

HARNEY COUNTY BASQUES
Oral History Project

This interview of Maria Baraibar took place as a part of an historical inventory of Basques in Harney County for the Harney County Historical Society. The purpose of the interview was to acquire information about historic sites in order to establish a database for historic resources. As a result, the book *Harney County: An Historical Inventory* was published in January of 1978 by Royal G. Jackson and Jennifer A. Lee. Jackson and Lee taped this interview with Maria Baraibar on September 21, 1976 in Burns, Oregon. At the time, Jackson was an Associate Professor in the Department of Resource Recreation Management at Oregon State University and Lee was a student in that department fulfilling an internship requirement. Amanda B. Purkey created a transcription of this interview in March 2001 as a part of an independent study project at Oregon State University.

HARNEY COUNTY BASQUES
Oral History Project

MARIA BARAIBAR
September 21, 1976
Burns, Oregon

Interviewers:
Royal G. Jackson
Jennifer A. Lee

LOG

[001-020] Arrival in US from Spain.

[020-040] Province and village names; reaction to US; family's opinion.

[040-060] Comparison of Spain and Burns; Spanish, Basque and English language use;
her factory job in Spain.

[060-080] Marriage; children; visits to Spain.

[080-100] Learning English; Basque friends in Burns.

[100-120] Other Basque wives; Basque festivals; differences in Basque and American
family lives.

[120-140] Children learning culture and language; possible return to Spain.

[140-160] Future of children; politics.

[160-180 end] Returning to Spain; visiting around Oregon.

HARNEY COUNTY BASQUES
Oral History Project

MARIA BARAIBAR
September 21, 1976
Burns, Oregon

Interviewers:
Royal G. Jackson
Jennifer A. Lee

[001] {R} Okay, lets see, your name is Maria

Maria Baraibar

{R} Baraibar, and you came to the United States when?

In 1970.

{R} 1970 was the first time you'd ever seen the United States.

Uh-hm, this is correct.

{R} How old were you then?

Twenty.

{R} Twenty years old.

Um-hm.

{R} You met your husband though, in what year? He came to Spain where you met him.

In, 1963.

{R} What were you thinking about when you came here? Were you excited to see what it looked like, or, were you scared, or, nervous, or

No, I wasn't nervous, I don't know. I just got married and I don't know, it was just like a honeymoon or something like that. So, no I didn't get scared.

{R} You flew into New York and then to California the same way your husband came?

No, we flew to New York, and then, to Boise, and then we came in the car to Burns.

{R} What was your reaction to seeing the United States, did uh, was it what you expected?

No, especially the houses were really different, because there we have big houses and big buildings, but when I get here to Burns I see all these small houses and, made with wood especially.

{R} Made with wood.

Yeah.

{R} You expected very tall skyscrapers?

Yeah, and made with rock just like in Spain but, everything was different.

[020] {J} Did you want to come?

Yes. When my husband told me if I want to come I say, well yes, but I don't know, I think I thought, I thought was like in Spain, but then when I came here everything was different.

{R} Now, were you from the same village as your husband?

Well, I am from Augustan.

{R} What was the name of the town that you came from?

Maya.

{R} M. A. Y. A. maya? Like the Indians in Mexico.

Yes, um-hm.

{R} And that's in Navara?

Yes, Navara, Augustan too.

{R} The same province as your husband.

Yes, um-hm.

{J} What did your family do? Were they farmers?

Yes they were farmers, um-hm.

{J} How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Well, we are three sis, five sisters. Um-hm.

{J} What did your parents think when you decided to come to America?

Well, they um, the first time when I telled them, they didn't like it, but then when I get married and, you know.

{J} Oh, you wanted to come before you got married?

No, well when Nick asked me to marry him he told me that he was coming here and if I would want to come with him, and I, then I asked to my family what they, they like or whatever.

{R} And they didn't like it.

No, in the first time, no. I don't have nobody here, you see? I am the only one in the family so, I think that's why. And uh, I always used to stay at home.

{J} Did you have this home to come to?

Yes, well, he was here. (speaking to husband) When you came here you came to this house, no? When you came to Burns? You were in this house, no?

(husband responds)No, no a different one.

[040] {R} So your husband lived in a downstairs apartment in the same house you live in now.

Uh-huh.

{R} So at least you had a place to come to and some known acquaintances and things.

Yeah, um-hm yeah.

{J} How did it compare to your village, or your town, in Spain? How does Burns compare? You have mountains and stuff where you live.

Yes, we have, everything is green at there, everything is different, really, I didn't, when I came here I didn't even saw the sun or the bird. Bird? Bird?

{R} Birds.

Birds. And then you know every morning all of the birds they are singing and you know how they make the nest under the window and things like that. And oh, everything was different here.

{R} Did you speak English when you came?

No, uh-uh.

{R} None at all.

Not at all.

{R} Well you've learned English very well.

No, I mess them too much. Well, I don't here either, you know, call me all the time talk in Spanish or Basco.

{R} You talk Spanish or Basque to your husband?

Um-hm.

{R} And children.

And children, yeah.

{R} So you don't, you don't have much opportunity now to speak English.

No.

{R} Your friends are mostly Basque.

They are Basco, yeah.

{J} What did you do in Spain? Before you came out here.

When, I went to the school until I was fifteen years old, and then I was working in, I don't know how I can say this

{R} A factory or something or

Mm, you know where they make embroidery, embroider, or something like that.

{R} Oh, all those rugs and

Embroider? Embroidery?

{J} Oh, embroidery.

Yeah.

[060] {J} How did you meet your husband?

Oh, in, (speaking to husband) in where? Where was?

(husband responds) I don't know, I forgot.

Well, what in the, where the dance place, or how do you

{R} The dance hall?

{J} Yeah the dance hall.

The dance hall? Okay. There.

{R} And that was in 1963?

Yes. Uh-huh.

{R} Did you think at the time that you would ever come to America with this man?

No. Hm-mm, never.

{J} Did you correspond, did you write letters, after you met?

No, no, uh-uh, no we didn't.

(husband) She was only fifteen years old.

{J} So you worked in, when you were sixteen you got out of school and you worked in sort of a, an embroidery place.

I was laboring in there and

{J} And then you met Nick when you were twenty and he came and brought you to America. And then you had your first child in '71?

In '71, yes.

{R} And that was a boy.

Yes they both are.

{R} Both boys.

Yeah.

{R} Are you glad you came to the United States?

(hesitates) Not really (laughs).

{R} No? You wish you were in Spain still?

Yep.

{R} Why, what parts are you

Well, I think is my family.

{R} You miss your family.

Yeah, I miss a lot, my family.

{R} Have you been back since you came here?

Yes, once.

{R} Oh, that's right, '73 you went back. What were your feelings when you came back to Spain after being away that long?

Ohh, what they were, because I wasn't there, when I was there I wasn't there, and when I came here, back, I wasn't here either.

{R} You were mixed up huh?

Yes.

[080] {R} And what were your feelings? Were you so happy to be back in Spain?

Yes, I was really happy.

{R} Saw all your parents and relatives and

Everybody.

{R} And then you stayed there two months then.

Yes, I stayed in there two months.

{R} And you didn't want to come back to the United States?

Well, I don't know. I wasn't think, I was thinking to come back here again and go back again forever but I don't know, if that is going to

{J} You've gotten used to this place, or

Yes, little bit, then I start learning some English, and you know. Everything changed.

{R} How did you get to learn English did you have more chance to talk to American women or men or?

Well, I went to a school for a few months.

{R} Here, in Burns?

Yes, in Burns, yeah.

{R} What kind of school?

Here, uh, to the high school. Was one teacher who was teaching Spanish, so she teach me for a few months English.

{R} In English, did that help?

Oh yes, a lot.

{R} Do you get together with other Basco wives?

Yes.

{R} During the day?

Yeah. Not that much but

{R} What do you do, do you drink coffee together, or?

Yes, we talk.

{R} That's about it, do you take the children and let them play together?

Yeah, mm-hm, yes we talk about our old country and things like that.

{J} Are there a lot of Basco women your age here?

No, just one.

{R} What's her name?

Maria Colo.

{R} Maria Colo? Is she married to a Basco?

Yes, um-hm.

[100] {R} Is he older than she is? Are they about the same age?

No I think she is younger than he is.

{R} How long has she been here?

Oh, something like four or five years, oh, I think she came two years later than I did.

{R} Does she want to go back to Spain too?

I don't think so.

{R} She's happy here huh?

Well, I think, you know, she came after she get married. Her husband came first and she was there alone I don't know how long for a year maybe? And I don't know, she didn't like that. You know, and was different, wasn't like me, I just came with my husband and everything was different.

{R} Do you go to the festivals in Elco or Boise?

Yes I went once to Elco.

{R} What was your reaction to that? Was that like you remembered Basque

Yes, it was like if I was in Spain, in my own country.

{R} Really?

Yeah.

{R} So American Basques are still pretty genuine Basques, huh, they haven't changed very much?

Not as much, uh-uh.

{R} Their language is about the same?

Yes.

{R} How about the ones who are born in this country, do they seem very different to you?

Well, I think so, because they live more like American people, you know. They doesn't live like we do.

{R} How do Basques live that's different from Americans, can you think of any ways?

Well, like you see here in America, every people everyday of the week they have something to do, go bowling, or, after, I mean, after the work they go bowling or movie or something like that, but we don't do that. We just, after the work, we come home and we stay watching TV, or talk, or we go to see other friend or something like that, yeah.

[120] {R} So your time is spent more with your family than out doing those kind of things.

Yes.

{J} Are you going to make sure that your children know about the Basco culture and about the dances?

Oh yes.

{J} That's very important.

I would like that, I will like when they get a little bit older, maybe twelve or something like that, returning to Spain, to school.

{J} To school?

Yeah. I would like them to learn

{J} National ways?

Yes, uh-huh. I like better that, yes. I think here the life is too easy for the people. Just like when they go to school, I remember my little boy now he is off to the kindergarten, and I remember him, he said 'I know how to write' but they here doesn't do just pictures and things like that. Was more, I don't know how to say

{R} More play?

Here is more play, but, there wasn't, here is more easy everything I think.

[140] {R} Do you want your children to be sheepherders?

No, no if I could

{J} Do you want them to be anything in particular?

Well, I would like to give good education, so they can go to the college and

{J} Go to college, university or something?

Yeah, something like that.

{J} In Spain though.

Well, in both places. If they don't go there, I would like here, they could go here.

{R} How do you get along with the Basques here in Burns? Are there any problems that you have?

Oh, not that much because I have few friends and I don't go party not you know.

{R} You don't get involved in discussions of politics?

No I don't want.

{R} Is that a usual thing that the women don't get involved or, or how is that?

Well, you know in my country they doesn't talk that much to the, politics?

{R} Yeah, politica. They don't talk about politics that much?

Not that much in Navara, but it's different in Viscaya y Depusqua they talk more on that, and here is most people from Viscaya and Depusqua than from Navara, so I don't get that involved. I don't want to.

(18 sec. Pause)

[160] {J} When are you planning another trip to Spain again? You going to go on your next vacation?

I don't know. I won't like to go back to Spain in couple years and then maybe go and don't come back.

{R} And don't return.

{J} Oh really? You don't want to come back?

Back, we don't know.

{J} Have you been able to travel around Oregon, or around the state?

No, not that much.

{R} Have you seen the Willamette, have you been over across the Cascades? Have you seen for example Eugene or Corvallis?

No, well we saw Eugene, no? Yeah, I think so.

{R} Have you been to Portland?

No, uh-uh, no I went maybe Boise, Ontario, and whatnot. Well, Elco, we went Elco, Winnemucca, and to the coast, but not that much.

{J} You know it's quite different in the Willamette Valley it might be, you know it has mountains and trees, I suppose it would be something like Spain where you're from.

Yeah, went to the coast and, it's raining all the time like in Spain.

[180] {R} Well thanks a lot, this is real helpful information for us.