

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #6 Side B

Subject: Maxine Bledsoe Krause

Place: Hines, Oregon

Date: June 6, 1972

Interviewer:

MAXINE KRAUSE: I finished my nurses training at Old Battle Creek Sanitarium and Hospital Training School for nurses at Battle Creek, Michigan. I graduated from there in May 1927, and from there I went to Lansing and went into this clinic where I worked for fourteen years. And in the meantime there was a group of us that decided we wanted to travel and see the world and get out and nurse a little. So there were four of us that started out in an old Ford car and we came out to my parents in Idaho, and from there the other girls decided they'd go on into Oregon, to LaGrande. They coaxed me up to LaGrande, and I was at LaGrande supervising the first floor at night when this call came through from Lillian Block, asking me if I would please come up to Burns and relieve her while she went on her vacation.

As far as Burns was concerned, I didn't know where Burns was or anything, and I said, "Well, where is it and what do I have to do?" She said, "They tell me you have done office work for a good many years." I said, "Yes, but I don't know if it is the same kind of office work or not." Well, she said, "Would you come up? I want to go on a vacation and I need someone to relieve me. Would you come up and relieve me for a month?" Well I had to quit my job in LaGrande, but I finally said, "All right, I'll come for a month, but I won't stay any longer. You'll have to be back in a month." And she said, "I will."

I went home to Idaho first and decided to take the bus to Burns. Of all the bus trips

that I ever had, it was a gravel road and the old bus was a rickety, rackety bus. I thought, oh my goodness, the rocks were flying from the road and I thought, oh my goodness what have I gotten myself into. I told the bus driver that I wanted to go to the hospital in Burns. I had my bags with my uniforms and everything, you know, and he let me out at the red stop light at the top of the hill. And he said, "Now you just go so far up this way and then turn down and you'll see this big rock building and that will be Valley View Hospital. And Dr. Smith runs it, and Dr. John Weare is with him."

So I said, "All right." He just let me out there, and there I was. There was no sidewalks, only just board walks. And I walked up there and I thought I'd never carry my luggage up that hill. When I got up near the school I asked someone who was walking where the hospital was and they said right around the corner. I walked around the corner and right into the hospital.

And here was Lillian and she greeted me with open arms. She was so glad to see me and to think that she could start her vacation. She says, "I'm all packed and ready to go and I'm leaving tonight." I thought, oh my, but it will all work out somehow.

I met Dr. Smith and he and I got along just fine. And I thought well, I can stick it for a month. This was 1937.

Well, the result of it was that she never came back, she left me there. It was rather provoking, and there I was.

Dr. Smith said, "Well, you will stay with us, won't you Maxine?" I said, "No, I'm not going to stay." I was out in the little old drug cupboard out there --- of course I was doing everything, taking care of patients, doing lab work, night work, and everything. I'd get out there in the drug room and I'd cry. Dr. Smith would come and find me crying, and one day

he patted me on the shoulder and said, "Maxine, I want to tell you something, if you'll stay here just one more month you'll never leave Burns." And I said, "That's what you think."

In the meantime, I couldn't have come in contact with any more wonderful people than I did in Burns. They were so marvelous to me, and I was to them. Even though I was used to a big city, Lansing at that time was 375,000 people. The Oldsmobile factory was there, and it was a large city. But I just fell right in with these people. I didn't know what they meant when they talked about horses, and cows, or anything, but I was interested. And they were the most wonderful people in the world.

I just didn't know what to do, but I stayed on to help Dr. Smith. Well, Dr. Smith was a great matchmaker. He was always trying to make a match for someone.

I would go upstairs and work on the floor, and I helped with all the deliveries, and I'd set up for surgery for them, and scrub for them. Then Ann Reineman came and she was so good to me, and Dr. John was so good to me. It was a completely different atmosphere that I was used to in the big city.

Well, one day Dr. Smith called early and he said, "I have a patient that we're going to do an appendectomy on, he's one of the men from the mill." Well, I said, all right and I went up to prepare him for surgery. And when I got in there it was Bill Krause, and I had never in my life met or seen a nicer person than Bill. He was just one of the nicest people, and he was working out at the mill. We did this appendectomy on him, and we took him back to the room and through that we became acquainted, and it wasn't long until we married in 1938.

He was so good to me, but every so often I'd get lonely and I'd want to get away from here and get to where the big things were. But Dr. Smith would always grab me by

the collar; I couldn't get away from him.

Then I decided I wanted to get away from the hospital for a while so I went down and worked for Dr. Homan for five years, until he left to go to Portland. His office was in the little brick building where Mark Palmer has his office now. He had Mary Myers as his office girl, and Dr. George C. Cash was with him. In those five years we did hundreds of baby deliveries. In about 1942 he decided to go to Portland, and he'd like to take me with him. Well, I said, "No, I couldn't go and I'd like to take a rest anyhow." I'd been working pretty steady, I didn't get many vacations, you know.

I had been off just no time, possibly a week, and here came Dr. Smith again. I said, "Doctor, I won't come back until I've had one month off." This was in December. I said, "I want that one month off, I'm tired." He said, "All right, I'll give you a month. Will you come back the first of February?" And I did, and worked for him until we moved into the new building in 1950. And he passed away in 1949 of his heart attack. I worked at the new hospital. I did everything that anyone could imagine there and helped with everything.

Going back over to the old hospital, this was during the war and I had no help, only two or three faithful people who stayed with me and helped me. They were Cynthia Smith, Lena Varien, Myrtle Smith, Pauline NeVore, and Nina Melvin. This was after Ann Reineman quit. Juanita Mayo worked for a while but she didn't work at all during the war, and Ann was unable to work so that left me with all the load.

We would be loaded with patients; there was nine or ten rooms up there. And one was a men's ward and had five or six beds, or as many as we could crowd in. And one was a woman's ward which would have that many, if not more. And then we would have

beds in the hall and wherever we could.

And we had a delivery room with a small nursery. Then Dr. Smith had a nice little nursery made out in the hall as you went up the stairs that was glassed in. And we got along very nicely with that, but was full of babies most of the time.

Then there was a kitchen and the food came up on the old dumb waiter, and from there the nurses or aides would pass out the meals. And we had an X-ray room downstairs. And I was allowed to have a room downstairs. Dr. Smith provided us with a room and our uniforms and food.

The pay was \$75 a month and room, board, and uniforms for a registered nurse. Dr. John Weare received \$150 a month for his work. We did everything, I was on call 24 hours a day, and it might be 48 hours before I got my uniform off again. Sometimes I would just sleep upstairs at night in case an emergency came in during the night.

The war years were the hardest years, there was no help. Everyone left here so that they could make more money in the shipyards, and you couldn't blame them for doing that, and of course it left us with no help.

I can remember that I would stand, scrubbed in the operating room, and we could look out over the hill --- there was no buildings there then, that's all been built since I've been here. And we could look right out over the hill in the sagebrush. And down the hill would come the biggest old rattlesnake you ever seen in your life, and it just gave me the shakes. Of course the rattlesnake couldn't hurt anything, but here it would come wriggling down the hill and I would stand there and watch it.

And I want to say that some of the most wonderful work that I had ever seen done, and I had worked a great deal with doctors in clinics and in surgery, and some of the most

wonderful surgery that I ever seen done was done by Dr. Smith and Dr. John. Some of their work was just miraculous. And right today I know that Dr. John is an excellent surgeon.

The town was just a cow town. The streets weren't paved, they were graveled. I was very, very unhappy here until I got to know the people. And the people were just marvelous. There weren't very many stores or places to shop, but oh the people, they were so friendly.

And we could go out to Frenchglen; we had patients from everywhere --- any of the Otleys, Marie Hardin, Witzels, most of the children in those families I helped with the delivery of.

I don't remember anybody coming in with rattlesnake bites, only maybe one, but we had lots of people come in with tick fever. We had a lot of that when I first came here, they would be so sick with that. Of course with me, I had no idea what Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever was, I had never been around that. Some would be so desperately ill with it, and of course some would expire with it.

Dr. John was a very kind man. Any person that was desperately ill, he could always take time to talk to that person. He was always very, very kind to his patients. When Dr. Cliff came he was the same way. He came after he served in the service, and it was a big help. It certainly took the load off when he came to help Dr. Smith and Dr. John.

I had become ill during the last period of my nursing training and was not able to finish pediatrics, but the State of Michigan allowed me to go on with my practice, and I worked in the clinic there. The doctors even sent me to Michael Reese in Chicago where

I took a four-month's course in anesthetics. All the years I wanted to finish my pediatrics and get my Oregon R.N. They let me practice all those years without my Oregon R.N. But anyhow, I always maintained that someday I was going to get it. So after I retired from my work at the telephone office, I had to retire at 65 --- and the next year, when they gave the state boards, I had studied up for it and I took the tests and got my Oregon's license. I passed it with a very high grade. I took not only the pediatrics, I took the whole test. Of course with all the years of practical experience, I had a grade way up in the 90's. Now I'll probably never use it, but I have it. I didn't tell anyone I was doing it, I didn't even tell Bill, because I thought I might not make it.

I started the first Girl Scout Troop here that was ever started. I ran into Pauline Reed in Corbett's Drug Store, I said to someone in the store that I was looking for someone to start a Girl Scout Troop. There were so many girls in Burns that wanted to be Girl Scouts. And I said if I can just find two leaders to get this started, and Pauline Reed spoke up and said she would take one. She said she had been a Scout leader in Kansas before she came to Harney County. And of course now she is one of our head Scouts. And I thought, where else would I go. And I thought of Zoe Morgan, she was always so willing to do anything for anyone. And I went to her home and knocked on the door, and I said, "Zoe, would you be willing to take a Girl Scout troop for me?" And she said, "I don't know anything about it, but I guess I could learn." And I said, "Well, Pauline will help you." And I got the girls together for these two Scout troops and that was the beginning of Girl Scouts in Burns.

Then we got the blood bank started. For eight years I was in charge of the blood bank. The blood bank started in about 1949 or 1950. We used to have to send to Boise

for blood, and in an emergency the State Troopers would bring it. After we got into the new hospital we started our blood banks and that was 1950. They would come over here and we would get all our help together, doctors, and nurses, and the Red Cross nurses that came with the mobile unit. We'd have to get aides and kitchen help. I couldn't give blood because of my high blood pressure, but I could work.

I also worked with the Red Cross and I organized Red Cross home nursing classes. Lola Smith helped me with those classes. We would meet in the Hines Grade School.

I've been a member of Sylvia Rebekah Lodge since 1942, and Eastern Star since 1953. I got the Degree of Chivalry in 1958 from the Rebekahs. I was Worthy Matron of Eastern Star in 1958.

I was one of the first people in Burns to greet Henry Slater when he came to be principal of the Burns Grade School. Mrs. Weittenhiller was superintendent of schools then, and she couldn't find anyone to be her truant officer, so she asked me if I would take it. I must have done that for one whole year, along with my nursing. Mr. Slater would give me the names of the absentees, and I would check them.

And then I took a class in social diseases. I taught that in the high school for several months. I taught the class once a week for several months. In the class were Betty Longevin, Lily Eberly, Dorothy Hibbard; these were some of the girls.

I couldn't even eat my dinner at night we were so busy. I would just get my dinner on the table and the doorbell would ring, or the telephone would ring. Maybe it would be one of the doctors and they'd say, "I'm sending a patient over that lives close to you, can you give him a shot?" I kept a whole box of medicines here at home, and all my hypos, all

sterile and ready to go. And they'd come by the house, particularly at tick shot time. Or they'd come by for a shot of estrogen, or something for pain, or something else that the doctor wanted them to have.

And then at the end, while still in Valley View Hospital, Ruby Mundy came. She had gone through her nurses training and been in the service, and when she came back here she was a godsend. And Evelyn Pearson came, when her husband finished his army stint, and she was a very competent, efficient help. So we really finished up with a very competent staff at the Valley View Hospital.

Dr. John and I used to work some pretty long hours and do some pretty hard work, and Dr. Smith the same.

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