

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #50-AA - Side A (Part II)

Subject: Alberta Parker Van Alstyne

Place: Pioneer Day - Burns, Oregon

Date: June 1973

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen interviewing Alberta Parker Van Alstyne, who lives in Prineville now. When did you come to Harney County?

ALBERTA VAN ALSTYNE: I was born here.

PAULINE: You were born here. What year?

ALBERTA: 1903. Eight miles north of Burns.

PAULINE: In 1903, eight miles north of Burns. And what were your parent's names?

ALBERTA: Melvin and Katie Young Bennett Parker.

PAULINE: Do you know when they came here?

ALBERTA: They both, my dad was born here. He was born about three miles south of Burns. I think it's on the Hotchkiss place. Somewhere in there. And my mother was born in Missouri, and came here in 1882.

PAULINE: Did she come with her family?

ALBERTA: Yes, her mother and father came here and settled some-where on the lake. And the first winter they spent out here at Potter Swamp. Or, not at Potter Swamp, out here at ---

PAULINE: At Harney?

ALBERTA: At Harney.

PAULINE: At Harney. And what were their names?

ALBERTA: Their names were William and Ida Belle Bennett.

PAULINE: And so your home was up north of Burns then. Did you live up there all the time while you grew up?

ALBERTA: Yeah, Silvies River.

PAULINE: Silvies River. Where did you go to school?

ALBERTA: Went to school at, I think they call it the Cowing School now, or do they, or what? Five Mile Dam.

PAULINE: Five Mile Dam. Was your father a rancher? Did he have cattle or ---

ALBERTA: He had cattle and raised a little crop. At one time he had a little lumber mill.

PAULINE: Did you have brothers and sisters?

ALBERTA: Yes, I have one sister Mrs. Harry Loggin, and Mildred. And brother James Parker, and Gene Parker, living. And Gordon Parker, and Emery Parker who are dead.

PAULINE: I'm beginning to figure out who you are now. My dad is Henry Ausmus.

ALBERTA: Yes, I think probably I was working at the hospital when you were born, I'm not sure, but I wouldn't be surprised.

PAULINE: You worked at the hospital?

ALBERTA: I worked at the hospital when Dr. Ground was there.

PAULINE: Dr. Brown?

ALBERTA: Dr. Ground.

PAULINE: How do you spell that?

ALBERTA: G R O U N D, just plain old ---

PAULINE: Just Ground, like ground. Yeah, I went to school with Jamie, we were in the same class. He was one of my very special friends.

ALBERTA: He was a very special person now too.

... (Unrelated discussion)

PAULINE: Where was the hospital when you worked there?

ALBERTA: It was up in the old stone building up there. Haven't they made that into apartments?

PAULINE: They are working at it, the Valley View. Can you remember anything special about your life in Harney County?

ALBERTA: Well I think I just lived a normal life; I enjoyed riding horses, you know, and that type of thing. I was an active girl. I married young, and then we were gone part of the time. You know you always have a special place, which is home. And then I had so much family here, and we are related to so many people in the Harney Valley. But the family is diminishing, people get older.

PAULINE: It's good to get back and see everybody.

ALBERTA: But I did realize that maybe I won't know too many people, you know. You read in the paper where others are gone, that you know. But I have found that there's still a lot of people that --- I think this reunion is a good thing, because even if you can't make it every year, why ---

... (Discussion of Pioneer Day)

PAULINE: Did you ever hear your family talk about why they came to Harney County?

ALBERTA: Well my grandfather, if I had listened to him a little better when I was a girl, you know, crossed the plains, I think, three different times. He gave the map ... they were looking for, trying to get away from people, I guess, I don't know. He lived an independent life. So he came here, he came to Harney Lake first, you know, in about '65, I think.

PAULINE: In 1865.

ALBERTA: But my dad was born here.

PAULINE: Well he was one of the very, very first ones then to come into Harney County.

ALBERTA: I'm not sure but it runs in my mind, that when I read this article that I want to look up in the book, that there was only 20 families in Harney County. And of course Egan was the --- there wasn't a town of Burns.

PAULINE: No, it was the town of Egan. Do you know why they called it Egan?

ALBERTA: Wasn't it after an Indian chief?

PAULINE: Well, that's what I always thought.

ALBERTA: That's what I understood.

PAULINE: But I've never been able to find it written down any-where.

ALBERTA: Well I think it's just word of mouth as far as I know, but it seems to me that that has been ---

PAULINE: And it was pronounced Eegan.

ALBERTA: Well I think it is.

... (Discussion of Egan)

PAULINE: Well I thank you for taking time to do this.

ALBERTA: Well thanks.

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