

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

AV-Oral History #72 - Side A

Subject: Lulu McHargue

Place: Presbyterian Nursing Home - Ontario, Oregon

Date: December 14, 1979

Interviewer: Pauline Braymen

PAULINE BRAYMEN: This is Pauline Braymen, and I'm interviewing Lulu McHargue, on December 14, 1979, at the Presbyterian Nursing Home in Ontario. Were you born in Harney County?

LULU McHARGUE: I was born in Burns.

PAULINE: In Burns. And what was your parent's names?

LULU: W. W. Johnson, they called him "Broady".

PAULINE: Okay, I was wondering when Mr. Jones told me about you, if Broady Johnson was your father.

LULU: And my mother was Carolyn, and her maiden name was Harris.

PAULINE: Were they married in Burns, or did they come to Burns from somewhere else?

LULU: No, they were married in Jefferson.

PAULINE: Do you know when they came to Harney County?

LULU: Well about '49 --- in 19 and 48 or '49. (Corrected to 1848)

PAULINE: What year were you born?

LULU: I was born in '87.

PAULINE: So they probably came in about '84 then.

LULU: Yeah, they probably did. They came by, you know, the wagon train. And there

was a lot of them came together. And I heard my mother talk about being in the train, and where they had to go in a circle, you know, when they camped at night. And then they had different problems with the Indians on their way, and even after they was in Harney County. I guess I must have been a small girl, why they had Indian problems there too, the Paiute Indians.

PAULINE: But they came to Harney County from Jefferson County on the coast?

LULU: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Did they grow up there, or had they come from somewhere else?

LULU: Yes, and I think they were born in Jefferson County.

PAULINE: They were raised in that part of the country. Well tell me about your father, I know the name. What did he do, what was his business?

LULU: He was a saloon man. He had a saloon, and he was a gambler too.

PAULINE: Was that the Red Front Saloon, or do you remember the name of the saloon that he ---

LULU: No, I think it was the White Front.

PAULINE: White Front.

LULU: Uh huh.

PAULINE: You went to school in Burns?

LULU: Yes, I went to school in Burns. And I married when I was quite young. Yeah, I was 16 when I married, and that was when I was out of the eighth grade.

PAULINE: Were you married at home, or in a church?

LULU: Yes, we were married in our home, in our own home.

PAULINE: Do you remember the minister's name?

LULU: I've forgotten it right now.

PAULINE: Did you have a special dress that you wore for the wedding?

LULU: Well I had my Fourth of July dress, but it had to be lengthened. So they took the ruffle off of the top and put it on the bottom. So I had the wedding dress out of my Fourth of July dress. And my husband was in the Red Front delivery stable at that time.

PAULINE: Well that's where I got the Red Front idea; I knew that

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LULU: Uh huh. Well this was --- where my dad's saloon was, it was a saloon. Do you live in Burns now?

PAULINE: I live about three miles out of Burns on a ranch. My dad was Henry Ausmus. Do you remember the Ausmus name?

LULU: Yes, I remember. And do you remember Lloyd Johnson?

PAULINE: I don't, the name sounds familiar, but I don't.

LULU: Well, he was in Lawen; he lived in Lawen.

PAULINE: Okay, I know. Was he related to Wayne Johnson?

LULU: No, no there were other Johnson's, but ---

PAULINE: My dad would probably know, because that's where he grew up.

LULU: LeRoy Johnson probably graduated with your dad.

PAULINE: Yeah, I know LeRoy.

LULU: Uh huh. LeRoy was out to see me one day ... And did you know Hester Goodman?

PAULINE: I know the name.

LULU: He was the sheriff, you know, of Harney County for ten years.

PAULINE: Was he the one that was shot at the Chautauqua? Were you there at the time?

LULU: No, we wasn't in Burns. We was on a homestead. We weren't very far from where he was shot though.

PAULINE: Where did you homestead?

LULU: In the Barren Valley, or Crowley. They named it after we homesteaded there. It was just a barren valley at that time.

PAULINE: Well that's quite a ways from Burns, that's about eight ---

LULU: Well we went by wagon, and we had mules, you know.

PAULINE: How many ---

LULU: We had two little children at that time, two little boys.

PAULINE: How many days did it take to go from Burns to Crowley?

LULU: Just about three days. We stopped at the Visher Ranch the first night, and then on to the Turnbull Ranch, and then home. The Turnbull Ranch was what they call Moreville afterward.

PAULINE: Moreville, that's a new name to me, I don't remember hearing that before.

LULU: Do you know where the Tom Turnbull Ranch was, did you?

PAULINE: I think so. How long did you live at Crowley, or Barren Valley?

LULU: I think it was about twenty years we lived there.

PAULINE: Did you have cattle?

LULU: Uh huh, we ran cattle.

PAULINE: Did you put any crops in at all, or did you have meadow hay?

LULU: Yes, we didn't have very good luck with some of them though. We had to go out and buy hay. He had to take, my husband had to take the cattle across to, you know, to the Owyhee and buy hay. And at that time he had to pay \$35 a ton for it.

PAULINE: That was a good price for those days.

LULU: That was a big price. Then he brought the cattle home, and --- we had to borrow money, you know, to feed the cattle. And of course why we didn't have them very long until they come and took our cattle away from us, because we couldn't make our

payments.

PAULINE: Was this during the depression?

LULU: Uh huh, one depression.

PAULINE: One depression. So are we talking about 1930, or before that?

LULU: No. Then we moved to Vale, and we had two more children then, Marilyn and Jim. They were born at Vale. One of them was born, Jim was born in '30, and Marilyn was born in '33. Of course I had eight children to start in with. Warren was the oldest one.

PAULINE: He was born in Harney County? Warren was the oldest?

LULU: Uh huh. Yeah, he was born in Harney County, and so was my other son. And then of course when we moved over to Crowley, why we were in Malheur County.

PAULINE: I think so. The line goes right through over there some-where.

LULU: My thinker isn't as good as it ought to be --- but I was 92 my last birthday. I will be 93 on February the 14th.

PAULINE: A Valentine's baby?

LULU: Uh huh. My oldest sister was born on Valentine's Day too; she's seventeen years older than I was. And they were all the Johnson bunch.

PAULINE: I've heard of lots of people mention Broady Johnson, especially as one of the early ---

LULU: The old pioneers.

PAULINE: Old pioneers in Burns.

LULU: Well I have his dad's biography, and I have ours. But I got everything all mixed up after I came up here, so I don't know where anything is.

PAULINE: Do you have a daughter, or a son that lives in Ontario or Vale?

LULU: I have five that live right around here close. Jim and Nellie, and Gretchen, Lynn,

and Tim.

PAULINE: You are very lucky to have them so close to you.

LULU: Oh I am. And my oldest daughter though lives in San Diego.

PAULINE: Do you remember what the town of Burns looked like when you were a girl growing up?

LULU: Is that recording now?

PAULINE: Uh huh, uh huh.

LULU: I wanted to hear you ask that?

PAULINE: Okay.

LULU: (Laughter) I remember a long time ago ... at that time, and she had one of them. And oh, we had so much fun with it. She played the piano, and then they said, "Now then, Lulu, sit there and why don't you sing?" It was terrible when I listened at it, after I sang. Because I'm afraid to come home in the dark, and it was dark! (Laughter)

PAULINE: We don't sound to one another, I mean; we don't sound to ourselves as we sound to other people. And it really is a shock when we hear yourselves the first time. Because you don't hear yourself the same way that you sound to other people.

LULU: (Laughter) We really had a ball with that thing. We still talk about it whenever we are together. We remember the things that we said, and it was so silly. But we were quite a bunch anyway. We always liked to laugh and joke.

PAULINE: That's what keeps you young.

LULU: Yes, I think so.

PAULINE: You were talking about your Fourth of July dress. I've heard some other people tell me about their Fourth of July dress. This was a special occasion, wasn't it?

LULU: Oh yes, uh huh. My mother sat up probably until midnight making it.

PAULINE: Was it white?

LULU: Uh huh.

PAULINE: Did it have a sash?

LULU: Well it had ruffles all down.

PAULINE: It had ruffles.

LULU: Yes, and it had a blouse and the sash around the waist, just like they are wearing now.

PAULINE: Do you remember Velfa Richardson?

LULU: Uh, I ---

PAULINE: I can't remember what her maiden name was now. She lived out, they lived out by Wright's Point when they were children, and she had a Fourth of July dress, a special dress to wear then.

LULU: I remember the name very well, but I can't place just who she was. But I went over to Pioneer Days this last time and, well really the only ones that was young, was we grew up together, was Frankie Felton, and her name used to be Shelley. And Grandma Mace, and her name was McQueen. And then I met Frank King; he used to be out on the farm. But there wasn't very many.

PAULINE: No, the people from your era are thinning down, there aren't so many anymore.

LULU: No.

PAULINE: I remember now, I knew I had seen you before. That's where I saw you, at Pioneer Day.

LULU: Uh huh. And that's where I remember seeing you too. Well did you speak or something?

PAULINE: Oh, I think they probably introduced me, because I was there for publicity purposes. In fact, I record the program every year, so that they have a record of that.

LULU: Well that's nice.

PAULINE: And it will be in the library and, you know, years from now people can listen to it and know what it was like. So I usually get introduced, and that's probably why you saw me.

LULU: Uh huh, probably was. Well I think you are doing just very well, and it's nice to think of our young people do remember.

PAULINE: Well it's interesting to find out what it was like when things weren't quite so convenient. Now we jump in our car and we drive to Crowley in a couple of hours, where it took you three days to go. I think it's important to remember these things.

LULU: I think we were all happy. I don't know why, but we were.

PAULINE: Well life, the pace of life was much slower. I think everyone had more time to enjoy.

LULU: Of course we lost a little boy; he was killed with a run away horse. And later lost another baby. Then later on my oldest boy died. But the rest of them are alive.

PAULINE: What was your husband's first name.

LULU: Rush.

PAULINE: Rush McHargue?

LULU: Uh huh, McHargue.

PAULINE: When did he come to Harney County?

LULU: Well he was about; he was 21 I think, when he came.

PAULINE: He was 21 when he came. And you were married shortly thereafter, after he came?

LULU: Yes.

PAULINE: You were 16 when you were married?

LULU: Uh huh. Would you like a drink of grape juice?



PAULINE: Oh, I don't --- I just had lunch, thank you.

LULU: They left some here for me, and I have juice. I just thought I would give you a cup.

PAULINE: Well thank you; I just finished lunch. We ate at the Charolais Restaurant, and they serve a really nice buffet. It was really good.

LULU: I know that Bonnie could furnish you with a lot too.

BONNIE LZICAR: Bonnie what? (Bonnie is Lulu's roommate.)

LULU: I say you could tell a lot of things.

BONNIE: About what?

LULU: About your life.

BONNIE: Oh wow! She isn't interested in --- I came from too far away.

PAULINE: Where did you come from?

BONNIE: Ah, Clinton, Indiana.

PAULINE: You are a long ways from home then. Did you come here to live in Ontario area?

BONNIE: Well when I was 14 years old, my mother --- my father was in the, first my father was in the Civil War, and he died of a heart attack later, after he was out. And that left my older brother, that had finished high school, and my sister older than me. Well you don't want all of this stuff.

PAULINE: Sure, I'm interested; tell me about it.

BONNIE: And a brother two years older than I, he was 16, and I was 14, we were still drawing a pension, my mother drew a widow's pension. And we drew until we were 18. And my brother and his wife decided they ought to go west and see if they could find a new country. Things were just opening up, so they went different places, and finally wound up in Sidney, Montana. Then he came back to Indiana, and he says, "Mother,

we're going to move to Montana." So they chartered a freight car, and put their furniture in it. And my two brothers Bill and Harry; Bill was the oldest; he took father's place, ... freight car to Montana. They had cattle in there too. They had some cattle besides their furniture, and a pig or two, and just things to help start out on our homestead. And he and my mother and my sister, all old enough to file on a homestead. My mother and sister had a homesteads adjoining farther west. My brother and I had to wait until we were old enough of age to take a homestead. My brother and my sister went first and got married, and they lived on theirs. It was on the Little Missouri River, right where the Fort Peck Reservoir is now.

And by the time I was old enough to file, they had you draw numbers, and I drew a number that was way out in Culbertson, Montana, way out in the country. And I registered for a homestead all right. But when I went back to Sidney and told my brother that I was eligible in every way to get a homestead now, he said, "That's fine and dandy! You go right ahead if you want to, but don't expect any help from me, I've had all the homesteading I want." (Laughter)

PAULINE: That sort of left you with a lot of responsibility. Did you go ahead and homestead it? Or ...

BONNIE: Oh, no. It was about 75 or 80 miles out from the railroad. Now you know I had nothing to ---

PAULINE: No way to do that.

BONNIE: No, it just fell by the wayside. And I never have regretted it, really. Because as soon as I was old enough to hold a job, I had all the work I could take care of. And every once in awhile I could invest a little money in a lot or two in this little town we were in, Sidney, and then eventually sell it and make a little money on it. I just thought I did real good.

PAULINE: That was probably a lot more satisfactory than trying to homestead 70 miles from the railroad.

BONNIE: Oh, oh.

PAULINE: That would be almost as bad as Crowley, wouldn't it?

LULU: Yes. I didn't see a train until I was 22 years old.

BONNIE: I didn't even have a horse. No, that was impossible. But anyway it was fun to know that I did it anyway.

PAULINE: Yeah.

BONNIE: That was the fun I got out of it. Well I stayed there until I was old enough to get married, and of course like all young people, I married when I was 21.

PAULINE: Uh huh.

BONNIE: I beat her by a few years.

PAULIN: Yeah.

BONNIE: And, oh Sidney, Montana is terribly cold, and a hard wind in the winter. It is awful, the climate. So my husband and I decided, well our one child, no by that time we had two, we better get to a country where it wasn't quite so cold. As young people we had a lot of fun there in Sidney, but you don't live on fun.

PAULINE: No, this is true. Then did you move further west?

BONNIE: We, I had a sister at Salem, and we decided for Salem. My mother was out there at the time. She, well there was one brother that was still in Indiana, he wouldn't come west. Well he wouldn't because his wife wouldn't; her family was back there, her father and her mother. They were getting old, and she wouldn't leave them, and of course he wouldn't either. So the first part of the summer, my mother would go back there for a few weeks, then she'd come out and visit my sister that lived at White Salmon, Washington. It is just across the river from Hood River. Her husband had an uncle that

lived there, and he was instrumental in getting them out there. So she come out there and spent a lot of time ...

But before we got married he went into business in Sidney, my husband. Anyway, in the meantime, we decided we wanted to go back to a nicer climate, so we came out to Salem. And Salem was an old established town, and there was lots of people there looking for work. Well of course we needed some work too, we didn't want to spend all of our savings. We stayed there until, one winter he read about --- well first though we decided he would go over to Bend ... a mill to see if they had any workers ... We moved to Bend from Salem, then we went on down to Klamath Falls. Then we went back to Salem, then from Salem we went up to Okanogan, Washington. And Frank Crow was building a dam out of Yakima, Washington. He and a couple of fellows were building this dam, and he and my husband had worked together for a while in Montana, and he found out that we were up there, and so he sent a word, sent a message, "Come at once, job waiting." Well of course that was a big inducement to go. We hadn't even unpacked our things yet in Okanogan. And that was quite a valley up there though.

So we went down out of Yakima for a while, trying to send our daughter to school. So I said, "Well now I'll go on down to Salem, and when this job is finished --- see the government usually furnishes schools, but that job was too near finished to start a school that fall, so I put Lorraine in school in Salem. Because I figured I wouldn't be quite alone down there with my mother and sister both there. And he says, "Well I'll tell you, I'll just go along with you." So we went to Salem, and stayed there for a few years.

Then he read about this Owyhee Reservoir being, the dam being built there, because all of the country would be opened up. So he said, "I'm going over there." Oh I said, "Why go alone, I'll just pack up and go with you." Well that was fine, of course. And I said I'll just speak to the lady across the street, we'll get everything ready to move, but

we won't take it until we know where we have to put it. I gave her my sewing machine so that she would feel that she was pretty well, be paid for, calling to transfer to move our things. Then we started out, came to Ontario. That was in '30's, and we've been here ever since.

We have done a lot of traveling since we've been here, just touring. And a lot of different places, all the way from Alaska to Hawaii. But I believe Ontario was home as far as we were concerned. We've been here ever since.

PAULINE: What was your husband's name?

BONNIE: Fred Lzicar.

PAULINE: How do you spell that?

BONNIE: L Z I C A R. It's a --- Oh I suppose right now it would be called Czechoslovakian, but at that time it was Bohemian. But I guess Czech's have incorporated all those little countries around through there.

PAULINE: Did you take up land then and farm, or ---

BONNIE: Oh, no, huh uh, no.

PAULINE: Or you worked on construction?

BONNIE: My husband had homesteaded before we were married. No, there was no more homesteading, no more farming. My husband was a contractor.

PAULINE: He contracted.

BONNIE: And I have a son here that has followed in his father's footsteps. Bob Lzicar, you probably have never heard of him, but he is quite a contractor now. He has a job, right now he has a job in Nebraska, and he has two sons and his one son is there on that job, foreman. And the other son is on a job in South Dakota. He also has a job over at Salem. They must be about finished up over there now, the May Transfer Company. My husband passed away in 1970. Of course unlike a lot of other women, I'm a widow.

PAULINE: How old are you now?

BONNIE: I was born in '92.

PAULINE: In '92.

BONNIE: 1892.

PAULINE: 1892, in Indiana.

BONNIE: In Indiana, uh huh.

PAULINE: Well you're due for a movie, so I'm going ...

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