

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #483

Subject: Rose (King) Robirts, Jerry Schmidt

Place: Harney County Library, Burns, Oregon

Date: May 3, 2013

Interviewer: Cathy Schmidt

Cathy Schmidt: Okay. Today is May 2, 2013. And I am here---

Jerry Schmidt: Today is the 3rd.

Cathy Schmidt: Oh, correction. Today is May 3rd. And I am here with three generations; Rose Robirts, who was formerly Rose King, and [her son] Jerry Schmidt and our son Jeremy Schmidt. And I am Cathy Schmidt. And so we're here to listen to Rose and Jerry's story of the history of their family, which started back in the 1880's with Samuel and Wilimina King. So Jerry, what do you remember of the history of Samuel King?

Jerry Schmidt: History of who?

Cathy Schmidt: Samuel King?

Jerry Schmidt: Well, the only thing I can remember is that the stories were that he came, I believe from Kentucky to Los Angeles, California. And then from Los Angeles, California he came up to Oregon...up to the Burns area. And I'm not sure if he homesteaded or he bought the property of the Thousand Springs Ranch. That's something that we need to look up. Or there's probably history already there. In 1885 is when he came up here and...

Cathy Schmidt: Who came with him? Wilimina King? His wife Wilimina and his son?

Jerry Schmidt: I don't know.

Cathy Schmidt: Benjamin Franklin King.

Jerry Schmidt: No. He was born here.

Rose Robirts: He was born up there.

Jerry Schmidt: No, no. He was born in 1887.

Cathy Schmidt: Okay. I stand corrected, okay.

Jerry Schmidt: So Benjamin Franklin King was born in 1887. But I don't know when Samuel King got married to Wilimina.

Cathy Schmidt: Okay. So what...Rose, what are some of your memories of being on the homestead that Samuel and Wilimina had? I guess they moved into a house that was already here? Or they built a house?

Rose Robirts: I imagine they built that. I'm not sure. And anyway, as far as our living up there, Jean and I used to play together all the time. And then the boys played together all the time. So we had a playhouse out on the Rim Rock. And of course, the house had already burned down that they lived in. And then Dad built another house for them to live in. And we used to have our playhouse out on the Rim Rock. And we'd go to the old house that had burnt down and pick up pieces of glasses for our dishes and that kind of thing.

Cathy Schmidt: So how many kids were there?

Rose Robirts: In our family?

Cathy Schmidt: Um hmm.

Rose Robirts: There was Jean and Percy and Frankie and I, at that time. And then Glen and Miles was born later. Because Glen was three years younger than me. And Miles was four.

Cathy Schmidt: So the old house burned down. But you were born just after the old house burned down, right?

Rose Robirts: No, just before it burned down. Because Frankie said that she had... When it caught fire, Mom told her to take me down to the chicken house...in whatever they had to take me down in. [Chuckles]

Jerry Schmidt: They probably just carried you.

Rose Robirts: Huh?

Jerry Schmidt: I wouldn't be surprised she just carried you down there.

Rose Robirts: Well, she said that she had a buggy or something.

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, okay.

Cathy Schmidt: And so your early days were spent in a chicken coop. [Chuckles]

Rose Robirts: Yeah. Well...And then we was about...Or I think I was about nine years old and Jean was ten when we started herding sheep. We had to go out and herd sheep one day. And then Percy would herd the next day. And that was our biggest job. But we used to play all over the ranch. We'd go down in the field and watch Grandpa mowing hay and working down there. And we'd play in the creek. Remember where you fell in the creek?

Cathy Schmidt: Yes. [Chuckling]

Rose Robirts: We used to jump in. [Laughter]

Jerry Schmidt: And didn't Grandpa King, he mowed the hay with his horses.

Rose Robirts: With a team of horses, yeah.

Jerry Schmidt: It was a team of horses that he pulled the mower with.

Rose Robirts: Yeah. He did have a thing with his team.

Jerry Schmidt: And he also raked up the hay with horses. And he brought it in to stack it with his horses. So everything that he did was with his two work horses that he had. I know one of them...One of the two horse's names was Dolly. And I don't know what the other one was. I think Dolly was a female. And I believe that the other one was a male horse. And he never let us ride the male horse. But we always...All of the Schmidt kids piled on Dolly at one time, all three of us. And he'd slap her on the rear end and tell her to go to the barn. And he would...She would trot all the way up to the barn. Which was fun for us because it had all of the rigging on the horse. And then she would wait at the barn so she could get rid of all of the rigging that was on her. [Chuckles] Because, you know, then she was free of all of the stuff. And then she also...She also got a few bites of oats, or barley. Probably oats. And that was a big treat for her.

Cathy Schmidt: What else do you remember about going out to your Grandpa's farm or ranch?

Jerry Schmidt: Well, I just remember going out there and enjoying the spring water. I remember enjoying the dinners that Grandma made. And I remember enjoying the working...the stacking of the hay that came off of the land up there on the Thousand Springs. And then it was just a really pretty place. I remember I---

Rose Robirts: It was so beautiful.

Jerry Schmidt: Yeah. I remember I carved my initials in a tree down at the lower part of the thing. And some years back, probably twenty years ago, Cathy and I went down there and we found that tree.

Rose Robirts: Did you?

Jerry Schmidt: With my initials in it.

Cathy Schmidt: It was a lot higher.

Rose Robirts: I think we all carved our initials on trees.

Cathy Schmidt: And you used to take something over to the Curry Garden Canyon. You used to herd the sheep there.

Rose Robirts: Oh, we used to take the cows up there every morning and turn them in the field so they could eat. And then we'd have to go get them in the evening. It was some milk cows.

Cathy Schmidt: And about how far was that from your ranch house to the Canyon?

Rose Robirts: Probably just a mile. But it seemed like five miles to us. [Laughter]

Cathy Schmidt: I'm sure.

Rose Robirts: Oh, yeah. One time we was taking the cows up to Curry Garden Canyon. And I think it was Glen probably. He jumped on one of the cows and was going to ride the cow. And that cow was pretty smart. So she goes under a low limb on the tree and brushes him off. [Laughter] It was funny. He never tried to get on another cow. I always remembered that.

Cathy Schmidt: Now I remember that the house that you grew up in on the ranch, it seems to me it was two stories?

Rose Robirts: The original was. The one that burned down was two stories. But the one that Dad built afterwards was just one. And there was only one big bedroom. It was bigger than the living room, really. So what Grandma did was petition off the beds with sheets or blankets, whatever she could find, and make rooms out of them. Jean and I slept together. And Glen and Miles slept together. And Percy, he slept in the utility room.

Cathy Schmidt: And then what about Frankie, where did she sleep?

Rose Robirts: Well, she was gone most of the time. She went to Grants Pass to go to school, high school. Well, she started college and went to college down there.

Cathy Schmidt: What year was Frankie born in?

Rose Robirts: Well, she's six years older than me, whatever that is.

Cathy Schmidt: So...

Jerry Schmidt: Twenty-four minus six would be...

Cathy Schmidt: 1918.

Jerry Schmidt: ,,1918.

Rose Robirts: Yeah, that's right.

Cathy Schmidt: So it was one big room for the bedroom. And then how about the kitchen?

Rose Robirts: The kitchen was real small, just about the same size as the one in this house. And the dining room and kitchen was all together, just like this.

Cathy Schmidt: And did you have ranch hands? Or was it all you kids that did the work?

Rose Robirts: The only time we had anybody up there was to shear sheep. Grandpa would get people to come in and shear the sheep in the spring.

Cathy Schmidt: And then you moved... You lived some other places. Like, what are the other places you lived with your parents?

Rose Robirts: Well, we lived out at Silver Creek. And Dad worked on the ranches out there. And then we lived on the Baker place. I don't know what to call it.

Jerry Schmidt: Jenkins.

Rose Robirts: Jenkins place. And I don't know where he worked there. And then we moved to Frenchglen. I started school at Frenchglen.

Jerry Schmidt: And he worked for Pete French.

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Jerry Schmidt: Do you remember what years that was?

Rose Robirts: Let's see. I started school when I was seven. Dates don't mean anything to me. [Chuckles]

Cathy Schmidt: That was about 1931. And so how long did you live at Frenchglen?

Rose Robirts: I think we must have been down there about three years, because Jean and... Frankie was with us when we was down there. And she went to school there. But she had already graduated from the 8th grade. But she couldn't go to Crane because they wouldn't let girls live in the dorm at that time. And so she just stayed down there and went through the eight grade again.

Cathy Schmidt: And how far out of Frenchglen did you live?

Rose Robirts: Three miles.

Cathy Schmidt: Three miles. What did you live in?

Rose Robirts: A house. They had houses for the Refuge...on the Refuge. Yeah.

Cathy Schmidt: Wow. And then from there, you moved to...?

Rose Robirts: Back up on the ranch.

Cathy Schmidt: Okay. And then from the ranch? When did you stay---

Rose Robirts: And then from the ranch, we moved down to Five Mile Dam.

Cathy Schmidt: And didn't you do that because the winters were harsh and---

Rose Robirts: Well, we couldn't live up at the ranch in wintertime. We always had to move down someplace. And we lived at...

Jerry Schmidt: Well, it was because of the snow and everything, wasn't it?

Rose Robirts: Yeah. You couldn't get in and out. And we lived in that house that's close to Catterson's house, right by the bridge, you know, Five Mile Bridge. And there's a house right on the other side. Well, just down a little ways was another one. And that's where we lived for awhile. And I can't think of the name of that place.

Cathy Schmidt: And then did your dad built a house down on Five Mile Dam?

Rose Robirts: Well, the wood shed... We're using for a woodshed now. [Chuckles] Yeah, he built that.

Cathy Schmidt: He built that. And so then that woodshed has quite a history because it started out at Five Mile Dam. And then where did it go?

Rose Robirts: Where it is now.

Cathy Schmidt: Which is on 420 North Saginaw.

Rose Robirts: 420 North Saginaw.

Cathy Schmidt: Yeah. And you all lived in that with Jean and her...

Jerry Schmidt: No, no.

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Jerry Schmidt: Jean and...Carl and Jean---

Cathy Schmidt: Oh, that's right.

Rose Robirts: Miles and Glen...Percy.

Jerry Schmidt: No...Oh, did they all live in that?

Rose Robirts: Um hmm.

Jerry Schmidt: Or they lived in the old house that was there?

Rose Robirts: Where do you mean?

Jerry Schmidt: Well, there was a house where your house is now. Isn't that the house that they all lived in?

Rose Robirts: Well, when we was up the river is when we all lived in that.

Jerry Schmidt: In this?

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Jerry Schmidt: In...in the woodshed.

Rose Robirts: Woodshed.

Jerry Schmidt: What is called the wood shed now?

Cathy Schmidt: Okay. Okay, so then tell the story about moving the shed to North Saginaw?

Rose Robirts: Well, I really don't know how they do that. They put it on rollers some way and just bring it down the road. And then you have to have people in front and on back to stop all traffic while you're taking it through.

Cathy Schmidt: And so then---

Jerry Schmidt: But that was probably back in the forties. So it was not like it was...Not like there was a lot of cars. [Chuckles]

Cathy Schmidt: Right, right. So Jean and her family lived in the woodshed; oh because Lewie helped to build the house that you live in now.

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Cathy Schmidt: Okay, say a little bit more---

Jerry Schmidt: Lewie is Lewis Fedor.

Cathy Schmidt: And in the meantime, you had married Frank Schmidt.

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Cathy Schmidt: And you out on the ranch of your own. Yeah. So how long...So what do you remember, Jerry, of them living in the wood shed and the other house being built?

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, I just remember the...I just remember the house being built. And I remember that Jean and Carl and three of her kids anyway...I don't think that Danny and...No, I don't know. I don't know if all of the kids were there. But part of them were. Carol and Marjorie and probably Danny were the only ones. I don't think Norman and Cathy were born yet. And then didn't Jean move? She moved out.

Rose Robirts: Yeah, she lived in Hines.

Jerry Schmidt: She lived out in Hines...in the old Post Office---

Rose Robirts: That's right. Yeah.

Jerry Schmidt: ---building, for several years. And then she moved further out by Greenhouse Lane.

Rose Robirts: Well, it's just as you turn off of the highway.

Jerry Schmidt: Right. Yeah. It was right by the Greenhouse Lane. And she lived out there for several years. And then she moved on. This is Jean Wenzel. And she moved on to Salem, I think. And she went to school. And she worked for the State.

Rose Robirts: Eugene, I think is where she went.

Jerry Schmidt: Okay, it might have been Eugene.

Rose Robirts: Because Frankie was down there.

Jerry Schmidt: Yeah. Anyway, and she went to...I think she went to school. And she got a good job of taking care of her family down there.

Cathy Schmidt: So I was wrong. It was Lewie that helped to build the rental house on Saginaw, right?

Jerry Schmidt: Grandma and Grandpa did that one too.

Rose Robirts: That house was for Frankie and Lewis.

Cathy Schmidt: Okay. And then...So then Lewis did help build the house that he lived in.

Jerry Schmidt: The other house.

Cathy Schmidt: Okay.

Jerry Schmidt: And then Grandpa built a third house on...

Rose Robirts: North Saginaw.

Jerry Schmidt: ...Saginaw, right down from the house that Mom lives in now.

Rose Robirts: Right across the street from Hillmans.

Jerry Schmidt: Right across the street from Hillmans.

Cathy Schmidt: Yeah, and it's still there.

Jerry Schmidt: And it's still there. And Grandpa built that one, pretty much alone.

Rose Robirts: Him and Lewis worked on that one.

Jerry Schmidt: Lewis helped until they moved to North Bend. But Grandpa is the one that finished all of that. He did that all alone. I do remember that, because I went down and helped him a little bit...or got in his way probably.

Cathy Schmidt: And you remember the house that was standing there before they---

Jerry Schmidt: There wasn't any house there.

Cathy Schmidt: Next to the woodshed, you said that...

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, there was a house. But that was...They tore that down probably in 1950. It probably didn't take very long to tear it down. I don't...I don't remember a lot about it. But I do remember the house.

Cathy Schmidt: So at one time, Frank King, your dad, owned a lot of Hines.

Rose Robirts: A lot of the town. Not anymore than what's there. He could have. But he---

Jerry Schmidt: No, he owned...He owned a lot of those...Because I remember him selling lots.

Rose Robirts: Well, he could have. I just don't remember.

Jerry Schmidt: What I remember there was forty acres that he owned. And he sold it off a little at a time. The other thing that I remember...Because it was right beside Roe Davis. And Roe Davis had an airstrip. He had his own airplane. And I remember Roe Davis taking Mom and I up in his plane from that airstrip when I was probably five...five years, maybe six years old. And I looked out at the road, and we were high enough up. And of course, me being small, I looked down at the road and I thought those were toys...cars on the road. [Chuckles] But I remember that ride was...

Rose Robirts: He was really a good pilot. He just was so careful. He didn't act smart with his plane.

Cathy Schmidt: That's good. That's good. So what else do you remember about your Grandpa King, Jerry?

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, my Grandpa King was so great. [Chuckles] Probably one of the things that I remember most is when we was building Butler Granaries out at our ranch, the Rim Rock Ranch, off of Potter Swamp Lane. And the tractor...John Deere tractor, which was a tricycle John Deere G., we picked the roof up and a little breeze come up and blew the roof. And it blew the tractor over. It tipped it over. And I can remember Dad jumping off of it when it tipped over. And it never missed a beat. It just kept running. And he went and pulled the wire off of the magneto so it would kill it. And I got pinned underneath the tractor. Actually, it was underneath a cylinder that was a hydraulic cylinder. And I couldn't get out. It caught both of my calves of my legs. And I can remember Grandpa King lifting up the front of that tractor. And I crawled out from under it.

Rose Robirts: Amazing.

Jerry Schmidt: And that tractor probably weighed probably well over a thousand pounds, way, way more than that.

Cathy Schmidt: And were your legs broken?

Jerry Schmidt: No. I didn't get hurt because it pushed me into the dirt. The dirt was soft. I had bruises on my legs. But I didn't...You know, I was able to walk. I just think of him very fondly when I think about that.

And he always helped us do all the haying out on our place and up on his place, on the Thousand Springs Ranch and out at the Rim Rock Ranch. He always was there to help. Grandma King was always there to cook every meal, for all of us that were helping put up hay. And the way we put up hay was with a net and cable. And it was pulled up with

a tractor onto the haystack and then pulled back by a horse that... The net was pulled back by a horse. And Rose Robirts is the one that did all of the pullback. She always was on the horse.

And the other thing I remember about Mom was, when we would ride up on the range, I would always tease her about her trying to lose me. But she could never lose me because she was always yodeling. [Laughter]

Rose Robirts: I thought I was up there where nobody could hear me. [Laughter]

Jerry Schmidt: And I could be maybe a mile away from her, but I could always hear her yodeling. [Laughter]

Rose Robirts: That's a custom of cowboys and cowgirls.

Cathy Schmidt: So that reminds me of the ranch that you and Frank bought, which it was called what ranch? What was the name of it?

Rose Robirts: Well, we didn't have a name at the time we bought it. But Frank wanted to call it Rim Rock Ranch. So we called it...

Jerry Schmidt: That's what it was called was the Rim Rock Ranch.

Cathy Schmidt: How many acres did you have out there?

Rose Robirts: How many acres? 4,280.

Cathy Schmidt: Wow. And where is it located?

Rose Robirts: Off of Potter Swamp...Road. At the end of Potter Swamp Road, I'd say....to the right.

Cathy Schmidt: What's some of your memories of living out there? Where do you begin, huh? I know that's a big question. Well, I think I know that you started out in a house that eventually burned down.

Rose Robirts: Yeah. Well---

Cathy Schmidt: Who was born there?

Rose Robirts: You know, that house, the way Frank got out here; it was called the Luig Place. And it was the Luig Estate. And how his grandpa ever got to taking care of that estate, I don't know. But...

Jerry Schmidt: That was Grandpa Schmidt, right?

Rose Robirts: Yeah. His Grandpa Schmidt, your Great Grandpa.

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, I didn't know that.

Rose Robirts: And anyway, they sent him out here then to live. So I just took it that they... Maybe they bought it and just gave it to Frank. I don't know. I'm really not sure. Because there was people living there when he came out here. And he just lived with them for awhile. And then they all moved out.

Jerry Schmidt: What was his name?

Rose Robirts: Who?

Jerry Schmidt: Great Grandpa Schmidt?

Rose Robirts: I can't remember.

Cathy Schmidt: Guillaume.

Jerry Schmidt: No. That was Grandpa Schmidt.

Rose Robirts: Guillaume Gabriel was his... his dad. Frank's dad.

Cathy Schmidt: Oh, you mean it was not Guillaume that took care of it. It was his dad.

Jerry Schmidt: It was his dad.

Cathy Schmidt: Wow, okay. We'll have to find that out. Wow.

Jerry Schmidt: See, I didn't know that either.

Cathy Schmidt: Yeah. Okay. So, what year were you and Frank married?

Rose Robirts: 1939.

Cathy Schmidt: Okay. And then you moved directly to the ranch, did you?

Rose Robirts: Yeah. Yeah. There was a house there at the Luig Estate. And we lived in that. And then... for two years. And then it burned down. And then...

Jerry Schmidt: It burned down two weeks before Duane was born.

Rose Robirts: Yeah, that's right. And I lived in a tent house that summer, after Duane was born. And then Frank and Grandpa, and I don't know who else, built the house that was lived in for the rest of the time. It was just a doll house; only two bedrooms, four kids and all the help that come along.

Jerry Schmidt: That's so true.

Cathy Schmidt: And I remember pictures of the kitchen that was sparkling clean and black and white linoleum.

Rose Robirts: It was.

Cathy Schmidt: And like a table that was in the corner.

Rose Robirts: Yes.

Jerry Schmidt: Well, there was a nook.

Cathy Schmidt: And your oil lamp that you had because you didn't have electricity.

Rose Robirts: Right.

Jerry Schmidt: We got electricity out there in 1954. That's what I remember. I could be---

Rose Robirts: The REA line came through.

Cathy Schmidt: No, we had electricity before that.

Rose Robirts: No.

Cathy Schmidt: Yeah. We had our own line. We had our own line. And then REA went through just the opposite direction.

Rose Robirts: We had...I can't say what they are, those batteries.

Cathy Schmidt: Like a generator?

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, no, no. No.

Cathy Schmidt: Where did the electricity come from, from that line?

Rose Robirts: The REA line is the only one that went through there.

Jerry Schmidt: But we had...All of the ranchers out there got together and put in their own line. Don't you remember that?

Rose Robirts: No, because I thought it was just all on our REA.

Jerry Schmidt: No. Because they weren't even out there during that time. They came through probably... '56, maybe. Maybe two years later, or three years later, '57, somewhere around there, REA. And they built a line that went just the opposite way. And what I remember was the dairy over there.

Rose Robirts: Eban Ray.

Jerry Schmidt: Eban Ray was part of it. We was part of it. And Lee Morris was part of it, of putting that line in. Everybody was together. You don't remember that?

Rose Robirts: I don't think Lee Morris was there. I think it was still Walter Baker when the line...I'm not sure thought. Walter Baker left there before.

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, it could have been. I can't say. I don't remember Walter Baker being out there. I remember Lee Morris. But not to say that I know, because I don't.

Rose Robirts: Well, that was Walter Baker. He was the original one to have that.

Cathy Schmidt: So speaking of neighbors, so what are some of the neighbors...names of some of the neighbors that you remember having out there?

Rose Robirts: We had Walter Baker and Chester Baker.

Jerry Schmidt: Lee Morris.

Rose Robirts: Lee Morris.

Jerry Schmidt: Eban Ray. And Ollie...or I mean, Bob Hughet, Ole Hughet and Claytons.

Cathy Schmidt: Weren't the McUne somewhere along there?

Rose Robirts: I never could remember that one that had the airplane and he was killed in---

Jerry Schmidt: Clayton.

Rose Robirts: Clayton.

Jerry Schmidt: Yeah.

Rose Robirts: It could be.

Jerry Schmidt: I know it was, because I went to school with his daughters, Linda and Paula.

Cathy Schmidt: But weren't there some McUne out there too?

Rose Robirts: Well, they was way out.

Jerry Schmidt: But they were way up north. Oh, and then Finley's.

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Jerry Schmidt: Finley's were up there.

Rose Robirts: Just above Bakers.

Jerry Schmidt: And then above Finley's was McUne.

Cathy Schmidt: So what did you do for fun, when you weren't ranching?

Rose Robirts: For fun?

Cathy Schmidt: Um hmm.

Rose Robirts: Well, we used to drive around the old cow trails a lot. And played lots of games.

Jerry Schmidt: And they used to play cards with McUne's, all the time.

Rose Robirts: Yeah, we used to do that.

Jerry Schmidt: And then we would play with the kids.

Rose Robirts: And then on Easter time, every Easter, we had an Easter party. And the whole neighborhood came. And if the roads were so bad they couldn't drive in, they'd come in in the wagon.

Jerry Schmidt: We'd go down with a tractor and the wagon and pick up people, for the last mile and a half to go the house.

Cathy Schmidt: Did you have an Easter egg hunt?

Rose Robirts: Yep. Yep. Clear up on the hill.

Jerry Schmidt: And not just an Easter egg hunt. But there was a... What do you call it when they put pieces of paper out?

Rose Robirts: Oh, a scavenger hunt.

Jerry Schmidt: A scavenger hunt.

Cathy Schmidt: Wow. Fun.

Rose Robirts: We had it for both the little kids and the big kids. The little kids, they had to hunt around the house. And it was fun watching them.

Cathy Schmidt: Oh, yeah . Yeah.

Rose Robirts: And then we'd have a big dinner.

Jerry Schmidt: So Eileen and John Anderson and their kids came out. Jean and her kids came out to the ranch. Oh, there was a lot more than that.

Rose Robirts: Oh, the one that she just said that had the radio station.

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, Wards?

Rose Robirts: Wards, they used to come out. And Alyce Sawser and her kids came out.

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, did they? Okay. Her kids were Renee, Dennis and Delores. There was an older one.

Rose Robirts: Yeah, I know. I can't remember her name.

Jerry Schmidt: I can't remember her name. But anyway, I went to school with Dennis and Delores.

Rose Robirts: We had lots of people come out for Easter.

Cathy Schmidt: Wow, how fun.

Rose Robirts: It was a fun time. And not only that, we square danced out on the ground.

Cathy Schmidt: Oh, wow. Well, speaking of dancing, I understand that you were quite the dancer.

Rose Robirts: Well, I never figured that I was. It was just...Because that was my talent, was dancing. But people say now, you know, they liked to watch Duane and I dance because we're the only old time dancers. The rest of them are modern stuff. And they don't go for the modern stuff like they do the old time.

Cathy Schmidt: And didn't they have dance contests back when you were young?

Rose Robirts: No. Not contests.

Jerry Schmidt: Not contests. But they gave prizes out for the best dancers.

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Cathy Schmidt: Oh. Okay.

Jerry Schmidt: And Mom got lots of those prizes because...Dad played in the band. So he was always in the band.

Jeremy Schmidt: What did he play?

Jerry Schmidt: He played a guitar. And he also sang. Yeah, I don't think you knew that, did you? [Chuckles]

Jeremy Schmidt: Hmm um. Grandma played the fiddle too, didn't you?

Rose Robirts: Not then.

Jeremy Schmidt: Oh, not then?

Rose Robirts: No.

Jerry Schmidt: She started playing when she was sixty.

Jeremy Schmidt: Oh, wow. [Laughter]

Rose Robirts: Seventy. That's just a pastime.

Jerry Schmidt: But that's what it was for everybody. So, you know, I mean it was just fun. And then Dad also called square dances.

Rose Robirts: He was a real good square dance caller.

Jerry Schmidt: He really was. He was---

Cathy Schmidt: I can believe it. He's got a good memory for that.

Jerry Schmidt: He's got a good memory and---

Rose Robirts: Yeah. And he could make up a pattern as he went along.

Jerry Schmidt: He did.

Cathy Schmidt: Wow.

Jerry Schmidt: Yeah, he would make them up. And then you had to follow those patterns that he made up. If you don't know anything about square dancing, you know, it's...there's all kinds of moves. There's all kinds of patterns, I guess. And you put those patterns in certain places. And then the dancers have to do those. But you have to know what those patterns mean, you know, do-si-do, allemande right and allemande left and all

these kinds of things. Those were all little patterns. And if they threw them in, the caller would throw them in, why, you then you had to do those. It's not like we didn't mess up. [Laughter]

Rose Robirts: All the kids learned to square dance. Allemande left to your left hand. Back to your partner and left and right. [Laughter]

Cathy Schmidt: Sounds like fun.

Rose Robirts: Hand over hand and round that ring.

Cathy Schmidt: Now your ranch, you did a lot of different things. You raised a lot of different things on the ranch, it seems like.

Rose Robirts: Well, yeah. But whatever we raised different from grain, why it wasn't very much. It was just...He just was experimenting with different things.

Jerry Schmidt: He raised about, what, a hundred and fifty head of pigs one year.

Rose Robirts: Yeah. And they got out too, and everybody had pigs. [Chuckling] We supplied everybody with pork.

Jerry Schmidt: It was right by the house. And oh, it stunk so bad. It was really nasty. But we always raised three pigs for our own use. We always had our own chickens for our own use. We had...I shouldn't say this, but we usually butchered two deer every year. [Chuckles] And we butchered our milk cow's calf. It was usually a two-year old. And we would butcher that every year. So one beef, two deer, three pork, three pigs and I don't know how many chickens. The chickens that I remember were the ones that would attack me. And on the third attack, that was when we had them for a meal next time. Because I never let them attack me the third time.

Rose Robirts: Well, I didn't know they attacked you. But before we moved over there, and right after the house burned down, we had those chickens. And every time I'd go out there, this one chicken would come at me, every time. You know, they'd fly up and paw you down. So I picked up a big stick and I hit this chicken over the head. And it knocked him out. And I thought I'd killed him. And I hollered at Frank to come and ring his neck, because I didn't want to ring his neck. So he came over there. Just as he got there the chicken got up and run away. [Laughter] He wasn't going to have his neck wrung.

Cathy Schmidt: Kind of a smart chicken.

Jerry Schmidt: Did he ever attack you again?

Rose Robirts: No. He didn't.

Jerry Schmidt: No. That's the funny thing is. Usually if you could knock them plumb silly, then they would never attack you again. They did learn.

Cathy Schmidt: They did have somewhat of a memory.

Jerry Schmidt: They did learn. But they took a lot of hard licks before they learned.
[Chuckles]

Rose Robirts: I know. I hated that old rooster. [Chuckles]

Jerry Schmidt: Well, that was what attacked me was banty roosters. And I remember I didn't mind them attacking me the first or second time. But the third time, why, we usually had a chicken dinner. [Chuckles]

Cathy Schmidt: How about you had some critters that enjoyed...Like, sometimes they entered your house. And I remember a snake story. A snake?

Jerry Schmidt: We left the kitchen door... We left an outside porch door open. We left the kitchen door open. And Mom had just waxed the floor. And when we came home there was a rattlesnake in the middle of the kitchen. And he---

Rose Robirts: Well, we was just on the porch. Duane hollered. He says, Mom, don't come out here. And of course, I had to go see why. [Chuckles] About that time here comes the snake in the house.

Jerry Schmidt: And so anyway, we got the rake and raked it outside.

Cathy Schmidt: Because he couldn't move because the linoleum was so slick.

Rose Robirts: Yeah, it was too slick for him.

Jerry Schmidt: Yeah.

Rose Robirts: Couldn't crawl.

Jerry Schmidt: So anyway, that was one of the things. Actually, it was good that he got in the house. Because if he'd stayed just on the porch, why somebody could have got bit by him. Because we wouldn't have seen it.

Rose Robirts: As soon as Duane said that, of course I had to go see why I wasn't supposed to come out there. [Chuckles]

Jerry Schmidt: And then there was one about the rats that were out there. [Chuckles] That run across Dad's back, when he was laying on the floor...naked. [Laughter]

Rose Robirts: And then the rats on the ceiling, up in the attic. It wasn't finished off on the wall and the rats looked down over the wall at the kids. [Chuckles]

Cathy Schmidt: Oh, boy.

Rose Robirts: I hated those little packrats. I worked out in the field one day. And I always wore something over my head. And I had a real bright red scarf that I had on that day. So when I came in, I just put it...I thought I put it on the washing machine. Wherever I put it, the packrats found it. And they'd go for anything bright. And they packed it off. And I never did find it. I looked all over the machinery, down holes, out in the field...or, up on the hill. And I never did find it. And he sure run off with it...because it was bright red.

Cathy Schmidt: How about the wells on your ranch, they were pretty unique...artesian wells.

Jerry Schmidt: Yeah. I think there was twelve or thirteen. Wasn't there twelve or thirteen wells?

Rose Robirts: Well, no, there was only five of artesian wells. Five artesian wells was all we had. But---

Jerry Schmidt: One, two, three, four, five...six.

Rose Robirts: It could have been six.

Jerry Schmidt: There was six. No, there was six. There was six artesian wells. And they ranged in depth from 50 feet to, I think 130 feet. And they were all different temperatures.

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Cathy Schmidt: What were the temperatures?

Rose Robirts: One was real cold. And one---

Jerry Schmidt: One of them was real shallow was like ice water. It was really cold. And others were really, really warm. Had really warm water coming out of them.

Rose Robirts: But we just left them run all the time.

Jerry Schmidt: And then there was water on...It was called the Bugman Place, right?

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Jerry Schmidt: Which was Eban Ray's place. But it was called the Bugman Place. And there was a big spring on the Bugman Place. But we had the water rights to it because

when my Dad bought the property, why that water was running onto his property. So, he had the water rights to it.

Cathy Schmidt: So what was it like in the springtime? I understand there was quite a bit of water out there.

Rose Robirts: And quite a bit of snow to go through. There was times that we had to go out with a Cat. And we didn't have a...I don't think we had the dozer on it at that time. I remember going up to the lane. Somehow we had to even go in the bar pit, although I don't know why. It was rough, getting in and out.

Jerry Schmidt: Well, there was times when we stayed in Hines because...in the springtime when it was running off. But that whole valley out there was...I remember time and time and time again, that whole valley being covered from one side to the other with water.

Rose Robirts: And filled with birds.

Cathy Schmidt: Oh, boy.

Jerry Schmidt: Yeah. In the springtime, why there was just hundreds of thousands of geese.

Rose Robirts: Geese and swan...and ducks, millions of ducks.

Cathy Schmidt: Cranes?

Jerry Schmidt: No. Well, during the summertime there was cranes.

Rose Robirts: We had lots of cranes when we farmed.

Jerry Schmidt: They were sandhill crane though.

Rose Robirts: Yeah. We used to watch them dance while we was working.

Jerry Schmidt: I remember one time that we come down off of the range land, Mom and I did, and there was a coyote out in the field. And we went over to check it out. And it had rabies. So we left it alone. And we went back to the house. And I got a rifle. And we went down in the truck. And I shot it. And then we dug a real, real deep hole and buried it in a deep hole so nothing could eat it. But that was the only rabid...That was the only rabid animal I ever saw. But it was definitely rabid. Because he was...He couldn't even run he was so sick. He was just frothing at the mouth.

Cathy Schmidt: Hmm. Wow.

Rose Robirts: We used to have lots of hunters come out from all over, everywhere; California, Montana, just...Idaho, all over, come out there. They'd dig a pit and get down. And then like I told you before, Charlie Wellington, he used to come out hunting ducks. He had arthritis so bad, you know. So he always came and got Frankie to go out with him and pick up the birds for him.

Jerry Schmidt: Yeah. Charlie always came out to the ranch and helped himself to the deer also.

Rose Robirts: Yeah.

Cathy Schmidt: Oh. [Chuckles]

Jerry Schmidt: But he was a good friend. I mean...

Cathy Schmidt: Speaking of deer, wasn't there a---

Rose Robirts: It was mostly antelope that we had out there.

Cathy Schmidt: Wasn't there a deer that was shot and then the game warden came by?

Rose Robirts: Oh, you're thinking about when Francis Griffin started coming---

Jerry Schmidt: No, no. No. We had butchered a deer. And Ellis Mason came out to the ranch. [Chuckling] And, you know, he walked right over the guts of it. Never said a thing.

Rose Robirts: Oh, he wouldn't. He was real good. [Chuckles]

Jerry Schmidt: Ellis Mason was a wildlife officer. But, you know, he knew that all of the ranchers, during that time they all...

Rose Robirts: Didn't bother us at all.

Jerry Schmidt: No. Nobody bothered us. But one person that would turn you in was Francis Griffin. And Francis Griffin was well known around here, back in the probably 30's, 40's and 50's.

Rose Robirts: He had a place out in Sunset Valley.

Jerry Schmidt: Well, Dog Mountain, wasn't it?

Rose Robirts: Well, he was kind of down by Dog Mountain, Sunset...I mean Dog Mountain. Anyway, he had a bunch of dogs. He always had lots of dogs. But he didn't have a job. I don't know how he got his money to buy food for the dogs even. But he'd go around to the neighbors and a food...beg for a meal. He happened to walk into our

house. That one time that he came, it was just before suppertime. And he ate everything I had. He drank a gallon of milk. And I didn't have any milk for the kids for supper. And, yeah, he did. You know, he'd go so long without eating. And then, boy, if he got to where he could have a meal, he ate it all.

Cathy Schmidt: Wasn't there a bowl of applesauce that...?

Rose Robirts: What?

Cathy Schmidt: A bowl of applesauce that got left behind? And when you came back, it was gone?

Jerry Schmidt: I remember that. Because Mom went to work. She was working at the...working at the hospital. And he came. And she had made this big, yellow bowl of...You know those bowls...that she has in her cupboard right now? Full of applesauce. And he ate the whole thing.

Rose Robirts: And then another time---

Jerry Schmidt: And then she was upset when she came home and there wasn't any applesauce left. [Chuckles]

Rose Robirts: Another time he came, we had company from North Bend. And they was sleeping in the bedroom next to where they could look out at the shop. We always hung our deer out in the shop at night to age it, you know. So anyway, I saw him walking down the road. So I hollered at Frank. I said, you better get out there and get that deer in because Francis Griffin is coming. He'd eat everything you had. But he'd also turn you in. So anyway, Frank went out there and got the deer. And in the daytime we kept it under the bed where these people were sleeping. So he passed it through the window across their bed. They didn't know what was going on. [Chuckling] It was so funny. But we managed to get that deer in before he saw it.

Jerry Schmidt: What I remember is he was also naked. [Laughing]

Rose Robirts: He was something else, I'll tell you.

Jerry Schmidt: It was so embarrassing.

Cathy Schmidt: Not Francis, but your husband was naked retrieving the deer, right?

Rose Robirts: Yeah. [Laughter]

Cathy Schmidt: Well, you know, you weren't expecting a visitor.

Rose Robirts: As soon as I saw him coming down the road, I knew that we better get that deer in. [Chuckles]

Cathy Schmidt: So you all farmed other places too.

Rose Robirts: Well, Frank and I did. Before the kids was born, we farmed down at Buena Vista...two thousand acres of grain down there. Yeah.

Jerry Schmidt: It wasn't just before we were born, in the '60's...

Rose Robirts: No. Duane was born. But---

Jerry Schmidt: I remember going down there. I remember driving a tractor back from there. [Chuckles]

Rose Robirts: No, you couldn't have.

Jerry Schmidt: Yes I did. Uh huh. Yeah. Ted Jones and somebody else stayed down there.

Rose Robirts: No, we didn't have Ted Jones at that time. Bill Yarber.

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, no, I'm talking about later on in probably the early 60's.

Rose Robirts: That wasn't...Frank must have got a small amount to farm down there. I don't remember that.

Cathy Schmidt: So what do you remember, Jerry?

Jerry Schmidt: Oh, I remember that they drained all of the water off of it. And I don't know, I would guess that there was a thousand acres down there that he farmed.

Rose Robirts: 2,000 acres we put in.

Jerry Schmidt: But anyway, I remember...And I don't know exactly, but it was at Buena Vista. And...

Cathy Schmidt: Was it hay that was raised there?

Jerry Schmidt: No. It was barley.

Cathy Schmidt: Barley, okay.

Jerry Schmidt: Yeah.

Rose Robirts: Barley, oats and wheat and rye is what we raised.

Jerry Schmidt: All I remember down at Buena Vista was barley. There might have been oats too. But I remember...But I never worked down there. But I remember driving the tractor back, because it was a long, long, long forty miles.

Cathy Schmidt: And it wasn't paved back then, was it?

Jerry Schmidt: No.

Cathy Schmidt: Yeah, it would be...

[End of Rose (King) Robirts, Jerry Schmidt oral history]