

Interviewed by Eliza Buck, from the Oregon Arts Commission, May 10, 2000

Vernetia Hadley (Nisha) Banister maiden name, born in Paisley in 1917, Going to be 83 in September, moved to Bly in 1941, husband, Herb Hadley worked at the Forest Service for 39 years, I was the Postmistress for 24 years. Lived here many years, 2 children, son Butch has a ranch here and daughter Darlene Dillavou. Darlene lives in Pendleton.

Worked at the Post Office 24 years. Been out almost 20 years. It was a good job, I got to meet everybody, really enjoyed it. Good to be retired. I was 42, in 1959, when I got the job, retired at age 65.

Herb worked at the Forest Service, I was 16 when I got married, Herb was 21. Herb was also from Paisley. My Dad's name was Frederick L. Bannister and my mother's name was Della May Bevel. My dad was a barber at Paisley. They had 7 kids. My twin and I had two brothers and a sister older than we were. Only two are now living. Twins name Vernita. Nita was nickname. Teacher always called us by the correct name. We didn't look alike. I have a set of great grand twins. They are 7 years old and identical. They live in Pendleton also, Nicki and Kaitlin, They dress in different colors. I can't tell them apart. Those girls will have so much fun. They are so much alike. Nicki is the leader. They also have a brother. (Picture shown of children.) I have so many pictures I can put them up. I'm a lucky lady.

I hated to come over here. I just hated Bly. I had heard that Bly was a pretty rough place. The Indians would come from Beatty and might kill someone on the weekend. I was scared. Paisley is a quite little town. Now I wouldn't want to leave. I love it here. People ask how I could I ever love Bly. There is nothing to do. There is so much to do I'm busy all the time.

Tell me some of the interesting things that were going on here. You said Bly was a pretty rough place when you first got here. "Yes I did, because we would hear they would kill an Indian every weekend. The Indians at that time could not have whiskey or anything like that. They would buy men's skin lotion, Bay Rum and stuff like that. I worked at that time at the store. The women who owned it liked me and my kids. She asked me to work but my husband said no I couldn't work. I told him I'd like nice things and we can't afford them and he finally consented that I could work. I worked at Protsman's Store. Protsman owned it. It was a big store, had everything you could ask for. She would give me and my kids gifts. Her husband was Slim and she was Olive. She gave me a set of sterling silver. One year she bought carpet for my house. She had one daughter. Her name was Jennette. I think Jennette is still living. Lives by the river. (in Klamath Falls) Slim was a carpenter and built most of these old houses around here. They were just wonderful people. It wasn't a grocery store. They didn't have groceries. They would get whatever you needed. She gave me the nicest suit.

Another lady named Thelma Abbott. And we were really good friends. He was with the Power Company here. Thelma worked there at the store with me. You said there was a power company here? Well it wasn't a full power company. He had to be here in case there was trouble. Bly was a pretty good place, kind of rough.

Did you ever see anything? No, because I never got around like that. Were there big things that you heard about? . My husband was a first aid man. He loved to do that. He should have been a doctor. He would teach at the school and people got to thinking he was the doctor and they would come to our house and he would patch them up.

One time an Indian came and he and his buddy had had a fight and he was cut right across the stomach. The Indian had a big belly. Herb said he would hold his belly up while Herb would put the stitches in. Herb said once in awhile he would groan. He took care of them. They called him Doc Hadley. He liked it but I didn't, We really fit right in with the town.

What was the population then? There were three mills in this area. Ivory Pine, Crane and Babcock and I'd

say the population was 5 to 600 then or more. Now it is about 300.

The post office was very busy. Were there any funny stories? Oh, we would get the blame for everything. The paychecks wouldn't get here and the Social Security checks. It was supposed to be there on a certain day. One lady had sent her glasses in to get them fixed. This lady told me "I know they are here somewhere. They told me they had mailed them." I made it a point to show them the postmark when it did come. We got lots of blame for things we didn't do. How was the mail delivered? A truck brought the mail to Bly and would go on to Lakeview. How long did it take to get a letter from Portland to Bly? It would take about 3 days. You had to smile and grin and bear it. I loved it though, I knew everybody in town. Now I don't. I don't know why they move here. There is no work. It is easy to get welfare out of it. They are the ones that get mad when their checks aren't there. How much did it cost to mail a letter in 1959? I think the penny postcard was still there. Of course they raised it every year or so. I think a stamp was \$0.10. I can't remember for sure.

Then in the late 50s people didn't have a lot of money? No and people never thought of saving any money. They lived from check to check.

What were the war years like here? They were kind of bad, everything was rationed. The lady that was the assistant ranger's wife was a very thrifty person. She saved everything. When they told us to declare everything, if you had too much sugar they wouldn't let you have more until it was gone. This lady had several hundred pounds of stuff in their basement. I declared everything because I was afraid they would check and I would get in trouble. She was able to can foods and I wasn't.

Did people have gardens here? No the growing season is too short.

Was the post office always in the same place as it now? The building belongs to me. When I first went it was in the house next door to the present place. It was so dirty. I said to the inspector one time "This is a dirty place" he said "Well if you find another place they would go along with it." The present location used to be a service station. They wanted Herb to buy it but he didn't want it. Snuffy Smith had in-laws that could do carpentry. The post office leased it from Snuffy. After a year or so Snuffy married and wanted to take his new wife on a trip. He asked Herb about buying it. Snuffy wanted \$3-4000 for it. I decided it to my son. Because I won't be needing it much longer.

Dennis Terzick is the Post Master now but he will retire in August. He took over when I left. I think his assistant may get the job. They have to advertise it but I doubt anyone would want to come in. I think Debbie (Hubble) will probably get it.

A train used to haul logs for the mail. The mail never came by train. It was always contracted. They don't go on to Lakeview. I had some good mail carriers. I had good clerks. I always tried to hire someone local.

I understand that there were quite a few fires in Bly? We never had any protection really. Now we have the fire department. People would be firing up their wood stoves. Once it started it always burned to the ground.

We didn't used to have the sewer system. Raw sewage would run right down the street, I'm surprised we didn't all get sick.

Once we almost got incorporated. There were so many they all had to vote for. There was a group that wanted it and one that didn't. We missed passing it by one vote. We would have paved streets, light and that stuff.

I've seen it at it's worst and at it's best. When was it at it's best? When we had the mill and we got a good class of people. Weyerhaeuser has been gone 10 to 15 years. It was a really good place and good people. Now people on welfare come here. There is no work.

Theater? Do you remember when it opened? My son-in-law helped build the theatre. Jerry Dillavou helped

Protsman to build it when he was still in high school. My kids were little maybe the early 50s? Do you remember the day it opened? No. It was really exciting. It was build by George Fullerton. I saw "Gone With The Wind" there. He always had good movies. How often did they change the movies? About once a week or so. How much did it cost? It was about \$0.50 for an adult. How long did he own the theatre? Quite a few years. When T.V. came in he had to close it. Probably the early 60s. The theatre looked pretty good. It was pretty nice. Could sit quite a few 50 to 60 people. Had a big screen. You could buy snacks. He had a popcorn machine. He had a black guy that ran the projectors. His name was (Sherman) Seastrong.

Did your kids have Ruth Obenchain as a teacher.? She was very good, they learned! Now the teachers get time off to do grading. She is 88 now. She was a teacher when we first came here.

What other things can you remember? We used to have a square dancing here. We danced at the theater one time. The teachers used to be required to live here. Now they commute. The Forest Service commutes also. They used to have to live here. That has killed out little town.

Bly used to have a bowling alley and skating rink. Had the old hotel, had 2 or 3 restaurants. We had a women baseball team. We played at Chiloquin and Beatty. One time we had to run, they were after us. We only had 1 man with us. They couldn't stand that we beat them. We played basketball and volleyball. You can make your own fun. We played Bridge. I love to play. They would have school plays and we would be in them..

This is bad place for young people. The CMA church just got a new pastor that came from Georgia. This can be a lonely place for a young single person.

We also have an Assembly of God church and a Catholic church. We're all trying to reach the same guy so we should get together. Church Friends are true friends.

Do you know any stories about characters in this town? Do you about Pearle the Fisherwoman? Any bootleggers? There was always as liquor store here. We were here in 1941.

One time this fella named Anderson from Beatty came to Bly. I think he was a black man He cut a guys head off. Was it someone from Bly? Well he lived here. They were down at the restaurant and the Indians and they were there. Jim Anderson had been in the pen, he was mean. Cut the guy's head off with his knife. We heard about it the next day. It was at the bar, Jack's Place. Jack O'Neil was the owner. They used to call it the Bucket of Blood. It was going on before we came over here. That was why I was so scared to come here. Corky smith grew up in Jack's Place so she can tell you some stories. Corky's Grandmother was Amy O'Neil.

We used to have the Loggers Club. It was pretty wild place too, I had never seen a woman go into a bar until I moved to Bly. I had never seen a woman smoke a cigarette until I moved here. It was a way of life here.

We had a dance about once a week. Used to have dances at Ivory Pine and sometimes we would dance in the gym. We both loved to dance. The kids don't want to go to dances now they want to go where there is a bar. Yep it was kind of a wild place. Bootleg liquor made them crazy sometimes.

Kids are offered so much now and they start drinking before they are teenagers. The high school is gone and the kids have to go to Bonanza. They have a problem with dope and stuff over there. All the schools have dope in them anymore. We never had to worry about anything like that. I hope and pray that we can get straightened out.

There has been lots of good people come and gone in Bly. Bly is home to me I hope I can stay here until the Lord takes me home. I have so many friends and I'm thankful for them all. They look out for me. Thank you Mary (Baker) for watching out for me when I don't raise my shades early in the morning.

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