

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #58 - Side A

Subject: Paul Wilson

Place: Bend, Oregon

Date: April 20, 1991

Interviewer: Edward Gray

Note: Paul Wilson is 96 years of age at the time of this interview.

EDWARD GRAY: ... Paul, did you work for Bill Brown chasing down mares, and stallions, and whatever, horses?

PAUL WILSON: Well we was bringing, probably averaged around 300 or 400 head of horses at a time. Went to ride in the morning, bring them into the corral, and at noon we'd have dinner, and then we'd go out in the afternoon work them, brand the colts, keep them in the corral all night. When we saw that we wouldn't, we'd ride one part of the country one day, and keep them in so they wouldn't go out and mix with the others, and bring them in the second time. When we'd get back pretty near to the corral somebody would go ahead and turn them out, and bring the others in, 300, 400 head, sometimes 500 head.

EDWARD: And there wasn't anybody else out on the range, like the ZX Ranch, or ---

PAUL: Oh there was, what they did was the outside people would send a man to ride, with the horseshoe outfit, like the ZX and the --- oh people at Summer Lake. I can't think of his name ---

EDWARD: Chewaucan Cattle Company?

PAUL: No, they didn't have any horses, I don't think, the Chewaucan. Curriers, Currier, he had, they sent a man to ride.

EDWARD: Did these men that they send to ride, did they take out a certain amount of wild horses or something?

PAUL: Well they'd take, if they wanted to gather any of their own horses, well they'd just help brand. They'd come with their own string of horses.

EDWARD: It is so hard to believe that Bill Brown ... probably 1893 for sure, was collecting wild horses. There must have been millions of them, or something.

PAUL: There was lots of horses.

WOMAN: See he sold them to the service too.

EDWARD: Yeah, oh yeah.

PAUL: You know they'd hold the geldings, and a fellow by the name of Manning from Los Angeles was a buyer.

EDWARD: That's the guy's name, in California?

PAUL: Yeah.

EDWARD: Manning.

PAUL: Manning. I remember one time he give him a check for \$90,000 and old Bill packed it around in his shirt pocket for two or three months before he ever sent it to the bank.

EDWARD: Of course Bill never drove a car?

PAUL: No.

EDWARD: Never drove a car.

PAUL: He tried it once, and seen a bunch of horses and took after that.

EDWARD: Oh yeah, that's in one of these.

PAUL: That was the last he tried driving.

EDWARD: How --- how did he ship out his wool, and his horses? How did he get them out of ---

PAUL: Horses was always drove. He wouldn't sell any horses around home. They had to be taken out of the country, and they'd drive them out.

EDWARD: You mean he'd get three or four buckaroos and they'd just drive them to Portland, or Burns, or ---

PAUL: Well the buyer brought their own buckaroos ---

EDWARD: I see.

PAUL: --- to take the horses. But the wool, they hauled it into Bend after they got the railroad to Bend.

EDWARD: That would have been after 1911.

PAUL: The last ... in 1919, I was working in Bend for Brooks and Scanlon. And so that's how I can remember when they hauled wool. I went out home and loaded up six head of work horses I had, and had two wagons, and went to Last Chance and loaded up 30 sacks of wool and hauled it into Bend, and then loaded it up with a load of freight to take back to the store. Got paid both ways.

EDWARD: How did Bill Brown pay you, by poundage?

PAUL: Paid in cash, check.

EDWARD: By load, or by ---

PAUL: Yeah, he paid so much a ---

EDWARD: A pound?

PAUL: Yeah, for hauling it.

EDWARD: Did you do that just one year, Paul?

PAUL: All summer, loads of wool. And in 1929 and '30 he had an old Ford truck, I hauled wool on that thing. I put, I think, 9 sacks on the truck, and 6 on the trailer. Coming down

Horse Ridge it had a Warford transmission in it, and this long drag coming down Horse Ridge, the top of that it jumped out of gear and couldn't get it back in gear. And all the brakes ... the old Ford ... But there was no traffic on the road and they'd just built that new road, and it was wide. So I just rode her down to the foot of the mountain, and went for miles after I got to the foot of it, before I got stopped.

EDWARD: You are lucky you are alive. It's a wonder the wheels didn't fly off. Yeah, I know Bill had a lot of, he had one Model-T truck I've heard of, a million stories about this Model-T truck.

PAUL: Yeah.

EDWARD: Of course he never drove.

PAUL: I drove that old thing many miles. When we was building that cistern at the windmill ---

EDWARD: At Gap Ranch.

PAUL: No, at the Pest House.

EDWARD: Oh, Brown Wells, okay.

PAUL: Yeah. I went into Bend after cement and stuff, and he wanted me to bring out a couple of guys to help build that cistern. And one of them was an old drunk Irishman, and had two barrels of gas on the back. One of them wasn't, they didn't get the cap tight, and it slopped out, and he was laying there on his arm. Well the next morning I had to take him back to Bend, his arm was in hell of shape ... gas. He got blood poisoning and died.

EDWARD: Oh! What did they have in that gas anyway? My lord, that wouldn't happen today.

MAN: Well we've got better doctors today, and medicine.

EDWARD: Yeah, that's true. What was some of your best memories about Bill Brown, himself, the man Bill Brown? What did he do for you, did he do anything special, or ---

PAUL: He never done anything really special for me, but he was

--- Oh I don't know, he was a real good man, a nice man.

EDWARD: He treated you pretty fair?

PAUL: Oh yeah. Oh he give me a job anytime I wanted it.

EDWARD: He must have hired hundreds over his life span out there on the desert. He must have hired hundreds of people.

PAUL: Anybody come along, them ranchers, he didn't have nothing to do, he'd make something for them to do. Put them out working on a ditch, or something, to give them something to do.

EDWARD: When is the last time you worked for Bill Brown?

PAUL: I think it was '30, 1930, '31 ...

EDWARD: Was he still at Buck Creek?

PAUL: Yeah. He was herding sheep most of the time.

EDWARD: He'd lost most of his horses by then, hadn't he?

PAUL: Well, no he still had quite a few horses. He didn't have as many as he did have, but he still had buckaroos. He finally got so he had to chicken feed them.

EDWARD: Yeah, went to Schlosser Brothers in Portland.

PAUL: Yeah.

WOMAN: Was that where you brought the first ones, to Redmond? Was that Bill's, or that was when you ---

PAUL: I don't know who sold --- but I brought 50 head first chicken feed ... my own horses. Brought them into Redmond.

EDWARD: Your own horses?

PAUL: Yeah.

EDWARD: Because they weren't worth nothing, right?

PAUL: \$5.00 a head you got for them.

EDWARD: That hurt Bill Brown, I know that. He hated that.

PAUL: Yeah. In 1918 he had, I think, 800 head of horses ready to sell, and the English government offered him \$80.00 a head. And Mosier was buckaroo boss then, he told Bill, he said, don't sell now, hold them you'll get a \$100.00. And when the war ended all he could do was turn them out, nobody wanted them. So if he had took that \$80.00 a head he would have --- 800 head of horses would have brought quite a bit of money.

EDWARD: Was Bill --- the people, for example, Bill hired a lot of men. For example under the buckaroo boss, who, what did they call them? Who worked under the buckaroo boss?

PAUL: Well the rider would have been --- I've seen Couch have 15 men. One time at Egli I saw, there was 15 of us saddled up, and 10 of them bucked off. (Laughter) Myself and Johnny Mosier, we kept us busy catching them horses. (Laughter)

EDWARD: That they got bucked off?

PAUL: Yeah, bucked off.

EDWARD: So you're saying you had, let's say you had Johnny Mosier, and then he had 15 riders per camp?

PAUL: Yeah. ...

EDWARD: Was it just one camp, Paul, or was it ---

PAUL: Oh no, they moved camp everywhere we went.

EDWARD: Johnny Mosier and those 15 guys would move from camp to camp?

PAUL: Johnny Mosier drove the cook wagon whenever we moved. After Charlie Couch's wife went to doing the cooking for the buckaroos, why Mosier drove the cook wagon. Of course she couldn't.

EDWARD: So let's just take Johnny Mosier as an example, not saying he was the

greatest, but just as an example. You'd have the buckaroo boss, Johnny Mosier, then you'd have 15 riders, and then they would have a cook.

PAUL: Yeah ... to cook.

EDWARD: And that would be the whole, and that would be the buckaroo camp?

PAUL: They didn't always have 15.

EDWARD: Oh, okay.

PAUL: In 1913 and '14, they cut down to just four of us. We rode all winter. ... every bronco outside, you'd catch a mare, and brand her right there.

EDWARD: So there were --- what was that, 1913?

PAUL: 1913 or '14, the winter of '13 and '14.

EDWARD: You had a buckaroo boss, and only four riders?

PAUL: Yeah. Jim Bunyard, and Bill Burgett, and myself, and Couch.

EDWARD: Huh. So it depended on however many horses there were, or how many they could sell, or how many they could get?

PAUL: Well --- just figured they would be broncos out there, and in the wintertime we did brand a lot of them.

EDWARD: Was that really hard; was that just downright dirty and scummy hard work?

PAUL: Well it wasn't too dirty, wasn't too scummy. It was a little dusty.

EDWARD: Oh, yeah. Well how did you guys take your baths out there, and --- oh by Brown's Well, out by Glass Buttes? Or did you take a bath?

PAUL: We didn't get too many good baths. (Laughter) You kind of sponge off a little bit, if you got water enough.

EDWARD: I mean you didn't --- a little spit bath maybe?

MAN: A couple girls swimming in a pond out there once?

PAUL: Oh yeah, that was Last Chance --- no Sand Springs.

EDWARD: Sand Springs? You must have caught them. They probably didn't think anybody was around.

PAUL: A fellow by the name was Stanley Belfour, and myself had split the buckaroos up. They sent six of us to Sand Springs. Stanley and I was the first ones there, so we rode the fence, so to keep the saddle horses in. And he went one way, and I went the other, and said we'll meet at the springs. So when we got there, there was two women and a kid in there naked, swimming.

EDWARD: Boy, that would be really nice, wouldn't it?

MAN: Way out there in the desert. (Laughter) Am I seeing a mirage?

EDWARD: That would be pretty nice. You stayed there awhile, didn't you Paul?

PAUL: Yeah, we did enjoy it. (Laughter) I got a picture over home of --- one of them was a schoolteacher, taking the picture of six of us a horseback.

WOMAN: She came out and took a picture.

PAUL: I was 17 years old.

WOMAN: Daddy always buckarood in a white shirt.

EDWARD: Really? That thing must have looked like a mess.

WOMAN: Didn't look like it in the picture.

MAN: No, looked pretty good.

EDWARD: Oh, he was looking for women, probably.

MAN: That's right.

EDWARD: I could drive out there, Paul, for 400 miles in that desert, which I did last summer, didn't see one woman.

PAUL: No.

MAN: Didn't even see a rabbit.

EDWARD: In fact he hardly saw any water. It's real dry over there; you probably know

that. It's real bad.

PAUL: Well that schoolteacher, she was a pretty nice woman. But old man Taylor --- old Jim Bunyard he was watching across the lake, keep the horses from drinking at night. He'd ... around behind him and take her out there and watch the water all night. I don't know whether the horses got in to drink or not. (Laughter)

EDWARD: I don't blame him. Poor guy, I don't blame him at all.

MAN: Not a bit, way out there in the desert like that.

EDWARD: There is something ... stupid questions. What do you know about --- did Bill Brown or any of his workers show you, I won't say where, but well --- did they ever show you where he shot Johnny Overstreet?

PAUL: No, but I know where it was.

EDWARD: Where was it, Paul?

PAUL: Between the Gap Ranch and the Egli place. See ... hurt Bill because he shot the wrong man. He shot the herder instead of the guy that was giving him the trouble.

EDWARD: Who was giving him the trouble?

PAUL: Well I don't know their name, but he was a sheep man too, and he was trying to crowd Bill off of his own ground.

EDWARD: Was it Ike Foster? Ever hear of that name?

PAUL: Oh yeah, I know --- it wasn't Ike Foster, because he had a ranch at Silver Creek.

EDWARD: Right. But anyway ---

PAUL: ... Meg Foster, or something, she drove mail.

WOMAN: Meg.

PAUL: She drove mail route from Egli.

EDWARD: Yeah, Egli's had the post office there.

PAUL: Yeah.

EDWARD: In fact the building is still standing. Yeah, the roof

--- But you know exactly where. Was it on Lost Creek?

PAUL: No, it wasn't on Lost Creek.

EDWARD: It wasn't where --- where he shot Overstreet. You don't think it was on Lost Creek?

PAUL: I know it wasn't. It was between the Gap Ranch and Egli's someplace in there.

EDWARD: Do you know where the Sinks of Lost Creek are, where the creek just --- goes out into nothing?

PAUL: Yeah. He had good corrals there at Lost Creek.

EDWARD: That was his original homestead --- it wasn't a homestead. He got that land that was his original land. He bought it from the government.

PAUL: Yeah, he bought it. His land.

EDWARD: Where those corrals are.

PAUL: Yeah.

EDWARD: And of course they had a lot of problems with all of that over there, particularly South Creek Spring.

PAUL: Yeah.

EDWARD: Did you ever hear of this guy named Link Hutton?

PAUL: Sure did, knew him well.

EDWARD: What kind of guy was Link Hutton?

PAUL: He was an all right guy. He shot that kid, but it wasn't --- the kid was going to shoot him, so he had to protect himself.

EDWARD: Harold Bradley.

PAUL: It was his wife's fault.

EDWARD: Yeah.

PAUL: She put --- had that kid up to kill Link, and it backfired on her.

EDWARD: Was his wife at that time May Hutton?

PAUL: And Viv, had a beautiful daughter.

EDWARD: I can't remember her name. Do you know if she is still alive, her daughter.

PAUL: I don't know, I don't know her name either.

EDWARD: I've got it, but I can't remember. It's a funny --- V E R A.

MAN: Vera.

EDWARD: Vera.

MAN: Vera.

EDWARD: Vera Hutton. But what happened --- I think that Link, his first wife either died, he shot her ---

WOMAN: They don't know what happened, do they?

EDWARD: They don't know really what happened to her.

WOMAN: Grandma used to tell that story.

EDWARD: Very interesting. A lot of people they don't know what happened to.

PAUL: There was a Tom Hutton too.

EDWARD: Huh?

PAUL: A Tom Hutton too.

EDWARD: Oh yeah, Tom, his brother, yeah. Link was born in 1872; I got that off the census. It's all in there someplace. You say he was a good man. Was he --- did he get into ---

PAUL: I didn't know too much about him. I never knew him being, doing anything else.

EDWARD: Did he get ornery real easy? Did he have a temper?

PAUL: I guess he was pretty hot tempered.

EDWARD: Because there was another guy that got beat to death up there. Harold

Bradley's father was beat to death, and they never found out who killed him.

PAUL: I --- they tried, burned his feet and everything, trying to make him tell where he had his money buried.

EDWARD: 1930.

PAUL: He was a moonshiner.

EDWARD: It's a mess out there, it's a mess. And then R. B. Jackson, did you ever know

---

PAUL: I knew him too.

EDWARD: Well he up and just was --- they said he committed suicide.

PAUL: Old Tom Cat Jackson, they called him.

EDWARD: Yeah. They said he committed suicide.

PAUL: Well I don't know if he did or not. I don't think he did. People don't think he did.

EDWARD: I know they don't. They found him in bed with three holes in him. Now come on now! Suicide?

WOMAN: That's a fast gun.

EDWARD: Now Dobkins, you know about Frank Dobkins?

PAUL: Yeah, I knew him too. He was a hair-brained guy.

EDWARD: He was a hair-brain?

PAUL: Yeah.

EDWARD: What's a hair-brain?

PAUL: Well I don't know --- I'll say he wasn't too smart or something.

EDWARD: Did he cause a lot of problems?

PAUL: Yeah, he did.

EDWARD: Over what?

PAUL: Oh, different things. They had a lot of trouble out there.

EDWARD: He came from Silver Lake.

PAUL: Yeah.

EDWARD: You know he was shot too, and he was blown off the saddle.

PAUL: Yeah.

MAN: The Wild West, wasn't it?

EDWARD: Well this is true.

MAN: Yeah.

PAUL: Yeah.

EDWARD: Yeah, he was blown away in 1939.

MAN: He's told us about a lot of these things already.

EDWARD: Unfortunately, this is going to be part of this story too, because Bill Brown owned a lot of that land. But Bill Brown had nothing to do with any of this.

MAN: Oh no, no, no.

EDWARD: I'm afraid they're going to find me in a rabbit hole over there somewhere, with the top of my head blown off. But good luck.

MAN: Somebody will come looking for you.

EDWARD: Yeah, I told my kids already. They're bigger than I am. Anyway, what do you think all of that mess was about on Wagontire? Did Bill ever talk about the South Springs and ---

PAUL: No, I never heard Bill talk much about anything.

EDWARD: What time?

WOMAN: That time is behind. It's ten to six.

EDWARD: It is?

WOMAN: Yeah, this isn't right. We just keep this one way, and they want to change the time, it's all right.

EDWARD: I thought it was getting kind of dark. Oh --- You're coming back, aren't you Paul, maybe in July or something?

MAN: Yeah, we hope to.

WOMAN: We're going to come over and camp ---

PAUL: I go wherever these people go.

EDWARD: Well you just make sure they go back over there, that way.

MAN: Wherever he likes to go, we'll take him.

EDWARD: Okay, well I'll see you. I've got to head all the way back to --- I don't know if I'm even going to make it ---

WOMAN: We went to Lebanon yesterday and had a lovely trip for Daddy.

EDWARD: Lebanon.

WOMAN: Uh huh, and Soda Ville, and ---

EDWARD: Oh yeah, I've heard of Soda Ville. I don't think Soda Ville is there anymore.

(END OF TAPE)

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