

Harney County Library, All Rights Reserved

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #69 - Sides A/B & #55 - Side B

Subject: Taft Miller

Place: Miller Home - Frenchglen, Oregon

Date: May 1972

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

Release Form: No

PAULINE BRAYMEN: The kind of thing that I'm interested in finding out is when you came to Harney County, and how you happened to come to Harney County, or how your parents happened to come to Harney County. Were you born here, or did you come?

TAFT MILLER: Yeah, I was born here.

PAULINE: I thought you were. In Andrews or Diamond or ---

TAFT: At the Double O.

PAULINE: At the Double O. What was your parent's names?

TAFT: Miller, George Miller.

PAULINE: George Miller.

BOB DEAN: Is that the place where Don is on now?

TAFT: No, it was part of the Moon Ranch.

BOB: Oh, the Moon place.

TAFT: I was born on that place.

PAULINE: When did your folks come to Harney County?

TAFT: I don't know.

PAULINE: Had they been here very long when you were born?

TAFT: Well, they lived in Catlow Valley...

PAULINE: Did you ever hear your dad tell why he came here? How he happened to find out about Harney County, and happened to come here?

TAFT: No, I never did find out. ... They come from the Black Hills.

PAULINE: In Nebraska? No, that's the Dakotas, yeah, in the Black Hills.

BOB: Was he a sheep man, or did he start out with cattle to begin with?

TAFT: He had cattle and horses.

PAULINE: Cattle and horses.

... (Sound of truck)

BOB: Did he raise the horses for the soldiers?

TAFT: I think so. He sold horses for the cavalry.

PAULINE: Were there still soldiers at Fort Harney then?

TAFT: Well, I wouldn't know that really.

MRS. MILLER: They fought the Indians, didn't they?

TAFT: Well, they fought in the Modoc War, and of course I guess they fought them in the Black Hills too. But my dad, he was in Deadwood the day that Hickok was shot. He saw him right after he was shot. ... Wild Bill ... Deadwood was where he was shot.

PAULINE: Well, what year were you born?

TAFT: 1893.

PAULINE: 1893. Do you think they had been in Harney County for several years before you were born? Were you the oldest in the family?

TAFT: Oh, no.

PAULINE: Or were there other children?

TAFT: I was the youngest boy. There were two girls younger than I am. The rest of them were older. They lived in Happy Valley over here by the Smyth's for, I don't know how long.

MRS. MILLER: How many was born in this county? ...

TAFT: Oh, I guess Pete, and Buck, and myself. The girl babies were all born here. A couple of the

boys were born up here...

MRS. MILLER: They must have been here quite a while then before...

BOB: Is that the place up on Jack Mountain?

TAFT: They used to call it the Jackass Ranch. When we first come here, there was an old prospector up there above the house, and in the rocks and he had some burros. Those jacks, you know. And I guess the Indians killed the old fellow, and with the jacks around there they called it Jackass. That's what it went by when I was a kid.

BOB: That's how the Mountain got its name, huh?

TAFT: That's really Jackass Mountain.

PAULINE: That's one of these places that the names been changed.

TAFT: ... when I was a kid; called that Jackass. That chimney that sat in that house, you been there?

PAULINE: No.

TAFT: Well, my dad built that and that fireplace, and then the old house burned down and that chimney sat there for years, and then that Mat Davies built his house right up against it. And it's the same old chimney, and if you're ever there you can look down at the lower end of the field at the big long rock fence. Rocks built way up in kind of a half-circle, my dad built all that.

PAULINE: For a corral or was it just for a boundary?

TAFT: Well, it's a field, you know, and there's lots of rocks on the hillside, he just piled them up and made a fence. It's still there yet, too.

BOB: Did they live there at Jack Mountain, or Jackass Ranch there?

TAFT: They first worked there. Yeah, and then they of course, they had both the places down at Warm Springs and that one too.

PAULINE: The Warm Springs, is that over here near Crane, or is this a different place?

TAFT: No, it's over here by the Double O.

PAULINE: By the Double O.

TAFT: It's along the hill from the Double O. There's four or five springs that come out of that hill, and that's supposed to be the Warm Springs. They used to call it the Warm Springs all the time.

PAULINE: I didn't know this. I didn't realize there were warm springs in that area at all.

BOB: Let's see, they're in the refuge now aren't they, or at least the lower one; isn't it?

TAFT: Not the ones that we had. We had two springs, my dad did, you know. They're not in the refuge.

BOB: I guess there's one out there...

TAFT: Three of them wouldn't be in the refuge; I think up there where Hughet's live it's not in the refuge either. But from there on up they are.

PAULINE: Did you go to school at Double O then, or did you go to school?

TAFT: Yeah, I went to school at the Double O.

PAULINE: At the Double O. How big of a school was it? How many kids were in school at the same time you were?

TAFT: I don't know, quite a bunch of us. Fourteen or fifteen of us. Maybe more than that, I don't know. Big families, there was quite a bunch of us, quite a bunch of Hughet's and the Bardwell's and the Oliver boys. See Pete Petersen married the widow of Oliver, the man that killed Pete French, and they lived there. I went to school with them. They had four or five kids too.

PAULINE: Well, then the story that she left the country wasn't exactly accurate, was it? The story I heard that after Oliver killed Pete French that his wife left the country.

TAFT: She never left this country. She married Pete Petersen, lived right over there when I was a kid until she died. She was Pete Petersen's wife, and I used to go up there and play with those kids and everything. I can tell you one boy that's alive yet; he's in Bend, Burt Oliver.

PAULINE: Oh, well I've got his name as a person that I should talk to. So now I know who he is, I guess I'll go talk to him.

TAFT: As far as her leaving the country --- he did.

PAULINE: He left the country?

TAFT: He deserted his family a month after he come clear when he killed Pete French. But she married Pete Petersen afterwards. ... She was a Simmons girl, was raised right here too, out at the Narrows, her people were.

PAULINE: I'm glad to find that out, because Burt Oliver's name was given to me as a person in Bend that I should see, but I didn't have any idea who he was. So, that will help me.

TAFT: It was his dad that killed Pete French.

PAULINE: Her name was Simmons, and she was raised down in the Frenchglen area. You said that Mrs. Oliver was a Simmons?

TAFT: Well, around the Narrows, her people all come, lived around the Narrows. There was a lot of Simmons there living around the Narrows. Well, the day that Oliver was supposed to kill French, he was after her cattle, at least I think when French run him out of the field one time, he was up there riding for his mother-in-law's cattle, and she lived at the Narrows, Grandma Simmons. I used to know her, remember all those people.

BOB: Is Mrs. Simmons' name on a gravestone at that old graveyard?

MRS. MILLER: The little one down on Mill Creek?

BOB: No, it's between the Narrows and Wright's Point.

PAULINE: Someday I'm going to stop there and look, but I haven't for a long, long time.

BOB: We could stop on the way back, its right there. I think I noticed that name somewhere.

MRS. MILLER: I've been in there once, but I wouldn't remember, not knowing any of the names.

PAULINE: I know that there are a lot of children's graves there that died during the influenza epidemic.

TAFT: Well, they lived around the Narrows. They had places there and run cattle, you know, the Simmons's.

PAULINE: Were there ever any stores, or a post office, or a saloon or anything like that at the Double O, or was it just a ranching area?

TAFT: Just a ranching area. We all had to go to the Narrows for mail. Go over there on horseback,

15 miles to get the mail. Us kids would bring it sometimes for everyone.

PAULINE: There were businesses at the Narrows?

TAFT: Well, Charlie Haines run that store. That was the biggest store in Harney County at one time. You could buy anything from a freight wagon to a needle, or spool of thread. He had machines; you could buy anything you want. A set of harness, or pack outfit, or anything.

MRS. MILLER: Didn't you help him out one time? Didn't you say you helped work with him one time?

TAFT: No.

PAULINE: They had the post office there in the store, I suppose. The post office was in the store?

TAFT: Yeah, it was in the back of the store, and then they had a cellar back behind too, and it was a saloon.

BOB: In the cellar?

TAFT: Down in the cellar, yeah.

PAULINE: Was that because it was during prohibition, or was it just because that was a convenient place to have it?

TAFT: No, that was way before prohibition.

BOB: Keep the beer cool.

TAFT: A long time ago. No, I guess it just happened to be down in the cellar, I don't know.

PAULINE: Did you live very far from the schoolhouse?

TAFT: About three miles.

PAULINE: Did you ride to school in the wintertime?

TAFT: Most the time we walked. No, most the time we walked.

PAULINE: Did they go pretty much all winter long, or did they take off sometime during the really bad part of the winter?

TAFT: No, I think they went to school all winter, as far as I know.

PAULINE: Some of the people I've talked to, it depended on where they went to school, but some

of the schools closed during the really bad part. They'd go three months in the fall, and three months in the spring, and wouldn't go during the middle of the winter. So this is the reason I asked.

TAFT: It seemed to me like we went all winter long over there. No, the teacher would come in the fall and stay all winter. Them days the teachers, they'd hire a teacher and she'd generally stayed with some of the families that had kids, you know.

BOB: Did she move around, or stay in one place all during the year?

TAFT: Well, I think that she stayed in one place, I think, most of the time.

PAULINE: What kind of fuel did you use over in that area? Sagebrush mostly, or juniper?

TAFT: Mostly sagebrush, I think.

PAULINE: Did your folks ever go to the mountains to get wood?

TAFT: No, they mostly had sagebrush. It's a long ways to where they had any timber over there. They mostly burned sagebrush all the time as I remember.

BOB: It would be quite a haul from there.

PAULINE: It would be.

TAFT: There's no timber close to there at all. Everything is cleared.

PAULINE: Did your dad do any freighting? Did he go out and get supplies, or did he usually get them from the Narrows, or Burns, or someplace like that?

TAFT: No, he used to --- we'd have those salesmen come around and they would order supplies and they'd have them shipped in to the nearest place, and then they'd go over there and get them. I think they went to Paulina them days with a team. They'd bring back a whole wagonload with a four-horse team.

PAULINE: Four-horse team?

TAFT: Yeah, they'd take a four-horse wagon and go and get supplies.

BOB: Paulina, is that clear over by Prineville? They went that far?

TAFT: Yeah, clear over there.

MRS. MILLER: Long ways.

BOB: How long would a trip like that take them?

TAFT: Oh, god, I don't know, quite awhile. Probably three weeks, I guess.

BOB: Hard to imagine, isn't it?

PAULINE: Yeah, every time I go to Bend I think about going across the desert on horseback, and I'm sure glad I have my car to drive.

MRS. MILLER: ... years ago.

PAULINE: Were there many Indians in the area out around the Double O?

TAFT: Oh yeah, there was lots of Indians then, lots of them then. And then in the spring of the year they would come, and they would come from Burns or wherever they come from. And they always had lots of horses, lot of pretty ponies. And we'd sit there and we was right on the ridge at where Virgil Moon's house is now. They crossed at that ridge --- he's got that big pond there now. We'd sit out there on that ridge and they'd cross right there and go on riding. Come to the mountain every summer, and the Indians would summer up there. And maybe there'd be a band, I don't know, of thirty or forty come by, and then in maybe an hour or two more there'd be another band come by. There was lots of Indians. Squaws with kids on horses, and all kinds of rigs. And they'd all go to Steens Mountain, and they'd summer up there, and in the fall they'd come back.

BOB: Did any of them live in the Double O area?

TAFT: Well, I think mostly around Burns, but those people on the ranches used to hire them to feed cattle in the winter. I know one winter when Dad had a whole band of them camp up here and they were clearing brush, grubbing it, the sagebrush ... on the ranch. Stayed all winter. I believe there were quite a lot of Indians.

BOB: They had their whole families there then?

TAFT: Yeah.

MRS. MILLER: Did they hunt and fish to feed themselves, or did your folks supply the food and what not?

TAFT: No, I don't remember. They might have furnished them food, but I don't remember. But I

think they traded horses for work or something, if I remember right. I don't know just how they made it.

MRS. MILLER: That sounds more like what they'd do.

TAFT: They had lots of horses.

PAULINE: The horses that your dad raised were they for riding purposes mostly, or did he raise workhorses too?

TAFT: Had both kinds.

PAULINE: Both kinds.

TAFT: In them days you had to have workhorses, and cattle horses too. He had some thoroughbreds for saddle horses, and big workhorses too.

BOB: Any one particular breed of workhorse that he had? Or do you remember?

TAFT: Oh, I don't know, just Percherons mostly. We had some thoroughbred horses too. When the Wallises left here, they ran thoroughbred horses, and my dad bought them. I remember we had a lot of them old --- they were branded with a "W" on the toe. And the Wallises was the people that took up Roaring Springs at that time. They had thoroughbred horses. When they left here my dad bought those and got them from them ... got all them old horses.

BOB: When they left Roaring Springs?

TAFT: Yeah. They're the ones that took up Roaring Springs.

PAULINE: You said your dad run cattle mostly, and horses. Did he ever try to raise any grain, or do any kind of farming?

TAFT: No. Always had a garden though.

PAULINE: I'd like to ask people about the weather. Was the weather a lot different --- oh say when you were a kid? Do you remember the winters as being harder?

TAFT: Oh yeah, some of it. It seems to me it's wetter them days than it is now. I wouldn't know, but --- Dad was out on the desert, you know, and when we was kids we'd go out there to Buzzard and there was always a big spring of water there. And now lately it's dried up. It's been dry most of

the time the last few years. I guess a couple of years ago, two or three years; they tell me that spring run. But it used to be that even in the fall of the year had quite a stream of water running down Buzzard Canyon.

BOB: Where's that at, Taft?

TAFT: Well, you know where Virgil Moon lives?

BOB: Yeah.

TAFT: Well, it'd be north, right straight out across the hills about twelve, fifteen miles. It'd be about halfway to Clover Swale. Canyon runs down there and it comes out, well into the Double O. I don't know whether you've ever been out in that country. Murphy had a place out in there, Iron Mountain. Do you know where Iron Mountain is? Well, it'd come out right down there by Iron Mountain, and run into the Double O, and it'd really come right back into Harney Lake, if it was high enough, you know.

PAULINE: Well, when did you get started in ranching? Did you just stay with your dad, or did you strike out for yourself?

TAFT: Struck out for myself when I was old enough. Filed on my homestead when I was just 21.

PAULINE: Where was it located?

TAFT: Oh, back here, up there ---

BOB: Catlow Valley?

TAFT: Well, by Catlow Valley, yeah. It's about 12 miles from Rock Creek.

BOB: Oh, it's not the place, the place on Rock Creek?

TAFT: No, it's just up here, then right by Stan Bennett's, then go on to Clover Swale, you know, you'd go right by my homestead. That's where I first started out, then I bought Rock Creek.

BOB: When did you buy Rock Creek?

TAFT: Oh, I don't know, about '48, I guess.

PAULINE: I understand there were quite a few people around Clover Swale at one time.

TAFT: This whole Valley was pretty well settled in 1914, when I come out here. Course, I used to

be out at Clover Swale every year, anyway when we was kids. We always run horses to Clover Swale in the spring, and people would gather all the horses and brand them. My dad had lots of horses. I used to put in lots of time when I was a kid at Clover Swale.

PAULINE: Do you know why they called it Clover Swale?

TAFT: I don't remember. I think they called it from the plant, the clover, but all the clover I know of on Clover Swale is up there on Augustine's place. A little patch of clover, but they called it Clover Swale.

BOB: Who did you buy Rock Creek Ranch from?

TAFT: The Company. That's when Joe Fine was boss over here.

PAULINE: That's Allied? No, the PLS.

TAFT: That's along time before the Allied ever owned anything. The Gills bought it a long time before the Allied's got it. He even sold it to the Gills, and they sold it to the Allied. He was still out working for the Gills when it was sold.

BOB: You weren't related to the Millers of Lux and Miller?

TAFT: No, not that I know of.

PAULINE: Have you grazed cattle on Steens Mountain? You've never had stock on the mountain?

TAFT: No ...

PAULINE: ... Do you remember the first time you saw an automobile, or had an automobile ride?

TAFT: Yeah, I remember the first one I ever saw. One come into Burns. I don't know, went in there for a rodeo or something, and there was one sitting down there at the entrance into the grounds. The first one that ever come to Burns, I guess.

MRS. MILLER: That must have been a real occasion.

PAULINE: Is that the one that if you paid 25 cents that you could go for a ride?

TAFT: Well, I don't remember. They might have let some people ride, I don't know. We'd just come from the ranch over there, and in them days I don't think we had 25 cents to buy a ride.

BOB: About what year was that, do you remember?

TAFT: I don't know; it was a long time ago.

BOB: Do you remember how old you were?

TAFT: Oh, I don't know, I was in my teens someplace. I stayed with --- about two winters I think with Mrs. Bardwell, went to school. You know her? She's a hundred years old. Well, they lived at the Double O too.

PAULINE: Oh, they did?

TAFT: Yeah, Gus and Emma went to school at the Double O with us. Yes. You know Jessie (Bardwell Williams)?

PAULINE: Yeah.

TAFT: She went to school at the Double O. Her and --- they used to drive a pony to school, and she got to running away with them. One day she scattered them all out through the sagebrush. Told her dad about it and he was going to drive her to school. Darn if she didn't get down there and she run off with him too.

PAULINE: Well I can just see that --- kids flying everywhere.

TAFT: That she did. She just got carried away.

PAULINE: Did you ever ride in the rodeos or take part?

TAFT: No.

PAULINE: Just go watch? Did you ever raise rodeo stock? I know some of your boys do. I thought maybe they got their interest from you.

TAFT: No. Lots of them horses they have come out of my horses. I had lots of horses out there at one time.

MRS. MILLER: Taft loves horses.

TAFT: Yeah, I had lots of horses. I used to...

BOB: ...

TAFT: I had some of the top bucking horses in there a long time ago when they first started that rodeo. I used to own "Trade Dollar" and "Box Dot". I used to ride them before they put them in the

rodeo. Bucking, they was good horses, the best bucking horses I had.

PAULINE: What were some of the horse's names that you had in the rodeos?

TAFT: There was "Box Dot" and "Trade Dollar", were two of the best ones. And of course lots of the horses that Donald used to take in, I had 'em and then they'd had 'em named every way. Then they had one, "Trade Dollar", but they lost him.

... (Bird flew into window - discussion omitted.)

PAULINE: As I understand it when they first started having rodeos and the fair in Burns, why, it was really quite an occasion. Do you remember any of those early rodeos, and some of the ---

TAFT: Oh yeah, some of them. I used to be in there when they had a rodeo. Helped with the chutes.

PAULINE: I know that cowboys came from all over the county to come in, but did they have many people come in from outside?

TAFT: Yeah, they come from everywhere. Pretty near everybody from around here I imagine. And there'd be people from Pendleton come down. They had some good riders come down. You live in Burns?

PAULINE: Yes. Do you know Henry Ausmus?

TAFT: Yes.

PAULINE: That's my dad.

TAFT: And Ormand and Dick, I remember him.

PAULINE: And Standley.

TAFT: Standley.

PAULINE: My dad's the youngest.

TAFT: Well, I've seen him, but I never knew him very well.

PAULINE: My husband and I are running his place now. We're about three miles out of Burns on the Crane highway.

TAFT: Yeah, I know where that is. Yeah, I used to know Ormand. I hauled grain out at, you know

when the lake went dry, and the boys there farmed it. They raised grain all over Malheur Lake. It went plum dry, and they had grain growing, gosh there were, I think, stalks that were six feet high. Some of it...

MRS. MILLER: ...

PAULINE: Well it was his brothers. It was his two older brothers. Daddy was involved to a point, but he was quite a bit younger than Standley and Ormand.

TAFT: That was Standley and Ormand that went together to raise the grain, wasn't it?

PAULINE: Yeah.

TAFT: Yeah, it seems to me like it. When they went to school in Burns, them Ausmus boys with Gus Bardwell, about that time I know. Those boys went to Burns to high school with Gus Bardwell. I'm sure of it.

PAULINE: That sounds about right, because all four of them went into Burns to school part of the time. They went to Crane and at Lawen.

TAFT: They went to high school in Burns. But they didn't have this kind of high school in them days.

PAULINE: No, my dad went to Crane High School for about a year, but I don't think ---

TAFT: Well, he could of --- but them other boys I think they all had to go to Burns. And all them people had to go to Burns. I never got that far, I never went to high school, too busy.

PAULINE: Too busy. Most people your age, by the time you had an eighth grade education that was considered pretty good, at that time. Now if you don't go to college and have a Ph.D., why you're not supposed to have been educated. But I don't believe all that.

MRS. MILLER: No, I don't either. A lot of money goes down the drain in school.

PAULINE: Well, education is a good thing, but I think that some-times we get a little carried away. I couldn't help but notice your beautiful arrowhead collection when I came in. My, you have some really pretty specimens.

TAFT: We picked a lot of them up at the ranch, you know. I never tried to get them, you know. I

used to hunt them, but I give them all away until the last few years.

MRS. MILLER: You should go up and see those at the ranch sometime ... but they have a gorgeous display of them.

PAULINE: This is the thing. I know my dad tells that they used to just pick them up all the time and no one ever gave them a thought. They were just something --- and now we take the family out some Sundays and hunt just for the fun of it, and we're just delighted when we find a broken piece of one.

MRS. MILLER: We used to be able to go out and find them pretty good, but not anymore. ...

TAFT: You know when that lake went dry and they went to farm, and turned up them buffalo heads. You remember that?

PAULINE: Yeah. Well, Aunt Gladys was telling me about it.

TAFT: Yeah, they got --- they used to be, well I don't think too far back down there by Ted Dunns, you know. They had them buffalo wallows all over that ridge. Holes where I guess they laid. Yeah, they got lots of heads out of that lake. They was just preserved in there. Yeah, lots of buffalo heads in there. I don't know how many, but some. They must of got there in the winter and went through the ice or something. ...

PAULINE: Well, as far back as any white man can remember, there hasn't been any buffalo in this country, has there?

TAFT: No, not as far as I know. But them wallows out there where Ted Dunn has his place, I've rode around there and there's great big holes. They call them buffalo wallows; I guess that's what they were.

PAULINE: Well, it sounds to reason.

TAFT: I think they were in here at one time.

PAULINE: Well, they found evidence of them.

TAFT: Well, and then them heads that they dug out of that lake. They were buffalo heads, I seen them. Yeah, they were buffalo here all right.

MRS. MILLER: They must of got lots of arrowheads out of there too.

PAULINE: Daddy tells about having oh, just boxes of them in their house on the lake, and then it burned down. Of course everything was lost.

MRS. MILLER: When they had a fire ... down at the ranch why they lost all that stuff they once had.

TAFT: Oh yeah. You'd find arrowheads everywhere; that was a long time ago. But now, like John and Georgia Crow they live down there, you know, on Ted Dunn's old place, and they've got quite a collection, and they found them all around that lake.

MRS. MILLER: Johnny Crow?

TAFT: Yeah, all around that lake down there, especially where that old feller lived --- I can't think of his name, but he had a homestead around there, above there five or six miles. That's a good place to hunt arrowheads. I can't think of his name, but one old bachelor lived out there, he lived there a long time.

PAULINE: Was that old Nick Klein?

TAFT: Oh, it might of been.

PAULINE: No, I don't think that's right, because I think he lived over on Wright's Point.

TAFT: No, that wouldn't be him, he lived at Wright's Point. I can't think of that old fellow. Johnny used to talk about him. He was still alive.

PAULINE: Oh, I know who you mean. Fred Wickert.

TAFT: No, Wickert lived up here.

PAULINE: No, okay.

TAFT: I believe his name was Fred something. I can't tell you his name right now, I will though. There will come a time when it will come to me. I've been to his place. But it was a great place to hunt arrowheads, and I guess they picked them all up.

MRS. MILLER: Where was it?

TAFT: Beyond Johnny Crow's ranch, Crow ... the other way. Old Charlie Backus had a place right

in there by him too. I can't tell you that old guy's name. He was a cranky old fellow too. ...

PAULINE: Do you remember anything about when this area they called Sunset Valley was homesteaded?

TAFT: Well, that's the other side of the Narrows where you drove right through.

PAULINE: Between Wright's Point and the Narrows.

TAFT: Oh yeah, I used to ride in there. I used to know quite a few of those people when they were there.

PAULINE: What did they do? Did they come in and plow up sagebrush and tried to grow crops there. Is this what they tried to do?

TAFT: Oh yeah, every one of them had a little patch of rye or something along there. But there was one outfit that had kind of a station there for people to stop overnight. There at the foot of the mountain, on this side.

MRS. MILLER: How long did they stay there? ...

TAFT: No, they finally left. Do you want to know about them people?

PAULINE: Yeah.

TAFT: I'll tell you who to go see.

PAULINE: Okay.

TAFT: You go see Nellie.

PAULINE: Okay.

TAFT: She's got the greatest memory, and she knew all them people. She could tell you about pretty near every one.

PAULINE: Well, I'll ask her about them.

TAFT: Have you talked with her?

PAULINE: Not yet. I've got a date, to have a date with her. And she's going to come by the next time she goes to town and visit.

SIDE B

TAFT: She could tell you more about, you see she lived right there. She knew pretty near all those people in there. Tell you their names; she's got a great memory about people.

MRS. MILLER: You won't have any trouble getting her to talk.

PAULINE: No, I know. She's quite a talker. I've visited with her several times, just visited. She's always got lots of things to tell.

MRS. MILLER: She'd be real good to give you information.

PAULINE: I hadn't realized that she had lived there, but I have been interested in finding out more about that area.

TAFT: She was raised right there at the Narrows, you know. She can tell you more about Sunset Valley and all them people than anybody that's left here.

PAULINE: I'm glad to know that because I want to find out more. That area in there has always fascinated me. We've been out through there, oh a little bit, and just the idea that anyone would come in there and try to do anything, there's no water or anything. I just; it just fascinates me.

TAFT: Them Newell's that lived out there, they were old timers. He used to be a surveyor in here, that surveyed a lot of this country, you know. And that Newell place, he dug into that hill there, you know. There was a little wet place and he tunneled in there and got quite a little spring of water. And there were several of them Newell boys. I guess they're about all dead though. Well, Rack had a piece in the paper, you know, here in the Oregonian. And he lives in Weiser, Idaho, but he was raised right there at Dog Mountain. But there was a big family of them --- some girls. I bet there most all of them dead. But Rack was alive here a couple of years ago, because he had a piece in the paper. But I don't think he's quite as old as I am yet. ... Told about him, said he had quite a deal in there, and I was telling Fred Witzel. He said, "I read that." Talked about him running cattle, you know. He said they never did run any cattle. Which they didn't either. He talked about running stock. He lived in Harney County, you know, but they never, they never run no stock. I don't know how they made a living, by golly. A dance would come along. They always had horses, saddle

horses, and they'd ride 50 miles to a dance on horseback.

MRS. MILLER: Can you imagine that. ...

PAULINE: No, I can't either.

TAFT: Ride all over the country. Wherever a dance was, maybe not 50 miles, but 25 or 30. Yeah, they'd go horseback, go to the dance at Silver Creek.

MRS. MILLER: They stay all night then?

TAFT: Oh, you'd ride home the next day.

MRS. MILLER: I just can't believe it.

TAFT: But they was ... about all they did.

PAULINE: Well, did you drive your cattle to market, or did you sell them to buyers that come through?

TAFT: No, you'd have to drive them in them days.

MRS. MILLER: How far a distance did you drive cattle?

TAFT: I delivered cattle at Quinn River Crossing. I delivered cattle in Burns, drove them all the way.

PAULINE: Where's Quinn River?

TAFT: It's about halfway to Winnemucca.

MRS. MILLER: But there were generally neighbors along though that housed you for a night, and fed you; wasn't there?

TAFT: Well, we used to drive from here to Crane. I've shipped out of Crane lots of times. And Burns, I've drove cattle to Burns and shipped them.

PAULINE: Is it really true that the cowboys used to, when they had a ride, to keep the cattle at night, you know, did they really sing to them? Is that true that the cowboys would ride around singing to the cows?

TAFT: It guess it is; I don't know. I stood guard, but I never sang to them. I kept still. I've been out with guys that used to sing to them, but you don't have to sing to them.

PAULINE: It's not part of the job, it's just a --- Yeah, okay. What kind of food did the chuck wagon put out? What kind of food did the chuck wagon cook put out for the buckaroos?

TAFT: Well, all the wagons I was ever with they sure fed good. They'd, oh there would be plenty of food. They'd always have potatoes and meat, and sourdough biscuits baked in a Dutch oven. And for fruit, they always had dried fruit, peaches or prunes mostly. Prunes was generally the mainstay. But they always had dried prunes, but no canned stuff in them days.

MRS. MILLER: Beans no doubt.

TAFT: Oh yeah, we always had lots of beans, and plenty of meat. You could eat a meal in the cook wagon and some of those old boys could really feed you. Good meals.

PAULINE: You were just a kid when Peter French was killed, but do you remember ever seeing him?

TAFT: No, I don't remember seeing him. No, I was four years old, and then we lived over there, and of course over here. I guess some of the older kids had seen Pete French. I know my dad always got along with Pete French, he knew him. But most of the fellows around the Narrows sure didn't, they was fighting all the time. I used to hear all them stories.

PAULINE: Well, mainly it boiled down to the point that he had it, and they wanted it pretty much, wasn't it? Rather than that he was trying to ---

TAFT: Well, he had most of it, but he was trying to get all theirs too. He used to fight 'em, and the story I got, and the way I remembered, why if he'd catch people in there getting cattle out of his field he'd whip them out of the --- the kind they used to ride with a buggy whip, and he'd whip you out.

PAULINE: Well, I've heard that story.

TAFT: I know it's right, because I've rode with people that had really rode with Pete French. Now like Frank Dunn's brother, Elmer --- Oh, I don't know I guess it was Frank. But anyway, I think it was Frank that went in the field, and they had cattle in the Little Sagebrush and they had land in there too. Their own grandpa had a homestead in there, but they went in to get their cattle and

French run them out. And he was gone about a week, and he went back after them cattle. French seen him, and went over there and got after him. He said, "I thought I told you to stay out of here." He said, "You did Mr. French." He said, "I've a notion to whip you." He said, "You can do it Mr. French," but he said, "You hadn't better." I just know he hadn't better too, knowing Frank Dunn.

PAULINE: Yeah.

MRS. MILLER: ...

TAFT: I do too. I wouldn't have the job to do.

PAULINE: Well, for the most part though, people that ranched in Harney County pretty much helped one another out and cooperated to get the branding done, and do the riding and that sort of thing, haven't they?

TAFT: Oh, they generally rode together, you know. Like us people that run on the desert, we always rode with the Dunn's. They'd always come out, there was Billy, and Frank, and Ted. Each one of them had cattle. And they went on the desert and when they'd ride, of course, anybody that had cattle would meet out there. It's quite a crew to round them up and brand them wherever you found them. We'd just camp out there in the summer and ride the whole day.

PAULINE: Did it take all summer to get them rounded up, or were you just checking on them to see they had water and that sort of thing?

TAFT: Oh no, no, no. No, we'd turn out in the spring just like you do now. You turn out the first of April, and by June you've got a lot of new calves to brand up there. And there's lots of cattle to be branded by the time we turned out in June, you know. Well, you've got to ride and brand up all them calves. That's the way we do, and they still do it. They still do it too. But every year before haying, they'd go out there for maybe two or three weeks and brand calves, ride the whole desert and brand calves, and then go home and have to put up your hay.

PAULINE: Now you used a system where you used net setters, pull back horse, and Jim wagon, and that type of system to stack your hay?

TAFT: Well, yes. You know, when they first started out they had crude outfits, you know. The

first time they ever got on the ... bucks they didn't know what to have in them. I had an old buck that had ropes on that and they'd swing the horse around and run it ahead until they'd get a bunch of hay, and then they'd turn the horse around and pull it out from under him. But they had the crude outfits, and then they kept a getting them better all the time. They got them old swamp angels.

You've seen them I suppose.

PAULINE: Now what was it, a swamp what?

TAFT: They called them swamp angels.

PAULINE: Yeah, tell me about them.

TAFT: Well, they made them out of a buck, just a buck head, like a buck head there, you know, only it had wheels on it. And of course it had a pole running out here and a place here, and then a platform that run away back that you stood on and drive the team. And you'd run up ahead and the teeth would go down and you'd stand there and get a bunch of hay, and then when you'd back the team up, why you'd walk back on that platform and raise the teeth, your rake. And you could drive around and get another bunch, you know.

PAULINE: Now was the horse in front of this or behind?

TAFT: No, they worked on the side, same as they do now, only they had a long pole like a brine teeth on a buck. I'll tell you where George and them still had them two old, and used them over there when George left and went to Canada, his dad still had them.

MRS. MILLER: Oh you're George, George Garrett.

TAFT: Yeah, they still had them swamp angels. I bet a fellow could see one over there.

PAULINE: That would be interesting to get a picture of one, with the horses on the side.

TAFT: I bet you could go over there and get it, right over there at Garrett's. Go over and hunt up Bud Garrett and ask him about that old swamp angel buck. It will be there too.

PAULINE: And this is at where? At Lakeview?

TAFT: Yeah, about 8 miles out, on the west side.

MRS. MILLER: ... It's right along side the highway.

PAULINE: That'd be interesting to check into. I'd like to see

MRS. MILLER: He's got some old stuff up there. That's an old ranch.

TAFT: That'd be the only place I know where you could get a picture of an old swamp angel.

That's what they called them, swamp angels.

PAULINE: This was something that the ranchers figured out and built.

TAFT: Yeah, but you know they used that down there to stack that hay right up until, it was about the time George went to Canada. I'm sure it would be there. And that would be something to have a picture of too.

PAULINE: Yeah, it would.

MRS. MILLER: Their gates are locked now, how would she...

TAFT: She could turn in on this side down there, on that other turn and come right in to Bud's house.

MRS. MILLER: Would someone be there?

TAFT: Most generally.

MRS. MILLER: Well, if not, anybody would know them.

TAFT: It's the Garrett's --- you could call Bud or Ed, or anybody and find out where they're at. They're friendly people, they'd go along with you.

PAULINE: Well, I can't remember ever hearing about swamp angels. I got my dad to sit down and tell me exactly how they hayed with bucks, and putting it on the net and pulling it up onto the stack, and with the Jim wagon and all this.

TAFT: Well, they used to, yeah. They had one that they run in the bunch hay, and set it right on the stack, and then pull it down. I know how that works. But the Riddles up here, now they was always backwards. They'd buck their hay and they'd have loops on this old thing, and they'd run up a bunch of hay and then swing the horse around and pull it back. Why, done everything the hard way.

PAULINE: Well, it's sure a lot different than the way we're haying now.

TAFT: Oh, god yes. But I can remember when we first started, and you know they stacked the hay, the first time they started stacking this hay over there, they pulled it up with a cable and some way or another they didn't have it right, and when they pulled the net back they pulled the cable under the shock, you see, and then they'd have to dig it out and get it up to the next one. Yeah, they did that for a while until they got to hooking it up, the net on the other rope so it would pull on top. But when they first started it, why they'd pull that back and the cable would pull underneath the buck or the hay. And then they'd have to dig that out so they'd be ready for the next load. It was quite awhile before they caught on to hooking it on that other rope so it would pull on top.

(Laughter)

PAULINE: Experience is the best teacher, isn't it?

TAFT: Yeah. (Laughter)... Every load they set up they'd have to dig the shock all to pieces to get the net on top till they bring up another one. Finally they figured out how to fix it so you pull on top, you know.

PAULINE: The way that Daddy explained it, you know, it just set it up and dumped the hay, and then it pulled it back down and started all over again.

TAFT: Well this is when they first started, you know, until they got onto doing it, by golly. They, some way or another, I don't know just how it worked, but it pulled the net under the load every time. And they'd have to dig it out before they could send up another one. I heard Dave talk they worked all day there, digging that cable out so they could bring up more hay.

PAULINE: For heavens sakes. Has your cattle operation changed an awful lot since you first started, or are you doing principally the same type of an operation?

TAFT: Oh, I guess running cows is about the same. Of course, we put up the hay different than what we used to. But you don't change much in running the cows or anything.

PAULINE: Well, I understand that they used to run steers until they were a couple of years old sometimes, a couple of three years old before they sold them.

TAFT: Well they did that, yeah.

PAULINE: Was that ---

...

TAFT: Well, it was good meat.

PAULINE: Well, I was talking to a lady the other day, well it was Hazel Culp is who it was, and she said that they always boiled meat --- that the housewife would put the meat on in the morning and boil up enough meat to last for a day or two rather than try to fry steaks for breakfast, and fix a roast for dinner, and cook hamburger for supper. They didn't do this so much. If you are boiling meat generally, why it wouldn't matter so much if it were tough.

MRS. MILLER: Well, Taft evidently had some tough meat ... put a little vinegar in it. So he knows about it.

TAFT: Oh well, I don't think there's really too much difference. I remember ... I always thought it was good meat.

MRS. MILLER: ... she could talk a blue streak to her too, couldn't she?

TAFT: Yeah.

PAULINE: How many children were there in your family, and what were their names? Why don't you start with the oldest?

TAFT: There was Frankie, and Pete, and Buck.

MRS. MILLER: Frankie was a woman.

TAFT: And Girlie.

PAULINE: Girlie?

TAFT: Well, that's what we called her.

MRS. MILLER: That's what everybody knows her by.

TAFT: And Baby, her name was Nora. Well, I come before Girlie and Baby though.

PAULINE: Well, Taft you're in between Buck and Girlie then.

TAFT: Then we had half-brother Dave Bollenbaugh.

MRS. MILLER: Is that all of them?

PAULINE: That's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Is that right?

TAFT: Well, I don't know, I thought there were nine of us.

PAULINE: Well, you missed a couple then. I've got Frankie, and Pete, and Buck, and Taft, and Girlie, and Baby, whose name was Nora, and a half-brother.

TAFT: Well, there were two half-brothers. There's Mark and of course another one (George H. Bollenbaugh) I didn't see him. He got killed when he was pretty young. But Mark Bollenbaugh, he was a brother to me. That was a pretty big school, now there was a lot of Hughet kids, and we was a big family, and the Bardwell's, and Hurlbert's, it was a pretty big school.

MRS. MILLER: It must have been.

TAFT: Sometimes there'd be extras too.

PAULINE: Is Buck Miller that lives in town, Mary's mother's husband, is that your brother?

TAFT: Yeah.

PAULINE: Well, I didn't know that.

MRS. MILLER: Didn't you?

PAULINE: No, I didn't realize that you were the same family.

MRS. MILLER: Are you going to interview Buck?

PAULINE: Jim Baker did.

MRS. MILLER: Oh.

PAULINE: Yeah, he talked to about 50 people while he was working, so he got quite a few. And so now I get to go out, well like out here, and out to Andrews, and out to Drewsey. Most of the ones that are left are the ones out in the country, so ---

MRS. MILLER: ...

PAULINE: Yes, I have him on the list.

MRS. MILLER: ... reminisce and I can just sit back and listen to the old timers.

PAULINE: I like to do that too.

MRS. MILLER: And it's interesting, all over the desert out there where it was so heavily populated, oh maybe there'll be part of an old school desk, and somebody will tell me the history of that. And every little spot has its own little history, real interesting.

PAULINE: Well, it's fascinating to me. I've found out about several places where there were schools at one time, than heavens, you know, no one never knows that there ever had been a school there.

MRS. MILLER: Well, how many schools were there in Catlow?

TAFT: God, a whole bunch of them, I don't know. I'll have to count 'em up next time I go down.

MRS. MILLER: There was even a high school out there.

PAULINE: At Catlow Valley, a high school?

TAFT: Sure was, a high school and a public school just below the Rock Creek Ranch.

MRS. MILLER: Besides all these others.

PAULINE: Well, I didn't know that.

TAFT: And there was a post office there by the name of Berdugo. That's what the school went by too.

PAULINE: Now what was the post office's name?

TAFT: Berdugo.

PAULINE: Berdugo.

TAFT: Yeah.

PAULINE: Was that the name of a person that it was named after?

TAFT: Well, that was old Chino that used to be the old buckaroo boss at the Company.

PAULINE: Yeah.

TAFT: His name's Berdugo. But it was named after old Chino.

MRS. MILLER: Well, there were all kinds of grade schools out there.

TAFT: Yeah, there were grade schools all over, but I was just telling her about that high school.

MRS. MILLER: Well I mean I was just trying to let her know that

...

TAFT: And there was a post office there too, you know. And there was a post office at Catlow, and one at Beckley, and one at Beckley.

PAULINE: Beckley?

TAFT: Yeah, there was one at Beckley.

PAULINE: I never heard of Beckley before.

TAFT: And there used to be one at Rieckens Corner too, but they moved it to Catlow, or what they call Catlow, and that's right up here, you know.

MRS. MILLER: You just can't believe --- how many voters did they say there were there at one time?

TAFT: They claimed there were 600 votes from Catlow Valley at one time.

MRS. MILLER: Isn't that hard to believe?

TAFT: By golly there were lots of people here. There was houses and tents all over that valley at one time.

PAULINE: Cows and tents?

MRS. MILLER: Houses.

TAFT: Well, houses and tents. Lots of people had rag houses, you know, tents.

MRS. MILLER: I never heard that before.

TAFT: What?

MRS. MILLER: A rag house.

TAFT: Well, Ragtown, that's what they called it.

MRS. MILLER: Did that mean it was a tent town?

TAFT: Well, that's what this Berdugo, they used to call it Ragtown.

MRS. MILLER: Yeah, I've heard you say that, but I didn't know you meant tents.

TAFT: And that was the name of it. They called it Ragtown for a while.

PAULINE: Well, that's interesting. I knew a lot of people lived in tents when they first came in.

There wasn't any lumber around, I guess for them to build.

TAFT: Lots of people lived in tents for a long time, and then they built up them rock walls out of that rock, and sometimes they had tents on top. Well, right up there where Oscar Downs lived, when he first come there he lived in a tent for, I don't know how many years, and they just had a sagebrush fence around it. Built the sagebrush up about so high to keep the cattle out. Yeah, and he lived there for I don't know how long, just in that tent.

PAULINE: Even in the wintertime?

TAFT: Yes, sir. In the summer and winter, both. It was a long time before they built a house. And that was Oscar Downs himself that lived in that tent a long, long time. Right up here on top.

MRS. MILLER: Well, I've heard you talk about Ragtown, but I never knew exactly what it was.

PAULINE: About how long did they have a high school there? Do you remember about what year this would have been? About how old were you when they had a high school there, is a good way to remember.

TAFT: It was just about 1920, I think.

PAULINE: Well, this is when most of this country, I mean all over Harney County and even like out here between Bend and Burns even was homesteaded along in the, between 1900 and about 1918, along in there.

TAFT: Yeah, there were lots of people in Catlow Valley at that time, and even Clover Swale. There was, August lived there and there was all of the Duhaimes there, and Dave Crow, and Robinson's, and Maces. All --- and they lived there all the time, most of them. Of course, Maces moved into town in the winter, but in the summer they was always out there. But the country, as far as people is concerned, there was more people then, than there is now.

PAULINE: Well, did they mostly run cattle, or did they try to, or sheep, or did they try to farm it?

TAFT: No, no. I don't know what, these people didn't know what they was doing I don't think. They just stayed till they starved out.

MRS. MILLER: You'd wonder why they stayed, or what they looked for.

TAFT: Well, they were in kind of a drought too, and they was pretty dry. And the rabbits just got thicker than the devil, and they just couldn't make it. They planted their crop and if it grew at all the rabbits would have took it, about that time. They was just forced to leave, lots of them. Spent what they had, and had to go.

PAULINE: Well, I understand that a lot of the people, or some of the people that came in read about it in a paper, newspaper back east, or got information from the people that were called locators and that they sent information back telling what a grand place this was, and come out.

TAFT: Yeah. Here we just went down to Death Valley, and there was an old fellow down there that was here about that time, you know. I knew him here. We was a visiting, and he mentioned about this old Sleeper (sp.?). He was a land locator. He had a load of people come out, and they were showing them all this valley. And said, "Some of this, someday," he said, "This is all going to be growing wheat." Well, you know ... (Laughter)

MRS. MILLER: I didn't listen in on that conversation, but I'll bet they had a real wingding.

TAFT: He said I was telling Bob we was going through country, and he said I told Bob, he said, "Someday this is going to be all in wheat." Bob looked at him, thought he was crazy. (Laughter) He was just a quoting old Sleeper. He remembered that.

PAULINE: Well, I talked to Amy Catterson the other day.

TAFT: Who?

PAULINE: Amy Catterson, she was a Leek, Thomas Leek's daughter. And they took up a homestead down by Lawen, and this is how they got --- came to be here. She said that her father got this information through the mail from Adam George who worked at this locating too. And she said it just described Harney County as a perfect paradise, you know. You just come out there and everything would just be perfect, you know. So he came out from Michigan, but he didn't stay. He stayed long enough, I guess, to prove up on his homestead, but he didn't like it here and he moved on. But she stayed, and the brother stayed, and they also proved up homesteads.

TAFT: There was a lot of them locators. They wasn't only just old Sleeper, there was a whole

bunch of them there, and they'd ride around and get a load of people in and they was a fighting over getting these people to take them out and locate them. There was, I don't know how many different locators they had there a living in Burns making money off these poor devils coming in. Well, I used to think of one here, and I can't think of his name now, he used to be up here. He was a, I can't think of his name. But he was still around here not too many years ago. But you might see out here in, maybe see two or three of them in one day or a week, you know, different ones with loads of people.

PAULINE: Oh, for heavens sakes!

TAFT: And they'd take them clear out on the desert to the Double O, or Clover Swale, or anyplace, you know, all over the county.

MRS. MILLER: What kind of transportation?

TAFT: They'd rent a livery rig in Burns and drive them out, and maybe have four or five different guys in the one rig. Well, they located the Churchs, and the Larson's, all that bunch around Weed Lake, and give them the wrong numbers of their purchases. See them locators was supposed to know the numbers of this land they put you on, and they give them the wrong, they filed on the different land. I guess they had a lot of trouble with that too. The land that one of them filed on was way up there on a rim rock.

PAULINE: Oh, I guess that would cause a problem. Fix your houses, and do the work, and then when you filed you had the wrong description.

TAFT: They had a fight over that thing too. Had a lot of trouble. They'd give them the wrong numbers, you know.

PAULINE: Yeah, just have to check that, it was going perfectly. I thought maybe I'd better take a look just to be sure. (Tape recorder)

MRS. MILLER: I don't know how you remember different things to ask people. Keep yourself clued in on what you want to find out.

PAULINE: Well, the thing about this job is, you know, people --- well I don't know what you want

to find out. The thing I want to find out about is the thing that people remember to tell. Because I just like for people to talk if they will, and I try to ask a few questions to keep the conversation going. And the things that, like the things that Taft remembers that someone else won't, and ---

MRS. MILLER: Well, through all of them, you know ---

PAULINE: Fit together. Well, like there was a high school in Catlow, well I didn't have any idea that they would ever had --- a school yes, but a high school? Why that's just really great.

MRS. MILLER: Where was the high school? Was that at Blitzen?

TAFT: No, it was just below Rock Creek Field.

MRS. MILLER: Oh, was it?

TAFT: I've showed you when we went through there.

MRS. MILLER: Well, you've showed me so many schools now that I can't quite remember where they all were.

TAFT: It's right close to Rock Creek Ranch. You might know the people that; Bill Newton that used to live at the Narrows was, taught there. He taught the high school.

PAULINE: Oh, he did?

TAFT: You've heard of the Newton's that taught so long down around the Narrows. And well he taught different places around Harney County. Bill Newton, he taught the high school out in Catlow too.

MRS. MILLER: Well, he'd know quite a bit about the school then.

PAULINE: Is he still living?

TAFT: I don't think so. I don't know whether he is or not. They left there, but they had a little ranch down there by the Narrows, you know, and they lived there. But he taught this high school. I believe Bob Bradeen taught that public school there one year.

MRS. MILLER: Oh, did he?

TAFT: And Bill Newton I think taught at the high school. I'm sure he did.

MRS. MILLER: Were you here when they had the schoolhouse in the back room of the store over

here?

TAFT: No, well I guess I could. Yeah, I've been here a long time.

MRS. MILLER: Well I know some old lady came in one year, a couple of years, two or three years back, and she just made herself right at home. When she walked back, and she said this is where I taught school, in the back of that store, in the back.

TAFT: Well, I never knew that.

MRS. MILLER: That's what she said. Barbara said she walked in and made herself right at home. She said this is where I taught school.

TAFT: I think she's mistaken.

MRS. MILLER: Well could be, I wouldn't know.

TAFT: Well, I don't remember the high school back in the back there.

MRS. MILLER: Not a high school.

TAFT: I mean a school, any kind of a school. Because when they established this, was a getting this school started, Joe Fine come up there and got us to come down and give us the ground to build a house on. I think we was about here as long as, pretty close to any of them. I think I went to school with Gene and Donald, and all of them went to school here.

MRS. MILLER: They had to have so many kids before they let them have a school.

TAFT: I don't remember whether we had a school before Joe Fine. He wanted to get everybody here anyway, I guess, but he give us that. Yeah, I don't think the school was run too much ahead of the time we come, might of. But by golly this store wasn't here too much before that either.

PAULINE: Well, this is what I've found. I was talking to John Scharff the other day, and I just supposed that Frenchglen had been here forever.

TAFT: No, it hasn't. It, Frenchglen, has been established since this here ---

PAULINE: Since the Bird Refuge?

TAFT: Refuge.

PAULINE: Well, what John Scharff told me was that there was so much traffic stopping at the P

Ranch up here ---

TAFT: Yeah, and then they started to build this up over here.

PAULINE: That they put this over here, you know, to take care of some of the people coming here.

TAFT: That's what started Frenchglen.

MRS. MILLER: Huh. Well, I didn't know it. I thought it had been here forever too.

TAFT: No, it hadn't. No, god, no. I don't think they even, I can't remember nobody teaching. In fact that there back end wasn't built on until later on anyway, was it?

MRS. MILLER: Well according to the people who run the store there.

TAFT: Well, Ron lived upstairs.

MRS. MILLER: Well, I know there's a trap door right over the store there.

TAFT: I thought that little cabin behind was built on ---

MRS. MILLER: Well, the very back end, Delmer Ash built on. But then that next section --- but there is a trap ---

TAFT: Well, that's when Bradeens run it, and Ron lived upstairs.

MRS. MILLER: Uh huh, yeah. Well, you'll have to ask some old people. They kind of forget, not like you.

TAFT: No, I don't know whether anybody ever taught school inside of that store.

MRS. MILLER: Well, you ought to know.

TAFT: Course we lived here all the time. I know damn well I was here when this thing was sold. I was here when John Scharff first come here.

MRS. MILLER: Well, isn't part of this house, didn't they bring it down from Blitzen?

TAFT: Part of it come from Blitzen.

PAULINE: Well, is this, now where this house sits, is this privately owned, or is it part of the Refuge too? Like the hotel over here.

MRS. MILLER: No, no. ...

PAULINE: ... So just the hotel over here is all that's involved in this ---

MRS. MILLER: The store was, but for years he's been trying to buy it. I mean it takes that long for the government --- But Kenneth didn't do anything about it. His is the only thing.

TAFT: He's got it ... But Kenneth is the only one that's left now.

MRS. MILLER: Well, it might as well not be.

TAFT: I don't know what they will do with that barn over there, that's up on the Refuge.

MRS. MILLER: That's right.

TAFT: ... But the Millers, when they run the hotel, they built that barn.

MRS. MILLER: Oh, did they?

TAFT: I think maybe the Refuge furnished the lumber, but he done the work.

MRS. MILLER: Well, the Refuge used to furnish the stuff. They used to when Eleanor and Kenneth were married. They furnished everything that Eleanor would want to keep that hotel in shape. But she was a good hostess; she was just real great for there. But it's really kind of sad now. People used to come out from Burns all the time for Sunday dinners, and what not. But now she gets the old freeze now.

PAULINE: Well, my mom told me what happened to them a couple of years ago. It made me wonder.

MRS. MILLER: Oh yeah, it's really sad. Some people came out, oh right after fishing season opened this year, and what did they want to stay there, or have a meal? And ... Kenneth's wife come to the door and said, "I think they wanted to stay." She said, "Oh my," she says, "don't you know this is fishing season?" And not a soul was staying there.

TAFT: Huh. ... (Laughter)

MRS. MILLER: It's really kind of sad. They had guests staying there a week ago, wasn't it a week ago? And Kenneth wouldn't even fix them breakfast. What did he say, "You have to eat here?" Something like that. What did he say to that fellow?

TAFT: I don't remember.

PAULINE: Oh dear. That's funny, because all you hear about is the hearty meal cooking.

MRS. MILLER: Everything you read is just hysterical.

PAULINE: Yeah.

MRS. MILLER: It used to be that way. It used to be that way. They used to set this big long table and put all the bowls of vegetables and meats on the table, and everybody sat down. And then they switched to a steam table, which was still all right. But now they've switched to nothing.

TAFT: Is your husband the mechanic, ain't he? Is he the one that's got the old boiler, the Hanley?

PAULINE: No, no, I think you're thinking of ---

TAFT: It was an Ausmus that fixed up that old steam engine, or some kind of a tractor that Hanley had.

PAULINE: Yeah, well, that was Standley.

TAFT: That was an Ausmus.

PAULINE: Yeah. Standley fixed that up. It was an old Hanley, I mean it was an old Romley Oil Pull, was that what they called it?

TAFT: Real old, big old, I don't know what kind it was, but he got that thing a running, and I think he drove it up town one time at the fair.

PAULINE: Yeah. I think that was Uncle Standley.

TAFT: Yeah, he was the mechanic. ...

PAULINE: Oh, Uncle Standley could fix anything, anything. Anything!

TAFT: Yeah, I've heard that.

PAULINE: Yeah.

MRS. MILLER: Is he living?

PAULINE: No, he died about 1957. He wasn't very old, he was only 55, but he had a heart attack. Then Uncle Ormand passed away about five years ago. It seems to me it's been about that long. I've forgotten now what year it was. So Uncle Dick now is, and Daddy, and then Aunt Izola is.

TAFT: Is Dick alive yet?

PAULINE: Yeah, Dick ---

TAFT: Well wasn't he about the oldest one?

PAULINE: No, Uncle Ormand was the oldest one, and then Uncle Dick. But he's about 80 something now.

TAFT: Yeah, I used to know him. He used to work around over there.

PAULINE: Yeah, he's been a painter.

TAFT: And I don't think, as far as I know, he never got married.

PAULINE: No, he never married.

TAFT: And he just worked around. I knew him pretty well.

PAULINE: He used to do a lot of sheep shearing, I guess, he and Uncle Ormand, when they were younger. Ever since I've known him he's been a house painter, and he painted for people. Well, he's semi-retired now.

TAFT: I've known them ever since I can remember, them Ausmus.

PAULINE: And then Aunt Izola married Ben O'Keeffe, you know. They're over at Silver Lake now.

TAFT: Didn't Ben O'Keeffe die?

PAULINE: He died just, oh ---

TAFT: That's what I heard.

PAULINE: This winter.

TAFT: Yeah, I knew Ben O'Keeffe too. I was showing her where Ben O'Keeffe lived before the hill where the old house used to stand over there, that one at Long Hollow, you know. He used to live over there and run sheep. And there used to be that little pond down there. It used to be a levee around there, and there was always a lake of water, but that didn't work out. You can't see no water down there no more at the foot of the hill. But there's a spring there that should be full all the time. I don't see why people don't keep it up.

... (Knock at door)

TAPE 2 - #55 SIDE B

PAULINE: ... Well can you think of anything else that is really wild and exciting?

MRS. MILLER: What's happened, way back?

TAFT: No. (Laughter)

PAULINE: We'll have your brain all worn out here remembering so much.

MRS. MILLER: The problem is after someone goes then ---

TAFT: Well, lots of things happen, but you just don't think of them.

MRS. MILLER: He had quite a time when the Geological Survey was here last year. And those boys, they were an awful nice crowd, and men, not just boys. And they'd come down to get information from him, and my he told things to them that I never knew about either. They would mention names, and he would tell them that was a BLM name, and then he'd give them the original name.

TAFT: Well, they was wanting a map of the whole desert and what they wanted was the old name. Well there's some of these new people come in and they changed all these names, just like one name I give you there. What was it?

PAULINE: Jack Mountain was Jackass Mountain.

TAFT: Yeah, Jackass Mountain. Everybody knew that when they was a kid. It was always Jackass Mountain and Jackass Ranch. We owned that, that was my dads when we was kids.

MRS. MILLER: Would she be interested, I don't want her tape to run out, in the fellow that fell in the well. Would that be interesting?

TAFT: Well yeah, Billy Carroll --- You've heard about that?

PAULINE: Oh yes. Did you --- I've heard about that, but I haven't ever talked to anybody that knew first hand about it.

TAFT: Well, I could show you the well, it's right up there, just up there towards Rock Springs. But they was in there for eight days, you know.

PAULINE: I didn't realize he was in there that long.

TAFT: Yeah, it was eight days before they got him out.

PAULINE: That was the reason he was crippled then. He broke his legs when he fell in?

TAFT: Yeah, and then they froze, you see, and they had to take them off between the foot, they froze, they broke when he fell.

MRS. MILLER: Both feet are gone.

TAFT: Uh huh. And some way or another they got in there and the other fellow went in there to help him, and he didn't fix the rope just right and it got away and then they didn't have no way to get out. They was both in there too.

PAULINE: Oh, there was another man in the well besides Billy Carroll?

TAFT: Bob Coons. Bob Coons was in with him. And he climbed up to about ten feet from the top one time, and then the dirt got so loose around there it couldn't hold him, and fell back in on top of Billy again.

MRS. MILLER: Wouldn't that be sad.

TAFT: And they was in there for eight days. And somebody with a crop was going by with a team, and I guess maybe they kind of missed him. But anyway he went over and looked in the well and found them in there and got them out.

PAULINE: The other fellow wasn't hurt then?

TAFT: No, he kept trying to climb out. I think he fell back on Billy once.

MRS. MILLER: Know anything about any of the old wells that happened. They've got a lot of history.

TAFT: No.

PAULINE: Well, the way they, the only way they had to drill a well, I mean, was to dig it by hand.

TAFT: Oh yeah. Those were all dug wells. There's wells up there, one right there by Stan Bennett's in that draw, was 318 feet deep, dug all the way.

PAULINE: Oh my goodness.

TAFT: Most of it rock.

PAULINE: I didn't realize they'd go that deep.

MRS. MILLER: Well this one over here at the schoolhouse is three hundred and what?

TAFT: This one at ---

MRS. MILLER: Or 600.

TAFT: It's 612 feet.

MRS. MILLER: Isn't that amazing?

BOB: A dug one?

TAFT: No, no. The one we get water from.

PAULINE: Well, I understand this is just sitting on a rock formation.

...

TAFT: I was there the morning they started this well and there's a streak of hard pan right up here, you know, that's four or five feet deep. When they got through that hard pan that bit just dropped for forty feet. Just went straight down until it hit this rock.

PAULINE: It's hollow in there then.

TAFT: Well, its just muck.

PAULINE: Muck?

TAFT: Of course them bits are heavy, you know, they weigh tons. It went straight down until it landed on top of this rock. Why they couldn't do a thing then until they got casing clear down to that rock. Then they drilled for days, and days, and days on that and it was 612 feet. And from the time they hit the rock down there about forty feet, it was solid hard rock all the way. And then they finally busted through that, and there was the water. It come right out through the top.

PAULINE: I bet it's good water then.

TAFT: Oh yeah, it come right up. If they'd dug a trench out to that ditch it would have run out there. It's considered artesian when it comes up that high. It is good water.

MRS. MILLER: Kenneth has a separate well for his house, and the hotel.

TAFT: Yeah, but they worked for months on that darn well.

MRS. MILLER: Did they witch that or ---

TAFT: I don't know what they did, but they were a long time. They hit that same muck, and that was when the CCC's was here. They worked on this, and even dug that ditch down here and on the side hill, they done that with all pick and shovel too.

PAULINE: The CCC boys did this?

TAFT: Yeah, and they worked on this well back of the hotel there for days. And they blowed it, I don't know how many times with powder. They put that down in there and set it off, and it would blow that muck and stuff clear over there, and way up in the air. That was when the CCC's were here.

PAULINE: I knew that there was a CCC Camp in the area, but I didn't --- It was very close to here, or right here?

TAFT: Oh yeah. You know you come right by it, it's that spring down here. So you can see the marks of it where it ---

MRS. MILLER: Did you see that little dug out where the ---

PAULINE: Yeah, I saw that.

TAFT: Well, they had their camp right there. They had trees around, some of the trees; well they died there. But the CCC Camp was set up there. Yeah, that's at Five Mile, that spring. And then they had kind of a branch camp down there at Buena Vista too.

PAULINE: Well, that's where I had it in my head that the camp was. But the main camp was here.

TAFT: At Five Mile.

PAULINE: Well, I want to ask you about that dug well again. Is it, you said it was three hundred and some foot, and it was all dug by hand wouldn't you say?

TAFT: Well, up here --- 318 feet I think it was.

MRS. MILLER: Who dug that?

TAFT: It was Dave Stearns. It's right there by the old man Stoats.

MRS. MILLER: I know where it is, but I didn't remember whose.

TAFT: It's supposed to be 318 feet. I was never down in it. I'm not going to either.

Pauline: Well, I hadn't thought about that, but the hole would have to be big enough for a man to get down in there.

TAFT: Oh yeah. It's a pretty big size well.

PAULINE: And how do they draw the water up?

TAFT: Well, they never got any water up.

PAULINE: Oh, they never got any water in it?

TAFT: No, they never got no water in it.

MRS. MILLER: Wouldn't that be heartbreaking though, and back breaking too.

TAFT: Over there at Hites, you know, he had one well up there too that was awful deep, and I don't think he ever got water in that either. But down in the flat he had another one, and I guess he got a little water in that. And the time he stole that stuff from Johnny Darsey ... and they had dropped a lot of it in this well. The sheriff had to get ropes, and went down in there and got a lot of that stuff back.

MRS. MILLER: How about when your dam gave out. I don't know if that's interesting or not.

PAULINE: Sounds interesting.

MRS. MILLER: Well, it was tragic, really.

BOB: Where was this?

MRS. MILLER: The big dam.

BOB: At Rock Creek?

MRS. MILLER: Yeah.

TAFT: Dam went out.

MRS. MILER: How long did it take you to build it up before, and then it broke out, and then you built it up again.

TAFT: Well, yeah. I built the dam and then the --- that cost me about \$25,000. And when it washed out it just doubled that to put it back.

PAULINE: Oh, my.

TAFT: But it got a hole in it, and now when I put it back, I put it back.

PAULINE: Well, this is on Rock Creek, to dam up Rock Creek.

TAFT: ... He would know that. I pulled him out of the mud a time or two.

BOB: Sure did.

MRS. MILLER: Days like this it's hard to imagine.

PAULINE: What made it go out? Was it the water was up high?

BOB: ...

TAFT: ... We'd worked cattle all day, and we got in there and ate supper, and everybody was tired and went up to bed. And ... On weekends part of the kids from Crane used to come home with the boys, you know, worked these cattle. Along in the night why, this old Irishman was here, he was sleeping downstairs and he heard something. And he started to get up and he raised up on the bed and threw his legs out, and the water was right up here on the bed.

PAULINE: Oh, my goodness.

TAFT: In the house. And he looked out and he was about scared to death. He come up and got everybody up. He said if he'd been alone there he'd of lost his mind, he was so scared. He says, "I don't know what the dogs is going to do." When you look out there, there was water every place, running just like a river outside the house. But he said, "The cats can climb a pole." (Laughter)

MRS. MILLER: Another, I think was interesting, wasn't it August; I mean ... his feet nearly froze off too. I thought that was kind of interesting too. ...

BOB: Well, tell us about that.

PAULINE: Yeah.

TAFT: Well, he was just an old bachelor that lived up there, you know, and he had to haul hay for his horses. And I don't know he went down to the Blitzen or someplace for the Company, but he come by Blitzen anyway, you know, on his road home, and he met this John Pick. Of course they're all drinking, would have moonshine, you know. And so they had a big party right on the road, and I

guess John left him, and he started home, or fell off the wagon or some darn thing, and he laid out all night and he froze his feet. And so they took him to town, and they had to take his feet off. ... He never did get back to the ranch anymore after that. He had that place fixed up pretty good there. He had it all cleaned off and he had ditches around.

MRS. MILLER: He worked hard at...

TAFT: He had a well out there that he was figuring on pumping his water, and irrigating the ranch, you know. But I guess that well was pretty close to the creek bed. Years after that why Dino Kern, he was up there trapping and he caught a coyote right close to there, and he was trapping him up and by golly that old Indian went out of sight in a little tunnel in the side of the ditch. He was laying over there. He went in that old ... well. He had a tunnel from the creek into the well, you know, and he was irrigating out of the creek. (Laughter)

PAULINE: I don't suppose he had any water rights.

TAFT: No, no, no. But that was his well. The water was coming out of the creek.

PAULINE: That's good.

MRS. MILLER: And who was the fellow that, well, the ... went in the horse and team, and wagon. He fell off and it run over him and killed him. The one whose grave is up there, that one.

TAFT: Oh, yeah.

BOB: Well, being a preacher I might include something about the wages of sin in that story. (Laughter)

MRS. MILLER: I thought that was kind of funny.

BOB: He had to pay for his water.

MRS. MILLER: Who was that, that killed himself, you might say?

TAFT: You mean the team ...

MRS. MILLER: Yeah.

TAFT: Well, that was a long time ago. Quite a long time ago. He was a driving Chino's freight team. Chino had wagons and teams and he'd do hauling for people, you know. And he had this old

... He's a teamster, and he had a homestead up here. And he'd come in for a load, I don't know whether it was for Beckley or one of these stores or something, you know. Maybe he was going home, it was late at night, and it was snowing in the winter, and cold too. He had six horses and going to Lawen. He'd been a walking, and he went around, I guess there was a little hill in the way, and he went around there to get on the wagon, and it was froze, icy, you know. He put his foot on the brake block and slipped and fell under the wagon and it run over him. His grave is right up there on his place. He was working for old Chino.

PAULINE: They say Chino was a buckaroo boss for the Company.

TAFT: He was buckaroo boss for Pete French.

PAULINE: He was buckaroo boss for Pete French.

TAFT: Yes, sir.

PAULINE: His name was Chino.

TAFT: They called him Old Chino.

PAULINE: That name, started with a B.

TAFT: Berdugo.

PAULINE: Berdugo, yeah.

TAFT: Chino Berdugo, that was his name, yeah. Old Chapel [Chappo] was the proud ...

MRS. MILLER: Who did he belong to?

TAFT: He was at the Double O.

PAULINE: Well, I know this too, but I can't remember so don't laugh at me for asking a silly question. But who had the Double O originally? I mean what was the original ---

TAFT: Hardin and Riley.

PAULINE: Hardin and Riley.

TAFT: That's what they called the Hardin and Riley.

MRS. MILLER: Have you ever watched them brand and mark sheep? I won't generally go. They do it with their teeth. Oh, it just about gagged me; I couldn't look.

PAULINE: Oh, dear.

MRS. MILLER: Isn't that awful?

BOB: Is that the Basques or Mexicans?

MRS. MILLER: Taft's son does it along with the Basques, too. I mean he wouldn't have them do anything he wouldn't do himself. I mean it's just a matter of the way they do it.

TAFT: That's just the way they have to do it, that's all.

MRS. MILLER: Well surely it isn't done that way all over the country, wouldn't you think?

TAFT: Yes, it is.

MRS. MILLER: I can't believe it. I don't doubt you, but ---

TAFT: It is. Ever since I've been born it is.

MRS. MILLER: Those poor little lambs, I felt so sorry for them. Cut their tails off and give them the old stamp brand, and mark them. I guess I'm just not a cattle woman.

PAULINE: Well we always put a rubber band around their tail and after so long it dropped off. That's the other way to do it.

MRS. MILLER: Well, he had so many.

PAULINE: Oh yeah, he couldn't do that.

MRS. MILLER: Yeah, he had several bands. And they just ran them through ---

TAFT: ... Just cut their tail off.

MRS. MILLER: Didn't they run 600? Didn't they run 600 through the other day, or was it 500?

TAFT: It was a little over 500 lambs, but there was about 600 ewes and rams.

MRS. MILLER: Yeah.

BOB: They were marking with their teeth? ...

TAFT: Castrate them, you know.

BOB: Yeah.

MRS. MILLER: They're going to do it again Sunday. (Laughter) Three fellows get inside this little pen and they hold up both feet. They hold them right against their breast, and belly up, and

they walk over to the edge and the --- the fellow that's marking them is on the outside and they go up there --- and I don't know which they do first, whether they cut the tails --- probably?

TAFT: No, they castrate them first.

MRS. MILLER: Castrate them, and then cut the tail off. They can't move, see, they've got the hind leg folded up, and the front leg and have them spread.

TAFT: Oh well, they have to sear that tail on them. Years ago when I was a kid they'd just cut that tail off and let them go. Lots of them bled to death, but now they got to ---

BOB: Why can't they mark them with their knife?

TAFT: Well, they do, cut that off.

MRS. MILLER: Castrate them he means. Do they ever do that with a knife?

TAFT: Well, you can't.

MRS. MILLER: You just can't.

BOB: You mean it isn't done.

TAFT: It ain't done that way, no. There's only one way to mark sheep as long as I've been --- I've seen them run sheep ever since I was a kid, and everybody marks them that way.

PAULINE: Well I've never heard that before.

MRS. MILLER: You haven't? Have you ever seen large groups?

PAULINE: No.

MRS. MILLER: Oh, I see.

PAULINE: I'll have to ask my Aunt Izola a little more about that. See how they did theirs. She'll probably tell you ---

TAFT: She'll tell you, I'll bet you. She'll tell you, because Ben O'Keeffe was a sheep man, and he'd mark them that way.

PAULINE: Well if he wasn't a sheep man, then there never was a sheep man, because he had them for years and years.

MRS. MILLER: And then those were --- that's a delicacy for breakfast.

TAFT: I knew Ben O'Keeffe before he married her, and there was three brothers over there, and they trained one of them. They used to have fighting men in Burns, and one of them, one of his brothers come in there and fought one of them guys in Burns that they brought in there. Whipped him too. I don't know if it was Jim or Bob or something. But Ben and his other brother trained this younger one. I think he was 24 years old. He went in there and fought one of the prizefighters. Right out of the sheep camp, they trained him in the sheep camp.

MRS. MILLER: How about that.

PAULINE: They're Irishmen, that's my Uncle Ben. I have to tell Taft this story about Uncle Ben, because I think he'll appreciate it. But you know Uncle Ben had quite a brogue. In fact, I could understand him if I just sat and listened to every word, and I loved to listen to him talk. But I never did get so it was easy for me to understand what he said. Well, a year ago they went back to Ireland for a visit, and when he came back we asked Uncle Ben if he had a good visit, had a good time. And it had been fifty years since he had been home. He said, "Oh yes, he had had a good visit," but he said, "it sure was good to get home." He said, "I couldn't understand a word anybody was saying over there." (Laughter)

...

TAFT: When the Irish come over here you can't understand them.

PAULINE: Oh, I just laughed and laughed. I sure got tickled because he couldn't understand a word anybody said.

MRS. MILLER: How long did he stay?

PAULINE: Oh, they were there for a couple of weeks is all. It had been the first time he had seen most of his family since ---

MRS. MILLER: That was too long though, wasn't it?

PAULINE: Yeah, it's a long, long time. Well, I imagine I'd better call this a good interview. It has been, and I sure appreciate your taking time to visit with me. It's been really interesting. I've learned a lot of new things.

MRS. MILLER: Well sometimes he can get wound up and just one thing just comes to him right after another. But when you know someone is wanting it from you, you kind of crowd yourself.

PAULINE: It makes it harder, because you're trying to think. But no, I think this is ---

(END OF TAPE)

b1