

## Dr. Archie O. Pitman, Sr. oral history recording Part 1

Interviewer [I]: The interview is being conducted on March 16, 1983. The interview is being conducted at Dr. Pitman's home at 1430 NW 228, in Hillsboro. The interviewer is Linda Dodds for the Washington County Historical Society. [Poor audio quality follows.] Dr. Pitman, I understand that your family has been here a long time, and that your great-grandfather, Dr. [?] Bowlby came here- I read that he crossed the Trail in 1852. Can you tell me something about what you [?]? Go ahead.

Dr. Pitman [P]: Yes, Dr. Bowlby went to medical school in New York. He was a long time crossing the Plains. But he came out [?] by degrees. [?] for a while. Eventually he came across in a covered wagon in 1852. He settled in Portland first, one year and then he came out to Forest Grove. He took up a homestead out south of Cornelius and lived out there for a time.

I: Now he bought his homestead. He wasn't a Donation Land Claim owner?

P: He was a Donation Land Claim Owner.

I: Oh he was?

P: Yes. They dispute that at the Museum. [?] But he controlled [?] I don't know. [inaudible section.] But he was a Donation Land Claim owner. Filed the deed. But he didn't- He lived in Forest Grove about 10 years, so [?].

[0:03:05]

I: Do you know why he came here in the first place, to Oregon that is?

P: I don't know exactly the reason, but [?]. There was the urge to go west, and to acquire land of course, and take up a homestead in the green valleys of the Oregon Country. So he was one of those who come to [do] that.

I: Was he a practicing doctor in New York?

P: Yes, in the East, and along the way, he was probably in New Jersey, and then I think in Ohio someplace. [?] kept him to wanting to go back, so he just kept moving, until they finally crossed the plains.

I: Do you know if Dr. Bowlby had relatives here in the area when he came in? [?] already here. I was just wondering if you knew if he had.

P: No, he didn't have in this county. None that he had here. He was the only Bowlby that crossed the plains that I know of.

I. Was he the first doctor in Hillsboro?

P: Oh no. There have been others ahead of him. Dr. Gregor is one that I know was - the first one I think -

I: Geiger?

P: Geiger. In the Forest Grove area. He was an early doctor out here. I don't know, there were other doctors in the area that come before him. But he went and practiced in Forest Grove. There were doctors in Hillsboro, but I don't know who all they were.

I: When Dr. Bowlby settled his land claim, was he working the land or was he practicing medicine, or was he doing both? Do you know?

P: Well probably doing both, although he had several sons who became the farmers. Of course that was true of the early doctors, that there weren't enough practices to make a living, so they usually had farms or something, had some trade that supplemented their income. Well he probably did some farming in the early days.

[0:06:30]

I: Do you know why he decided to relocate in Forest Grove? You mentioned, did you say his son was going to Forest Grove?

P: To educate his children. At Pacific University.

I: So did the children then stay in the area?

P: Yes. One of them stayed on the farm, but my grandfather Theodore, [?].

I: Now Theodore had 10 children, did he not?

P: Yes.

I: I have in my notes that he died in 1894. So he had passed on some time before you were born?

P: Oh yes. In '94?

I: I have that he died in 1894. That could be incorrect.

P: I think the doctor died in 1895. It could be he died first, yeah.

I: Well this is Theodore I'm talking about. So I have that his children were J.Q.A. and Theodore and Sarah, were the children of Dr. Bowlby.

P: Yeah.

I: And then Theodore was your grandfather. He had 10 children, and your father was among those children.

P: No-

I: Was it your mother?

P: My mother.

I: And what was her name?

P: Emily.

I: And how was she placed among the children? You recall?

[0:08:27]

P: Well let's see if I can take a look. [Movement sounds.]

I: We can go back to that another time. [Background noise.] Did Emily grow up on Theodore's farm near Hillsboro?

P: Yes. She grew up on the farm there. She met my father. He lived up on Chehalem Mountain. Moved there about 1874, '75. He lived up on Chehalem Mountain, [near?] a mountaintop school. Now [?]. He was also one of the 10 children.

I: What was your father's name?

P: Let me - Hmm.

I: Sometimes those memories get locked.

P: Michael. His name was Michael.

I: How did Emily Bowlby and William Pitman meet, then?

P: He was a logger at that time. He helped clear the farm, the old farm, that was all timber. [?] most covered in timber. So he logged it off, [most of the?] timber there.

I: This was the same claim where he owned a timber lot?

P: [?] a long time ago.

I: Is this near the Bowlby property, or are you talking about that it was on Bowlby property?

P: It was Bowlby property, yes it was, it was at the farm.

I: So you mentioned your father was a logger then. Did he have other professions besides that, logger?

P: No, he stayed with logging most of his life.

I: So they married and did they live on that property then?

P: No, they lived in Hillsboro.

I: In town, then. So then they obviously had children. How did you fit in?

P: Yes, 5 of us. I was number 5. [inaudible section.]

[0:12:21]

I: So I didn't realize that you were raised right in Hillsboro.

P: [?]

I: What kind of a home did your family have then?

P: We lived in rented houses. [?] built right on the corner, [?] at 8th and Baseline. [inaudible section.]

I: What sort of a house was it?

P: A framed [?], a two-story framed house.

I: Where did you go to school?

P: [Hillsboro?]

I: How did you get to school?

P: Walked. [?] blocks. First one I went to is now a Hillsboro public school. A short distance walk to and from. The high school I had to go to 3rd street. Now it's part of a grade school complex.

I: This would have been about, what, 1906 you would have gone to school, or 1907, to in 12 years, 1919 or so?

P: I was till 1917, then I went in the service.

I: I'm going to ask you about that in a minute. But I'm first going to ask you about what Hillsboro was like when you were a youngster. What do you remember about downtown Hillsboro and some of the activities there, and that sort of thing?

P: I never, at first, [?]. I can remember, there were those old [homes?] on Baseline Street, right back at the Methodist Church that was there on 3rd and Baseline. And at that time we had plank roads in Hillsboro. The streets were planks. You can see them in photographs. [?], parade on Main Street [?], the street was all planks. [?] very useful to keep out of the mud. Now I remember in the old days before we had the pavement, we had plank roads.

[0:16:25]

I: What were the stores like? What kinds of shops were there?

P: There was general merchandise store, [?] grocery store, [?], and mercantile [?]. There were two [stationary?] stores.

I: [?] would know about that, wouldn't he? [laughs]

P: Yes [laughs].

I: Is there anything you remember about the buildings and things looking - any new, special [?] buildings that they built during the time that you were a boy?

P: No. Some of the old buildings were still there. The [?] building down at 3rd and Main, and the building [?] on 2nd and Main [?]. [?] across the street [?], was not worth it. The old Commercial National Bank building had to be torn down [?]. There was a Washington Hotel on 3rd & Main, a two or three-story frame building. [?] [inaudible section] We had Dr. [Tems?], he built the hotel.

I: Was he a medical doctor?

P: Yes, he was.

I: Was that the kind of typical small town hotel where lots of things happened and where everyone stayed because it was the only place in town, and that sort of thing? Was it that type of hotel?

P: Well, yes. Hotels did pretty good business in those days. The town of Salem, I remember when we drove [?], they kept hotels [?]. Every small town had some kind of hotel. Forest Grove had one, and down at Carlton [?] and Yamhill had hotels. Pretty good business those days. Kind of typical. You had to stay overnight.

I: Now lots of towns had special activities. They had all kinds of festivals and social things like that. Parades sometimes. Are there any events that [?] that you might recall as a boy?

P: There was the Fourth of July parade, of course, and the County Fair once a year. It was held in the streets of Hillsboro.

I: How did they hold it in the streets?

P: With a tent. Tents.

I: And they pitched them right there in the middle of the street?

[0:20:35]

P: Yeah. They [threw?] it on the street.

I: Would they bring the livestock in there and everything?

P: I assume they did. I don't remember livestock. But they [?].

I: You were talking just a moment ago about World War I. I know you had some time at the, kind of [usual stereotype?]. A young boy, I think, during World War I. Could you tell me about that?

P: That occurred of course during high school, during my sophomore year. Before war was declared, actually, they - one of the [Seegers?] had been a member of the National Guard. And he'd come out in uniform and he got the seniors and juniors here to join the National Guard. Which was different before war was declared. Numerous things would happen. After two or three days, oh about 25, I signed up. I got encouraged [?] to go along with [?]. Looked like big adventures at that time. I got my mother's permission to go in. I was 16. So I pushed my way into it. But they didn't care about [?]. You told them you were 18 [?], big enough. So I got into 25 coming from history, Company B. Became Company B, [?] the old 3rd Oregon, National Guard. Became federalized I suppose. [?] important organization. So we had to go to training. At first we stayed a month so we got [?]. Some trouble with the Wobblies, Industrial workers of America.

I: Oh the Wobblies, sure!

P: The Wobblies. We were doing guard duty on the bridges and [?], that sort of thing. And then moving out to Camp Whitman, training out there. Then they moved us up into Washington. We were on guard duty on railroads, irrigation, [?], central Washington.

I: I didn't realize that the Wobblies were agitating just right here in that pre-war period. But they were?

[0:24:46]

P: [?] Yeah. They didn't do anything. They were afraid they were going to. [?] Panic. We were out there on the Gorge, [?], irrigate, [?], in Ellensburg. [?]. We camped up here and were guarding irrigation equipment. We [?]. But nothing ever happened, anyways. They did round up a few malcontents, barbed wire enclosure for a while, [?] but nothing ever happened. [?] We went to Camp Whitman for a while. Some more training. Then we went to Camp Mills in New York.

I: Camp Mills?

P: Yeah, in Long Island in New York. Whitman about December, November, sometime. Kind of cold anyway. We were there in training for about a month and then we embarked for France. December the 12th. Down in Saint Nazaire the first day. [Zig-zagged?] across the ocean. We didn't have any trouble, but they decided to separate [?], had a convoy [of destroyers?], and [inaudible section]. Torpedos. It went right behind one of the ships in the convoy, [?] guess it must have gotten that submarine.

I: What was your rank at that time?

P: Oh it was Private. Now I never got beyond Private First Class. We in Oregon didn't get that [?]. In Saint Nazaire for 2 or 3 months, then we went up to camp by train. [?] They decided [?]. I was sent out to be in Company G, the 18th Infantry, 1st Division. And I saw service there. Fought at the Battle of [the Marne?], [and ?]. I was in well-known battles. The first American troop activity was the Battle of Catigny. I started out as too [?].

I: [inaudible; background noise] Quite an emotional experience for a young boy [?].

P: Well yes, but on the other hand, it was probably as traumatic as it is for old people. I knew it was [?], anyway, trench warfare, bombardment, shells exploding all around, throwing dirt on the [?] trenches. Some days they ordered us to go [?], scared to death. The younger fellows just kind of [?], a [salty?] attitude, [?]. If you didn't, then you wouldn't. [inaudible section; loud background noise.]

[0:30:25]

[Recording stops and restarts.]

I: But there is a name for that phenomenon, I believe. No you were mentioning these battles. Where were you when the armistice was signed?

P: I was in convalescent hospital at that time.

I: Oh, you had better tell me about that.

P: Yeah, I didn't last too long at the front lines. I had one little break after Catigny. [?] of July, that they would put us behind the line. July the 14th, [?] go down to Paris. [?] So I had two days in Paris. Without any money. So we had [?] shirts and [?] and boots, [?]. To taverns, go [?] downtown, and look around a bit. Then [?] we came back from Paris. We were back in the lines again. We had one of these all-night marches. Where guys just go back to sleep on the floor, [?] start to fall over, [?] from the enemy, but just because they're tired from walking, and go to sleep. [?] 5 minutes, [?] go to sleep. Sleep anyplace. After walking all night, we got to stay in the [key?] for about 3 or 4 hours, and then at daylight, we had to go [?]. We took off. [?] Keep following the barrage. Compared to those, the [site of the] fighting at Verdun was a big surprise, because the enemy trenches were just wiped out, with nothing left of it. [?] on the way back. [?] All I saw was German prisoners that surrendered that had to have their [?]. The barrages passed over, and they'd be in a deep hole. [?] They'd come out with their hands up. That was a fairly easy situation for us. [Now speaking about the 2nd battle of the Marne?:] We had a tremendous barrage. We didn't take any artillery over ourselves, we just took troops with rifles, that's all that we could provide then. There were a lot of these French 75's, these huge guns, and our artillery [gunners?] had these guns. Just line 'em up, [?]. And they could just blow them through Pershing's [?] like a machine gun. And they took down [?] for us. But anyway, finally it was an enemy shell that got me. We were advancing at [?]. Second file. Advancing along the railroad. One of the shells which had been going over us, one of them dropped short. Dropped right in our file. Killed a bunch of people ahead of me, and one piece of shell got me in the thigh. We didn't hear it coming. Usually you could hear the shells coming. The noise seemed to increase in intensity when it come close to you. But if it didn't increase, it was going to go on over. You know, just make that big noise, when they were going over or going to come close. And if they were going to come close, you'd hit the ground. But we didn't hear this one coming. It'd come over a hill or something. Must've been fired [?]. Anyway, a piece of shell got me in the thigh, and that was the end of my fighting.

[0:35:55]

P: So I had quite a big trip to go back to Paris again, but this time by ambulance. [?]. It was a bumpy ride in a French train. [?] at night, on a stretcher outside a railroad station, waiting for the train to pick up. We got into Paris the following night. [?] Quite a scene. [?] all their damaged flesh, put in drains and irrigate it, [?] damaged by the [?]. Quite the ordeal. And they took a long time to heal, of course. [?] I spent a lot of time in the hospital that I didn't [?]. After 3 days in the Paris hospital, I was taken on down to a hospital in Limoges. Interesting then, when I was in the hospital in Limoges, they were having the flu epidemic over there-

I: Was this the Spanish influenza?

P: Yeah. I had become ambulatory and was walking around a bit, walked downtown, across and over a stone bridge to the city of [Limoges?]. When I was going to head downtown, I met [Ashel?] Carter from Hillsboro. [?] He'd been hospitalized in [?], and was in recovery. Odd to meet him over there, down south of Paris. We both arrived in [?]. He's the only one I ever met for a long time [?]. But after, we moved from the base hospital to the convalescent hospital. The army barracks [?], edge of [?]. I was walking on [?], limping some [?]. I was [?]. Armistice [inaudible section]. Just before Christmas. We were [?].

[0:40:04]

I: So you were there 2 years?

P: [Yes.] [?] went out to Camp Merritt. They were about a month [?].

I: You sound as if you took all of that very philosophically.

P: Yes.

I: There was that whole generation after the war that suffered from this disillusionment of World Wars. You were all very upset by it.

P: Not so much so after that war, [?] being in war, that was serious. That was war without purpose. We hadn't been [indoctrinated?] [?]. We did eventually drive the Germans off France. We saved France. We turned the tide and got them, we put a million Americans, [?]. The Germans had gotten down pretty close to Paris along the Marne there. Chateau-Thierry.

I: Tell me what happened when you got home. How had things changed, or what did you decide to do. Did you formulate any plans about what you wanted to accomplish when you came back, or did the war influence you in any way?

P: Yes, it influenced me, I'm sure. I had decided I wasn't going to be a private in a rear rank. [?] I mean, you got to advance one way or another. So I came back and my family had moved to Portland. I stayed in there a week. That was not home for me, so I moved back out here to Hillsboro. I lived [?]. And then started high school again.

I: Why did you decide to start high school again?

P: I wanted to get an education.

I: Did your parents feel strongly that you complete school, or? I just wondered if that was family values. Did your brothers and sisters go on to finish high school, do you know?

P: The girls finished high school, my brothers needed help [?], worked on the farm for [?] years. Build up physically [?] working for the farm. But my sisters went to work, for a time [?]. [?] she got a job in Los Angeles, went to California. [?] telephone office for a long time.

I: How did people react to a boy who had been in the war coming back to high school? Were you a hero then? You did, I see receive a French medal for your wound.

P: Oh, a citation. We didn't have [?].

I: Wasn't, well somewhere I wrote down the meaning of your award. But it was a French award, was it not? [Sounds of movement.]

P: The citation.

I: Oh dear, oh dear. [Sounds of movement.] Citation for honor.

[0:45:52]

P: [?] purple hearts. I didn't get a Purple Heart, I got that instead.

I: And that was your [wound]?

P: Yeah.

I: How did your fellow students react when they had a, someone among them who had been in the war?

P: They didn't really react. They were just children who wanted us to come back, [?] also [?]. The others had been seniors. The seniors got credit for it and they graduated. [Tripp?] and I, sophomores, I think we got credit for our sophomore years. I went back as a junior and I spent 2 years in high school in Hillsboro. And I found out during this time that I would be eligible for what was called rehabilitation. So this man come along, [?] the administration. Tried his, to get me to - Either I should go into engineering or be put in [?]. Well I thought I [?], what I wanted to do was have a chance to go to college. [?] the government rehabilitated you, they extended a 4-year college course. So I gave this considerable thought. I talked to him a bit, my professor, [?]. At that time I was working part time for Dr. [Smith?] at his hospital that he had here in Hillsboro.

I: What were you doing for him?

P: [?] work. And I was working nights in the telephone office. But the people I talked to, V.B. Barnes and Doc Smith both encouraged me to go into medicine. [?] knew it or not. But Doc Smith thought I [?] I used to [inaudible section]. V.W. Barnes thought I had that kind of skill, mathematical skills and so forth, thought I was a good mathematician. [?], scientific courses, he thought I would do all right medicine. So I asked the administration if they would give me 4 years toward the medical degree and they said yes, of course. [?] nice to me. Went down to University of Oregon and we met. Finished there the first part of medical school, and after I passed, that was a 3-year pre-med course, after my first year in medical school, then I had to complete my 4 years of training. [?] continue my case. They asked if I was rehabilitated. I said no, I wasn't. Obviously I could do [?] [Laughs]. Well he said, you better keep on. And then that [?] finished, I did 3 more years of medical school, [?] the administration. So that was quite nice. After the next war, they gave all the veterans the G.I. Bill. Gave them all the opportunity to have a college education. Which is a fine thing. [?] better to educate veterans, make better citizens out of them. Everything has a cost.

I: While we're on the subject, I did some research, and I want to ask you about, for example, was Dr. McKenzie there when you arrived?

P: No.

I: Was [name?] there?

P: Yes, he was a resident. Oh I'm trying to think of his name. [Name?] John?

[0:52:22]

I: Richard [John?], yes. Well the [University of Oregon] medical school, I think didn't they move up on the hill [to the current site of OHSU in Portland] about 1919?

P: About '21. No, I guess it was [earlier]- I got in there '21 and they had just moved up there a short time. They must have been there about [?]. There were still stumps standing around the school.

I: How many were in your class?

P: 45. [inaudible section.]

I: So were you working when you were going to medical school at all?

P: No. [?] I got married by [?] university. So I got extra money because of the marriage. I did all right.

I: So you met - did you meet Mrs. Pitman at the University of Oregon, or did she come down there, or how about that?

P: No, I met her while I was still in high school. She was going to Portland High School, but she had [?]. Right across the street [?].

I: What was Mrs. Pitman's maiden name?

P: Gardiner [spelling?].

I: Carter?

P: Gardiner.

I: So you did live in Portland, I take it, while you were going to medical school. Or did you live here [in Hillsboro]?

P: Well, I did live in Portland part of the time, but shortly after the [contract?], we bought a little place out here near Quatama, near her folks farm, out there.

I: Near where?

P: Quatama, it's just a mile down the track here. Bought a little house, this carpenter had just finished it rough. I [?] framed windows and things, and sealed it inside, and finished it up [?]. And then we stayed there at least most of the year, maybe [?] wintertime, we might live in an apartment in Portland. We'd drive back to Portland to go to school there.

I: Was the electric [trolley] running?

P: Yeah. I used to go in [on] the Oregon Electric train. I would get it at 6:30, train in the morning, and get home at different times of day depending on if we had lab or not. There were several trains a day that ran, so it was good service.

I: What did your family think about your desire to become a doctor?

P: Well of course they were quite pleased. Surprised when I decided to do it.

I: Had your folks ever spoken to you about becoming a doctor, or ever influenced you in any way?

P: No, I [?] myself.

I: Did Mrs. Pitman work when you were going to school?

P: She did for a time. She worked for old Dr. Tucker in his office for a time. Then, I'm not sure how much longer [?] it was. She worked for several months [?].

I: You said you entered in 1922.

P: '21 or '22.

I: So you graduated then in '25? or '26?

P: No I graduated in '28. I went to Eugene to train [?].

I: OK yeah, that's right. You graduated in '28 from the U. of O. And what interested you in medical school? Was there any particular speciality that interested you at that time?

P: When I decided that I would go into the [?], the idea was to specialize in [?]. But [?] I decided to stay right there [?]. It was an old practice. [?]

I: Were there a lot of [?]. Why did you decide to come to Hillsboro in the first place? Did you like the location or the people or [?] had here for doctors?

P: No, I didn't want to leave. [?]. I made the tour of the state. I had heard the praises of [?] county in Central Oregon. [?] Dropped out of the center of the state. [?] East of Bend.

I: Oh east of Bend. Not Gilchrist?

P: No, that's south. Due east. Burns! Yeah, I drove by Burns. And I, we went over there. At that time, when Nancy was born, she was probably about a year old. And we drove across that desert then to Burns. It was sort of [?] wagon track stop in the sagebrush, about halfway down there, [?]. But the [?] was worse than ever because that was dusty. Just thick dust. [?] it was a 9 hour trip to get from Bend to Burns through the dust. I was quite discouraged [?]. Rather than the good [?] practice, there was [?]. So the next day I went on. The place-

[recording stops.]

[End of Part 1 of the interview.]