

Mrs. Boswell

7/78, T1, S1

JG: Now how do you spell your name?

MB: B-o-s-w-e-l-l.

JG: Okay. And you came to the valley here the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of October, 1898 on the train. Where from?

MB: Central Texas.

JG: How come your family moved up here?

MB: Well, a number of years before that my parents got acquainted with an Episcopal minister and his wife that were also stationed in central Texas. And they liked each other very much. And I don't know just when the Harris family moved away from Texas, I wasn't interested in things of that sort at that time.

JG: Your maiden name was Harris? Er, you mean...

MB: No. My maiden name was Ransdell. R-a-n-s-d-e-l-l.

JG: Oh, okay.

MB: Mr. and Mrs. Harris were stationed in our town and about that time, I'm not...they left and went somewhere or other. And my parents went to New Mexico and after about five years of experience that they didn't need they came back to central Texas and they'd lost track of the Harris family. And they, of course, had lost track of us seeing as we'd been out of the state. And after we went back to Texas, my mother was looking through the church yearbook and she found a Henry Harris...I don't know where they were, in Oklahoma maybe. Well, no. They had been in Oklahoma, but they were in Cove, Oregon then. And my parents were very much interested in and they wondered if it might be the same man and wife that they had known. So they wrote to find out and sure enough it was their old friends. Mr. Harris was an Englishman and I think he must have been ordained in England. If not, he must have been soon ordained soon after coming to America. I'm judging by the fact that all of their children were born in England and the youngest son was too young...or was young enough that he must have been born before they left England. Well, I don't know how much country the Harris family had seen, but they'd seen the Atlantic Ocean and some of the sea coast anyway before they got to Texas. And,

JG: So your parents followed 'em out up to Cove, huh?

MB: No. They're both gone.

JG: No, but they came out to Cove, then? Your family moved.

MB: Yes.

JG: How old were you?

MB: Nine.

JG: What do you remember about the trip?

MB: What do I remember about the trip?

JG: Yeah, the trip.

MB: Well, it was long and noisy and dirty.

JG: Did you have to sit on benches?

MB: When we got here it was a very different country from what we'd been used to. The most of my early remembrance is of the five years that we spent in New Mexico. And then we were in Texas for a year before we came to Cove. My father was a doctor, a graduate of the medical college in Louisville, Kentucky. He owned his first office there in Louisville.

JG: Did he open an office here in Cove?

MB: Oh, he practiced in Cove for years.

JG: Huh. Did you grow up in Cove, then?

MB: I've spent most of my life in the Grande Ronde Valley and most of it in Cove and the Cove area.

JG: Huh. Do ever remember John Allen?

MB: John Allen? Yes, I knew two men, but the one that you probably remember had some sons that went to...

JG: What kind of a fellow...

MB: ...Corvallis.

JG: What kind of a fellow was he?

MB: Well, I always thought he was a very fine man. He was strictly honest and neighborly.

JG: Do you remember when Miss Fern Hobbs came into Cove to close down the saloons in 1914?

MB: Yeah. That was quite an event.

JG: What happened?

MB: Oh, I don't know there's anything really happened, a good deal of talk and interest.

JG: What do you know about that railroad behind that they used to call it the Dinky, I guess, between Union and Cove?

MB: Well, it did pretty well for a while and then a couple of men by the name of Weimer got in there and got to freighting and they just practically [laugh] chased the railroad off.

JG: Mostly cherries went over that railroad then, huh?

MB: Yes. There went over the...and then Weimer competed with the railroad.

JG: What was he doin'? How was he... What do mean he competed with 'em?

MB: Truck. Trucking.

JG: Is he still around?

MB: No. As far as I know he died several years ago.

JG: What happened when he started competing with 'em? Was there any violence or?

MB: I don't think so. I don't remember of ever hearing of any trouble.

JG: Do you remember that flagpole that was in Cove?

MB: Yes.

JG: Supposed to be the tallest flagpole in the world or something for a while.

MB: Oh well, it was evidently a tamarack so it...it would've been tall.

JG: Do you remember that time that that fellow had to climb it, to put the pulley back on?

MB: And did...he climbed it and did what?

JG: And put the pulley back on on the top so he could put the...

MB: Oh. Well, yes, I remember having heard about something of that sort, but I totally forgotten it.

JG: Did you ever hear any stories about that fellow names Kelsey Porter that got hung over here in Union?

MB: Well, I don't know if I remember anything about him.

JG: He stood trial and stuff and then they ended up hanging him because he killed some people up by Halfway.

MB: Well, I heard something about it, but I just don't know anything about it.

JG: Did you ever hear anything about when they stole...when La Grande stole the courthouse from Union?

MB: Well, I think that must've been before we came to Cove. I remember they swapped a courthouse back and forth a few times, but I don't remember personally of any actual happenings.

JG: When was the first airplane you remember seeing?

MB: Oh, it must have been when I was in school in Walla Walla.

JG: You didn't see one around here, huh?

MB: Not first.

JG: What was the first car you ever saw?

MB: Well, that must've been when we were living in Texas they were coming in used.

JG: In '98? Must've been out here.

MB: Well, I remember that there was trouble about...they had cars. I remember of my father reading a Sunday paper and there was a picture of car going into a irrigation ditch, across the ditch, and the water splashed up just simply drowned it.

JG: Do you remember any Indians around here that used to travel around here?

MB: I don't know how it is now, but from the time that we came here it was a common for Indians to come from the reservation and go through Cove up Mill Creek Canyon over on the Minam.

JG: Fishing, or? Would they be fishing?

MB: Well, fishing and I suppose hunting and picking berries.

JG: What would they... Would they be... Would they come in on cars or on horseback?

MB: Oh, horseback.

JG: Do any of 'em stick in your mind that you remember talkin' with or anything?

MB: I don't think there was any trouble with 'em.

JG: Did you ever talk with any of 'em?

MB: No.

JG: They stayed in their world and you stayed in yours, huh?

MB: Well, they were horseback and traveling.

JG: What would they carry with 'em? Would they have saddlebags or travois or...?

MB: Well, I don't know. I was accustomed to seeing people on horseback with pack horses and they must've had pack horses. I was accustomed to seeing pack horses and loads.

JG: Did you remember when Ezra Meeker came through here in 1908 following the Oregon Trail?

MB: Who?

JG: Ezra Meeker.

MB: Well, I remember hearing something about it, but nothing interesting...nothing more than that I had heard of. [tape interruption] And one thing I think of right now I was married twice. My first husband was Edwin Boswell, a cattleman's son, Davis Boswell. And he had a brother, a younger brother, they were the two youngest in the family of twelve from back in Virginia. Well, my second husband was a first cousin of my first husband, the son of Ben Boswell. Benjamin rode into Cove the day he was twenty-one. And you've heard of Dunham Wright, well, they got acquainted coming across the plains together.

JG: What year did they come across?

MB: 1860s. And Ben and Dunham came on to Cove, but someplace where they camped before they got to a forks in the road somebody...and I suppose a number of people on the...they met on the way as they came West...had a good deal to say about California. Well, the most of the crowd decided that they'd go to California. And about that same time there were a couple of men or maybe three that they came from Idaho, northern Idaho, and struck the east-west trail, and they just struck gold in northern Idaho. Well, that sounded a good deal closer than California and I don't know how many there were in the train or how they divided, but oh, possibly a half a dozen or between a half a dozen and a dozen decided that they'd go to Idaho. And Dunham was captain of the train. Well, when they got thrashed out amongst 'em they were all going to inspect the mines. Most of them went to California and the others went to northern Idaho. So that left Dunham Wright and Ben Boswell with nobody to look after. So that dissolved the responsibility of being captain of the train and the two of 'em decided that they'd saddle up early in the morning and head for Cove.

JG: How did they know about Cove?

MB: I don't know just how, but Cove was settled pretty early. And they...you've probably heard of Massacre Rocks, that's the other side of Boise. Have you ever been over the road? Well, you know how a rough, open hill slope with scattering trees. Well, I was gonna say monoliths of rocks standing up, a few here and a few there. The highway follows exactly the old pioneer trail, it's about the only place they could build a road. And the two men had each a saddle horse and a pack horse.

JG: They didn't... They weren't married then, huh?

MB: No. They boarded with the family in the train. And when they got through there was nothing to distract their attention as they came through that section of the road. But they had gotten an early start, they didn't have anything to do but pack up and saddle up and get into their saddles and ride. They were quite a ways ahead of the train that followed them and they didn't see anything, hear anything, but they said that they felt sure that the Indians were already there on the ground. And when the people with wagons came along they massacred the outfit. There were three men horseback with them that escaped, but they massacred all of 'em. They didn't want settlers.

JG: And Boswell and Dunham Wright didn't know anything about it, huh?

MB: No, they were ahead.

JG: How did they finally find out about it?

MB: Well, there were three men that were already on their horses and they moved out.

JG: Ran away.  
MB: Yeah.  
JG: So what ever happened to those three guys?  
MB: I don't know. I guess they lived to a ripe old age probably. [laugh] And I don't know who they were, I never heard.  
JG: So did one of them end up coming to Cove and telling Boswell and Wright about it?  
MB: Ben and Dunham came to Cove.  
JG: They heard in Cove about everybody being massacred, huh?  
MB: They found out after the word got round. But they said that they believed the Indians were there when they came through, but that being horseback, pack horse a piece they mistook them for trappers and they didn't mind the trappers, they could get along with them. They didn't want settlers. [tape interruption] ...stretch of road has always been known since then as Massacre Rocks. [tape interruption] My second husband, Charles Boswell, was in the transportation business and he had a son that was big enough, old enough, to drive the stage if he didn't. And Erving, of course this was years later, but everybody knew about Massacre Rocks and Erving had the misfortune to have a flat tire in that stretch. He said he could see Indians lookin' out from about every rock on that hill. [laughs]  
JG: When was that? In the '30s or so?  
MB: He got the tire changed and got on the move as soon as he could!  
JG: When was that? About 1930 or so?  
MB: Oh, maybe, I don't know. It was long after there was any trouble with the Indians. [laugh]  
JG: [tape interruption] Now Ben Boswell was what relation to your first husband?  
MB: First cousin. Their fathers were brothers.  
JG: Oh, okay. Did he ever tell you any more stories about coming out West or anything?  
MB: That was... Erving was born out here in Oregon in Wallowa County. But he didn't have any experience with the Indians and his father didn't want any. [laughs]  
JG: Did you ever know a fellow in Cove named John Smith?  
MB: Yes.  
JG: He had a bunch of hounds.  
MB: Yeah. I was gonna say that there were two or three men that passed by that name.  
JG: Now this is the one that had all the hound dogs.  
MB: Yeah, that was the John Smith.  
JG: Tell me something about him.  
MB: Well, are you acquainted with the Cove area any? Well, going in on the road you go straight east and then you...there's a jog in the road. Right past the jog in the road there's a big old white house.  
JG: The John Allen house?  
MB: Closer to Cove than the John Allen house, but it's the next house that was Smith's house.  
JG: What... Did he always run around with a bunch of dogs at his heels, or...?

MB: No, not always, but if he went hunting coyotes he had a pack of hounds and so did Allen.

JG: How would they hunt 'em? How would they hunt the coyotes?

MB: Horseback with a gun.

JG: Do you remember when they took the bounty off of coyotes in 1917 and Allen and Smith turned all their dogs loose? Where there a lot of their hound dogs running around town?

MB: I probably would have known something about it, but I don't remember. I might've been away at school.

JG: Were you a school teacher?

MB: Well, I taught one term. I intended to teach more, but it so happened that that didn't fit in with the family plans. Instead, I was in the Cove post office for approximately ten years to start with as clerk and then for a short time as acting postmaster and, I don't know, I supposed about six years as postmaster.

JG: [tape interruption] What was... This is your great-uncle?

MB: Yes.

JG: And what was his name?

MB: Thomas Rounstow.

JG: And what were you starting to say about him coming West?

MB: Well, he came ahead of the rush while there was plenty of room on the trail.

JG: In '44, huh?

MB: And settled someplace in the Willamette Valley, I don't really know just where.

JG: Were you around here this year when that bear was shot here in town? When they shot that black bear here in town? [tape interruption] What was that?

MB: Poor place for a bear.

JG: You think they should've shot...[tape interruption]

MB: He got shot and he ought not to have been there.

JG: He went down to California during the gold rush?

MB: Yes, he was... I don't...[end tape]

7/78, T1, S2

[TV comedy show, speaking, audience laughing for about seven minutes]

[pause]

[song "there won't be no country music, there won't be no rock and roll..."]

[pause]

[song, about fixing a fence of a neighbor, a duck, a dog]