

Interview with Elizabeth Baertlein

Conducted by Gay Beaudet (teacher at Nestucca Valley Middle School) & a student from her class in Cloverdale, Oregon

(Note that anyone who knew Elizabeth McClain Baertlein knew her to be very intelligent with a wonderful sense of humor. At the time of this interview I believe Elizabeth was in her 90s. And as you can tell from this transcript she wasn't hearing very well.

Also, the interview was held to learn information about Dolph School at which her mother attended. So Elizabeth answered the questions with information that she learned from her mother. And as you can read, many of her answers were what she imagined or supposed happened.

Enjoy reading this transcript! I loved picturing Elizabeth sitting in front of me as I read this . . . I can hear her voice, see her face and hear her laugh. There's a short written history that Elizabeth wrote. I hope to post that online soon as well. And thanks to Gay Beaudet and the student for taking the time to conduct this interview sometime in 2001 or 2002. db)

Student: *Ok... today we are interviewing Elizabeth Baertlein, and we are here in Cloverdale, and we have a couple questions to ask you about the school that your mother went to. So, do you have any idea when the school started or closed?*

EB: No, I don't know, but, uh... my mother must have been in fifth or sixth grade at the time, and they had this man come in to talk to the teachers... or, to the kids, and I think he boarded with my grandmother... I think... and, uh... and he a lot of interesting stories that he told, and mother, of course, remembered them, and, uh... she was all excited about seeing this little school (*again*).

We had a 1948 Buick, I guess it was, and we drove up there, and lo and behold, she started crying because the school was gone, and an old horse was standing inside with it's head sticking out, and she was crying because that horse was in the school... that was the end of the school. (laughing)

Student: *Would you like to tell us the name of the grade school you attended, or your mother attended, and describe if you can the exact location of the school.*

EB: My mother's name was Audrey McClain... her father was a mail carrier from Dolph to Oretown, and he would go down the Little River, if he could, otherwise, sometimes he had to go around by Hebo, depending on the weather. It had bridges, so they went through there, and, uh... and... apparently the school superintendent from Tillamook come down and wanted him to vote for him, and he didn't want to vote for anybody that just had a school six weeks out of the year, and he wasn't too happy about it.

Well, later, they would go down the Little River for a week at a neighbors... a week, that's all they had, and, uh... yeah, eventually my mother went down to, uh... where Clem Hurliman lives... uh, in Meda District, and she worked down there for three months and went to school for three months. And that's all they were getting... was just odds and ends... but she really was impressed with this instructor who talked to them, and I wish I could remember his name and the rest of it, but I can't.

And then she went to Salem and stayed with an aunt and went to school through the seventh and eighth grade... she washed dishes and ran for school, but that was her job. And the last year they decided they wouldn't give out eighth grade diplomas to the kids... they would wait until the ninth grade, so she got left out again. Well, then, if she could find the right books and the right texts and

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take the exam, she could teach school. I mean, just like that, you know, the kids were in school themselves, then all of a sudden they could teach. Well, that didn't work too well, either, because she couldn't find the books, so he was kinda' left out. And that's about the main thing I know about school. Course she gave me all the details years and years ago, and I've forgotten.

Student: *After the school closed, what school did the students who attended go to... after the school closed?*

EB: I guess the school just closed down... they didn't have teachers.

Student: *Ok... please describe the school building in as much detail as you can tell us about the outside and the inside of the building.*

EB: It was a long, green building... big enough for a horse to stick it's head out the window.

Student: *Were there coat rooms that you know of, or bathrooms... running water...*

EB: Oh, no... there wouldn't be any bathrooms... I suppose some out buildings, I suppose.

Student: *Do you know how many numbers of classrooms there were?*

EB: I haven't heard anything except about my mother and her sister, and they would put them on a horse together and fasten their coats together... the same time it was obvious to me, that if one fell off, the other would fall, too... but that's the way they rode the horse to get to school.

Student: *Was there a stage or a play shed?*

EB: Was there a what?

Student: *Was there a stage or a shed or anything?*

EB: I don't know... they never fell off.. they got to school, anyway.

Student: *Was there a bell in the school?*

EB: A what?

Student: *A bell?*

EB: Oh, dear. I don't remember ever hearing about a bell.

Student: *Please tell us from where to where the students lived who went to school. Do you know where any of the students lived?*

EB: I just don't know who the others were. They were the ones who just lived at Dolph.

Student: *How far did your mother have to go to go to school?*

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EB: At Meda, she, uh... she was there three months, so she got acquainted with those kids. Well, there were grown-up guys around Meda, and she knew them, but it's all gone out of my mind... I don't know now.

Student: *What were all of the ways students got to school? Like how did the students get transportations to and from school?*

EB: What... what is it?

Student: *Transportation, at school... you mentioned horses, were there any other, like...*

EB: They just had to provide their own way to get there.

Student: *Were there buggies... like milk trucks... what other ways did they get to school?*

EB: Yeah, I guess just take off on their own.

Student: *So most of them walked?*

EB: They... most of them probably just walked, or ran.

Student: *If you can, please tell us what time of the day the school started, and each time it was dismissed.*

EB: Well, I have to assume that they started like, nine o'clock in the morning, but then they stopped in the afternoon at three-thirty or four o'clock. That's my guess.

Student: *What were the days during the year that school... or that students... what days of the year did students not attend, such as Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving....*

EB: Well, I suppose they had Washington's birthday for a day off, and Christmas... well, this would be during the summer time, you see... it would just be during the summer months....

Student: *Please tell us about a typical day at school, from the moment your mother left home to go to school, to when she arrived back home in the afternoon.*

EB: Well, I suppose she had to push or pull that horse to get there, and uh... they probably... as I remember the school then, they had a bell that they would ring when school would be taken up, and, uh... I guess have the regular classes, and each kid would be working in his own group.... how many kids there were, I just don't know... it's too far back.

Student: *Could you tell us about the regular curriculum?*

EB: What?

Student: *What kind of curriculum did they study... what subjects did they study?*

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EB: (laughing)... They emphasized reading and, uh... and the math, of course... adding and subtraction and that sort of thing. I imagine it was pretty simple.

Student: *Could you tell us if there were any extra curricular activities, like sports or 4-H clubs...*

EB: No, I don't remember her talking about them at all.

Student: *How were the students taught? Was everyone taught in groups, or were there smaller groups of instruction, or were they individual, or...*

EB: Well, I imagine they called for a class, and they'd have one class at a time that got the attention of the teacher. I didn't hear a thing about any discipline or anything... this man seemed to be so interested in telling stories, and they were fascinated just to listen to it.

Student: *Did the teacher mostly lecture, or did they use books to study in?*

EB: I imagine it was just questions and answers.

Student: *Was there much homework?*

EB: Oh, I don't think they ever heard of homework.

Student: *If someone misbehaved at school, what were some of their punishments?*

EB: I don't remember hearing about punishing anybody. I think they were pretty good kids. They might have had a little fun on the side, but I never heard of any punishment.

Student: *How were the parents involved in discipline for school behavior?*

EB: How were they what?

Student: *The parents of the children... how were they involved in the discipline for school behavior?*

EB: Well, my guess is that they did what they were told.

Student: *Could you tell us about technology in the school? Were there any telephones?*

EB: Oh, no, there wouldn't be any telephone there, just for six weeks, you know.

Student: *What did the students write with? What did the student typically write with?*

EB: I don't get that.

Student: *Did they write with pens, pencils...*

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EB: Oh. I don't know whether they had Palmer method then or not... we did go through a series of the Palmer method about, oh, like you make the rolls, and turn and colors or whatever, but I don't know whether they do that now or not.

Student: *What would happen if a student was hurt at school, or if there was some other emergency?*

EB: I imagine that the neighbors would just go over together and make sure that the building was there and safe, and that was it. They had directors... one time my grandmother was... she was the clerk for the school.

Student: *Was the community involved in the school, and how... was there a parent support club?*

EB: No, there wouldn't be anything.. the only thing they'd do was send the kids to school and get them all, and get them all into their old clothes and do the home chores and get up in the morning and start all over and go to school again.

Student: *Was the school building used for other community functions, or was it only for the six weeks that school was in....*

EB: It was just that one building that I ever saw... big enough for a horse to stand inside (chuckling)...

Student: *Well, if you can remember any of the names of the teachers or administrators, would you like to tell us?*

EB: Well, my mother was really interested in school, and she really wanted to be a teacher, but he just couldn't do it.

Student: *So what were some of the games that your mother played at recess? Did they have like hopscotch, jump rope, tag...*

EB: Oh, I suppose they'd play, uh... I don't know about hopscotch, but they'd have a baseball team, and if the teacher and enough kids, they'd play Auntie Over, over the building, and if there wasn't, I guess they just threw the ball at one another. I don't know. (laughing)

Student: *Are there any stories that you remember about things that happened at school, or concerning school?*

EB: No. See, mother was born in 1884, and I was born in 1907... there's a gap there.

Student: *Do you remember when... with... where she was born?*

EB: What?

Student: *Do you remember where your mother was born?*

EB: Well, she was born in Salem. The family came to Salem as missionaries... this was way back in the thirties, and they came from the east coast... went around the Horn of South America and Hawaii,

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and then come back and went up the Willamette to Salem... that's the way they got there. And they're still working in the same schools... the same buildings... my daughter works in some of them, and uh.... she works... she's director of the Bible schools... there's two in Salem... a big one in Salem, and one smaller one out of the town, and, uh... he's in charge of the Bibles for both schools. She was here yesterday, but she only gets out here once a week.

Student: *What is your ancestry? What is your ancestry?*

EB: Well, as near as I can figure it out... it went so far back.. that I guess we're Irish and English and Scottish, and then I married a German... that's how I got the name of Baertlein.

Student: *Hmmm.... could you describe any significant events that your mother had during her childhood? Were there any significant events your mother had in her childhood?*

EB: Well, I think she just worked all the time, and, uh... she was one.... so I was the first one to go through college from Cloverdale high school, and the idea was to send me over there and learn home economics and come back and put in the department in the high school. That was my job, and I made it in four years.

Student: *Could you tell us about some chores or responsibilities your mother had while growing up?*

EB: Oh, I remember her telling about washing dishes for people and running to school to get there on time. That's all I remember.

Student: *What were some of your mother's favorite games or hobbies?*

EB: I never heard of any games. I suppose they played baseball, bat ball or something like that. I don't remember how many went to that school.

Student: *Does your mother remember a lot about her mother and father, which would be your grandmother and grandfather?*

EB: Yes... he lost his eye... when he... wait a minute... he carried the mail down the Little Nestucca to Oretown, and part of the time, he had to... during the winter time, he had to go back and over at Hebo to get across, and, uh... he would take one day to go to Dolph and pick up the mail, and he'd get it home... they lived down on the Little Nestucca... and then the next day he'd take it on down to Oretown and come back, so I think he made about three trips a week.

Student: *What was some of the best advice your mother got from your grandmother and your grandfather?*

EB: Well, I remember my grandfather, and he was almost blind, and, um... he'd sit me down and brush my hair and braid it... I remember that... he'd braid my hair for me.

Student: *Could you tell us about any accomplishments or occupations your mother had during her life?*

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EB: Well, we worked... or they worked on dairy farms, and eventually they came to Cloverdale.. I, uh... they lived in... they lived near St. Paul, and uh... I went to school out there to the Sister's school, and when it come time to move over here I had to move my horse, and nobody thought about a trailer or anything then, so I just got up one morning and took off, and I got as far as Sheridan the first night, and we had lived there before, so I stayed with some friends, put my horse in the livery stable, and the next day we come on across, and we finally caught up with the household team and wagon... and they were feeding the horses and watering them, and they weren't ready to move, so I kept going...

The horse was frightened, because she'd never been out of the valley, and she was just scared, but, uh... we came down Three Rivers and when we got to Dolph, and that's where my folks and their car caught up with me. My dad had been a homesteader and he figured that if it got dark I would just stop at a house and ask if I could stay overnight, and I didn't have the nerve to do it, so I just kept going. I stayed at Hebo Inn long enough to feed the horse, and it was pitch dark before we ever got to Cloverdale.

And we come down here to the junction by the Hudson house, and it was raining by then... and the sign... I could feel the sign and it said eight miles to Neskowin, so I knew that wasn't the way to go, so I stayed on Resort Drive, and then I went along for three more miles and somebody came along and came out and he had a light over his head, and he said it's two more houses, so they were watching for me. And apparently somebody put me on a mattress and I went to sleep. (chuckling) And that's the way I got here. The next morning I had the horse in a dairy barn... Charlie (*Ray*) raised dairy barn in Cloverdale, and I was banging on the door for school in Cloverdale... high school... they had all the grade school kids and all the high school kids all in the same building... can you imagine what a mess that was? Well, that's the way we got to....

Student: What special skills or interests did your mother have?

EB: Well, she was special in the way that she kept me reading books, or she would read books... she would read at night... she had a little lamp, and she would read to the rest of us... to the kids, you know, 'til they went to sleep, or she lost her voice, and then we'd sleep 'til the next night. I don't know what time we got up or what we did or anything... that was too far back. But she was... that was her incentive... to get me to read and to study, so that's what I did.

I was the first one to graduate from the Cloverdale school... high school, and the first one to come back and put in the home economics department... then the teacher wouldn't hire a married teacher... he wanted single women, and, uh... you know, how they went through all that back and forth... anyway, this principal got away with it, and he fired me because I was married, and some of the rest of the schools got into lawsuits, and they put that law out. It isn't true any more. If a married teacher wants to teach, that's ok. In fact, at the time that I was here, one teacher got married and then got a divorce and then that didn't work too well, and they let her come back and teach... but me, I was married and that was it. There was no place to go... she was either Tillamook or Lincoln City... there was no sense of getting into a high school. So that's what happened to me.

Student: *Are there community or religious activities your mother was involved in?*

EB: Well, yes, she was involved in church work and community work. And of course they ran a dairy and milked cows, like everybody does around here now. (chuckling)

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Student: *Well, we're almost finished, but we'd also like you to share some thoughts on why do you like living in this area, or why did your mother like living in this area.*

EB: Why did she do what?

Student: *Why did your mother like to live in this area?*

EB: Why she didn't like to live in Salem? I'm not getting this straight.

Student: *Why did your mother like to live in this area, or why did...*

EB: Oh... they came over and discovered that I didn't have hay fever and I didn't have asthma over here, so they came on account of my health. Course I still get into the cows work and barn work and things like that, but uh...

Student: *Well, we're very interested in all the stories you've shared with us today, and we'd like you to pretend you're sitting here with your grandchildren, we'd like you to tell us some stories that your mother had during her life experiences, or life experience that you had.*

EB: Well, for one thing, I got an invitation the other day for my graduation from college in 1929, and you're going to have to figure that out... I think that's about seventy-three years ago....

Student: *Yeah, that's a long time...*

EB: Something like that... but apparently they kept track of my name, and they sent me an invitation, but whether I'm gonna' get there or not, I don't know. (laughing)

Mrs. Beaudet: *Sort of a general.... A reunion from your college, huh? A reunion?*

EB: Well, the class of '52 is celebrating their fiftieth, so they're the honored students, but me, I'd just be stuck up there. And the last time I was out there, there was only eleven of the group that I remember anything about. So I think they're probably gone.

Student: *Well, thank you for letting us visit with you, and we'll type up your comments and stories that are being recorded right now...*

EB: I wish I could be more accurate about it... but it just has to go along in the past.

Student: *It's fine... you did a great job. Thank you very much.*

EB: Ok.

(end of tape)

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Transcribed by Darleen Cole
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