

Interview with Quentin Borba

Conducted by Dean Bones

March 6, 2004

Dean: *Ok. So... And I am going to get close for this so they can hear his name. This is Dean Bones, and I'm interviewing Quentin Borba, and today is March 6, 2004 and we're actually sitting in front of a work shop on how to collect oral histories, and Quentin has graciously agreed to come and be interviewed. And I'm gonna' use questions that have been collected from the participants in the class, so... thank you for coming, sir.*

Quentin: You're welcome.

Dean: *And these questions are going to maybe jump from... or around, because they are by different people, so... Describe for us your first job.*

Quentin: Milking cows by hand. (laughing)

Dean: *And tell us about that. Was that for someone else, or for your family?*

Quentin: No, for the... no, because when they went to dry cows up years ago, well, they'd start out, maybe, milking every other day, and they'd bring 'em down to where I and my parents lived, because the ranch that they milked on was up above, a quarter of a mile up the road. And that's where I learned, because they say if... as soon as you start learning to milk a cow, you're liable to dry her up. Well, they would teach us to learn how to milk on cows that was drying up.

Dean: *Oh, really.*

Quentin: Yeah.

Dean: *So tell us, what was that like to milk a cow? I mean, what was that whole process?*

Quentin: Just, uh, well.. 'cause we milked by hand, you know, and run 'em in the barn, and they only wanted you to guess to milk 'em half way out, which they was already way down in their lactation period anyhow, so it wasn't gonna' hurt 'em one way or another. (chuckling)

Dean: *What about cleanliness? I mean, did you wash the cows or anything?*

Quentin: Not then. Not when you was drying 'em up.

Dean: *So you milked the cow. Was the milk kept on the farm, or...*

Quentin: No. Just give it to the cats and dogs.

Dean: *Oh, the... what you milked, you mean. Describe for us what school was like in your early years.*

Quentin: It was a one-room school. I think there was eight of us, but there was all eight grades. One teacher. Great. I loved it. Uh, had the same teacher for three years, and then... uh, her name was Miss Quinn when she come there, and her name was Mrs. East when she left, and then they got

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a Mrs. Myra Costa from California taught when I was in the fourth grade in Brown School. Then I went to Beaver School, and of course there was two rooms there, and Mrs. Gilbert was my teacher four through eight.

Dean: *What did you feed your family? Actually, let's start with this... tell us about your family. Your own family.*

Quentin: Raised all your own... all your stuff. Done cannin', did gardens, and of course, had our own beef, raised their own pork... so it was... I guess you might say survival... because with a big garden, 'cause my mother... I don't know what... we had a big cellar, and it was always full of canned fruit and vegetables, and that was the way it was.

Dean: *Not too many trips to the store?*

Quentin: Oh, no.... no.... nope... homemade bread, and made our own butter in the wintertime... uh, and you ate what was on your plate, and if you didn't you... or you snacked in between time, and didn't eat everything that was on your plate, you didn't snack with cookies or in between meals for quite a little while. You soon learned that.

Dean: *Tell us about your wife and your own children.*

Quentin: I was married in 1949, and then in 1951 we moved onto the place up there, and then started raising a family and then in 1953 we started buying the place from an old timer that was here, uh... Adam Smeltzer. And the place then was known as Hazel Bend Ranch.

Dean: *Ok, so then, what did you feed your own family? Was it similar to what you were raised on?*

Quentin: Right. Yep. Same way. We raised a big garden, and what we couldn't use, if other people wanted it, well, they could have it, you know. Yep.

Dean: *What other jobs did you have besides your dairy... you did have a dairy then of your own, right?*

Quentin: Right, yeah. Well, I worked in the woods, also worked in the mill... had to to buy the ranch and keep a'going, you know, to make a livin', but uh, if I had it to do over, I'd do the same thing right back over again. I've never changed nothin'...

Dean: *So tell us about working in the woods. What do you mean when you say that?*

Quentin: Well, I run some equipment, but also fell... most of the time I fell timber and bucked it. Yeah. And then the mills, well, I was either off bearing for lumber or else I ran trim saws.

Dean: *What mill was that, Quentin?*

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Quentin: I worked in Paraguay's Boulder Mill, and I also worked in Vanhandle's at Beaver. And I worked at Bogg's alder mill... that was an odd deal... a fella' got sick and wanted to know if I could come up and happen to spell off for three or four days, and it ended up four years.

Dean: *And who ran the farm at that time?*

Quentin: Well, we run the... milked and went home and on Saturdays and Sundays, that's when you done all the farm work.

Dean: *So, when you milked, what happened to the milk? Did you have to deliver it? Or did someone pick it up?*

Quentin: No... they... everybody picked it... they picked it up, and then, there in 1960, well, I went Grade A, and so that way it was in a bulk tank and then it was picked up.

Dean: *So, change of subject... you were talking to some people about Portuguese Joe... tell us about Portuguese Joe.*

Quentin: Portuguese Joe jumped the boat in Astoria, and he caught two bull elk calves and raised 'em, and he was the first one to come over Neah-Kah-Nie Mountain with elk oxen to come into Tillamook. And his dairy was where... uh, about where Thriftways Store was here in Tillamook.

Dean: *Now, how do you know this?*

Quentin: My grandparents... grandmother... 'cause she was Portuguese, and of course, a lot of my relation that come here... uncles... they would take the name Borba when they jumped boat either in Astoria or Tillamook, take the name Borba for three years, and then they would take the original name of Suarez, because that way they wouldn't be shipped back. 'Course that was in the 1900's, too, early. (chuckling)

Dean: *What do you think is the most dramatic change that you've seen in South County over the last many years?*

Quentin: More people... probably more diversified now than what it was then. Because then I knew everybody in Beaver, now I don't know hardly anybody in Beaver. (laughing)

Dean: *So... diversified as far as... not... people groups, or jobs, or...*

Quentin: More jobs, and then, 'course then there was only two stores, and at one time there was only one service station, and now, of course, there's two, but still the two stores... uh, the fire hall... but there's just... more... and then of course there's the trailer court that was never in there before....

Dean: *So, different buildings have gone up?*

Quentin: Yep.

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Dean: *Doctor Huckleberry was a real Tillamook County personality. Would you share some thoughts about him?*

Quentin: That was one gentleman that I never knew.

Dean: *Ok, then let's talk about any doctors in South County. Any... what would you do for emergencies? Were there doctors?*

Quentin: Uh... well, when Dr. Lemery first came to Tillamook County, his office was in Cloverdale. And I happened to break out and my folks... and it was in the middle of the summertime... and the folks rushed me down there in Model T Ford, and he looked at me and he said, "Take him home, build a fire, wrap him up in a blanket and get him sweatin'." And what had happened is that I had got poisoned with a weed called dog fennel, and I was breaking out on the inside, and that made it come to the outside. (chuckling) And then Dr. Ringo in here at Tillamook, and also Dr. Hayes, and Dr. Steinbach.

Dean: *So.... when you were younger you doctored in South County, but later your doctors were up in Tillamook.*

Quentin: In Tillamook... right.

Dean: *Bayocean Spit... with the homes and development has great intrigue... what was that like to watch that dream develop and then go away?*

Quentin: I only remember being out there at one time... uh... and then we'd heard about it, and I can remember the folks on a Sunday drove out towards Bayocean... we couldn't believe that that had all washed away.

Dean: *So, you didn't really know that much about it?*

Quentin: No... no.

Dean: *Distances... was it quite a distance from where you were, then?*

Quentin: Well, yes, because see, we lived within a mile and a half from where I live right now.

Dean: *Has the road changed, or is it the way you traveled...*

Quentin: The way we traveled, and the road has changed. Then it was all rock roads and Model T Fords.

Dean: *Ok. When did your family first come to Tillamook County, and what brought them here?*

Quentin: 1902, from California. Beings they were ... I always asked my grandmother how come they moved up here from Fresno, California, and she said, "We just didn't like it down there". And so now... but I could never get her to tell me why. And now these other Portuguese that have moved up

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from down there, now I realize what was the matter, is because Portuguese are darker skinned, and then they classed them and treated them the same as blacks, and so they moved out. That's the reason they come up here.

Dean: *In fact, in your own family, wasn't there a difference in the skin color?*

Quentin: Right. My uncle was a lot darker skinned than my dad.

Dean: *Ummm... very dark.*

Quentin: And your skin is... bad as I hate to say it, but your skin is more oily, uh... I will get real red but I will not sunburn... put on a white shirt, and you could scrub my neck raw and put on a white shirt and in five minutes it'll be black around the collar. (chuckling)

Dean: *So do you know anything of your family's journey? Can you describe anything you know about them coming up here?*

Quentin: Well, they come up by boat, and in fact, it was on the Elmore and it landed right in front of where the feed store is in Tillamook down there right now.

Dean: *Hm.... How did you meet your wife?*

Quentin: We first knew one another when we went to grade school in Beaver, and then, uh... then when they moved from Pleasant Valley down there, both of us happened to be in grange down there and she run for fair queen and, so.... she asked me if I would be her escort. The rest is history! (laughter)

Dean: *Have you ever thought of leaving the area?*

Quentin: Never!

Dean: *Why?*

Quentin: I love it there. I live within a mile and a half of where I was born and raised.

Dean: *Sooo.... the area has been good to you in a sense?*

Quentin: Real good... real good.

Dean: *Uhhh.... without internet or t.v. or video games, as a child how could you keep from being bored?*

Quentin: We played a lot outdoors. But then, 'course we was busy all the time. Because folks and them had a dairy, and you worked on it. You... you know, like I said, learned to milk cows, you fed calves, you brought cows... took 'em to pasture... drove 'em to pasture and brought 'em back, you know... you always had chores to do. Chickens to feed, kindlin' to get in, you name it!

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Dean: *So the word bored wasn't in your vocabulary?*

Quentin: No... no.

Dean: *Talk about what you know about the impact the Navy had on Tillamook County during World War II.*

Quentin: Well... 'course I was livin' in the South end, you know, but it had quite an impact on it. In fact, several of 'em that was stationed here married and stayed here. I can remember the blimps and the planes that would fly over. They would fly real low... uh, we could stand outside and read the numbers easy on the sides of the planes, because they would come in... lot of times they would in underneath the far end of Mt. Hebo and then they'd drop down real low and then go over the top of Bunn Creek. And they was practicin' uh... I guess sight unseen, you know. Because that's when they spotted the subs off Pacific City and I can remember the day that those planes went out through and scared my cows all to pieces. Yeah. But then you could pretty near always see a blimp in the air then.

Dean: *So you had that constant reminder.*

Quentin: Oh, yeah.

Dean: *Tell us a humorous story from your past.*

Quentin: (chuckling) Wow! I don't know... I like to play practical jokes on people. Uh, and if you can get one on me, I get just as big a bang out of it as you will. I think probably the most practical joke is gonna' have to be on your father-in-law, when they got married... they lived in a house right below where I am now, and it was an old house, and the front porch was broke down, and nobody ever used it, and I'll say it was green and slick and slimy, and we went to chivaree 'em...

I don't know if any of you ever know what chivarees are, but that was the main thing then when couples got married and come back from a honeymoon, you got chivareed. Clocks underneath the bed, or cornflakes in the bed, or anything. Well, a bunch of us around there... we went to chivaree 'em, and they would not turn a light on in the house. And if you want to hear a dreadful sound, take an old buzz saw blade and put wire through the eye of it and hold a bar on and have somebody hit it with a hammer. That will really get your attention. Well, they wouldn't come up... er, turn the light on, so what did I do? I was gonna' be real smart and beat on the front door. So I went a runnin' on that porch, my feet went out from underneath me, I went through the door, and I was on the floor in the front room and here was Reuben standing there... HA, HA, HA, HA!! (laughter)

Dean: *If we can switch gears, then... what has been your hardest challenge in life? Or one of the hardest challenges?*

Quentin: Boy, I don't know. One thing right now, I know I would hate to raise a family right now, with everything that's goin' on in front of 'em... of the young students.

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Dean: *But for you, that wasn't really a challenge?*

Quentin: The drugs and everything wasn't there then.

Dean: *Uh, huh (yes). If you had one piece of advice to give students of today, what would it be?*

Quentin: Well, I'll tell you, from what I've... went into the schools.. uh... politeness... I think that is really one of 'em... and another one is, uh... the way the laws are now, you can't discipline your child at home, and they can't really discipline 'em at school. So, they've got free run. And, uh, like when I was down there at... last year talking to your sixth grade class, if we had acted in school as they do now, you'd have never seen a recess, you'd a been sittin' at your desk all day long. 'Cause if the teacher said somethin' to ya', that was law. And that's what I'd like to see so much different in schools now.

Dean: *I don't think Quentin ... you said, how many cows you actually had. How many cows did your family have when you were young, and how many cows did you have on your farm?*

Quentin: We had twenty-five at.. when I was young, but when I and the wife went on to the ranch there, there was thirty-two cows... uh, they couldn't even raise enough feed for 'em... uh, and then when we got rid of it, well, we sold 110 head, and raised most of the feed.

Dean: *So was it enjoyable having the dairy farm, was it tiring, what was it like for you?*

Quentin: It was a lot of work, but like I said, I would never change if I had it to do over. Same way that we farmed with horses, and if, uh... when I was up until... well, half-way through high school... if somebody today would offer me a job of mowing hay or plowing with a team, I'd be there.

Dean: *What new technology or invention most drastically changed your life?*

Quentin: Tractor.

Dean: *In what way?*

Quentin: Well, before we... I mean, we harrowed... you done everything with the team, you know, and you was walkin' all the time, and the tractor you was ridin' and you done it in... wow... what... sixteenth of the time.

Dean: *I apologize for keep looking down, because I'm not familiar with the questions, I gotta' see what's next...*

Quentin: (chuckling) Oh, that's all right.

Dean: *What advice do you have for me? How do I live a good life?*

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Quentin: Be truthful, uh... be honest, you know, even if it hurts, tell the truth. That's what I've always told my kids. Maybe you done somethin' wrong, but tell the truth, it's gonna' hurt, but the truth will bring.. come out. If you don't tell the truth then, you're gonna' learn it sooner or later, and the treatment's gonna' be rougher.

Dean: *So, in an emergency, who would you and your family turn to for help?*

Quentin: Neighbors. Then, it seemed, I think, years ago people were a lot closer than they are now. You knew all your neighbors, and if somebody needed help, you didn't question, you went and helped 'em. You'd do work for 'em, and not accept any pay. Didn't expect any. Because if you needed help, and they'd hear about it, here they'd come, you know.

Dean: *Can you think of one of those times where neighbors needed help or you did, and just tell us about how that worked?*

Quentin: Well, once this Ben Knutson, he'd lost his wife and his house had caught afire, and, well, he'd lost everything, and... then it was word of mouth 'cause not everybody had a telephone, and everybody got together and within... different people would furnish . . . people would furnish stuff, and he went to stay at another person's house, and, what was it? In about three weeks we had a small, you might say cabin for him, you know, all built back up.

Dean: *That's wonderful.*

Quentin: We couldn't get in a car and see how far we could drive in twenty-four hours like they do now.

Dean: *What about your community has stayed the same over the years?*

Quentin: I think it's stayed pretty much the same.

Dean: *In what way?*

Quentin: Because the people that are around there now were born and raised there, you know. There's not too many... we've got a lot of new ones come in, but you go meet 'em, tell 'em who you are and where you live, and you visit back and forth. And so it's... We always say if you come into our community and if you think you're going to change it, you're not gonna' stay long.

Dean: *I have gone through just about all the questions. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us? Any stories, any thoughts, any advice?*

Quentin: Hmmmm....

Dean: *And Quentin, think of important moments in your life. Are there any of those you could tell us about?*

Quentin: Important ones... boy....

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Dean: *Well, ones that stand out.*

Quentin: Uh.... I don't know... I guess when I moved onto the dairy the worst that I would have to remember would be my brother gettin' killed. I can still hear my dad yellin' at him.

Dean: *Still very fresh in your mind, isn't it?*

Quentin: Yeah.

Dean: *I appreciate you sharing that. And, let's go ahead and stop the tape player.*

Transcribed by

Darleen Cole

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