

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #64 - Sides A/B

Subject: Roy Beede

Place: Burns, Oregon

Date: May 1972

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen; I'm interviewing Roy Beede at Burns, in 1972, May. Now your father was Ed Beede?

ROY BEEDE: Edgar Lesley Beede.

PAULINE: And when did he come to Harney County?

ROY: He come here in '91.

PAULINE: Did he go to Drewsey directly, or ---

ROY: No, he come to Harney.

PAULINE: How long did he stay at Harney?

ROY: I don't know how long he was there, but he was there a while and then he bought a homestead over on Calamity.

PAULINE: How far was that from Harney? ... Which direction and how far?

ROY: Clear over the mountain.

PAULINE: This is up around King Mountain, isn't it?

ROY: No, it's the other way. It was right across the valley from the Van Post Office.

PAULINE: Oh, over there ... Do you know why he came to Harney County? How did he happen to find out about this place?

ROY: They had a gold scare here, and he come out ahead of time to get located. And

my mother and I, and my grandfather didn't come till July of '92.

PAULINE: Where did you come from?

ROY: Alliance, Nebraska. That's where I was born.

PAULINE: How old were you when you came out?

ROY: Oh, just a few days over --- I just passed my second birthday.

PAULINE: So you were real small then.

ROY: I was pretty small, yes.

PAULINE: How did you come out, on a train?

ROY: We come on the train. One thing about that train, it didn't stop at Ontario.

PAULINE: It didn't? Where did it stop?

ROY: It didn't stop much. You just had to jump off at the depot there in Ontario.

PAULINE: It slowed down enough so that people could hop off if they wanted to get off there.

ROY: I don't know why they didn't stop. I never had that explained to me. It was too fast for two youngsters to get off there. And my mother was holding my sister in her arms, and she stepped off, and she's not used to it, and she was just running to stand up and not fall flat on her face. A cowboy, he stepped off and caught her. And then my grandfather, he was carrying me. Oh, she said she thought sure she was going to land right on her face.

PAULINE: That's quite a walk for the little sister.

ROY: Well yes. Ontario wasn't much of a place then, you know.

PAULINE: Well, I always thought that this was one of the prettiest spots to take passengers on, and let off passengers.

ROY: I always thought so too. But me, I could handle it, but I didn't have any say about that.

PAULINE: What was your grandfather's name?

ROY: Lewis E. DeCoogris.

PAULINE: Did he stay out here with your folks, or did he go back?

ROY: No, he stayed here. He was here for years and years. He finally brought his wife out. I'll never forget about Mother running to keep from falling on her face. My grandfather he'd had a little more experience, and he didn't have the trouble. He only had one arm at that.

PAULINE: With a child in your arms it's kind of tricky --- but when you're handicapped anyway.

ROY: I'll say it was. I don't know how slow they were going, but it was enough that she was heading for a fall.

PAULINE: Then how did you bring a family on into Harney?

ROY: There was a stage and it ran from Ontario clear into Burns. And I suppose they spent the night there, then they come on that stage. And then my father met them over the other side of Beulah. Then they transferred to a buggy. And then we come on and took Mother and Grandfather and the two youngest, I suppose they had a buggy full, and we come on and arrived in Harney City on the 17th of July.

PAULINE: Is that in 1892?

ROY: 1892.

PAULINE: Had he taken his homestead up yet?

ROY: No, he bought this man's relinquishment, and it had a house on it, was one of the reasons why he wanted it, I guess. And he kept that until --- oh about 1900, and then he sold it.

PAULINE: This was at Harney, or at Calamity?

ROY: No, it was over on Calamity.

PAULINE: I just wanted to be sure that I had it straight. I thought that this is what you

meant. I just wanted to be sure.

ROY: I don't know how long they stayed in Harney, but evidently he had this place in mind, and he closed the deal.

PAULINE: Well, a relinquishment is where someone had taken up a homestead and stayed on it so long, and then decided to move on and then they would sell it out to someone else, and they would go ahead and ---

ROY: I don't know what my father paid for it, but --- seems like it could be quite a bit because there was a house on it. A house that we could move into.

PAULINE: Well, did you go to school at Van or ---

ROY: School? Van, I don't know just when I did start, but I suppose it was, I don't know when they started them to school then, 6 or 8.

PAULINE: Was it a very big school when you were in school?

ROY: No, there couldn't have been very many. Maybe 4 or 5 pupils. My dad made it a point to just board the teacher, so I suppose we started to school just as soon as we was old enough.

PAULINE: Sounds like he was interested in you getting a good education.

ROY: Well they wanted me to get what I could.

PAULINE: Did he have cattle or, what kind of a farm, or how did he make a living?

ROY: Off the ranch. They planted a garden, always raised a good garden. And there was quite a bit of meadowland there so all we had to do was to clear up the trash and start mowing the hay.

PAULINE: So you had some cows to feed?

ROY: Oh yeah, I don't know how long, but he soon got him some cows. They got two cows, a --- there was a black and a brindle. And every time they saw us kids they just took to us. So we had to be very careful. There was many a time that we dashed into the

brush to get away from them cows.

PAULINE: They put you right over the fence?

ROY: I don't know what they'd have done to us if they'd got to us, they'd like to have trampled us. And later, after we moved to Drewsey, why we got this old brindle cow and kept her until she died. She was a good milk cow. We moved to Drewsey and he and an old friend started a saloon.

PAULINE: What did they call it?

ROY: Well, Beede and Olsen.

PAULINE: Beede and Olsen.

ROY: Uh huh. Then they, I don't know if the building was in poor construction or not. Anyway they started the saloon and they run that for a good many years there. After this man Olsen died my dad kept, he run the saloon alone. And that's where I grew up, there in Drewsey.

PAULINE: Harry Clark was telling me about the water coming down in the spring and flooding every year. Do you remember about that?

ROY: It wasn't a very long stream, and that was Gabe Creek.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ROY: Right there on the banks of Gabe Creek. We had to have a bridge to get across this stream to get over to the shop. And I can remember ... I think his name was Bonham, I wouldn't say for sure. I know we kids used to trail along behind him and imitate his walk. It was about a mile and a half, or two miles to the schoolhouse.

PAULINE: Did you usually walk to school?

ROY: Sometimes in the winter they'd take us in the sleigh, but when it was good walking, why we had to get to walking.

PAULINE: Well I'm interested in finding out about the newspaper that your father had for

a while, is that the Pioneer Sun?

ROY: Well he ran a newspaper there in Nebraska, so he wanted to get one started here.

So as soon as he left the saloon, why he began to get things together and so he could start this paper. He called it the Pioneer Sun. Just what year he started it, I don't know. I don't even have a copy.

PAULINE: This is what I've been asking everybody that I ... has talked about Drewsey at all, is if they possibly had a copy of the old newspaper. But I haven't run across anyone that does.

ROY: I've got some papers at home, I might have one, but if I have I haven't seen it for years. I couldn't say for sure.

PAULINE: Do you know about how long he ran the newspaper, how long ...

ROY: He run the paper until he died.

PAULINE: Until he died. And when was this? About 19---

ROY: Along in the '20's.

PAULINE: In the '20's.

ROY: And then a friend of his took the paper and kept it up for quite a while, and she finally had to just let it go ... it was just too expensive.

PAULINE: Do you remember your mother ever telling you just what she thought about Harney County when she first came?

ROY: If she did, I've forgotten.

PAULINE: I know some of the women I've talked to have had some mighty definite opinions.

ROY: Well, I'd imagine she had some too, but she was never much of a hand to express herself.

PAULINE: How many children were there in your family?

ROY: Well, there is six of us still alive. Six, seven, eight, I believe there was nine children.

PAULINE: Oh my goodness, no wonder she never had time to talk. That would be quite a job in those days with no modern conveniences of any kind.

ROY: They were fortunate. The teacher stayed there most of the time, until we moved to Drewsey, and that give her some companion.

ROY: The first teacher's name that I remember was Edith Barrow.

PAULINE: Did she stay around Harney County, or did she leave?

ROY: She met a man, I'm trying to think of the man's name that she married ... railroad.

PAULINE: Oh, let's see, what did they say her name was, Jackson I think. I didn't write it down.

ROY: Who was that?

PAULINE: The first teachers you were telling ...

ROY: It was Bonham.

PAULINE: Bonham, right.

ROY: ... And then they had a teacher next to her, and I don't know how many years she taught. And then she had a sister that come out and joined her here, and I think she taught for a year or so after Edith was married. ...

PAULINE: Did you go to high school, or was eighth grade the end of your education?

ROY: I went to high school here at Burns.

PAULINE: I thought you did, I think I've seen a picture of you; I'm not sure.

ROY: In fact Dad talked me into getting all the schooling that I could. And after I graduated from the eighth grade, I stayed around there and studied every year. In fact I got to work for the teacher and, so after a little, I decided I'd come over here to Burns and go to high school. I started to high school ... I started in the fall of 1910. ... I think there

was nine of us.

PAULINE: Did you stay with someone, board and room with someone, or did you cook and care for yourself?

ROY: No, I stayed with Dale Dibble there in the Burns Hotel. I went in there and made this connection with the Burns Hotel, and then I took a job of cleaning out every morning. I'd clean the lobbies and clean out the saloon. I stayed there with him for two years; I think it was. Then I got a notion in my head to move. I moved right across the street to the French Hotel, and hired out again. And I stayed there about a year and a half, and then the last half I --- something come up and I just don't know what the trouble was, we had a row or something and then I went down and stayed with an old friend, and finished my high school there.

PAULINE: I've heard them tell some pretty wild stories about how wild Drewsey was. What did you think about Burns? Did you think it was a pretty wild town, or just ---

ROY: Oh, once in awhile there would be a bunch come into Drewsey there, and they'd get drunk and get on a tear, and the same way there in Burns. But there was more coming into Burns than there was to Drewsey. That stage still come through Drewsey, and it was better than twenty miles up to the ranch.

PAULINE: After you finished high school you went --- what did you do after you finished high school?

ROY: The next fall I went down to Corvallis, and I went one year there at Corvallis. And I see'd what I was up against, and I never did go back.

PAULINE: Was it because you didn't think you were learning any-thing that you could use later in life, or because you didn't think ...

ROY: Oh, there was no doubt about it, I learned a lot there in Corvallis, and it wasn't all at school. I just figured it was too big a handicap.

PAULINE: Coming from a small town this way?

ROY: No, it was under the conditions that I had to live there in Corvallis. Then I came back to Drewsey, and I was in Drewsey there a few years, and I applied for the postmaster. I applied for the postmaster on March 29, 1916.

PAULINE: Until when?

ROY: And I was postmaster until I went into the Army. I went into the Army the 20th of July 1918.

PAULINE: If I remember right you went to France, didn't you?

ROY: Went to France in the fall of 1918. They put me in that post office there in France.

PAULINE: So you were still handing out mail.

ROY: I was still handling mail. The Captain was a good old scout, he come in one day and said, "Boys, I've got a chance to go home, and I'm going." And this was way on in the summer of 1919, and "I'll take you with me if I can." So he wrote a recommendation, and in about a week, here come a whole bunch of guys, said get out of here, we're taking over.

PAULINE: And so you were on your way home then.

ROY: And so --- that was the start of September 8, 1919.

PAULINE: So you came on back to Harney County then?

ROY: Come back to Drewsey.

PAULINE: Did you go back into the post office department then, or did you find something else to do?

ROY: No, I didn't go back to the post office any more. My father had been United States Commissioner here, and he died in '22 I think it was, and in a few months they had me appointed commissioner, and I was commissioner there for a long time.

PAULINE: What did this job include? What were your duties as commissioner? What

kind of things did you do?

ROY: The main thing was to take a look at a lot of homesteads, and the main thing was to secure the final proofs. And then finally I got a notice from the court in Portland, said all I was doing was taking care of these homestead cases and they said the Justice of the Peace can do that, so I lost my job there.

PAULINE: But you never were the Justice of the Peace?

ROY: No, they got somebody else, I forget now who it was. Then I got married in '33, May 12, 1933. Married a young girl by the name of Peck, (sp.?) Josephine Peck. She'd just come from the old country.

PAULINE: From Ireland.

ROY: Come from Ireland.

PAULINE: You told me a story about her, Peck chasing a cow, and she stepped in a hole or something, I can't remember how it went now. Do you remember that? Oh, she fell in a well didn't she? Didn't she fall in a well?

ROY: Oh, that was a long time afterwards. Yes, she did fall in an old dry well, and I went down a ladder and carried her up that ladder.

SIDE B

ROY: I was taking care of a bunch of sheep then, and there I was. We was a long ways from headquarters, and the sheep, for some reason or other that bunch of sheep just left and took off for parts, for the home ranch. And when that bunch of sheep began to come in there, and I wasn't with them, why they come looking to find out what was the matter with me. And I think they knew that my wife was with me --- so she had injured her back or something, I don't remember now just what it was; a minor injury, but they took her right to Burns here. I don't know whether she was acquainted with Mrs. (Hilary) Meyer's, that

was the doctor's name; anyway they got to be great friends. And later I come to Burns. But the marriage never lasted long. Drewsey wasn't big enough for her, I guess, and Burns wasn't either. She took off and left our daughter. She took our daughter with her, and she kept her until she was 12 or 13 years old. Finally she just come in one day, and left the girl with me and took off.

PAULINE: And this is Marsha?

ROY: Marcia.

PAULINE: Well, you have a beautiful, lovely daughter out of the situation anyway.

ROY: Well, I'm pretty proud of her.

PAULINE: She's a very nice person, she really is. Did you ever go on any cattle drives?

ROY: No, my dad discouraged that, and I'm glad of it. A lot of the fellows was young buckaroos, but I didn't ...

PAULINE: But you did herd sheep?

ROY: Not any more after that fall in the well.

PAULINE: That was the end of your sheep herding then.

ROY: That was the end of the sheep herding. Then I went to work in the Porter-Sitz Company Store, and I was there, oh, I don't know how long I was there, and finally the silent partner, he sent up a man to take my place, and I could just step out. And Charlie Miler, he was County Commissioner at that time, he come to me and wanted to know if I wanted to come to Burns and take the charge of the county shops here. And I came over here in '39. I was there about 10 or 11 years.

PAULINE: You were in charge of keeping all that equipment in good running order.

ROY: No, I wasn't a mechanic, I was just in charge of the office. They furnished me a place to live. Josephine she joined me for a while, and then she took off. Last I heard from her she was in San Diego. She called me up and wanted me to come up, and I told

her no, she better just stay where she was. And I haven't heard from her since. I was with the county for 22 years.

PAULINE: Twenty-two years.

ROY: The foreman --- I found out that an old friend of his was looking for a job, so this guy took my place. George Renwick down here. I was past 65 then, so I went on my Social Security. Yeah, I was getting ... and so I kept this state pension, so the two of them, why I was able to get by on those two very nicely.

PAULINE: You have a very nice place to live now. I think that area where you live in is very ...

ROY: It really is a nice place; they are nice people.

PAULINE: It's sunny and warm on that side of the hillside there, and a nice yard, and close to the stores and the post office.

ROY: There's three stores there within a block.

PAULINE: You don't have any trouble spending your money, huh?

ROY: I've managed to save a few dollars over the years.

PAULINE: When we first started talking about your dad coming to Harney County, you said that they had a gold scare here, and this was the reason he came out.

ROY: I don't know where the place was, but it was up there above Harney someplace.

PAULINE: Could this have been where Idle City is there, up in there somewhere?

ROY: I'm just not sure. It might have been that gold there at Idle City, because I just never did check into it.

PAULINE: Yeah.

ROY: I don't know of anyone here that could tell you much about it.

PAULINE: Well I thought you could have this ... of somebody that knew something about Idle City, and I haven't turned up anything yet.

ROY: That was why he come out was this gold strike.

PAULINE: It must not have panned out to be too much of anything there, because if he came in '91, and a year later went to a homestead why ---

ROY: That was something that he could handle. Later on the one man bought three or four ranches in there, and then later, he later sold it to an organization. A stock organization there because it was right next to an extra little ... and it put up quite a little hay. But the winters aren't as severe now as they was then.

PAULINE: This is what I've heard. I ...

ROY: It was nothing to have two or three foot of snow on the level over there, and that hasn't happened for years and years.

PAULINE: How did you put up your hay in the summertime? What kind of methods did you use?

ROY: Well, team and wagon and Bert. I don't think that he used anything but a team and wagon for a number of years that he was on the ranch.

PAULINE: Did he have a mowing machine to cut the hay with?

ROY: Oh yeah, he had mowing machines, rakes ---

PAULINE: Then you pitched it on the wagon and hauled it to the stack.

ROY: Yes, and pitched it off by hand. But he had the faculty of making a nice looking haystack, and everybody that could got him to stack their hay.

PAULINE: Oh, he was good at it. Did he have a special way of going about it?

ROY: I imagine he did, I never tried it. But he had the faculty of making a nice looking stack, and the same way with grain.

PAULINE: What kind of grain did you raise?

ROY: Oh the usual, oats, and barley, and wheat.

PAULINE: We talked about the weather being different, and the winters being a lot colder

and a lot more snow. What about the summers, were they warmer?

ROY: ... I don't remember whether they were warmer than they are now or not. I don't know. I don't suppose the weather bureau could give you any information because that was too far back.

PAULINE: I know some years here, in the last two or three years, it seems like we haven't had any summer to speak of. Just a couple of weeks --- the Fourth of July. That makes me think of something else. What about the Fourth of July celebrations in Drewsey, did they have some good ones?

ROY: Oh, you bet they did! --- I gave you the day I was chosen postmaster, the date I went into the Army, the date I was discharged, and the date I was married. I had to go home yesterday and I went through a lot of my old papers just to find these dates.

PAULINE: Well, I appreciate that. When they had a Fourth of July celebration out here, it wasn't just a day, it lasted a couple of days sometimes.

ROY: Depends on the crowd, sometimes three or four.

PAULINE: Did they usually have horse races or that sort of thing?

ROY: They had horse races, but they didn't have these broncobusters like they do now.

PAULINE: Someone was telling me there was a racetrack there at Drewsey at one time.

ROY: Yes, there was. They had two different racetracks. You about to run that tape out?

PAULINE: No, there's still some left. Are you about to run out of talk?

ROY: I don't know what I could tell you.

PAULINE: Well, there's another question I wanted to ask you. I know that there was several saloons in Drewsey.

ROY: There was three there at one time.

PAULINE: One was Olsen --- Beede and Olsen, and then do you remember what the others were called?

ROY: J. D. Smith's, and Rye.

PAULINE: And Rye. I think this is interesting, because you know in the westerns you see on TV the saloons have names like the Broken Bucket, The Blue Eagle, The Swinging Door, or some --- you know really ---

ROY: ... Figure out something that ... sounds crazy.

PAULINE: You know this is --- to me this is real interesting, they just called them by the man's name that run them. They didn't tack a fancy name on the saloons at all.

ROY: I run across a picture of J. D. Smith's boy. He came in there and married a local girl. That boy got about, oh I don't know, 16, 17, 18, I don't know, he just up and died. Drinkwater, the man and I worked there at the store, he had a boy about the same age. And these two little fellows was just, I don't know, they were about that high, and I've got a picture of them. Thought I'd take that picture and send it to Mrs. Drinkwater over there.

PAULINE: She'd probably like to have that. That's Castolia?

ROY: Yes, she may have one herself. I don't know.

(Someone walked in.)

ROY: Hello, I'm telling my life history.

?: Go ahead, I'll listen to it.

ROY: I'm afraid you're too late.

PAULINE: ... What else? I know there was three saloons, and there was a post office, and the Porter-Sitz Store in Drewsey.

ROY: There was two stores.

PAULINE: Two stores. What was the other then? Porter-Sitz, and what was the other?

ROY: Oh, what did they call that, Drewsey Merc. I think.

PAULINE: Okay, then there was a couple of hotels.

ROY: Two hotels.

PAULINE: What were they called?

ROY: The Bartlett Hotel and the Hamilton Hotel --- Sid. He finally married Mrs. Miller.

PAULINE: Then they had a blacksmith shop.

ROY: Yeah, they had a blacksmith shop there. A man by the name of Johnson ran it for years and years. And when he passed away, why the blacksmith shop just passed away.

PAULINE: And that was the end of that.

ROY: That was the end of that.

PAULINE: Did they have any other kind of businesses there?

ROY: No, I think --- there was Mrs. Clark there. That's Harry's mother.

PAULINE: She was the postmaster for a long time, wasn't she?

ROY: She was. Two hotels. And they got into that --- into a controversy or something then, maybe I'd better not say it. ... Then they built that big schoolhouse there. Three rooms, two ... each room was 28 feet square.

(Conversation between Roy and visitor, Jessie Williams)...

PAULINE: I've got to ask you another question before the tape runs out. What about the Indians out there? I heard tell that they camped out there on the hillsides all around Drewsey ...

ROY: There was quite a bunch there. They camped on the hillside facing south.

PAULINE: Did any of their children ever go to school or anything at all?

ROY: Over there?

PAULINE: Yeah.

ROY: No, they didn't go to school over there at all.

...

?: They sent their children out to the Fort Goodman, didn't they?

ROY: I don't know what they done. ... I imagine they did.

PAULINE: I haven't heard this before.

...

ROY: It wasn't very long before all those Indians moved over here.

...

ROY: They'd get drunk same as anybody else.

?: I mean were they on the warpath?

ROY: Oh no, they wasn't on the warpath. They used to come up there on Calamity. ...

PAULINE: Didn't they help the ranchers in the fields?

ROY: Not ...

(END OF TAPE)

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