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AV-Oral History #493

Subject: Alan Bossuot

Place: Bossuot Ranch on Windmill Lane

Date: September 27, 2018

Interviewer: Laurie O'Connor

Release Form:

LAURIE O'CONNOR: This is Laurie O'Connor, and this is Monday, August 27, 2018. I am interviewing Alan Bossuot of Burns, Oregon. Alan, could you please tell me your full name, and when you born, and where?

ALAN BOSSUOT: My full name is Alan L. Bossuot, and I was born about two miles east of Burns on the kitchen table.

LAURIE: What was the name of that place? The Whiting ranch?

ALAN: George and Ida Whiting's place.

LAURIE: You were for lunch? You were born on the kitchen table?

ALAN: I don't remember that far back.

LAURIE: What was the date?

ALAN: June 27, 1930.

LAURIE: And how old are you today?

ALAN: A few years [days?] older than 88.

LAURIE: Who were your parents?

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ALAN: Vern Lewis Bossuot and Lottie-- what the Sam patches was her middle name? Whiting.

LAURIE: They were both from this area?

ALAN: Both of them were born here, in Burns.

LAURIE: Really. When did their families come into this area?

ALAN: The Whitings came here in 19-- No, 1874.

LAURIE: And do you know when your father's family came here?

ALAN: Dad came here, now I don't know when my Dad come here, but it was around 1920, from Brewster, Washington.

LAURIE: Oh, he came from Washington?

ALAN: Yes.

LAURIE: Do you know what your family's heritage is? You said it was French, the name Bossuot?

ALAN: Yes.

LAURIE: And do you know when the original family immigrated? Did they immigrate through Canada, or did they come directly into the United States?

ALAN: They come to the East Coast. But, I'll get the facts on that. I've got a whole raft of that information.

LAURIE: What did you have for brothers and sisters, Alan? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

ALAN: Two. Two sisters.

LAURIE: What were their names?

ALAN: Married name or single?

LAURIE: Both.

ALAN: Single name was Judy-- Julia, Bossuot, and Shirley Bossuot.

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LAURIE: And married names?

ALAN: Julia Raymond and Shirley Mingus.

LAURIE: Is that the Raymond that still lives and ranches here? Jerry Raymond?

ALAN: Yeah. Jerry Raymond is their son.

LAURIE: Wow. You're related to Jerry.

ALAN: Yes. He is my nephew.

LAURIE: And, your grandparents, you said Tom and Ione, were the Whitings?

ALAN: Yep.

LAURIE: And then, the grandparents on your father's side?

ALAN: Daniel Augustus Bossuot. And I think Dad's mother's name was Agatha.

LAURIE: So you were born here, and you were born in the family house?

ALAN: Yep.

LAURIE: And, are you the oldest? Where are you in the birth order?

ALAN: Oldest.

LAURIE: And your two sisters came later. Did you grow up on that family ranch?

ALAN: No. At that time the folks lived, when I was born, they was living five miles on this side of Frenchglen, where the CC Camp was at.

LAURIE: Oh! And what were they doing there?

ALAN: Dad started out running horses, down there in the Catlow Valley.

LAURIE: Running the wild horses?

ALAN: Yeah, in Clover Swale, down through there.

LAURIE: So they lived down in that area during that time?

ALAN: Well, they lived there, Five Mile, north of Frenchglen.

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LAURIE: Oh, sure, I know that area. So they lived there for a while. And when did they relocate to the Burns area?

ALAN: They moved five miles north of Burns, the latter part of 1935. At the same place that Dr. Fitzpatrick has got today.

LAURIE: Yes, I saw that in Norma Curtis's interview, that Dr. Fitzpatrick was trying to buy that property. And then, what was your father's vocation at that time? Was he a logger also, did he work in the woods?

ALAN: No. No. Dad stayed with horses too long in his life. He didn't change over. We was there, and I started school there. A school house right north, on the east side, above the Five Mile Dam, near the bottom of that little shallow swale that come down there.

LAURIE: Do you remember the name of that school?

ALAN: I believe it was the Bluebird School, or the Foley School, one or the other it was referred to.

LAURIE: And you started school there?

ALAN: Yes ma'am.

LAURIE: How long did you go there, and where did you go next?

ALAN: I started school there, and I think it was six years, but I got put back one year, because I goofed off too much in school.

LAURIE: Ok then.

ALAN: The lady that was the school teacher, was, uh, I don't-- She was very motherly. Very motherly. We didn't really learn what we should have learned. And besides that, I never could get too interested in school. There was too many interesting things to do outside.

LAURIE: Yes, a lot of young boys struggle with that.

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ALAN: And, she taught school for five years, I think it was, and then they hired a Miss Davis.

Later on in life, she married a Reed here. But anyway, she did not like my goofing off in school, so she pinned my ears up one day, and I started applying myself a little bit, after that.

LAURIE: And then after that school, did you go into Burns?

ALAN: Yes.

LAURIE: You don't remember the name of your first teacher?

ALAN: Yeah. In Burns?

LAURIE: No, in the school at Five Mile Dam?

ALAN: Julia Clark.

LAURIE: And then you moved into Burns, after five years. So you were like in fourth, fifth, sixth, grade?

ALAN: When I came to Burns, I was in sixth grade.

LAURIE: Do you remember some of your teachers while there?

ALAN: I remember that teacher quite well. His name was Ben Brandon. He was a draft dodger.

LAURIE: Really? Was that why he was teaching, like a civil service, an exchange? During WWII or Korea?

ALAN: Germany.

LAURIE: Ok.

ALAN: I did not appreciate him. I want to tell you a story about that. Times was hard then. Tough. Clarence Mason's family lived down on 205, about a half mile north of the Experiment Station, on the west side of the road. They was four younger in the family, Tom was the eldest, a boy and girl, I am talking about 1936, in the winter. They had a '35 Chevy sedan. Well, she was late getting to school that morning, it was about 9 o'clock before she showed up. He called her up there and

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whacked her hands with a yard stick because she was late. I will never forget that. Never forget that because them days, I don't know, they had to heat the water to warm them rigs up, that was before they had Freestone, or however, and startin' them old rigs when it was cold, why, it was somethin' else.

LAURIE: So, it was a hardship just getting to school, and then he disciplined her for being late, just because of the circumstances...

ALAN: Yeah. Yeah. I will never forget that.

LAURIE: Those things do stick in one's mind. So, he was your first teacher [in Burns]. Did you have some other teachers that you can remember? Can you think of some other teachers, of interest?

ALAN: Not of interest. Of course, later on, oh man-- You're digging up the cobwebs lady!

LAURIE: I know. I will find them all.

ALAN: Well, Mrs. Quier was one.

LAURIE: We'll get you to write some of those down, as you think of them, if you want.

ALAN: I guess I'm gonna' have to. I've got kind of a blank there.

LAURIE: How long did you go to school in Burns? Did you graduate from high school in Burns?

ALAN: Yeah.

LAURIE: Do you remember what year that was?

ALAN: Well, I had better! 1949.

LAURIE: Do you remember any of your classmates? Who did you hang out with? What did you do for fun? Did you take part in sports?

ALAN: I, uh-- The only sports I went out for was fall football.

LAURIE: What position did you play, Alan?

ALAN: Guard. Now let's back up a little bit, well, right in there, yeah, sixth grade, alright. When

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we moved to town, well Dad lost the biggest share of his cattle, when we lived up there, up the river, and we had to move. About that time, my mom got sick and had an operation. And everything is kind of “fazey”, for two years, because we got shifted around. One summer particularly, I don’t know where my sisters went, and they removed a tumor, I think it was underneath my mother’s ribs.

LAURIE: Everything went wrong all at once.

ALAN: Yep. Everything went wrong at once. I, uh, part of that summer, my grandfather and I lived up above Mitch Baker’s, in a cabin.

LAURIE: And this is your grandfather Whiting?

ALAN: Bossuot.

LAURIE: Up above Mitch Baker’s, along the river?

ALAN: Up a canyon. I think the canyon’s name was Cherry [Curry] Garden. And, uh, oh boy, cobwebs--

LAURIE: And what did you do while you lived up there, Alan? What was your grandfather doing up there?

ALAN: Well, we just lived there, that’s about all it amounted to. I had a little brown horse that I rode around up there. I think that’s the summer that Dad got a job with the, uh, Oregon State Education. They had just purchased the Experiment Station, down 205, and Dad got the job, superintendent of haying, for them that year. And a fella’ by the name of Eickler, that was overseeing the whole thing, he lived out there at Squaw Butte, and before we started haying, about 2-3 weeks, we moved approximately 12 head of horses, to Squaw Butte, one day, that was before they had any fences. So, that took care of the horses. But I do not remember anything about what happened to the cattle.

LAURIE: So, your dad got a job there. That must have been a relief, a change?

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ALAN: It helped the burden a little bit. They rustled around, and down there where the high school is, Roe Davis had his wrecking yard there, and his shop, and he built one of the first, and Dad helped him in the shop there, built one of the first hay bucks in the country. Then they rustled up and bought a new John Deere H tractor and a bore, and Dad had a rake, at the ranch north of town here, and they loaded it up on a hay wagon to rake the hay. It had-- I drove the hay wagon down with the rake on it. And then they, well, do you know where Harley Hotchkiss lived?

LAURIE: I do not, but I know the Hotchkiss family in general.

ALAN: Ok, you go out that lane, east of, well, you go down by the fairgrounds by the corner down there. And Pete Hotchkiss lived there, right straight east before you cross the river bridge, was where Harley lived. I got to the bridge, and Harley had give Dad a work mare, and I was leading that work mare, it was right at noon, and we got to the bridge and she pulled back, broke the rope, and went in the yard. And Harley came out to help me, and I will never forget it--they gave me a piece of chocolate cake!

LAURIE: Oh, that could start a bad habit.

ALAN: And down the road I went from there. But I did have a little problem there.

LAURIE: How old were you then?

ALAN: I was twelve.

LAURIE: That's a lot of responsibility already.

ALAN: We slept in a tent down there. There was one house. Mrs. Sorenborg done the cookin'. And Slim Ball done the raking, and a fella' name of Boyd, his wife lived there. I don't know where they lived then, whether there was a house that they lived in. But, I raked all of that south of the railroad track.

LAURIE: And this was when your dad was working for the Experiment Station? So you're in full

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haying production.

ALAN: Yeah.

LAURIE: Did they use beaver slides and buck rakes?

ALAN: Yep.

LAURIE: And did they net it, netted it and pulled it?

ALAN: Yep.

LAURIE: Did you ever have to work up on the top?

ALAN: No, but I pulled the net back with a horse.

LAURIE: Did you ever spill anyone off of the rake, um, off the slide?

ALAN: No, I never pulled anyone off. And I pulled the net a lot of years, because there was three years that I worked for Harley, later on there, but I pulled back every year for him.

LAURIE: This was Harley-- ?

ALAN: Harley Hotchkiss.

LAURIE: So you hayed for quite a few years?

ALAN: I worked for Harley for five years. They were a nice couple to work for, they had no kids there. During the war, he hired kids to help hay. They only kept one hired man, through the year, and the rest of us was kids, that done the haying.

LAURIE: Just seasonal help.

ALAN: And he kept his own books, and he told me one time back then we made one hundred tons a day.

LAURIE: Only semi-mechanized. A hundred tons a day?

ALAN: Yep.

LAURIE: That is a lot of hay.

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ALAN: That's a lot of hay.

LAURIE: They must have had quite a bit of property, even back then?

ALAN: Harley had quite a bit of property south of the Experiment Station, there he had-- one mile south of the lane, and that field you drive by that J. R. Davis bought-- he owned that.

LAURIE: Oh. Nice fields, nice flood irrigated fields

ALAN: Also, down south of the Experiment Station, down there in the corner in the Southwest, there's about-- I think that field had about 420 acres in it, he called that the Tyler Field. He had that, too. And then I got to tell you another story. When I first started raking for Harley why I had an old grey team, old John and Sal. So I worked them for the first year, and after I worked them for a while, when I was first started up there at the home place, well we left our rakes in the field, in the east, and north there, about eighty acres, and they always started in that field. So, when we got done at noon, and at night, well we left the rakes out there, and we led the horses to the barn, which was about 1/8 of a mile. Well, cowboys never walk. So I got to riding that old mare back in. No problem. Well, the last year that I raked, they had broke a-- "Smoke" and, what did they call that other horse, uh, well a gelding anyway. They had broke that team that winter, and they give me that team to rake with that year. And when I went to work with them, well, of course that first day, "Cowboys don't walk", so I tried to get on 'em, I think I made the mistake of trying to get on the gelding, and he got loose from me, and he run down the gol' danged lane, into the yard there, and the boss's wife about-- well seen those horses running around there, and it kind of caused a little bit of a stink. But I didn't try that again!

LAURIE: Were you riding the one?

ALAN: Well, I tried to ride the one, and I couldn't do it. He got away from me.

LAURIE: Oh. So they got away from you, and they came in without a handler.

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ALAN: Yeah, my face was a little red. So I didn't try that any more.

LAURIE: It's tempting. I started out riding workhorses. And, I would have to walk them away from the barn, turn them around, and then we could run or trot back to the barn. But that was the only direction I could get any speed. So I understand.

ALAN: Oh my God, those horses suffered in them days. If I had of used my head, and worked those horses about two weeks, I probably wouldn't have had no problem. Horse flies them days was terrible. And then at nights they had mosquitos! Working nine hours a day, six days a week.

LAURIE: Would they get pretty thin by the end of haying season?

ALAN: Yep, Yep.

LAURIE: Did you have any protective gear, for their heads, so they could breathe, with the bugs?

ALAN: Well, Nona fastened out sheets to put on top of them, and then he tried some button stuff, but of course as soon as the horses sweated, they was gone. There was just nothin' really to help. If you put the sheets on, I don't know if they cooled 'em off or not.

LAURIE: I have heard stories about horses suffocating from the mosquitos, out in the Double O Valley.

ALAN: I can see that.

LAURIE: I can't verify the story, but I have heard that in a bad summer, the bugs could be so bad, the horses would choke.

ALAN: Oh, that's bad, bad down there.

LAURIE: So you switched gradually to more and more machinery, and what did you think about the conversion from horses to machinery?

ALAN: A hell of an improvement. One heck of an improvement.

LAURIE: That's kind of what everyone felt. Kind of sad, but still, more efficient.

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ALAN: Yeah.

LAURIE: When did you go into the woods?

ALAN: I gotta' think about that.

LAURIE: So, you'd been haying for about six years, and then you graduated about--

ALAN: I graduated in '49, went to Oregon Tech for two years, and then I went to work for Leroy White Johnson. He was a contractor, he poured cement. The biggest share of that time I run a wheelbarrow. I got tired of that after about a year. And then, let me see, I got a job--

Ethel Bossuot: That was about the time we would have been married.

ALAN: Yeah, I got a job.

ETHEL: We were married in '54.

ALAN: Umm, uh.

LAURIE: Well, let's go back to the romance. How did you and Ethel meet?

ALAN: I was going to get to that.

LAURIE: Oh, that has to wait?

ALAN: Yeahhh, that has to wait. Well, the first time, I started hauling logs, no wait....

LAURIE: You were doing construction work, when you came back, when you went to work for Leroy.... You said went to work in town, after Oregon Tech. Who did you work for?

ALAN: Leroy Jackson.

LAURIE: And that was in construction?

ALAN: The biggest share of his work was pourin' cement.

LAURIE: Ok. You did that for a while.

ALAN: I did that for about one year. I don't know how I got started in the woods. Uh....

LAURIE: Did you ever work for Hines, right in the mill?

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ALAN: No.

LAURIE: So a couple of years after you worked for Leroy Jackson, you were doing something else.

ALAN: Yeah. I can't figure it out, 'cause Clarence Gardner was in there somewhere.

LAURIE: What kind of business did he have?

ALAN: He was a gypo logger. In there was some things in before that too. Well, let's just go when I met Ethel.

LAURIE: Okay.

ALAN: They had up at the mill there, I had drove some little bit of truck before, went up to the mill there.

ETHEL: The Frost Mill.

LAURIE: The Frost mill up at Van?

ALAN: Yeah, and they had bought a blow down sale down at Gunbarrel, about fifteen miles, twenty miles, from the mill.

[inaudible discussion]

ALAN: They had a KB8 International and they put stakes on it, and I hauled logs from Gunbarrel down to the mill. And we unloaded those logs off that truck with a Peaty, into the rollaway into the mill. I got a picture of that somewhere. And over there at Gunbarrel, it was near the end, we had put on a small log on that truck, and it rolled off on me. And I seen it comin', and of course those gollanded short logs, you can't get underneath the dirty son of a gun. But it didn't bother me that much. They did take me to the hospital in John Day, but I survived. Yeah.

LAURIE: So, you were standing-- Were you in your truck, did it take your truck over, when it rolled off?

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ALAN: Well, what happened, they didn't have cable wrappers then, they had chain wrappers, and I had the wrappers on, and when I pulled that chain down a little bit, it pulled the log off. Yeah.

LAURIE: So you were putting it on, and then the log came?

ALAN: Yeah, well, I wasn't quite fast-- It was a good thing I went to the truck, because I think if I would have went out, it would have gotten me for sure-- bad.

ALAN: Well, that was number one. Yeah. Well, anyway, that was when I met Ethel.

LAURIE: Driving truck and coming into the Frost mill, which was owned by Ethel's dad.

ALAN: Yeah. It took me about nine hours a day to make three trips. And I, uh, I ate with the logger, the fella' that done the skiddin' and the loadin', I ate with his wife down at their cabin, and the logger and the choker setter stayed over there at Gunbarrel, they bached' over there.

LAURIE: So you could make three trips a day, and how were you paid back then? Was it just day wages, or were you paid by mileage, or loads?

ALAN: It was just day wages, I think.

LAURIE: Do you have any idea what you were making then?

ALAN: No, I don't remember.

LAURIE: Same pay, no matter what the roads were, what the conditions were? Just flat day wage?

ALAN: Yep. Yep.

LAURIE: So then you met. How did you start dating? What was that "attraction"?

ALAN: Well, I don't know.

[*all laughing*]

ALAN: Well, one thing, Ethel's mother and sister and Ethel, were out there playing croquet, and I stuck my nose in and started playing croquet with 'em, I guess. Yeah, it was around the barnyard, with rocks and everything else.

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LAURIE: Did you have to let him win, Ethel?

ETHEL: Oh, he tried, and he usually did! [*laughing*] I made a sign, and hung it on a tree, as he drove into the mill, it said, "Look out for log trucks", so then I made a big one that said, "Look out for Alan", so he saw it as he came up with his load of logs to the mill.

LAURIE: A special warning, just for Alan driving. I've got it. How old were you, Ethel, when you started dating?

ETHEL: Sixteen?

ALAN: Well, I don't know, you had one year of school left.

ETHEL: Sixteen or seventeen.

LAURIE: Sixteen or seventeen? He was kind of, robbing the cradle, a little bit, don't you think?

ETHEL: [*chuckling*]

LAURIE: An older man, if you will. It's kind of cute. So what would you do in those days, for fun, dating? We are looking at the early 1950's, 1950, right? What would you do for recreation? What was a "date"? What would you do for fun? Were there dances?

ETHEL: Alan didn't care too much for dances.

ALAN: I did take her to a few movies, in town, but there wasn't a hell of a lot else to do, no. But, uh. Then the next year I went to work for Gardner, and her dad and them run the mill for one more year, after I left. I didn't go back a second year.

LAURIE: So when you went to work for Gardner, where were you hauling logs then?

ALAN: From, uh, do you know where Snowshoe is at?

LAURIE: Yeah.

ALAN: Ok, at the bottom of Snowshoe, on the Izee side, they started that road, the County did, up Snowshoe, and Gardner hauled right-of-way logs up that road to Seneca. Ray Pettyjohn was the

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other truck driver.

LAURIE: So, when you were going to Seneca, by then that was Edward Hines, the big mill up there.

ALAN: Yep.

LAURIE: How far was that to haul logs? How many trips could you make up there?

ALAN: I think about three.

LAURIE: Three also, huh.

ALAN: Yep.

LAURIE: What were the roads like? What kind of conditions were you coming down, with logs? I don't know how steep the roads are, back in there.

ALAN: Well, the roads weren't all that steep. How many times have you been over that road?

LAURIE: Oh, I don't know, maybe just once or twice, years ago. It's been a long time.

ALAN: Well, at the bottom of Snowshoe, before you start up the grade, there is a canyon off the right. The old original road went up there, up that canyon, I don't remember, it couldn't have been too awful steep, no, but that was the way it was, it went up that canyon where it does and then joins back up where it does up on top. And on this side, in Bear Valley, we took the Hines road and came in to the mill on the back side.

LAURIE: That was a big sale, the Bear Valley sale. That was one of their bigger sales, from what I've read, and a good piece of timber in there.

ALAN: Yeah, yeah. We hauled right by, Missus, uh-- What was her name? The Lemcke ranch. The veterinarian's wife.

LAURIE: Pielstick? Her family?

ALAN: Yeah, Pielstick, her family. We came right by there.

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LAURIE: How long did you drive out of that area, Alan?

ALAN: Oh, we was there about two months, three months, and then we moved to, uh, I think the next job was-- Well, wait a minute. I've gotta' think about that. I think the next job for Hines was Burnt Snag, which was east of Yellowjacket Lake. And that was a dirty, rotten haul. On the old road. You can see traces there, that was going down Spring Creek. Went by the Buttes, through Hughet Valley, down Gunther Creek, and up Spring Creek. Yeah, and we hit the Hines Road where it goes today. Three trips a day, too.

LAURIE: So roads were still being developed, and when you were hauling, there were a lot of unimproved roads up there?

ALAN: Oh yeah, yeah, for sure.

LAURIE: What was the worst road you ever hauled logs on? What was the scariest thing that ever happened to you?

ALAN: What?

LAURIE: What was your worst logging experience, when you were hauling logs? Did you have problems with brakes heating up?

ALAN: Well, I will tell you about that later on. Some things in life you want to forget.

LAURIE: Yes, that would be one.

ALAN: Yeah. But we done, that took the biggest share of that year, hauling out of there. That's about it. Welllll-- maybe it ain't. Gardner bought another trailer. That was a KB12 truck, that was. And it had 150 Cummins, that was souped up to 185. Then Gardner bought a KB12 Red International that had a 180-horse Continental in it. That was a good truck. Yeah, that was a good truck. I hauled for gypos, for other gypos, at that time. Gardner more or less lost out on Hines or something there. Yeah.

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LAURIE: So you would just be sort of be contract labor? You would work for different loggers, for logging firms, and just get day wages from whomever you were driving for?

ALAN: Yep.

LAURIE: How long did you drive logging truck?

ALAN: I started for Smerski in 1959, about the first of September. There's some other things I left out behind there.

LAURIE: We can fill them in later.

ALAN: Gonna' have to, I guess. Quite a few things, if you think about it. Aaagh. [*laughing*] The years fly by.

LAURIE: So, you'd been driving already, when you went to work for Smerski, you'd already been driving for five years.

ALAN: Yeah.

LAURIE: And then Smerski, how long did you work for him? And which Smerski is this? This is the father of--

ALAN: David's Smerski's-- ol' Andy.

LAURIE: Andy? And then that's his dad?

ALAN: Yeah. You knew David?

LAURIE: I know Dave.

ALAN: Well, he worked for me in the woods. When he first started out, why I was woods boss, so he worked underneath me.

LAURIE: So what does a "woods boss" mean? That you are in charge of the whole crew in the forest?

ALAN: Yeah, Yeah. I drove logging truck, three years, four years. And then they got-- Hines

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bought that sale, the Stancliffe Sale, west of Idlewild, north. When they first started that sale, I was driving truck, one season, and then Andy asked me to run the woods the next season. And, uh--

LAURIE: What was that like to have to supervise, so many people? That's a whole different thing.

ALAN: You know that wasn't that bad. Uh, I guess I was kind of a tough sucker to work for. But most of my men were older men.

ETHEL: I brought you some pictures to look at.

LAURIE: So, we have some pictures here. We have a group of logging trucks lined up. And this is-- is that Smerski? Smerski trucks?

ALAN: Yep. And that was taken out there by the mill.

ETHEL: That's when he was Woods Boss.

LAURIE: Bull of the Woods? He was Woods Boss, and he had a sign, "Bull of the Woods"?

ETHEL: Yeah, yeah.

LAURIE: He was Woods Boss, and then they had a sign, "Bull of the Woods"!

ALAN: Well, they put that on there.

LAURIE: This other picture that we are looking at—this tree was old?

ETHEL: Andy and Vi-- Alan.

ALAN: Dave's in there somewhere.

ETHEL: This is Dave [Smerski] right here.

LAURIE: Andy looks a lot like Dave! Or Dave looks a lot like Andy.

ALAN: Yeah, yeah.

LAURIE: Yeah, they are very similar. And that is Mrs. Smerski? And where's Alan in this picture?

Maybe I can get this picture scanned, for the library, and you guys can come and identify everything, and I can get it in the archives.

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ALAN: Yeah.

LAURIE: But this is the photo that shows that old tree, right?

ALAN: Yeah, it shows the age of that tree right there, if you can read it.

LAURIE: The sign says, "This tree was fifty-five years old in 1492." At the time this picture was taken, it was 523 years old, and it was from Tel [Telephone] Butte, up in that area. Yeah, I want to get a copy of that picture and add it to the stories.

ALAN: Yeah, that picture will blow a lot of peoples' minds, right there, if you show up there in the library.

LAURIE: Yes, I'll try to get a good copy of this photo, and even hang it up for a while, and we might get some folks talking about logging. That is part of what I hope to get done here, is to get more of the history in the woods. There's just not a lot of that documented up there.

ETHEL: Yes, you can take that with you.

LAURIE: Okay, and I will copy it, and get these back to you, and then we'll talk about some of your family photos.

ALAN: Oh, we had logs in them days, nothing like them poles they haul anymore.

(Mixed chatter.)

LAURIE: So how long did you work for Smerski as the logging supervisor, as the log boss?

ALAN: In 19—Uh-- twenty. 1971.

LAURIE: So, 1960 to 1971?

ALAN: Nineteen fifty-nine.

LAURIE: Okay. Driving truck one year?

ALAN: Ah, two or three years drove truck.

LAURIE: So, ten, eleven, twelve years.

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ALAN: Yeah. Sometimes during those years, I, well one year-- Now I gotta' take one year off that. One year, I went to work for Harney County Farm Supply, for Jack McCallister. Andy's wife-- was a troublemaker. And she was always sticking her nose into the woods when she didn't know one end of a log from another. So that was one reason I quit for one year. We also, during those years, we-- The Forest Service forced Hines into taking what they call a "Martin exchange". And that was when Hines built the plywood mill. And they had all that confounded fir east of Seneca, back there about forty, forty-five miles, to haul out. I don't know what year it was, but Andy put up a logging camp, one of the last loggin' camps that I know of in this area, at Summit Prairie. And that was the end of the railroad. And they also had a, Hines hauled in there, and they had a truck shop there. Some of the doors was gone, but at least the roof didn't leak. It had six, big wooden double barrel stoves in that, when Hines was there, to keep the trucks warm during the night when it got cold, so they could get started the next day. He moved in a fourteen-foot trailer house up there for the cook's shack. They run water down from up above the camp there for water. He put in a-- or he rented, I guess-- a diesel electric generator to furnish electricity for everything. And four of us slept in one of the old Hines' bunk houses they had left there. And that was where I slept, was in that bunk house, with the other three men.

LAURIE: That was in Seneca?

ALAN: That was in Summit Prairie.

LAURIE: Oh, Summit Prairie. So you were up there?

ALAN: We logged out of there at least three or four years.

LAURIE: That was in fir. Now, you're not in the yellow pine, so much. Was that worse to work with, fir?

ALAN: Fir? No, it wasn't that bad. We even hauled out of the North Fork of the John Day-- from

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the North Fork of the Malheur River, into Seneca. And some special logs, we went in over the hump, into Prairie City, into that mill at Prairie City.

LAURIE: Ok. Johnson owned it then?

ALAN: Yeah, I think so. I liked it up there in the summertime. It was a nice place to work out of. But by God, about the first of November, when it starts snowin', I was like a goose, I wanted to go south. The roads-- However, we never had any bad wrecks, but it got a little slick, once in a while.

LAURIE: Yes, it would be a tougher winter, for sure, up there.

ALAN: Yeah. Ahhhh, I gotta' tell you a story about that. When we pulled out there the last time-- Well, okay, Hines done us a dirty deal. I don't know how it happened, but right straight south of Summit Prairie, we moved all the stuff out from the cut shop—all of it. And they come up with a sale south of Summit Prairie, between there and Crane Prairie, or Crane Flats, is what it is. So for... I don't know when in the hell we started on that sale, uh, must have been around August, I guess. And we drove from here to that sale, and one round trip was eighty-five miles.

LAURIE: Eighty-five miles' roundtrip?

ALAN: One way! You know, I never had a crew holler a bit!

LAURIE: Huh, that's two hours out of their work, day on both ends.

ALAN: Yeah. Yeah. And we got done there, and we moved to a small sale that Junior Hurd had, uh, down Logan Valley a little ways there. He'd done the skiddin' but we pulled in there to load the logs. I don't know when the hell that was in, was it December or January? It must have been January. And, the trucks left at four o'clock, out. Well, by the time we got everything cleaned, the cats all cleaned and fueled up, it was four-thirty before we was ready to move out. And we got up there to the main road going east and west across Summit Prairie, or Logan Valley, and, uh, the wind was blowing. And the first god danged pickup that was out of there was a two-wheel drive.

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And there's a stretch of that road that runs southeast before it straightens out across Logan Valley. It had drifted full. And that first pickup got stuck. And we was second. You know, I couldn't open my door.

LAURIE: That deep? That much snow.

ALAN: That deep. I went out through my window. I was worried, lady, that time of night.

LAURIE: Coming back in in the dark, and no communication.

ALAN: No! And at least, uh, to Bear Valley, from Biggs' to Bear Valley, was at least 20 miles.

LAURIE: Why were you working in that kind of weather? Didn't they usually cut down production when there was that much snow?

ALAN: Well, that was just a fluke. The road drifted full.

LAURIE: So the weather just sort of came in?

ALAN: Yeah, it was just a fluke. Just a fluke. Well, we worked out, we finally got that first pickup out, he was a two-wheel drive and the rest of us were four-wheel drive. Man, I'll tell you, I was scratching my head there for a little while. Yeah, no phone, no nothin'. There we were.

LAURIE: So, do you know about what year that would have been? Was that in the fifties?

ALAN: No, it was later than that.

LAURIE: You were still working in the woods by the early seventies? So, this would have been in the sixties, late sixties?

ALAN: It would have been around '68, '69, somewhere in there. Yeah.

LAURIE: When did you leave the woods? Alan, when did you start [your business]?

ALAN: I started in the shop 1972.

LAURIE: Ok. And that's your welding shop, that's still Alan's Repair today? The same location?

ALAN: Same location.

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LAURIE: Alan's Repair has been there since 1972.

ALAN: Yeah, that shop was built in 1959 by Sam Gunderson. I think it's 1959. It's stamped in there, on a toilet, it's stamped when it was built.

LAURIE: So, about 1959, that shop was built. Who owned it before you? Who did you buy it from?

ALAN: Sam Gunderson.

LAURIE: What was that shop when you bought it?

ALAN: Same thing.

LAURIE: Welding and fabrication?

ALAN: Yup. Yup.

LAURIE: So, from 1972. And, what were the struggles early in that business? How hard was it to start a business then?

ALAN: Well, Sam had it pretty well started. Yeah, Sam had it well started. And, you know, you might think-- I've got a lot of comments from different people. And I had one call today from a fellow in Independence, Oregon. Most people don't realize, how much, a lot of ranchers depend on that shop that goes through there.

LAURIE: It is a long ways to anywhere else, and if something breaks, to get it fixed. Now it's a little easier to get parts, but historically, you had to get it fabricated here and now. It was the same for the farmers, back in our area, where that fabrication shop was critical to getting those crops in. So, a pretty good business, especially in the summer.

ALAN: It was a good business.

LAURIE: How many people did you employ?

ALAN: Generally three. I've had as high as five in there, a time or two. In the summertime we

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got rushed, but generally three, yeah.

LAURIE: What was it like from going from “out in the woods” to being a “civilized person” in a town shop?

ALAN: You know, I liked loggin’.

LAURIE: I figured you did.

ALAN: But, driving truck, for a long time, in the winter time, when it gets slick, you kind of lose your nerve.

LAURIE: Well, and you had a family, too.

ALAN: And a family too.

LAURIE: You think about those things, when you have a family, you know.

ALAN: And you talk about the family business, I didn’t bring that up, before hand. But anyway, there was a fellow I knew, his name was Floyd Lynch. And, uh, he got a job, that was when I was working for Gardner, and loggin’ was a little slack, and anyway, he got a job out of, haulin’ logs into--? Aaagh. I have to get the damn map out.

LAURIE: Somewhere in this area?

ALAN: No, down the John Day River. Where did we go to see that off-hand relation, when the girls took that rafting trip down the river?

ETHEL: Where did we go?

ALAN: Anyway, we went up there to see that off-hand relation of mine. And he wasn’t home.

ETHEL: I can’t think of it either.

LAURIE: So, he was hauling logs, Floyd Lynch was hauling logs, in the John Day area, and what happened?

ALAN: Monument. Monument. It was the last load of the whole sale, and it was a lot of flighty,

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off-highway loads. Pretty good loads. Pretty good logs. Have you ever been to Monument?

LAURIE: Yes.

ALAN: On the west side of Monument, the town, they got the school there. Now, I don't remember if the high school and the grade school was in one building or not. But anyway behind the school there was a big yard there, a great big yard. And then behind that, this loggin' road came down, and forked right at the bottom of the hill. The right hand fork went to the mill, which was down the crick a little bit from Monument, well on the edge of Monument. And the road to the left, there is a little bit of a curve to the left there, at this hill, and it went right straight down to the north fork of the river, and it forked, left then right. And back, west of Monument, on the loggin' road, about a mile, there was a flat there, and I discovered I didn't have no air brakes, and I got lookin' around, the pulley had come off of the air compressor. The air compressor stuck out separately on the right hand side. Yeah. And, I thought, well, what in the hell am I gonna' do? Last gol danged load and I am a mile from town, somewhere around a half a mile, and I thought if I get up on top of that danged hill, before I start down, I'll put it in one of them old granny holes-- because it had a double-under in it-- and maybe the compression will hold that dirty rotten sucker. So I got up there, and I put it in second under, double under, and I started off of that hill, and I started pickin' up speed, pickin' up speed. I knew I was in deep doo-doo. Bad. Well, I got-- I kept pickin' up gears, otherwise I would have blowed the engine up, and I got thinking ahead to the road ahead of me, and I didn't like either one of the outcomes. No way to turn. I knew I couldn't make a turn to the right—that was OUT. And all that I could see at the end of that other street was the John Day River. I don't know how fast that truck was a travelin'. When I got down there at the forks in the road, I had no idea, but it was travelin' faster than I wanted it to travel. I made the turn to the left, and that truck raised up off the left hand side, and

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the grace of God was with me. The cable clamps broke, came loose on the load, and tipped the logs off of the truck. I went right down through the-- Before I got down to the John Day River, it had slowed down enough that I could make the turn to the right, went across the main highway that goes to Fox, to a road in that area, down to the mill, and parked it. But I could feel my heart right down here. There's a lot of things you can think in a damn short time, when you are in a fix.

LAURIE: Yeah. And that was a fix.

ALAN: That was a fix.

LAURIE: So, when those logs came off, it was just the velocity, and then those logs came off, it didn't roll the truck, didn't roll the trailer, they went, and then with the loss of that weight, you were able to get some control. Were able to shift down at that point?

ALAN: I don't remember about it. I don't remember, so help me God. But it slowed down enough that I had it under control.

LAURIE: So, already I'm feeling, what you might have been feeling, and I'm thinking, "I don't want to do this much longer."

ALAN: [*chuckling*]

LAURIE: But that was fairly early. You still drove truck for another ten years.

ALAN: Yeah. Always after that, driving truck for Smerski, if I was on a steep hill, and they was loading logs, and I had to stay in that truck to keep it steady while they loaded, my left foot would jerk up and down like I had the queebies. I couldn't hold it straight. No. I couldn't do 'er. What's a guy going to--?

LAURIE: So did you change any of your operation after that? Were you double checking gear? What does a guy do after that kind of a close call?

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ALAN: Well, after that, of course a lot of the trucks, they came up with this “jake brake”. I did have a runaway in Hines one time, comin’ down off of that hill.

LAURIE: That steep hill that comes right down to the mill? Wow. I’ve heard about runaways on that hill.

ALAN: [*Pointing to old photos of Smerski logging trucks*] You see that truck right there on that? That’s the same truck that it is. The same make.

LAURIE: A Mack?

ALAN: The same make. Same everything. It was a new truck, practically, and it blowed an air can, with an off-highway load.

LAURIE: What is an “air can”, I am sorry?

ALAN: That’s the one that the air goes in it and it pushes against your brake.

LAURIE: That’s what pressurizes your brake, and it blew.

ALAN: Yeah, and it blewed out. But it wasn’t that bad. I, uh-- That turn up there, there’s a house up there at the first turn, where the road turns to the left, there’s a house right there. And, I, uh, it was starting to gain speed on me a little bit right there. But Hines had that runaway road there, so off-highway trucks, or whatnot, could take the runaway road. Well, the air pressure went down to fifty pounds of air pressure, but I was able to hold fifty pounds, and by God, before I got to the highway, I had her stopped.

LAURIE: Wow. That’s kind of a miracle, I think, too. With that kind of weight behind you, it could have gone either way, I suppose.

ALAN: It didn’t take me long that evening to get that new brake can in. But that’s the only one that I’ve ever blowed in my life. And that truck was pretty new then.

LAURIE: What would the owners’ say? What did Smerski-- How did Smerski react to things

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like that?

ALAN: Ah, it didn't bother him. Andy wasn't a truck man. He was a Cat man.

LAURIE: Huh. So he didn't question the trucking so much, he was more involved with the woods.

ALAN: Yeah. You know, the old duffer, I can say this. When I worked for him, when I was driving-- When I was the woods' boss, he never bothered me at all, about running the woods. I had taken sales up there and loaded them that he never even looked at.

LAURIE: Hmmm. Well, he really trusted you then.

ALAN: He trusted me. And that year that I worked for McCallister down there, he was having trouble in the woods. This was August, I think that he come down to the shop, to McCallister's shop, more or less steppin' on his lower lip, asked me to go back to the woods. And so I said yes.

LAURIE: For Mr. Smerski? So you returned again.

ALAN: Yeah. Yeah. No, he was a good ol' egg to work for, yes he was.

LAURIE: Do you have any good stories about when Dave went to work under you? Do you have any good "human interest" stories about Dave Smerski?

ALAN: Well, just one is all. Dave and his choker setter up there one time, he had it-- just down below the road-- and his choker setter was there. And I don't know, Dave was getting all over his choker setter over some dang thing. I don't know now exactly what it was, but I kind of jumped all over Dave somethin' about that. And that was the only problem that I ever had with Dave.

And, uh, when we logged out here at Rattlesnake, that year-- When did we start in there?

December? Yeah. Well, I was missing a Cat skinner, and Dave and I, that one steep hill up there, well we logged that. Yeah.

LAURIE: He did all of the skidding up there, in that country?

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ALAN: Yeah, if I was short a hand, a Cat skinner, well I run a Cat too, along as being the woods boss.

LAURIE: Did you ever fall trees?

ALAN: Very few. No. I did, um, I got in one fix one time. We was up here on Stancliffe. And, uh, we had an old Baycity loader, and on a Friday night the shovel operator moved that up on the west side, just up above Myrtle. And there was two good decks of logs, but they was all small, about eighteen inches. And went to work Monday morning and the shovel operator didn't show up. So, I got on that old machine, and started loadin' logs, of course, not being used to everything-- And after the first, I don't know who it was, and after that first truck or two, I told-- I sent word down to Smerski to send Don Cox up to load logs. I did get fifteen loads of logs out that day, and I never ate dinner. That was the hardest job I ever did in my life!

LAURIE: Loading logs. And that was a boom loader, cable and boom?

ALAN: Yeah.

LAURIE: I imagine that is like learning how to run a dragline. You have to get the motion and weight just right?

ALAN: It's all in the timing. Well, I'd never run it enough. I knew the mechanism and everything. And of course, small logs-- If I'd have had logs like this [*pointing at photo*] anything like this, it wouldn't have taken long. But a bunch of poles, oh man!

LAURIE: Was there any line logging in this country?

ALAN: Very few. Very little.

LAURIE: And that's just because the ground here is generally pretty level?

ALAN: Hines had, up at Seneca, had sales up there. Lively was one. Ernest Lively, done line logging. We've had some jobs that required it, but I had to—I ended up hiring a gypo to come in

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and do it. But, uh, we kind of stayed away from line loggin'. We wasn't set up for it.

LAURIE: Right. It takes a lot of setup, a lot of overhead to get it in, and then you'd better have several, I would guess, to make it pay.

ALAN: It's a different deal altogether.

LAURIE: Did you get involved, were you ever contractual on any of the road building? Did you do any of that?

ALAN: We did some road building. I never really got involved in it. We just hauled the right of way logs is all. But they did some road building for Hines, for some of the sales we took out.

LAURIE: Who were the main contractors for the building roads during the heyday of Edward Hines? Arntz's, I've heard, did some.

ALAN: Uh. Verna Pettyjohn's dad was one, I believe. I am sure he was.

LAURIE: I'll revisit that, Alan. I'll ask you. I'll write some of these down, and ask to recall some of these things, just so I can kind of flesh out some of the history. I was surprised, I know Arntz's were involved with a lot of the construction and roads, around here, and I cannot find any history in our library of the Arntz name.

ALAN: You might talk to Verna Pettyjohn about that. I think Milburn Wood was a contractor, too, but don't really take that out-- but, I think he was.

LAURIE: Okay, I will ask around. And I will write this down so you can help me put some names together on that. Because, that was a big part of the industry, and getting those logs in. This is a remarkable area for roads, an awful lot of roads in that area, to get the lumber out.

ALAN: I've got some pictures I'll show you, too. [Andy?] had an older boy, too, that went through World War II, and Andy picked up a seven [D7?] to do—to go down into Beaver Creek, just north of Snow Mountain, to the left. And John built that road down into Beaver Creek, that

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we logged. That was some of the best logs that I ever saw in my life, that we logged down there.

LAURIE: Out of Beaver Creek?

ALAN: Yeah, out of Beaver Creek.

LAURIE: I'm thinking we're going to wrap this up for today.

ALAN: Alright, just don't let me forget the "Pung".

LAURIE: The what?The "pung"?

ALAN: [*laughing*]

LAURIE: All right, Alan gets the last laugh for today. It's 2:30, and we are finished for today.

End of recording

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