush right there, right near old Windy. And that's where Manuel Clark took John Scharff, and said this was where Pete French was killed, see. And I know just as well as I'm setting right here that Manuel, Manuel got the gates mixed up there. It's just that simple.

MATT: Yeah.

COLIN: What was the deal with Dave Shirk? He and Pete were friends when they were young, when Pete first got up here, but they became bitter enemies.

MARCUS: Yeah, it was over a woman. That happens ever once in awhile, you know.

(Laughter)

COLIN: What's the whole story?

MARCUS: Well there was these Crows, there was --- one of the brothers Dave, I think it was, I'm not right sure about this, but anyway he had a daughter that was a good looking young woman. And Pete French and Dave Shirk were both laying in the bend over there, and old Shirk stayed a little longer, he married her. And Pete French never did, quite get over that, you know. He married old, what you call it, Frenchglen, Glenn's daughter down there. And they, I don't know what you found out down there, but it has never been determined whether she ever came to the P Ranch.

MATT: Yeah.

MARCUS: What did you find out about?

MATT: The only thing we found out was from the library, and it is just speculation. She was telling us that she had heard that Ella did come up here once and didn't stay very long, and hated it so much, he just said that she would never come back. But Dr. Glenn was killed 16 days after they were married.

MARCUS: Yes.

MATT: So if she did come up here, it must have been right after their wedding, and then she went back down for the funeral.

MARCUS: Now I read an account here, you know you get so many stories floating around, that they had started home and got to Winnemucca. And they got the word that the old man was killed, and they turned around and went back.

MATT: That was in Giles French's book.

MARCUS: Yes.

MATT: And he is the one who maintains that they only got as far as Winnemucca.

MARCUS: Uh huh.

MATT: And then Miss Wood's book, in her novel, she says that they got all the way up here. But I don't know what kind of documentation she has got.

MARCUS: Oh she --- I got this thing for my birthday, Florence gave it to me. That's the biggest line of BS that anybody could ever possibly use.

MATT: Oh, is that right?

MARCUS: Oh yeah, there isn't a word of truth in any of it, isn't supposed to be.

MATT: Do you have any idea what Ella French was like?

MARCUS: Well a little bit from what I've heard, you know. Just one of these rich girls family, and temperamental I think, from what I understand. And then they always say, I think common knowledge that this boy that she had when ... Pete French's too, you probably heard that along the line. And that she was probably loose, a little loose with her desires or whatever it might be, I don't know.

MATT: Yes, she lived in the Palace Hotel for a number of years in San Francisco.

MARCUS: Yes, and she lived at the Willows, in the hotel.

MATT: Yeah.

MARCUS: I worked for John there for eight years, and used to haul materials down there with the CC Camp, just out of Willows. It was a veteran's camp, and unload there, and I'd come back and I'd stay at that hotel. And she was staying in the hotel then, and that was in the early '30's, and '40's. I went to work for John in '38, and quit in '46.

MATT: At the Barton Hotel, or the Willows Hotel?

MARCUS: Yeah, I think it was. Uh huh, I don't remember for sure about the name of the hotel. But I think there was only one there anyway.

COLIN: Did Pete French think that his son wasn't really his? Did he have an inkling of that?

MARCUS: Well it sounds like it. Now, you read in Giles book too about, Giles French's book about Pete French trying to get one of Rye Smyth's boys. Corey Smyth's knew him well, and he was wanting a boy there real bad, but he never got him of course. But anyway, he probably did.

Now I'll tell you I have some real fine testimony here and it's up there in the library, and maybe you read it. Esther South, who was John South's daughter, John South was the horseman for French and Glenn in San Francisco, he run a market down there. And when Pete French got killed they sent, what you call him, up to take the outfit over, and he had two girls, or a girl and two boys. And this girl was five years old when they came up. I can show you pictures of them. And I have --- she was up here about seven or eight years ago, and we went out there and made a tape and all, and she just tells a lot of stuff there, that, she has a wonderful recall, and she just tells a lot of stuff there that we've never heard before. Yeah.

MATT: Wonderful.

MARCUS: Yeah. So, you bet. And these people, you know, they just jump at anything. Now she told me this --- Pete French, you've seen the pictures of the P Ranch haven't you? There are two high portions, and then there is the center, a low center. Now that was the original building right there, that's where Pete French lived. Then he built the

headquarters for the buckaroos. So her father told Glenn then, said, “Now I’ve got a family here, I’ve got to have more room.” So that’s when they built these two extensions on the end of this little building of Pete French’s, to accommodate this fellow and his family. I have it right here written out.

MATT: And that was after French was killed?

MARCUS: Well he come up to run the business. Run the business here for five years then. See they sold the property out in 1907 to Henry Corbett from Portland, and hired Bill Hanley who had the Double O country over here to run the outfit for him. And the story goes that at the beginning of this operation Corbett had the money, and Bill had the experience. And in 1916 or ’15, they sold it out to the company. And they said that Hanley had the money and Corbett had had the experience. (Laughter) Which was about right.

And then this South went on down and started this little town of Juntura, between here and Ontario. You haven’t been down there since. It’s about 60 miles here, east of Burns. And he laid that out there for Bill Hanley. And this girl tells about coming in here a horseback to get some dental work done. Getting lost and all, oh she has a fine story.

COLIN: Her photographs are at the Historical Society.

MARCUS: Miss South’s?

COLIN: Yes, right. I looked through some of those and there was a little note on the back where she had said that the P Ranch was only the small house in the middle.

MARCUS: Yes, yeah. And they were alone, and they came up here from Portland, I can't tell you her name, but she just knew so damn much more about what had happened around here. And when I told her that, she said that Pete French built that house long before he was killed. And so I got out this testimony, I got this transcribed, just laying here. And she tells in this, well she just couldn't believe that, that can't be. Well she goes back to Portland, and she calls down to Sacramento and down there somebody told her that Pete French built it. And I got this, such a hot letter, it was still smoking, when it come up here, and I never bothered to answer it. (Laughter) So that's what you're dealing with, with this deal, this stuff, you know. You just can't believe ---

MATT: Yeah. Tell me a little bit more about --- oh gosh there is so many things. Let me look at some notes here. It's hard to know where to trail it, you know.

COLIN: What do you know about Lionel Webster, the attorney from Portland? Do you know anything about him, background?

MARCUS: The attorney, you mean?

COLIN: Uh huh.

MARCUS: Other than he was just here on the trial? No.

COLIN: Did you hear anybody comment on what his delivery was like? The closing argument?

MARCUS: No, no.

COLIN: Okay.

MARCUS: As I say the closing arguments and all that is all lost.

COLIN: I did some research in Portland, and he was a wonderful fellow.

MARCUS: Yes. He married a famous lawyer, as I can remember.

COLIN: He was a circuit court judge later on, and he started the Multnomah County Courthouse. He single-handedly got the Women's and Orphan's Fund through the Oregon legislature in about 1904, when nobody else would do it. And he died in 1917 when he fell down an elevator shaft.

MARCUS: Well I hadn't heard the story of his final years.

COLIN: Did you ever hear whether or not he was any relation to the other famous Webster's like ---

MARCUS: No, I don't know very much about him other than just --- well see then Pete French brought suit, I'll tell you about this, I have a map here I can show you here that will explain the whole thing to you, against the people around Malheur Lake. And a fellow by the name of Springer was the one. And they hired Webster to defend their part of it there. But gosh that was back in the late '70's. I didn't arrive until 1907, so it's been awhile.

MATT: That case went to the Oregon Supreme Court, and set quite a precedent. But it was after French's death by a couple years, I think, that it was finally resolved.

MARCUS: Yes, I will tell you what happened here, I'll show you, I've got the map. I have been trying to get the county court down here, they've got quite a problem down here and they are wanting some help with it. And I've gone out and photographed it and all in the sand reefs that separates Malheur and Harney Lakes. And when this high water came up it closed up the outlet. The water from Malheur Lake can't get into Harney Lake. And it was kicked out by a fellow by the name of Mart Brenton in May of 1881,

and was open ever since. And people used to go down there after a dry year and the dust would fly, to build up and take teams and Fresno's, and clean that out in order to get rid of this water here in Malheur Lake. And now that all went out within a mile and a half of the sand reef, is washed out and gone. But it has built up another reef of its own, made this dam this --- we went down and run some levels down there and they took --- shut off the water there in Harney Lake. The water was away from us on the Malheur side. And that reef was seven feet higher than the water there. Yeah. So it's got to get up to pretty near as high as it was here to get out of there again.

And so I had, I got the refuge manager in here, he is a new man, I knew he didn't know anything about it. I spent the afternoon with him, showing pictures and whatnot. But they have --- this area then from, when you cross the, when you go to The Narrows, it's shown here in this picture. When the road used to go to the west out of The Narrows, across a 300 foot bridge down there for about $3/8^{\text{th}}$ of a mile, then made a square turn and headed north for Burns. Well the government came in here in 1935, with the CC Camps, and got with the road department and they changed the present road and tore the bridge out down there and replaced it with a 6 foot culvert. But anyway, where this bridge was, when you crossed the bridge, the Malheur Lake was here, and Mudd Lake was here. That was the division point. And then the water raised up, filled there and went on out. I just photographed that again last week. I haven't got my pictures back yet, showing the drainage and all, because there is going to be an upset here one of these days on this thing. But anyway ---

MATT: We went through The Narrows on our way up, and it looks like there are only a couple buildings left. And one of them apparently just fell down.

MARCUS: Well the water washed it down there, soaked it up. It's in this picture right here.

MATT: And so there is only really one old building left.

MARCUS: That was Charlie Haines' residence. The store buildings and all of that is all gone. And up on the hill there is a little stone house, they called the jail, these people. But Charlie Haines' son, I visited with before he died about this, and he said his dad built that to keep kerosene and paints and stuff, to keep it out of where the vegetables and his dry goods and all that stuff was. He was a pretty smart man, I'll tell you. Probably the smartest man to ever hit Harney County.

I'll tell you a little bit about him, he came in here in about 1890. Fred was the first one to come in, and he went to Harney, and started a store in 1889. And Charlie came in from Illinois or Indiana to work for him. And he worked for him then until 1892, and they put the bridge in at The Narrows, you see, after it was washed out. They had to go clear around by the Double O or clear around by Crane to get to the P Ranch, and that was a crossing. Well nobody said a word about washing this --- kicking the sand reef out until we got the bridge in. Mart kept his mouth shut, if he ever --- he was the biggest liar in Harney County, to doubt that he ever kicked it out.

Anyways he went down in 1892 and started this store, and then he got the post office in '96. And he died in 1916, and left an estate of \$360,000, and made it right there in that store.

MATT: That's a lot of money to make in a store.

MARCUS: That was a lot of money. But you see they were settling Catlow Valley, and all this country up here and all the trades went right through The Narrows after they got that bridge in. And boy, he had a memory that, well you just can't believe, and a judge of human nature. Well I'll tell this, he had 3 or 4 clerks in that store, and he made each one of them a book, and you were listed, all the customers that he dealt with, were listed into three categories. And the first one when you come in, well just sell him anything he wanted on credit and force the sales on him. Well the second group then, just sell him what he wanted on credit, but not any more. And the third group was cash on the barrel head. So this clerk would ask you, have I met you before? He turned to the name and he says step back, take the book out and come back, and he knew just what to do with you. (Laughter)

But the buckaroos, I've heard, a lot of them tell, talk about this, but it seems uncanny, but they all traded with Charlie Haines. And he was --- somebody would be going down to the store, and --- tell Charlie to send me a pair of Levis, or a pair of boots, or some shirts. If you'd ever bought them there before Charlie had his size, he didn't have to --- he remembered them, he'd just send them back to him, and he knew him too, he was on credit, you know, whatever it was. And he had anything, people from Burns would go down and buy things at The Narrows at that time. So that's what that amounted to.

MATT: Now is that the same Haines, or is it a relative of the Haines who was over by Prineville?

MARCUS: No.

MATT: Involved in that ruckus over there?

MARUCS: No, no relation at all. Now my father ---

MATT: Oh. That was Barnes, I'm sorry.

MARCUS: My father was in the Spanish American War, and when he was discharged he came in and went to work for my father, or my uncle, down at The Narrows there. And my mother married a fellow when she was 16 years old, she was living in Council, Idaho, by the name of Warren Curtis. They got married and they came in here and he had homesteaded over on the south side of the lake. And they --- in March 1903 there was a, nearing midnight one night, he heard a commotion going on out at the barn, and he got up and went out, and there were some fellows that came from The Narrows, they went down and got tanked up, never knowing that George Miller had a shotgun, and they killed him right there. And my mother had this, step-daughter, she was five years old, and they had a horse in the barn that her dad was breaking, but my mother found out what had happened, and she was afraid they'd come back and kill her, and burn the house up and all. So she got this, caught this horse, and got on him bareback, with her little daughter, and went to the Simmons Ranch that they were talking about a while ago, about, less than half a mile away.

So then later, they, my father then --- and they were married. I never have found the date when they were married. But anyway they hatched me out in 1907, I was the next one, and then I have a younger sister.

MATT: Now the Simmons people were married to Ed Oliver, I mean were related to Ed Oliver, right?

MARCUS: Well he married one of the daughters.

MATT: Uh huh.

MARCUS: Yes.

MATT: And when he was arrested by the sheriff, it was in another sister's house, or Mrs. Simmons house?

MARCUS: No, it was in the Simmons house, yes. See old Oliver just, he beat it out to the west and got out in a field and just turned and went home. He didn't go on up there, and the sheriff got him there the next morning. And he had a 32 six-shooter and said he packed, had 3 shells, and said he was hired to kill Pete French, this that and the other thing. But I think I'd have a loaded gun if I were out to kill somebody, wouldn't you?

MATT: I think so. Whatever happened to him?

MARCUS: Nobody knows. He got a --- there is a fellow here, Shelby Petersen, he won't tell you too much. I've been trying to make a tape with him. I've talked to him quite a lot about it. But he, his father was a Dane, he came from Denmark. And he married the widow, and Shelby is a step-brother, you see, to this family here. And they got the story going, that John Scharff popped this one out, I don't know where he got it, but Oliver when he was turned loose got with a prostitute and left here. But Shelby said no, he said he didn't, he said he just disappeared. And he said we've always thought that Pete French's men killed him, these Mexicans. He said I don't think there is any question about it. So that's --- That was the end of Oliver, nobody ever heard of him after that.

MATT: Let's see who have we talked to about that. I was talking to, I talked to Phil Petersen to try to see if I could track town Charlie Petersen and talk with him about it. He's in Yuma, Arizona. And they thought that maybe he knew something about it. But then I talked to Phil's wife, Vel Petersen.

MARCUS: What was it?

MATT: Vel.

MARCUS: I don't know, I've never heard of it.

MATT: That's Phil's wife. And she thinks that he was murdered and buried in the desert. But she said a person who might be interesting to talk is Lola Bailey.

MARCUS: I've talked to her.

MATT: What did she have to say? She was Roy's daughter, Roy Oliver's daughter.

MARCUS: Yes, yes.

MATT: And Roy Oliver was the only one of the Oliver children who had any children, wasn't he?

MARCUS: I think so.

MATT: The other two didn't. And so Lola is Ed Oliver's granddaughter. And then Pat Bailey who runs the TCI Cable thing down here is Lola's son.

MARCUS: Yes.

MATT: And so that Vel Petersen thought that Pat might be able to connect us with Lola and find out what her story is. But you say you've talked to her. What did she say?

MARCUS: Well I've spent quite a lot of time with her. Well she didn't know any more about it than we did. There was supposed to be an Oliver buried in the cemetery in Red

Bluff. And she was going then down in that country there. She had arthritis real bad. They sold out here and got a trailer and made the trip. Before they went down she went down through there, she said --- when she came back she called me and told me, she said I checked the records of the cemetery there at Red Bluff and said there was no Ed Oliver there. Said that was a mistake of some kind. But I think everybody has agreed that the Mexicans got him.

MATT: Yeah, she also said that Shelby Petersen probably wouldn't talk to me, so.

MARCUS: No, he won't. He comes here quite often and we visit and --- there is a lot of people, you know, that won't let you tape them, that's all there is about it, and he is one of them. No sir, nothing doing. Come here and tell you some of the damndest cock and bull stories, you know. This George Miller, I'll have to tell you this one, it's pretty good. Shelby told me this one --- She said George Miller that killed my mother's first husband, he lived at the Double O prior to this, after he came back. No, that would be after he got out of the pen, I guess.

And anyway, Shelby's dad came from Denmark, and went into Washington. And he saw a band of sheep and he said, that was his business right there. So he got a partner, Shelby told me all about this, and he worked off down into Idaho with these sheep. And he got into the forest here someplace that was loaded with bears and they just about put him out of the sheep business. So they migrated then on into Harney County. He dropped his partner someplace. And he went over here to the Double O and bought a ranch from Hanley, and was running his sheep there. And George Miller was living over there then, he was raising a family there at the Double O country. So the word got

around that old Pete Petersen, that old Miller said that we'd just kill that old guy, and I'll load him on a packhorse and take him out here in the desert and I'll throw him on one of these rock piles and cover him up, we'll get rid of him. We don't want any sheep men around over here. So Pete beat it over to The Narrows then and he bought a six-shooter from Charlie Haines. So Charlie said, "Well Pete, what do you want with a six-shooter?" He never shot one in his life, you know. So he told him then what had happened. There was great gossip going around. Charlie said, "Oh Pete," he says, "never turn your back on George Miller you're just as safe as you can be." "He'll never shoot you as long as you're looking at him." So Pete come back without the six-shooter.

So when anybody would go to The Narrows from the Double O country they'd bring the mail all back with them. No mail was delivered, never has been any mail service in that country. And so he was coming around the south side of Harney Lake coming back, and he met old George. Old George wanted his mail, so Pete got the sack down and told him to look down and he was staring at him all the time, and he got his letters and away he went. Well shortly after this happened then, Pete raised, or Miller raised quite a family. And a little five year old girl died, and she is buried up on the hill, right there near the ranch. And when they got old Pete down there to help with the services, then he left. And Shelby said after that, said you know my dad and Mildred got along fine. Said my dad was never out of a quarter of beef after --- from the time he sold out and left there. Said I don't think ... told George, but it was good meat anyway. (Laughter) Oh, those are some of the tales that went on around here after ---

MATT: Okay. You said that the fellow from San Francisco ran the ranch after Pete did.

MARCUS: John South, yes.

MATT: John South. Does the name S. C. Lusk ring a bell for you?

MARCUS: Well he was, yes, he was their bookkeeper, I think, attorney for him. He was here for a little bit but hell he didn't know nothing, you know. ... so that's when they sent out John South. South came up here and spent a time with him when he married his wife. Come up and Pete French gave him his house and he moved out with the buckaroos there. They were coming ... that's what this girl tells us ...

MATT: Yeah, Russ was the administrator of the Glenn estate. He was a lawyer out of Chico.

MARCUS: Yeah a lawyer. But the damn bookkeeper is the guy that killed old Glenn, wasn't he?

MATT: Yeah.

MARCUS: Yeah, I forgot his name.

MATT: Hiram Miller.

COLIN: Hiram Miller.

MARCUS: Turem Miller.

MATT: Hiram Miller, H U R A M.

MARCUS: Oh, uh huh.

MATT: And he was an alcoholic, itinerant bookkeeper. And there was a lot of controversy, there still is a lot of controversy about that one too.

MARCUS: Oh.

MATT: Because Miller kept saying that Dr. Glenn was fooling around with his mistress. And that made Miller mad, because he thought that that was defaming Mrs. Glenn. And so, and he was sure that Dr. Glenn was going to kill him the minute he saw him. And so he just happened to be walking on the porch of the Barton Hotel with a shotgun, when Dr. Glenn was out there. And as Glenn turned around Miller says that he was sure he was armed and he was going to pull out a pistol and shoot him, so he shot him in the back of the head with a shotgun. And of course Glenn wasn't armed, and that was the end of that. But he was sent to Folsom Prison for a life term, for manslaughter I think, and got out after only ten years. And we don't know what happened there, and why that sentence was commuted or paroled, or whatever. I don't know what happened. We're trying to find that out too. And I'm trying to figure out again how Bill Hanley got involved. Now Henry Corbett was a senator, right? He was the senator out of Portland.

MARCUS: Yeah, and pretty well fixed too, of course.

MATT: Yeah, and I had heard that he had bought the P Ranch for his son.

MARCUS: Yeah, I heard that too.

MATT: But then, so he bought it and he hired Bill Hanley to run it?

MARCUS: Yes. They tell about Bill Hanley owning it, but Bill never owned it. He was just the foreman for Corbett.

MATT: What did, how long did that happen? What ---

MARCUS: Well he bought the ranch in 1907, and Bill took over the management then. He put, he dredged the canal down through, and they had the trouble with the Forest

Service and all of that. And I think in 1915 then that Swift and Company bought the property from Corbett.

MATT: And then in '35 it was sold to the government.

MARCUS: Yes, February '35.

MATT: Yeah. Let's see --- times were changing then, weren't they?

MARCUS: That was in the depression, you know, there, then.

MATT: I mean when French was still alive, its --- just before he was killed, things were already starting to turn, weren't they? Things were not as comfortable as they used to be.

MARCUS: Well that's probably right, alright. Because he was really getting the animosity of the people around the lake against him there, and he was really, you know, getting the animosity of the people around the lake again in there. And he was already in bad circumstances up the country here. I have a tape here that I could play for you, up the horses mouth here, about Rye Smyth. You've probably heard the encounters that they have had. Rye came in here in 1872, settled out here at the mill, because that's the hot spring out there, where they used to make the mill pond. He spent two years there, and then he moved to Happy Valley in the winter in about 3 feet of snow. He went over there and the snow was all gone. And that's the reason they called it Happy Valley. Well Pete French was putting all this stuff together, around here, all this time. And he certainly had his eye on Happy Valley, and they had a ranch up there, started to show him, by the name Riddle, the Riddle Ranch. Belongs to the Otley boys now. And this tape here, the daughter of Rye Smyth's made with me, I made a tape with these folks on the Indian War in '78. And I have four versions of it, it's pretty close too, it's really interesting. So old

Rye Smyth was a violinist, and every Saturday night they would have a dance in somebody's house. And this night they were dancing, and a mister, I've forgotten his name, was just a couple of miles from where the Smyths lived. And when he moved in there and homesteaded, he was a bachelor, he dug a hole in the wall, in the hill, along the road to live. When he got a little money then he built a house out in the front. That's where they were dancing then. And they had, their first boy Claude, he was just a baby, and he was back in this dugout asleep. Well the dance was over, and they got ready to go home and so went in to pick up Claude, I guess, maybe got a hold of him, and George Miller followed him in there and he made a slash at George's belly or old Rye's belly. He just ... whack. Old Rye jumped back, reached around and got him ... right in the face. And down he went. And she said well we just picked up Claude and went on home. And then he said of course ... shot him. He was inquiring the next day about what had happened. ...went home and went to bed, didn't think too much about it. And while this happened, old George was drooling, well the baby had the mouth open, and the bullet went through his mouth and come out the ... side of his ear here. (Laughter) And she said, well you know George always wore sideburns after that to cover up this scar on his face. But says after that you know my dad and him were good friends. And he said that Pete French had paid him to kill him. But he said he never could get around to do it. But he said that night he was drinking a little bit, trying to get enough courage to try it.

MATT: Oh, Pete French had paid Hiram Miller to kill ---

MARCUS: To kill Rye Smyth, yeah. That's what he told him, anyway.

MATT: Were there a lot of stories that Pete French had hired people to kill people?

MARCUS: Yes, yeah. People who disappeared around --- Well I'll tell you, Pete he had to move along pretty fast there to do what he did in 25 years, you know.

MATT: That was quite an accomplishment in 25 years.

MARCUS: It certainly was.

MATT: Yeah. Charles French ... was that the Ruby Ranch by any chance?

MARCUS: Was what?

MATT: The Ruby Ranch, was that in Happy Valley?

MARCUS: No, no.

MATT: Where is the Ruby Ranch, because I know that he wanted to get that ranch for a long time too.

MARCUS: Well I really don't know, I don't know of a Ruby Ranch around here.

MATT: Huh. I'll have to look that one up. Now Giles French ---

MARCUS: There was a fellow by the name of Ruby here that started a sawmill, but he came in here, into the Diamond country with a bunch of cattle, and that's where they started the name of Diamond, that was his brand. And Pete French bought him out there, that's where he was at when the Indian War started there, was in the Diamond Ranch, the Diamond Ranch there.

MATT: Giles French, I read somewhere that Giles French made a film in the '60's. Do you know anything about that film?

MARCUS: No, never heard of it before.

MATT: I saw it in the Historical Society, and then somebody else told me that they had run into it also. But we're trying to find it. We've never been able to find a copy, or anybody that got one.

MARCUS: I never heard of it until you told me on the phone. You told me --- then movie here. It's news to me, I've never heard of it.

COLIN: Okay. Do you know anything about the construction of the Round Barn? Did Pete French have anything to do with that or did he have ---

MARCUS: He built it, yes.

COLIN: Did he design it?

MARCUS: Well we don't know about it. It started, it took a while to build it. It started in 1883, just shortly after he came in. Of course he had lots of Mexicans for that, and whoever designed it knew what he was doing. Have you been to it?

MATT: Huh uh.

MARCUS: And I'll tell you, the fellow was a carpenter and a construction man, he probably hired some fellow to do that. And of course all of that lava rock was hauled out of the lava beds there out toward Diamond. But gosh, almost all the timber was hauled from up here at Burns ... and there was a dispute about where all those big junipers came from. That center post there is 33 feet high, you know. ... to the ground there. And, but it never was a success, that was the problem of it. They could run those horses around in there, in the wintertime, and exercise them in that barn. When spring came they got outside, they had to do it all over. They bucked these cowboys right and left when they got out where they could see the ... I think about one year ... but he built three of them.

Built one at the P Ranch, and one over at Three Mile in Catlow Valley. Joe Fine told me, I guess you've heard of Joe Fine. Yes, I knew Joe real well and he's got a son lives right down the line here from me. And Joe told me that they --- he moved there in 1928 and took over the, he rented it there, he run his sheep at the time. They said they tore the barn down there, and they started the hotel at Frenchglen out of the old lumber.

MATT: Oh, I'm going to change tapes. Okay.

MARCUS: It's blinking at me now, does that mean anything?

MATT: Oh yeah, that means the tape is getting low. Yeah. Could we make some kind of arrangement do you think, to listen to copies of the tapes that you have with some of these people?

MARCUS: Well sure they're all --- well if you want to hear it.

MATT: Maybe we can put that on our list. Okay.

MARCUS: Are you going to be around for awhile?

MATT: No, we're leaving tomorrow morning. Yeah. We have one appointment tomorrow morning at the headquarters. And a gal down there, Carla, I think is her name, is going to take us to the Sod House and show us around where Pete was taken after he was murdered and stuff like that.

MARCUS: Yeah, they bulldozed the house down here just this winter. The Sod House house is gone.

MATT: Oh yeah, she told me that they had done that. She said that was only about 40 years old.

MARCUS: Oh no, no, hell no.

MATT: Maybe we're not talking about the same one.

MARCUS: ... idea in their head. I've been in that country since 1907, and I can remember that old house ever since I was big enough to remember. It was built, it was in '80 down there, and the barn was too. They got a big barn, 150 ... out there, starting to fall down now. You can see it kind of leaning to the east there. And there is a cellar there that they built, it got, its inscribed there in 1900 in the stone right over the door there. I don't think that, maybe they knocked it down, I don't know.

MATT: I don't know. Giles French wrote of Ed Oliver belonging to a poker club. And guys would sit around and play poker and complain about Pete French. And he said that there were a bunch of guys who drew straws to figure out which one was going to kill him. That ring a bell with you?

MARCUS: Yeah, that's been going around for a long time. But I don't know that there was ever a word of truth in it. I don't think any of them were brave enough to kill him to begin with, and was involved in something like that. But then I heard that ... we had the 100th year of P Ranch up here in 1870 --- or 1972. Giles come over here, and come up here and rattled around here. He was mixed up ... so damn bad he didn't know what he was talking about. I've read his book, I've got it here, but --- When, you got to know the facts of some of this stuff --- you tell these people, they come in, and you tell these people, they'll take a slip of paper, and they will scribe and they wiggle on here, and when they leave they don't know what the hell they've got. And they guess at what they have heard. I just won't have an interview with them for that reason, if you're going to publish it, because they rarely ever get it right. Don't take the time. If they've got the

tape they can play it and listen to it. But just taking down scribbling notes here, for most people they can't read them after they cool off anyway. (Laughter) But oh I sure, ... my idea of Pete French's there --- Giles' story quite a bit after that episode up there at the P Ranch.

COLIN: Anything more come to your mind?

MATT: There was something in here that I'm having a hard time trying to remember. And --- oh I remember what it was. A long time ago, when we first started this afternoon, we started talking about Burt French. What happened to Burt French? Why did he kill himself?

MARCUS: I don't know. I never knew much about Burt French.

MATT: Now he was Pete's little brother wasn't he?

MARCUS: He was what?

MATT: He was Pete's little brother.

MARCUS: Yes, he was one, he was a buckaroo outfit. He was the one that went with the casket, with old Mart Brenton over to, I guess they went to Pendleton didn't they? Put it on the railroad there. And he kind of got his stories mixed up there too, in the testimony, if you read it there. And several of them got it mixed up. If you study the transcript there some, and he was one of them there.

MATT: Now he was a candidate for awhile to run the ranch. Pete was thinking about leaving the ranch to him, but then he didn't do it because he felt that Burt didn't have what it took to run a ranch like that. And that's when he started looking around for Corey Smyth.

MARCUS: Corey Smyth, yeah, uh huh. No, I never heard that.

MATT: After Pete and Ella were divorced, what did he do then?

MARCUS: Pete?

MATT: Yeah.

MARCUS: Just went ahead and made the money there, I think. And he just kept expanding, he was definitely going pretty good there.

MATT: What did he do for a social life? Did he ---

MARCUS: Well he'd go to dances, yeah. He was quite a dancer. And there is, now this may be fiction, but I rather think it is the truth. But there was a woman here, born and raised in the country, Jessie Williams, she was curator at the museum for years. She died here at 93 years old. She was my first school teacher. I started to her in 1913, she was 18 years old. In those days if a teacher was married they wouldn't allow her to teach. And the next year why Jessie, Jessie got married that summer, and that ended her career. I always told her --- trying to teach me was what caused it. But she told me, told me this that --- I won't tell you ... a family around here. Every time I see one of them I think about it. And she said she told Mrs. Williams' mother that I'm carrying Pete French's baby. And then this girl was born in '97 there some time. And my sisters and her were about the same age, and great friends, as things went on over the years --- and then she lived at The Narrows there. So I guess they ... around a little bit. I really think that it was true alright ... then. And I know the family, in fact I traveled with one of the boys out to Hart Mountain country a week ago tomorrow. We drove out there to look at some ranches and Indian writings and what-not. And --- a pretty sharp kid. And --- there is

lots of kids, there is 7 of them in the family, with this woman who was supposed to have the --- This older woman, I mean the one that was carrying the baby, was the oldest girl there. This is the offspring of hers there, so there would be a Pete French trace there, you know. They are all pretty sharp kids, and they certainly didn't get it from their dad, I know that. There was old George Miller's pet, the son. Yeah.

MATT: It's amazing how everything is interwoven in this area.

MARCUS: Oh yeah, yeah, you bet.

MATT: Everybody is connected in some way.

MARCUS: You take over in the Drewsey country, if you know anything about it I guess. It's 40 miles out here, and you go through it going to Ontario all the time, on highway 20. My two, our two daughters are married and live over there. But those folks at one time was all related.

The old Hotchkiss boys here, he was telling ... are doing real well. And he says I know what was wrong over there, said they were all just so damn ... they couldn't get out, they had to get married over there. I think it was probably about right. (Laughter)

MATT: Tell me more about this baby, this French girl. Did you say it was a daughter, that this woman had?

MARCUS: Yes.

MATT: And did she know that it was maybe, that Pete French was maybe her father?

MARCUS: I never heard that, no. That's the only thing I ever heard, was --- it come from this woman, and she was pretty truthful and all.

MATT: And that was the teacher Miss Williams?

MARCUS: That was the teachers --- yes she told me ---

MATT: She told you about it.

MARCUS: See I was on the historical society board here for 11 years, and worked up there all the time with her. And she told me that. And this woman was supposed to have told her mother. And that was --- see Jessie was born, well she was born in '94. She wouldn't have been old enough to remember much about it probably. But she wouldn't have told ... kid, but she did tell her mother that. And she went ahead and had 4 girls, she had 4 girls and --- or 3 girls and 4 boys.

MATT: Now is that Mrs. Williams?

MARCUS: This woman that was supposed to be Pete French's daughter.

MATT: Oh. She had --- what did you say, 3 girls and 4 boys? And one of the girls might have been Pete French's daughter.

MARCUS: No, French's daughter was having, had these 7 kids.

MATT: Oh, I see, I see.

MARCUS: Yeah, she was born in '97, the same year he was killed.

MATT: Yeah, yeah. And you think it is probably true?

MARCUS: Well I rather think so. I've known those folks, known them ever since I can remember, and they are good substantial, you know, citizens. And I don't think there is any question but what that was the truth of it. But he was quite a ladies man. ... talked about that. He was quite a dancer, and he really cut the pigeon wings off. (Laughter)

MATT: How did he and John Devine get along?

MARCUS: He didn't get along with hardly any of those fellows too well. You see old John wasn't around here to mix up with him here too long. Yeah, John had the Island Ranch here, and in '89 when they had the severe winter there, old John went out of business. That's when Henry Miller bought him out.

MATT: Yeah. That was at the White Horse?

MARCUS: Yes. And he gave him the Alvord Ranch and moved him down there. But Henry Miller, apparently they, those big fellows there didn't associate too much with each other.

I was talking to Dave Buliger (sp.?) down to Safeway awhile ago --- but anyway why the big bribe had to be made when they were taking the casket with the body and all, and all was here and they got over there with the body damn near as quick as he got down here. As far as I'm concerned it was just an unnecessary ride. Hell, he was dead, there wasn't anybody going to do a damn thing about it. But anyway they decided to do that, and Dave made the job, get the job.

MATT: Where was the rail head at that time?

MARCUS: Where was the rail head?

MATT: Yeah, wasn't it closer?

MARCUS: No, no, Winnemucca. That's where they drove all these cattle and put them on the train there.

MATT: When did it come closer finally?

MARCUS: Well the railroad didn't come into Burns until September 1924. It came to Crane in August of 1916, and Riverside in 1914. It just kept coming out. But Riverside,

but --- Winnemucca, with these ranches down through here where they could stay, you know. And then of course the PLS Company, and they could stay on their own lands clear into California there. And they did all their driving, and the people in the south end there went to Winnemucca, and some of these people, some of them went to Vale. It's 131 miles from here to Vale. And then some of them went clear over to Pendleton which, I have a story that Joe Fine made here for me. It's up there in the library. He was just a kid, and tells about going here in the wintertime, taking a bunch of cattle clear through to Pendleton. And got over there, they're really going to have a big time ... and that's when they went off the gold standard there. When they got there nobody had any money at all. The kids never even got paid for the trip. And they come back then, and they had a buckaroo wagon along and they camped in 40 below zero weather and all. They thought they had quite a trip, and I guess they did.

MATT: There was another trial. I was trying to find ---

COLIN: Canyon City?

MATT: Yeah. Yeah, as it turns out, I read about it today again, and it was in Harney City that they say it was tried. Where Pete was, supposedly hired somebody to kill a rancher, and the rancher saw him coming, and he killed him instead. And the rancher was tried for it, and found not guilty by self defense. And I remember the line, something about both Harney County --- wait a minute, Harney County, no that wasn't it. That both French and this other guy were the losers for it. And now I can't quite remember where it was. I wonder if it was in, maybe that thing that I read that you had done. Well, it is

not in here. It's got Fort Bidwell, the Indian thing. Well I don't remember now which guy it was, who was accused of killing who.

MARCUS: Well a lot of killing going on around about then. I'm just not right sure what it was.

But like in the case of my father's --- my mother's husband killed, they had, they tried him here in Burns, and they had a hung jury or something happened. And then they took him to Vale and tried him twice down there, and they still had a hung jury. When they took him to Prineville, over here, and all this time she was a witness and driving all these distances with a buggy and a 5 year old girl. And they convicted him then over in Prineville.

MATT: That was George Miller.

MARCUS: Yes. But that went on for a year or so. He was locked up all that time, I guess. But anyway, they drag him out and try him here, and try him there. He wasn't in a penitentiary ...

MATT: Why is he such an ornery guy?

MARCUS: Well there were lots of them back then. Yeah he was.

MATT: Why didn't Pete French in 1883, Glenn died, right?

MARCUS: Yeah.

MATT: And then he got divorced from Ella. Why, well we know Pete French's nature, why didn't he take, try to take all the ranch from the Glenn family?

MARCUS: I just don't know. You don't know what they had in writing on this thing, you know.

MATT: But he didn't put things in his name, I mean I have seen guys where they put their name and just leave Glenn off of it. And he didn't seem to do that at all. Put everything in the country.

MARCUS: No, no, no. He had quite a time with the Glenn family. They were after Pete French then, you see.

MATT: Yeah, yeah. It was incorporated in '96, wasn't it?

MARCUS: I never heard that, I don't know.

MATT: I think it was finally, because he and Glenn had a partnership for a long time.

MARCUS: Yes.

MATT: And it went on as a partnership even after Glenn's death. And then the heirs pressed for a corporation, and it finally became the Frenchglen Livestock Company, the corporation. And at that time, now this is according to Giles French, at that time Glenn lost a tremendous amount of stock in the company, and he wound up with, I think, 20% of the ranch. In the corporation, 20% of the corporation, and the kids got the rest. And he spent the rest of his life trying to raise enough money to keep the kids in money, I guess.

MARCUS: Uh huh.

MATT: And I think that is how Ella survived, because she had married Leonard, I don't remember his first name, an accountant, and they moved back on to the Glenn holdings in California. And that dwindled, and they sold that off, and Leonard died. And so she was the widow --- that's when she moved back into the Willows Hotel. And it wasn't until her son died, I think his name was Harold.

MARCUS: Yes.

MATT: And then she inherited the endowment that Pete French had given to his son, or whose ever son it was. Ella's son anyway. And then Ella inherited that endowment. And that she then moved back to San Francisco and lived there. And then of course when Pete French died and the ranch was sold, then she got the portion of the stock and she lived out the rest of her life in San Francisco.

MARCUS: Uh huh.

MATT: But that was in the '30's I guess. She lived until some time into the '30's when she died.

MARCUS: Well yes, she was in the hotel when I think the first trip --- because I went to work on the civil service for John Scharff. I was working in the CC Camps prior to that time. And I went to work for him in May of '38. And he was all grain down there ... plow back, and this and that and the other thing. And I made three or four trips down there hauling nothing you might say. I always stayed overnight there at the hotel, and she was there then, so I was told, you know. So that was in, probably in '40, I think after the war started why we didn't have gasoline enough to haul stuff all over. But anyway John furnished everybody with grain, they could buy it cheaper than we could haul it to them. (Laughter) We'd haul the grain up here to the bison range in Montana to feed the buffalo from here. I made three trips up there one time in an old diamond T truck.

MATT: Do you know of any photographs or any films of cattle drives around this area?

MARCUS: Oh yeah there are lots of cattle drives. I've got some of my own here in slides.

MATT: Anything that is really from, anywhere around the turn of the century?

MARCUS: Well no, no, not there. I wasn't around to drive them some days. But there is, I think there is some pictures of Hanley driving around here, and he died in the early '30's. Yeah, I think there is a big picture of Rankin Crow up there in the museum, maybe you saw it there today.

MATT: I didn't see that one.

MARCUS: Outside of that blind over there.

MATT: Whatever happened to Pete French's sofa, made out of cow horns?

MARCUS: Well I don't know. Joe Fine had a picture of it, and I copied it. I have it here someplace, and I asked ... that too. And he said I don't know where he got the picture of it, he never did tell me. But yeah, that's what it was, you know.

MATT: It sure would be interesting.

MARCUS: Uh huh. That's the pictures up there. I framed them out of the, a lot of stuff that Pete French had that was already --- it was steel crated.

(End of DVD)

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