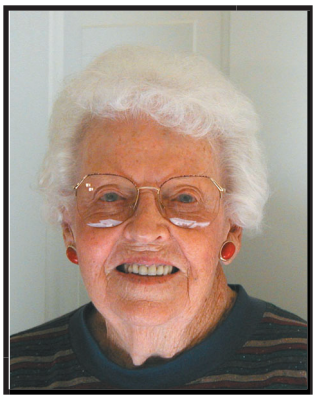
LAUROSE HIBBERD

Union County resident for 88 years

AN ORAL HISTORY



Interviews in April & October, 2003
at her home in Elgin OR

Interviewers: Emily Correll & Eugene Smith

UNION COUNTY, OREGON HISTORY PROJECT
2004
(revised from 2003)

UNION COUNTY, OREGON HISTORY PROJECT
An Affiliate of the Oregon Historical Society

A non-profit, tax-exempt corporation formed in 2002

In collaboration with Eastern Oregon University
Cove Improvement Club History Committee
Elgin Museum & Historical Society
Union Museum Society

Purposes

To record & publish oral histories of long-time Union County residents
&
To create a community encyclopedia

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copies of transcripts are $4.00 each + shipping & handling

Preface

Much of the history of a place is stored in the memories of people who have lived there. Their stories may be told to family members, but, unless someone makes a special effort to record these stories, they become lost to future generations.

Each of the historical societies in Union County, Oregon has begun to make that effort. Tape recordings exist in several locations, some of them transcribed in written form, others not. A more ambitious and thorough effort seemed necessary so that more of the oral history of Union County could be captured and preserved.

The Union County, Oregon History Project, begun in 2002, is making that more ambitious effort. One of its principal purposes is to collect as many oral histories of older Union County residents as possible and to make them available in both taped and written form. This edited transcript is part of the series of oral histories to be produced by that project.

About the Interviews and This Edited Version

Two interviews with Laurose Hibberd took place at her home in Elgin OR. At age 88, she is remarkably agile, both physically and mentally.

The first interviewer was Emily Correll, a volunteer with the Union County, Oregon History Project. She completed a one-hour interview on April 4, 2003. Eugene Smith was the second interviewer on October 4.

Heather Filling's full transcription (available for research purposes) presents the literal contents of both interviews. The edited version presented here differs from the literal transcription in the following characteristics;

- reorganization of content

- deletion of some extraneous comments

- omission of false sentence starts and other normal speech fillers that detract from readability

- normalization of pronunciation and grammar in conformity with standards of written English.

LH designates Laurose Hibberd's words, *I* the interviewer's.

CONTENTS

Laurose's Family Background

I: I know that you have lived in Union County for a long time. When did your parents come here?

LH: [reading from a family history document] Scott Edwin Harris, my father, was born June 20, 1878 in Fayette County, Illinois in the old Harris home ten miles northwest of Adalia, Illinois. In March, 1880, with his parents and sister he moved to Louten, North Dakota and lived there six months. Then they moved to Glencoe, Minnesota, lived there for one year, and moved next to Mill Bank, South Dakota. They were there one summer.

Scott was a very sick little boy; he had fever and was hardly able to get up when they left the north for the west coast. They took the emigrant train for San Francisco, came from there up the Pacific Coast in a steam ship, Queen of the Pacific, and arrived in eastern Washington in November, 1882.

After wintering at Steptoe Butte, they came to Union County in April, 1883 and took a donation claim in the Trout Creek area, eight miles north of what is now Enterprise. When they first settled there, Wallowa County and Union County were all together. They did not like the life in Wallowa County very well and did not encourage other family members to come.

The scattered community erected a little log schoolhouse on the Harris claim. When Scott was eight years old, his mother and aunt, the first teachers, were teaching five other kids and got $25 a month for services for five months.

In 1890, when he was eleven years old, the family moved to Elgin. As there was no school building there, they asked for use of their small merchant store in the Mayes and Masterson build ing. A new school was erected that year, where Mae Harris, his sister, was one of the teachers. In 1894, Leonard Couch opened a preparatory school in Elgin, taking the place of a high school.

[resuming extemporaneous speaking] In the summer of 1899, my father taught school on Gordon Creek. He graduated in 1900 from Oregon State University, the first person to graduate in pharmacy from Oregon State. In the OSU alumni magazine seven or eight years ago, there was a picture of my dad with the caption "First pharmacist to graduate from Oregon State School of Pharmacy." There's also a picture of the inside of the drugstore he established in Elgin. It's still a drugstore down here on the comer [at N. 8th Street and the Tollgate Highway]—the only one in Elgin.

I: Why did your dad sell the drugstore?

LH: It was before I started to school. He decided in about 1920 to sell the two orchards he owned and relocate the drug business in Portland. When I was about five years old and Marie was about three. Daddy took Grandpa and Grandma with us when we moved to Portland and spent a winter. He had to take the orchards back because the sale didn't go through, so we come back to the orchards. In later years. Daddy did a lot of relief work in the drugstore.

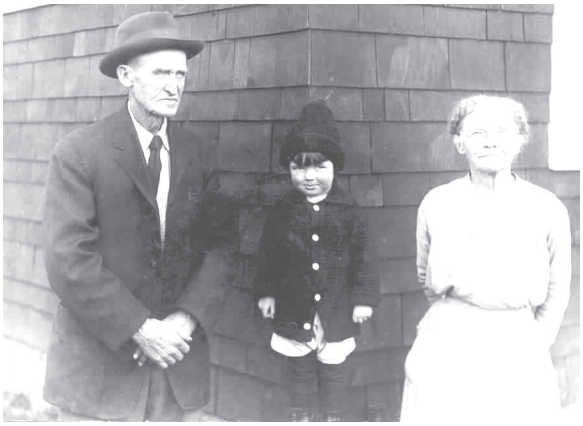
I: Was your mother born in Elgin?

LH: No. My mother came to Elgin in 1906 to teach school. She married my dad after he had established the drugstore; they got married in 1912. I was bom June 3,1915.

Photos from the Harris/Hibberd Collection

Courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

Anna Harris, Laurose's grandmother, buried in Elgin



Edwin & Anna Harris, grandparents, with Laurose, 1918

Laurose, 1917

Laurose (l.) & sister Marie Harris, 1920

House in Elgin built by Laurose's parents, 1921,
(all archtectural features are Craftsman style,
retained as of 2003)

Josephine & Scott Harris,
Laurose's parents, 1920s

Enlarged detail from photo
at right: Pharmacist Harris

Drugstore in Elgin owned and operated by
Scott Harris, 1905-21 (Derv's Drugstore at same
site, 2003, with pressed metal ceiling still intact)

Laurose's Birth in Elgin

I: Were you bom in the town of Elgin?

LH: Yes. About a block from where I live now.

I: Was that a home birth?

LH: Yes. Dr. Whiting was the doctor, and I was delivered at home. Mrs. Brown, a good friend of my mother's, who lived across the street, was the first lady to see me. There was also a lady named Grandma Russell, who was kind of a midwife. She went with the doctors, helped take care of thc babies, and generally stayed for a week or so with the mothers.

School and Other Social Experiences

I: I suppose you went to school Elgin. Can you describe that?

LH: Yes. It was a brick schoolhouse that burned during the war, with the grade school and the high school in it. The present grade-school gym in Elgin was brand new when I was a freshman in high school.

I graduated from high school in 1933, was president of the senior class, and was active in sports. When I was a junior and senior, the basketball team from Elgin High School was an undefeated team. We beat Imbler forty-eight to two. I have a gold basketball, given to the most valuable player on the team.

It was a different kind of basketball then. Teams had six players; the court was divided into three sections. Each team had a jump center and a running center, forwards on one side and guards on the other. Players could only dribble once. We had a man coach, and he was good.

I: Which teams did you play?

LH: We played in what was known as the Two Valley League, which included Joseph, Enterprise, Wallowa, Elgin, Imbler, Cove, and North Powder. We also had scrimmages, or practice games, that weren't in the league, and we played Catholic schools in La Grande and Baker.

I: Do you remember the games you played as a little kid?

LH: I was in high school during the Depression, and kids didn't have a lot of money. We made our own entertainment. For example, farmers out on Cricket Flat [north of Elgin] had house parties or dances a lot of times. They'd take all the furniture out of the front room and we'd dance. My mother used to say, "I'd think those people would get tired of you kids coming out there." There would be maybe a carload or two of kids, bringing our own sandwiches. We'd circle two-step to the music of a fiddle and a piano.

We kids went to dances at the Grange Hall north of Elgin; the last dance there was when we were seniors in high school. One of the boys had a team of horses and a sled with hay that took about 20 of us kids there in the snow. We had a good time.

I: How was the school divided into classes?

LH: There were eight elementary grades and four in the high school. We took penmanship by the Palmer method. When we graduated from eighth grade, the county school superintendent came out from La Grande for eighth grade graduation and presented certificates.

High school didn't have a lot of extra-curricular classes. I had algebra and geometry, four years of English, history, geography, typing, and law. I think we had to have about the same number of credits as students do now.

We had operettas and plays. Each class gave a play; one was *Aaron Slick from Pumpkin Creek*. About twenty years later, we did it again at the high school, with the same cast except for one person. We also had a debating team, which I was on.

I: Was your graduation ceremony in the Elgin Opera House?

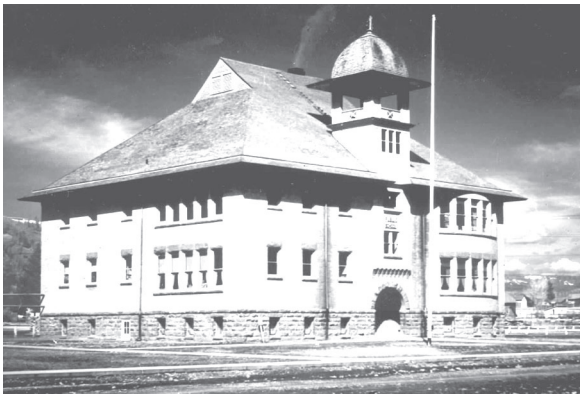
LH: In those days that's where we graduated. I was valedictorian of the class of 1933.

I: Do you remember anything about your valedictory speech?

LH: I think I have a copy of it, but I don't know just where it is. Have you seen the curtains backstage?

I: Yes.

LH: Everybody signed their names; my name is on that curtain. There's a little peek hole we could peek out and see the crowd.



Elgin High School, ca. 1930
Photo courtesy of Fred Hill

The alumni association had a banquet for the graduating class that same night. We walked down the street to a room above the drugstore--a kind of lodge hall and banquet room. The alumni association still meets, but hardly ever does a graduating class come to it. Kids are too busy.

We got an education that was adequate for our times. Our class was small--only ten in the class--and there are only two of us left.

Visits to La Grande

I: When you were young, did you ever go to La Grande?

LH: I have a picture of my dad when he had the drugstore, taken in 1916; that picture would have been taken in La Grande. Maybe once a year we went into town to do a little Christmas shopping. The old road, instead of coming as it does now, went down through our pasture below Hamburger Hill [a promi nent land feature approximately one mile south of Elgin, so called because several cattle were hit by cars on the new highway near that hill]--a muddy road that was the only way into Elgin. One time we had stayed in La Grande a little too long and it was raining. We got stuck in the mud, my sister and I in the

Elgin Opera House, where Elgin High School graduations occurred in the 1930s
Photo courtesy of Shirley Peters

back seat, wrapped in a robe made out of four coyotes, with a tail on each comer. Mother was out there in the rain, trying to push the car. My folks were a little unhappy with each other--in the rain and at night.

When I was in high school, we did most of our business in La Grande. There used to be a dance hall, Zuber Hall, in La Grande. Dick was raised in La Grande.

Working in Apple Packing

I: What did you do when you graduated from high school?

Out of our class, during the Depression, only one boy went on to college. He later taught school at Milton-Freewater [approximately seventy-five miles northwest of Elgin], My mother wanted me to go to college. I didn't go to college though I probably could have. Raising and shipping apples was a big indus try in Elgin, and, since my dad had an apple orchard and a packing shed, I sorted apples there. That's what I did the first year after high school; I got married the second year, when I was nineteen, in 1934.

Laurose at high school graduation, 1933
Photo courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

I: Did the Depression have a big effect on you?

LH: It did on my folks, yes, because my dad lost the orchards during the Depression. When he got a carload of apples, wrapped and packed, back to Kansas City, there was no market for them. Apples aren't like wheat; they rot. His health wasn't good either. He sold the orchards because he had to.

He became Justice of the Peace and was city clerk. My dad was also school clerk for many years, and, when he died, they hired my mother as school clerk till she was not so young anymore.

When I was in high school, my mother took in boarders to get by; school teachers stayed with her. Yes, the Depression affected our lives, but Marie and I as children always had plenty to eat and always had a good time. It was the same for all the kids. A song of the time said it: "Potatoes are cheaper, tomatoes are cheaper, and now's the time to fall in love."

Meeting and Marrying Dick Hibberd

I: How did you meet Dick Hibberd?

Elgin apple orchard, 1919
Photo courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

LH: He had inherited the ranch where our daughter, Mary Hibberd West, lives now. He was young, and he used to come to Elgin to the dances; that's where we got acquainted. When I was in high school, Dick refereed basketball games. I went with him while I was working in the apple packing.

We lived in a bunkhouse on the ranch, where there was no electricity, a well with a hand pump out back, and a toilet outside. In about 1936 or '37, we got electricity from Imbler, paying $500 a year for five years. We moved to another house and lived there during World War II.

I: Was that difficult for you?

LH: I was young and busy and I didn't have kids, so I didn't miss the conveniences. I used to come to Elgin to visit my mother and always took a bath there.

I: How long was it before you had kids?

LH: A long time--seventeen years before Carrie was born. When Carrie was born, I was thirty-seven. I had Mary when I was thirty-nine--both born after the war. We wanted to have kids, but we just didn't have kids until then. I did a lot of doctoring and probably could have had a dozen after fixing whatever was wrong with me.

I: Did that change your life a lot?

LH: Yes, a lot--if you've been married seventeen years and you have a husband that likes to go places. He could come in, say he wanted to go to China in five minutes, and expect me to be ready. You just don't do that with kids. My mother was alive then and liked to be with the kids. She'd call up and say, "Don't you and Dick want to go someplace this weekend?" She wanted to come out to the ranch and baby-sit Carrie and Mary. She did a lot of it.

Daily Life in Laurose's Early Years

I: What was day-to-day life like when you were young?

LH: When I was married?

I: Yes.

LH: We didn't have a refrigerator. We had a wood stove that had a reservoir, where we could heat water and wash the dishes on the top of the stove. When we got electricity and water, we had a toilet and bath in the house.

The hay crews were different from those of today. Now you can swath the hay, bunch it, and go with the bale wagon. One person can do most of the work. But then, hay was stacked long on a haystack. We generally had two or three men on the stack with buck rakes to bring in the hay and four or five on the haying crew. We had a thrashing machine for the grain, binding the grain and bringing it to the thrasher. Of course, now it's all combines. We had way more hand labor. Over the years we had quite a nice crew of kids; we fed them without the modern conveniences. Nowadays they bring their sandwiches or go to the Imbler store and get something.

I: What about homemaking?

LH: You mean cooking and sewing?

I: And keeping house. Do you think it's less important now?

LH: I never worked outside of our home. When we had the kids, we generally had a girl in the summertime to help cook. I did other work at home.

I got Best of Show at the county fair for pickles. And I canned food--even meat. When I grew up as a kid, we canned everything. The folks had the fruit orchard after Daddy had sold the drug-store. We had berries and a big garden. Where Mother washed down in the basement were shelves full of canned foods. We even put eggs in a water glass --a crock--that preserved them. They weren't really a good egg to eat but all right for making a cake. We were allowed a cow in town, and we generally had a pig or two and chickens. We were very self-sufficient.

Building a Ranching Business

I: How were you and Dick involved in farming?

LH: When the war [World War II] came along, it took a lot of the young men. Farming was important because of the need to feed the army. Using a point system, young men who owned a certain amount of land devoted to farming could be deferred. We had enough points to get five men deferred. Lee Rudd was one of them. He lived on the ranch with us. When he was the only man left, he came to Dick and said, "You know, all my friends are goin' to war and I want to go, too." When Lee left, we sold the milk cows and the hogs.

That's when we put our crews together with a friend of ours that lived out on Cricket Flat. Our hay land got ripe and ready to cut before his; after we cut, we went out there and put up his hay. Women worked out in the fields, too. We milked a bunch of cows and had hogs. Then Dick established a herd of polled [i.e., naturally hornless] Herefords. He had bought them before we were married, eventually ending up with two hundred head of registered Hereford cows. He was very active in livestock sales and shows. He was inducted into the Polled Hereford Hall of Fame, along with several breeders throughout the United States.

I: I bet that was a lot of work.

LH: It was. We showed cattle and sold bulls. We even shipped Herefords to Japan, Alaska and, I believe, China. At that time, livestock shows had more purebred cattle--Angus, Hereford, or Shorthorns--than now, when there are so many mixed breeds. Dick was a director of the American Polled Hereford Association for six years, and he was also on the board of the National Western, which was a big show in Denver.

I: When you were on the farm, did you get the water for the animals and the crops from the river?

LH: We had a well. After electricity came, we had watering troughs, and we irrigated our land. We used to have to pack the pipes, but now they're on wheels and everything's a lot easier. We lived along the river and there was a slough, so the cattle got their water either from the river or the slough.

Cattle Shows

I: Did you take your animals to shows?

LH: Yes. We had a purebred herd and sold bulls and heifers. We had a show string, which had to be fed really well. Nowadays there are not as many breeds that have their own shows. Another differ-

ence is the artificial insemination being done now; we figured one bull to twenty-five cows, which made quite a bull market that doesn't exist now.

I: You'd have to pack up the show string into a trailer and haul it?

LH: Yes, that's right. We had to wash them, curl their tails, and teach them how to stand by scratching them on the stomach. They used to say I was the best bull-lail-curler in Oregon. I don't know whether I was. We fluffed the tail up in a ball and tied it up on the back of the tail. We wanted the cows to look taller or bigger than they would if the tail was down long and dragging on the ground. Nowadays they just clip the tail.

4-H Club Leadership

LH: Both Dick and I led a 4-H club for about twenty years and a beef club.

I: What happens at a 4-H meeting, typically?

LH: They have a form that they follow. They give the 4-H pledge, which is, "I pledge my heart to ..." I've forgotten it. They pledge allegiance to the flag and then they open their business meeting.

I: Did somebody teach a skill of some kind?

LH: Yes, oftentimes. Or if someone was getting ready to take an animal to stock show, we showed how make a halter and gave demonstrations on how to get an animal ready for the stock show. If you've gone to the county fair, you've seen 4-H sewing and cooking demonstrations. 1 remember one time the kids were getting ready to take their steers to the fair. and they were also baking bread. They'd run out and wash a steer and then come in and work on their bread.

I: Where were 4-H meetings held?

LH: In homes most generally, though now they're held at the school in Imbler.

Dick Hibberd with his bronzed hat, awarded for outstanding service, at a convention in Kansas City of polled Hereford breeders, 1975
Photo courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

Dick's bronzed hat as it appeared on Laurose's kitchen wall, 2003
Photo by Eugene Smith

Dick and another lady led the horse club--the Indian Valley Riders--which is still in Elgin. He had about thirty-five kids in that. They met at the Stampede Hall a lot.

I: Would any given 4-H group be subdivided to boys' activities and girls' activities?

LH: When I was active in the 4-H State Leaders' Association, I won a trip to Kansas City for leadership training. A lot of those midwest towns met in a local place and broke off into different clubs--horse, sewing, or cooking, for example. We've never done that in Union County. I don't think Oregon has ever taken that approach; at least they didn't when 1 was active.

I: So might there be some boys learning how to sew and cook?

LH: Yes.

I: And girls, of course, taking care of horses?

LH: Yes. That's right.

I: Did they pay dues?

LH: Yes. They have a little dues and a moneymaking project, too, for some of their activities.

I: What do the h's stand for? Home?

LH: Health.

I: Happiness?

LH: Something like that, but I forgot. It's been a long time. [*4-H* stands for head, heart, hands, and health.]

I: What would you say are the ideals of the 4-H?

LH: It's to develop leadership and working together and teaching skills and knowledge. You can belong to a 4-H club that involves about any type of thing from livestock to sewing to cooking to mechanics to birds or anything.

I: I thought everything was related in some way to farming.

LH: Yes. Originally probably, but a lot of city kids and in the Portland area belong; it would he the same way with Future Farmers of America. It started with farming, but nowadays the farming community is a real minority. So it's any type of club for young people who want to develop knowledge.

I: It sounds as though it's become very similar to scouting then.

LH: I imagine 4-H was probably at one time stronger than scouting because they have paid 4-H county agents. We've lost 4-H agents in this county in the last year because of budget shortage.

When Carrie and Mary, our daughters, were in school, I had a sewing club, too. We took the kids camping. For one trip, the kids trucked their horses to the stampede grounds [in Elgin], and we rode up Clark's Creek to Billy Hindman's ranch. We camped out on the top at that spring there and ended up at Cove [approximately twenty miles southeast of Elgin], The kids went swimming, and that was a nice trip.

Effects of Technology

I: Has technology made a big difference in your life?

LH: When we had two hundred head of registered cows, we had to know what bull each cow was bred to, when they calved, and whether it was a heifer or a

bull. They were tattooed by hand. Now Mary has all that information in the computer. She can talk to somebody by e-mail. But technology hasn't had much effect in my life because I figured I was too old to tax my brain.

I: Do you remember when the telephone came in?

LH: We always had a telephone here in town. When I lived on the ranch, it was a farmers' line that went down Brooks Lane and up on Pumpkin Ridge [approximately three miles southwest of of Elgin]. I think there were eleven people on it. The phone box had a crank. When Dick got the ranch going, we eliminated the eleven people and had our own phone line that came to the ranch. We still had a crank phone.

Eastern Star and Rainbow Girls

I: Were you involved with organizations other than 4-H and the beef club?

LH: I belonged to the Eastern Star and was really active in that organization.

I: What did you do in it?

LH: I became Worthy Grand Matron at the state level before I got through.

I: Was it a requirement that you wear a fancy dress?

LH: Yes. You didn't always have to have a fancy dress, but you weren't allowed to wear pants.

I: What did Eastern Star do in Elgin?

LH: The Eastern Star put on plays in the Elgin Opera House to raise money. Rainbow Assembly was a young girls' organization that the Eastern Star sponsored; we had an assembly here in Elgin of thirty plus. I was district deputy for Rainbow Girls. La Grande, Union, Baker, and Enterprise each had one.

I: Did the Rainbow Girls organization have purposes that were at all like 4-H?

LH: Yes, the same quality of developing young people and especially girls--teaching them how to walk and live. We expected them to be dressed up when they come to the meetings.

I: When you say teaching them how to walk, what do you mean?

LH: Have you seen some kids slump around?

I: Yes.

LH: We also taught how young women should present themselves in front of the public--to be the nice, young lady type. They're thinking about reinstating it in Elgin because they figure a lot of young girls need to know how to dress and need to know how to present

Laurose as Worthy Grand Matron of Eastern Star, ca. 1957
Photo courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

themselves in front of the public and to speak out in front of people.

I: Would the Rainbow organization have said anything to the girls about moral behavior?

I: Yes. We didn't get into details, but we expected them to be good, young women that set an example. I was talking this last winter to a mother who had been a Rainbow Girl. She said, "I wish we had it now. The kids today just don't have the values that we learned when we grew up." I won't say that to everybody, but there are lots of girls they could help.

I: Do you think Rainbow could still be a powerful influence on them?

LH: They could, but you know there are so many activities for girls now, like girls' sports, that there weren't when Rainbow was most active. If a girl is playing on a girls' basketball team, the coach expects her to be there to practice.

We had our strongest Rainbow group here in Elgin when the superintendent of schools set aside Wednesday evenings for church and Rainbow activities; there were no school activities on Wednesday nights. He was superintendent for seventeen years--a good number of years. But you don't find that nowadays, when there's a lot of emphasis on sports.

Performing wth the Elgin Stampeders

LH: Dick and I were charter members of the Elgin Stampeders, a drill team. Dick was drill master for twenty years. I rode in the Elgin Stampede horse-drill team for many years and in parades through out eastern Oregon.

I: Tell me a little more about the drill team.

LH: We were a mounted drill team--husbands and wives. About twenty couples did square dances, all dressed alike. The outfits we wore are at the Elgin Museum. We did square dances on horseback. In a gallop we did figure eights and thread the needle. We ended up with a big S, which meant Stampede, and then unwound it. We went to Chief Joseph Days in Joseph and over to Union and La Grande, where we put on our drill and rode in the parades. We were quite active.

I: Do you mean to say that you square danced while you were riding on the horses?

LH: We were riding, galloping. When we did an allemande left, we bent in and out and met our partners. We sashayed through the middle and turned around.

I: Wasn't it somewhat difficult to get the horses to do the right things?

LH: Yes. It was a good place to break a horse. Not really. After the first time or two those horses were pretty manageable.

I: Do you think the horses enjoyed doing it?

LH: I don't know.

I: You know so much about horses that I should think you could tell their moods.

LH: They were ready to go when the music started and the gates opened.

I: Did you use recorded music?

LH: Yes, it was recorded music. It was

called the *Banjo Gallop*. The horses almost galloped to the rhythm of the tune. It was fun.

I: This must have taken a large amount of practice.

LH: Every summer from about the first of June till the middle of July, twice a week, we practiced. The horses got so they pretty much knew what they were doing. One time there were a couple of the fellows who had a little too much to drink. I had to meet one of them on an allemande left. I could see that I was going to hit his horse, so I pulled out a little and thought, "Well, it's just my knee on horse flesh. It's not gonna hurt too bad." I really should have pulled out a little more. It did hurt. A horse is pretty solid to hit on a gallop.

I: Would a drill master at that time have had a book or a manual to get ideas from?

LH: No. My husband figured out what we'd do.

I: Were you performing in a large arena with people in the stands?

LH: Yes.

I: How long did each routine take?

Laurose and Dick as grand marshalls of Eastern Oregon Livestock show, Union, 1996
Photo courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

LH: Eight minutes. They've never discontinued the drill at Stampede, and Stampede is about fifty-six years old. But there are more kids today, sixteen up to twenty years old; we were an adult team.

A Traumatic Incident for All to See

LH: In 1960-61, when I was president of the Oregon Cowbelles or Cattlewomen, Dean Fresnick was head of the animal husbandry department at Oregon State University. I was advisor with him to the Junior Hereford Association. He dreamed up the idea of a Hereford display in Meier and Franks' [a major department store in Portland] windows during Agricultural Week in 1969: John Williams, now a county agent but a boy then; George Chandler, a grandson of Chandler Hereford in Baker; a Conklin boy; and my daughter Carrie. The dis play was in the corner window of the store. This was one of the traumatic episodes of my life.

A doctor in Portland had two boys who raised Herefords; I contacted them to use and gentle a Hereford calf to put in Meier and Franks' window. They promised that they'd do it. The four kids and I from eastern Oregon were there to put on the display. We got our meals and room at the Imperial Hotel paid for a week. The Chandler boy and the Conklin kids from Baker brought a pickup and went to pick up the calf and make a beautiful display--a rail fence, chaps, saddles, and straw.

I was walking up Broadway, heading toward Meier and Frank, when the Chandler kid came running toward me and said, "We've got to tranquilize the calf. He's wild! Run to the phone and call a vet." So I went back to the hotel and called a vet, who said, "Oh, he'll be all right. Just everybody back quietly out of the window and turn him loose."

I went back to the store, where the display seemed OK, but soon after I got out of the window and was walking down the steps, I heard a tinkle of glass. That calf took three circles and jumped through the window. He jumped right over a couple of Hari Krishna kids--with their hair shaved and orange robes--who were setting up at the window to play their music. The two boys from Baker jumped out the window after the calf and flanked him on Broadway.

We were all in shock. Some executive from the top floor of Meier and Frank came down and said, "Who's responsible here?" I said, "I guess I am." He said, "Was anybody hurt?" I said, "No." He repeated it four times: "Are you positive nobody was hurt?" I said, "Yes, nobody was hurt." Then he stepped out of the window and laughed and laughed. He got a big piece of plywood to put up that day until they could replace the glass.

Afterwards a boy from Oregon City that belonged to my club said, "I've got a gentle calf. I can go bring it in." He brought it in in the morning, and it stayed there on display.

I: Were you invited again?

LH: No. I don't think they've ever had it again.

The Imbler and Elgin Communities

I: Was there a strong sense of community in this area?

LH: Oh, yes!

I: Were churches an important part of what was going on?

LH: Yes. There was a Presbyterian church here that burned down. It was on the Tollgate Highway [i.e., the road heading northwest out of Elgin]. We were married in the Presbyterian church; the minister from La Grande came out and married us.

And a little Methodist church also burned. I started out as a little kid at the Methodist church. My sister had seven years of perfect attendance at this little Methodist church. Later, she went to college but got married before she finished. She was over sixty years old when she went back to college to finish up a year or two and graduated, cum laude, I think it was.

About the time of Second World War, I wrote stories for the local newspaper. If there was something that happened in Elgin, I'd report it. For example, our riding club, the Elgin Stampeders, used to have activities, like camping every summer into the north Minam meadows or one of the high mountain lakes. When we came back from the trip, the editor always wanted an article in the paper. I wrote several of those. [See two examples in Appendix B.] I got in the habit of writing when I was secretary of the Oregon Polled Hereford Association and wrote a newsletter that was published about every month, entitled "Polled Herefords along the Oregon Trail."

I: How did you make the arrangement with the editor of the *Elgin Recorder* that you would write articles?

LH: I either volunteered or he asked me. I don't remember now who the editor was. They always looked forward to my stories; some of them were exaggerated a little, but it made good writing.

I: Was there any question of being paid for them?

LH: No.

I: Why did you want to go to the trouble of writing them and having them published?

LH: I guess I just enjoyed writing.

I: What did people say about your writing?

LH: Even yet people will say, "I wish you were still writing."

I: Were you aware when you were writing these articles that you were helping to preserve history?

LH: No, but I always enjoyed history. In school I enjoyed history.

I: Were you writing at all about events that occurred before you were born?

LH: Yes. [showing a newspaper clipping] This little article is about visiting my grandmother's grave. She came west and homesteaded up Succor Creek, which is out of Caldwell, Idaho. It's also a little bit about the stock show--all bits and pieces.

I: Did you start with a pen or pencil or typewriter?

LH: I broke my wrist and arm and couldn't type, so they were handwritten. However, my daughter, Mary, typed them so they were readable. I am a poor writer.

Trip by the Elgin Stampeeders to Bowman Basin in the Wallowa Mountains, 1958--one of the subjects Laurose wrote about
Photo courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

I: How long did it take you to write each article, do you think?

LH: Probably four hours. I got my thoughts jotted down the first day and then went over them to reword them and try to make my spelling so they could read it. Other stories were accounts of things we did in the Stampeders. It wasn't every week, but, if something happened, I'd write it.

I: Was any of your information coming from stories other people told you?

LH: Other people or my parents.

I: Were you using any kind of research?

LH: I researched that, yes.

I: Letters? Diaries?

LH: Yes. Jacob Hug, I think was his name, had a diary about the Hug family's homesteading up on Pumpkin Ridge [approx. two miles south of Elgin]. His son or grandson gave me his diaries and I wrote from what he had said--about going to Summerville for the dance on Saturday night, or the family's having a big potluck on Sunday, or his taking apples to Elgin in the wagon and going to the flouring mill at Island City to have his wheat ground into flour. It was all in that diary.

Involvement in Local Politics and Civic Events

I: Can you describe any political issues that you remember having a significant impact on the community, like laws

that were passed that everyone was upset about?

LH: Dick got involved with getting electricity out in the valley--the PUD [Public Utility District]. He got himself on the board and was responsible for getting cheap, government electricity to farms. That was about the extent of our political activity.

I: What other civic activities were you involved in?

LH: My folks were quite involved with the school and with the city of Elgin. Daddy was on the school board, and Mother was on the school board for years. I was president of the state 4-H Leaders' Association and won a trip to Salt Lake City. I've done quite a bit.

I helped with 4-H and a Brownie Scout group. I was on the the Imbler School Board. I was on the fair-maid board for several years. We were responsible for the fair maids--selecting them, getting their clothes, and seeing mat they got to the fair.

I was on the fair board for probably twenty years, and I was also a rater, appointed by the Department of Agriculture for Oregon. I rated about six fairs--every fair in Oregon but Union and Polk counties. We gave points for several parts of the fair, and each one of those points represented so many dollars they got from the State of Oregon. I did that after the kids were up and gone, and I enjoyed that. We had a motorhome and Dick went with me. Since we were both retired, it gave us something to do in the summer.

Pickles were my hobby. I took my home-preserved pickles to the Union County Fair in 1998, where I got Best of Class; I won all the ribbons for pickles.

Dick Hibberd's Death and Laurose's Move Back to Elgin

I: When did Dick die?

LH: Dick died in 2000. He was ninety-two when he died on May 24, 2000. I moved back here to Elgin about a year ago.

I: Can you tell me a little of the background of this house?

LH: Yes. It's listed in Houses of Historical Note in Elgin. When Dick and I moved here in 1986, we put in new flues. You could not put a stove in these old flues, so we put in gas heat over there in the corner. We had to put a new flue up on the outside. That's the only thing that kept it from qualifying as a historical

Laurose with the ribbons she won for her home-preserved pickles at the 1998 Union County Fair
Photo courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

Laurose and Dick Hibberd in 2000, shortly before his death
Photo courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

house, but it is listed. There are pictures of it in the Elgin Museum.

I: Is there a written explanation of who built it and when?

LH: A man by the name of Boss Masterson built the house with a picket fence around it. He owned the whole block—the house, a horse carriage, a barn for a cow, and a little orchard. It was built in about 1895 or'96.

I don't know who they sold it to. Over the years it was known as Indian Valley Lodge--not a bed and breakfast but a place where you could stay, with a neon sign above the front door. The Union County Fair used to be in Elgin. Maxine Conley, a good friend of mine, remembers coming to the fair at Elgin and sleeping in a bedroom upstairs.

When Mother bought it in about 1946, my father wasn't well, and Mother didn't drive. She was two blocks from town here, The two cabins that are still next to the house were really Elgin's first motel. She rented the rooms in the motel and lived here twenty years till she died. I rented it for twenty years, and then it was time for Dick and me to get off the ranch so we fixed it up. We lowered the ceilings. They're still high [approx. ten feet], but we took three feet off of these ceilings and insulated. The house was very comfortable--cool in the summer. And the same way with the upstairs.

The Hibberd historic house in Elgin
Photo by Eugene Smith

This Christmastime the Methodist Church is sponsoring a money-making tour of houses they pick out. They asked me if I would be on the tour. I said yes kind of reluctantly--not that I mind them coming--but I'm not so young and decorating a house is a little work at Christmastime.

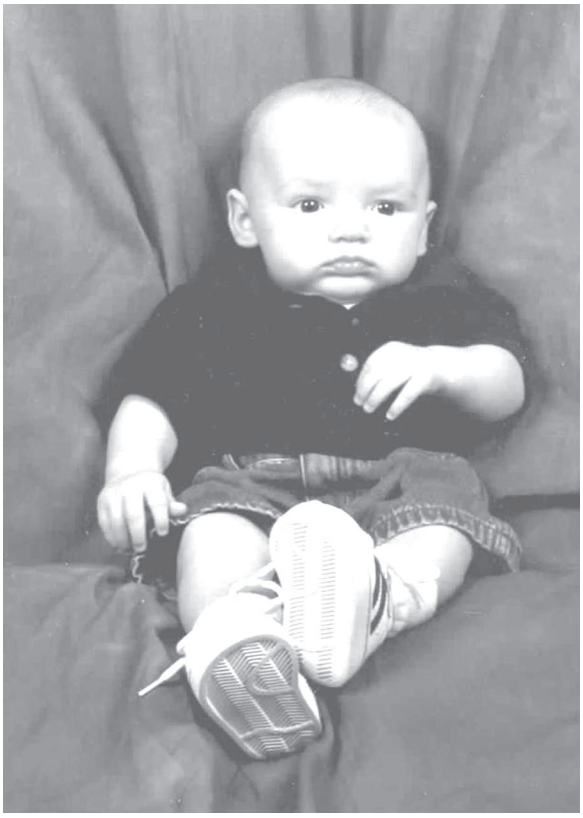
I: Maybe they'll help you.

LH: They said they would. I'm not going all out, though. Some years I have. They wanted a little bit of history.

Afterword

LH: [written after the interviews] As I look back on my life, they were all good times, even the Depression. My parents were always there for my sister and me --three good meals a day, served sit down at the table. Church, family, and school activities kept me busy. Being married, living on the farm and working together with good families were busy, happy times. My husband, Dick, supported me in all my community activities and I in his. We were blessed with two beautiful daughters, Carrie Jo Hibberd Bingaman--and her children Wade, Kristin, and Sarah--and Mary Hibberd West, who gave us four more grandchildren, J.D. and Jamie Cant, and Nick and Reva West.

The farm is a Century Farm, homesteaded by Phares Wade, who brought the first wagon train to Summerville in 1862. The sixth generation arrived on June 4, 2003: Nathan Wade Bingaman, my first great grandchild.



Nathan Wade Bingaman,
Laurose's first great grandchild
Photo courtesy of Laurose Hibberd

Appendix A

Untitled verse by Laurose Hibberd

It's the common, ordinary folks,
The ones like you and me,
That get the most out of living
In a small community,
The ones who work the whole day through
And evening brings them rest.
All the happy times they had
Are long remembered joys, the best.

Appendix B

Two of Laurose's articles from the *Elgin Recorder*

BITS & PIECES

by Laurose Hibberd

[published in the *Elgin Recorder*, September, 1994]

Sixty four years ago this week one of the greatest fires ever to engulf Elgin occurred. The whole block of homes between Cedar and Birch were left in ashes including the Methodist Church. Everything was destroyed between Birch and Alder with the exception of the bank building and two homes. Across town in the vacant lot east of the drug store the Masonic Hall was left in ashes.

It was a very hot, windy Saturday afternoon. The Presbyterian minister lived in the Methodist parsonage. The minister's son lit a small fire in some trash behind the church. It quickly spread to the steeple where cinders and shingles blew across town. Jumping from one house to another, the fire soon covered the entire block and all was lost. Now the homes have been rebuilt along the east side of Highway 82.

Hot cinders 5-6 inches across fell all over the business section of Elgin. One of the cinders landed on top of the Masonic Hall and the large 3 story building was consumed before the La Grande big pumper arrived. The opinion of many was that without the arrival of the pumper with lots of pressure the whole town would have gone up in flames. A hot wind of great velocity made it hard to contain the flames. Home owners with garden hoses saved many homes along Highway 82. Business owners also fought the fires downtown. Many of the businesses were in brick buildings which helped stop the flames.

Kate Lewis's cafe, part of Bill Wades' Pool Hall, the back of Gary Patten's Pool Hall, and part of Eastern Oregon Power Company's building burned. The bank building and the current site of My Style and The Bakery were all that was left of that block.

People were in a frenzy trying to save their homes. Many people moved furniture from their homes into the street only to have it lit by flying cinders. In the excitement people threw breakables from second story windows and carefully carried out blankets and bedding which were quickly consumed on the street. Men and boys were on roofs saving homes that were in the path of the fire. Some humorous incidents from the fire will be in next week's Bits and Pieces.

The quickest way to become an old dog is to stop learning new tricks.

BITS & PIECES

by Laurose Hibberd

[published in the *Elgin Recorder*, October, 1994]

This summer we watched on T.V. the many wild fires that destroyed homes in the Los Angeles and Lake Chelan areas. We saw the heartache and frenzy that goes with uncontrolled fire.

On September 27, 1930, my father and I were grouse hunting on a ridge by a choke cherry patch above his apple orchard. This was above where John Croghan lives today. We paused to rest and looked back toward Elgin about 5 miles below us. We commented that it looked like there was a fire in Elgin. Daddy said there were 2 fires in Elgin.

Of course after the Masonic Hall caught there were 2 fires burning uncontrolled. We decided to hurry back to town and by the time we reached the orchard Georgia Ohms was running through the orchard yelling, "Scott! Scott! Your packing house has been on fire 4 times." My mother had put 2 boys on the roof with a hose trying to put the burning shingles out. It was utter panic and confusion in Elgin chat afternoon. People trying to save some homes, some already gone, belongings burning in the streets. Dirt, dust, and smoke covered the town.

A bit of humor was mixed with sadness after it was all ever. All that was left of the large wooden 2 story Masonic Hall was a cast iron toilet suspended 30 feet in the air by the drain pipe. A woman exclaiming after it was reduced to ashes "Oh, my goodness, it will be a total loss."

A lady rushing out of a burning home with a jar of beet pickles. A woman screaming "Never mind the furniture. Save my cat." Brave rescuers throwing breakables out of second story windows. Kate Lewis's cow roiling in the street dust to extinguish its burning hide. A citizen with too much to drink saving his home by wetting everything down on a newly painted and papered interior with a garden hose. (The house didn't burn.) Believe it or not, a burning keyhole in the side door of Myron Hug's garage.

Dr. Thompson reported that one of the saddest and most pathetic scenes resulting from the fire was a dog, separated from his master, curled up on the doorstep of a burned house which a few hours before was his home. "Home is home to a dog wnerever it might be."'

Sixty four years later the burned out blocks are replaced with homes. Grass grows where the Masonic Hall burned and the Masonic Building is located on Hwy 82, replaced with a cement and brick building.

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