

Interview with Ruth Obenchain, May 9, 2000

Interviewers, Eliza Buck, Lily Hevern and Gordon Hevern

Was born 4/26/12 born in Langell Valley Or

Parents Walter and Eva Campbell. Bought the Finley Ranch (Merkley ranch0

Children: Carolyn Obenchain, Margaret Jacobs.

Carolyn's Children: Mike Madden, Eddie Madden, and Bill Proctor

Margaret's Children: Ryan (deceased) and Darrell

In 1940 moved to Bly, Frank was husbands name

Taught school and husband was a rancher, worked a short time at the mill, lived on the old Obenchain Ranch, born in Jacksonville Eva, parents lived there.

Have 8 great grandchildren, Erie and Becky, Bridie and Frank. Morgan, Amanda, Makayla, Ashley

Moved here in 1940, married in 1933. Taught school began in 1931, taught at Henley, Sprague River, Altamont, married women commotion because of women taking men's jobs. Taught in a lumber camp near Hildebrand, 9 kids to begin and down to 5. Quite a winter. Logging train went through. Rode the train and then walked 2.5 miles. Could catch the train at the switchback. Also taught music at Bonanza. Sup said if you could go to Bly he would hire another at Bonanza. Started in Bly 1937. Very nice experience. Didn't have to be tough they knew what I expected.

Taught 5th and 6th and then High school, then 7 & 8th Principal the last 7 years.

Didn't want to put single women in the lumber camp so they sent Ruth. They had pinochle parties and the folks were nice. Logging camp wage was \$100/month for the first year, next year depression \$90 but did their own janitor for \$7.00 per month. Closed early because they didn't want to give bonds. Lived in one of the cabins. Two sheds together, kept part of it shut off in the winter. Had a small woodstove. Roads would get muddy. Lots of complaint about women working when the men couldn't get jobs.

Quit teaching in 1970. Thankful to have a job. Thought everyone should be a teacher.

There used to be a school on Campbell road. Just near the highway on the knoll. Doesn't know the name. Remember the Boyd children and them went to play in the old building.

Ranch has been added too. Pastureland, 640 acres, added Anderson Field. Traded land with the BK ranch. She thinks it is about 2300 acres. Not all pasture land. Raised hay for the cattle, have to buy hay. They have about 300 head of cattle. Carolyn and Margaret with the help of Mike run the ranch.

Took baths in the washtub. Had a big carbide tank, had carbide lights. Ruth's folks bought a new Delco plant so they got the old one. They and the BK ranch put in electricity in 1951. Margaret was born in 1951.

Enjoys having family close. Mostly working vacations.

Played at card parties, 500 and Pedro, had dances. Not enough left to play bridge.

Went to camp, had 22 colt pistol, on a nail up above her bed. People next door ask her to Pinochle party. Man was drinking, old southern couple. Got pretty rough and their son walked her home. Got the pistol down and kept it beside her bed. Many of the loggers came from the South because there wasn't any work there. Lots of people from Arkansas. Pelican Bay Camp. Euwana Camp, lots of people. Had 3 main mills with 2 smaller at one time. Big Weyco camp up North. Bus was so loaded that the kids at Ivory Pine had to

be picked up by the Sprague River bus.

Went to high school, just 3 people. County paid the money towards their board. 1925 or 26. Ruth was sent to Eugene to a boarding school. University High School later. Bly re-opened the year Ruth came to teach 1937. First school burned down. Two rooms to start with and gradually added on to. Did an EPA build the back part. Already built on the other end. Gym was built in around 1938 or 39. The high school is where the medical center now sits. Closed in about 1964. Sent kids to Bonanza or Lakeview. It was too expensive because they had to pay out of county tuition. Now everyone has to attend Bonanza.

The Gearhart School grades K-8th are in Bly. Called a 6/6 plan. Never had to wear uniforms. Taught freshman and junior subjects one-year and the next sophomore and senior. Didn't have enough people. I didn't teach the year Carolyn was born and Margaret was born during the 3 years I quit. Had a hard time getting teachers to come to Bly

Had surgery on throat, can't sing now.

5th and 6th taught standard classes plus music. Don't have history now it is called Social Studies. In the 8th grade had 6 weeks of Oregon history. Not taught anymore. General high school had algebra and geometry, didn't have foreign languages, Taught English, history and Math. Taught Home Economics also. Had sewing at University.

Logging Camp was taught required grade school subjects. Hardest thing was I was not a primary teacher. How would you compare with today's teaching? Don't ask. I didn't often assign homework; most kids got it done at school.

Logging camp usually only about 6 families. Weyerhaeuser was here a long time. When it closed it hurt the community. Ivory Pine had a cookhouse etc. Large community.

Had 3 grocery stores. Had a drug store, clothing store about where Granville Curtis lives. The only building in 1920 is the old brick building where Leonardo has the antique store. The rest of them are gone. Most burned or were torn down.

Dixon Place where Valladaos live here. Dixon cut the top off of the building.

Dave Campbell bought the ranch. And came from Langell Valley.

PHOTO: Right hand side was built on for a high school. Assembly of God church used to be a Methodist church. Hazel Peters owned the house in photo. Givens daughter. Had 4th grade in a separate building. Ruth and Frank lived in a house that was partially finished. No steps. Frank would pull her up. Tower picture KFPA. (Where the library sits now) Man that was head of the CCC camp lived in Steve Cornell's house. School playground used to be the campsite. Men came in from all over the U.S. Conservation Core, got money for it but didn't think they did much. The Sprague River Park was built by the CCCs.

When I moved here in 1920. Rode horseback to school. Had a little barn behind, Dave Campbell hauled hay but no one else would. Hamaker had a barn kept the horses there one year. Big barn in the back of where Nisha Hadley now lives. Best place for a garden. Across the highway, huge big barn, hotel and stage stop, about where the liquor store is now. Change of horses and all winter the only transportation was horse. Had a brother that died at age 16 appendix, winter, took him in a hack, past Dairy, had gang green didn't have sulfur drugs.

Arther ranch, down the mountain around the bend, kept people at their house. Stagecoach went out by the dump and over the mountain to Bonanza. Made left turn at Beatty around the hill to Whiskey Creek. Would get stuck in the old Ford many times.

Personal experiences? Frank got thrown a few times. Dave Campbell got badly hurt. Tried to stop a team, broke a hip.

Obenchain ranch formally owned by Givens and Jack Watts before that. Watts mother was a Casebeer. Frank bought from Givens.

Ranching: Summer irrigates and raises hay, cut and raked and baled. Haul and stack. Feed is gone by Thanksgiving and you have to begin feeding the cattle. Push hay from a trailer. Keep boxes of salt out. Calving and branding. Many cows have trouble and need help. Feed calves with bottles. Little calves about 6 weeks have to be branded and ear marked. Earmarks are registered just like brands. Some people used a waddle. Have to have shots for black leg. County low in selenium, have to have a shot. Girls check everyday for new calves, give shots. Hard work. Lots of expense. Environmentalists and Indians are trying to take the water away. Assessed for every irrigated land, someone has to pay. Indians do not.

What would happen if all the water rights were taken away? No idea what we would do. Just take a header for the river. Scary to think, couldn't drill a well. Would need right for that too. Meadows would dry up. Put people out of business. Hope some starve to death that is doing this. Started 4-5 years ago. People have felt sorry for the Indians, robbed by the white man, paid for the reservation and now they want the reservation back. Have a small allotment. Rent some pasture above us. F.S. environmentalist wants the forest cattle free. Force people to fence all the streams to keep the cows out.

Cows make paths down to the water etc. Cows naturally come in the fall. Some have to be brought in. Doesn't think the cattle damage the forest. Maybe re-plant with the small trees.

Carolyn got tipped over on a three-wheeler one time trying to get to a new calf. Now have quad runners. Carolyn and Margaret are cowgirls, just ranchers do everything. Buckaroo and cowboy? Some cowboys still around. Bly cowboy's hats shaped different. Dress less fancy. Many wear baseball caps instead of hats. Always wore big hats when Ruth was a kid.

Some have milk cows, Jersey, Guernsey, Holstein. Hereford and Durham, Angus are used for meat. Holstein has stronger feet. Went to Colorado to buy Holstein. Pick out good bulls and hope they inherit the traits. Scrawny cattle if you don't watch. Hard to keep a good herd up. Good bull costs about \$4000. Keep separate until you want to calve. Usually the weather is pretty good in February. Sell in October. Takes about 10 or 11 bulls to service the whole herd. Usually keep them for 3 years and then sell. Sometimes calves are too big and need help being born. Sometimes you lose the calf and sometimes the cow. Lose one there goes a whole year. Calves are sold at about 9 month. Slaughter at 1000 pounds or so.

Carolyn one day it was sleeting out and I asked if there wasn't another way to make a living and she said, "Well, I wouldn't be anywhere else".

Love ranching, out in the open, can't go anywhere. Have to be someone there. Watch for scours, lung trouble etc. I cooked for the crew while the other women helped with the branding. Branding day, 10-12 is all. Campbell ranch has a big crew all year round. Can't hire people for the wage they can make everywhere else. Have old equipment but don't owe anything. Start baling after the 4th of July. Baled hay stores easier than the shocks people used to leave in the fields. Or store in the barn. Dave Campbell build a large hay slide. Slide under the shocks of hay, yarded to the nets and fastened a cable and the derrick driver pulled it up. Made a good-looking stack, Good solid stack. Rain ruins the hay. Hay in the barn is like money in the bank.

Were all ranchers when I moved here then logging came in. Young guys worked on the ranches. Grew up to be a logging town, started out as a stage stop. Ollie Howard had the hotel and barn.

Breaking horses, don't do anymore. Don't ride enough to keep them tame. Have two horses left. Carolyn can't ride anymore. Fences are expensive to put up and maintain.

Are there rodeos around? Not a lot. Big one in Lakeview. Oldest, started in Bly at Parker Flat 1921,22 had a grandstand and everything. Got too large and moved to Klamath Falls.

Were there work parties, barn raising? Not usually here. But everyone came for brandings. Now have to do with the kids when they are available. Ted Hyde and Bill Hill used to come help Frank. Easier to do with

more people.

Secret recipes? Not a camp cook just cooked at home. I always baked baking powder biscuits. Carolyn would say “Mom, bake biscuits. I always had dessert. Vanilla cream pie and berry cobbler, chocolate upside down cake were my specialties. The Ruth Obenchain award is given at the school each year to a deserving girl of the 8th grade. No money, just recognition. The men’s award is the Mike Mansfield goes to a boy. Mike drowned in the Gerber Reservoir.

Drive buggy to school to school, one year another girl would drive a buggy. Man used to live in Bailey Flat, Sunny Jim, had a beard, scared of him. Don’t know why we were afraid. Dad hired him to work later at the ranch.

My legs don’t work too well but they work. Betty Patzke was at our church on Sunday we used to play basketball. Don’t believe we could do it now. One of Betty’s sister lives in Klamath Falls is crippled up.

New minister at our church, CMA. Had not had a minister for a while. The church has been there, rebuilt after being bumed. Nice church, before Weyerhaeuser left we had to build in. The Forest Service mostly moved out.

Met Frank when I was in the 3rd grade. After I was in college he ask me to go to a dance. Just past Nisha’s house. Had a community hall. Played cards, basketball, danced etc. Big kids were pretty rough on us. Mr. Parker played the fiddle. Later had bands that came out. People came because that was all there was too do. Turned into a movie theater. Build new theater? Came in after I began teaching, borrowed Dad’s cement mixer. I think eh first movie played was there was Bambi. The last one was Rufus J. Pickle and the Indian. Harry Obenchain was here before I was.

Laboree home was called the Haunted House. Came home at Christmas and went to a dance over there. Had a fire in the fireplace. Van Landrum gave me a picture of it. Didn’t Ethel Fairchild’s first husband owned part of the Laboree place? Laboree’s wife wore the jewels. Lost everything, had sale, bought inlaid linoleum. Had to be scrubbed, let the chickens in. Man quite well to do in the railroad business. She was a dance hall girl and after he died she married Elmer Lowery. They lived at the big barn, my folks not good at gossip. His wife came here and married Vance Hall. I knew him. Dance hall girl fro m New York. He died and the lawyers ended up with most of the money. Liskey bought from the Indians. People sent history.

Drew and then Dave would ride the colts. Brothers were good horsemen. Drew died when he was 16.

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