

AGNES HEALY JONES
Third Interview

Interviewed by:
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Oral History Project
Latah County Museum Society

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AGNES HEALEY JONES

Genesee; b.

farm wife.

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with Sam Schrager
May 19, 1976

II. Transcript

A: Not very often. No, Mother she did all the cooking and everything like that. We did the outside, milking cows and all – feeding calves and / ^{things} like that. Herding hogs and I don't know.

S: That was all women's work?

A: Well, yeh , the women, they didn't think that was anything. No. ^{that}

S: Today you think of that as men's – just the work/men would do. You wouldn't think of women doing that kind of work, would ya?

A: Oh, I don't know. We didn't think much about it. I was about two years old, I remember, when I went out to the shed and she was out helping to take care of the cows. And I got near a calf and ^{he knocked me down and} I started crying and the cow started to bawling. Caused quite a commotion. I wasn't afraid or anything.

S: You weren't when you were growing up?

A: Um-um. I wasn't afraid of animals. Never.

S: When you were a kid, then, did you spend – as a child – did you spend a lot of time with the livestock, the animals?

A: Oh, yes. We didn't think it anything.

S: Was your mother concerned about you growing up to be a little "lady"?

A: Oh, yes. We could be a lady and be around animals too. She was a frail little woman herself.

S: Did that mean that the work that she had to do was hard on her because she was small.

A: Oh, she was a small little woman, you know, and she'd work like everything. When she was a child at home she had three brothers and an adopted brother and they took care of all the stuff on the outside. But when she married, why then she had to learn how to feed calves and things like that, you know. It was kinda lot of work for her. Then we kids, we learned how. And my sister – and we got on the outside of the fence, you know, and milked the cow through the fence. And the cows – the calves was easy to break in to milk because we had to feed

'em when they were calves, you know. So they were tame and everything so we learned how to milk 'em because they were tame. And then, that's from then on, they grow up and broke them in to milking. And then later on why, Dad, he – he didn't bother with cows anymore. He'd let us girls milk 'em. Mother had a square place in the cellar. She had a milk cellar – we called a milk cellar. And she kept the milk in there and built of block and mortar, you know. And she kept all of her milk pans in there and she'd skim all of that cream off of there. And then she'd take the butter and sell it and take the milk to the hogs, skim milk.

We stayed home all the time. We didn't know any different.

S: When you say you stayed home all the time, you mean that you didn't go around visiting other places and that kind of thing.

A: No. We enjoyed ourselves at home. We didn't know the difference. Kids, you know, kids them days, they didn't know.

S: Well, did you then have much chance to play with other kids outside of the family?

A: Oh, yes. They'd come visit us – neighbors– you know, and kids that a way. There wasn't very many of them then them days anyway.

S: Did you, when you were growing up, did you have a lot of different kinds of clothes or just a few pairs – a few outfits?

A: Oh, we didn't have many clothes, no. Mother bought the material and she'd make our clothes. Holiday, we'd go to town and us kids would go along once in a while. Our mother'd go in and she'd buy material and she'd take it home and make clothes for us girls.

S: Were you – well, I was thinking about the kind of clothes that you wore. Were they real long dresses and that kind of thing?

A: Oh, yes. We wore them according to styles. Them days they never wore the dresses very long. Wore the dresses below the knees. We didn't know what coveralls were, you

know. It wasn't ladylike to wear coveralls. Our only clothes were dresses.

S: Did you have dresses you wore only for work?

A: We had dresses for work and then to go to church Sunday, ~~why~~ a Sunday dress. They were made out of nice material. She sewed awful nice.

S: You know, I've heard it said that most women had one good black dress. Is that true the way you remember it?

A: Oh, sometimes they had a black dress. Mother, she never like black. She'd rather wear navy blue, serge. She always sewed nice and sewed nice for us girls. She went to a parochial – her mother died when she was quite young – and she went to a parochial school and she learned how to sew, how to draft patterns, cut by chart.

S: Were you expected, Mrs. Jones, to do much work around the house or were you figured – were the girls –

A: Oh, we used to play a lot. Us children used to play an awful lot and we would help around the house. And do things like that.

S: What kind of things would you play when you were playing?

A: We'd play house. Then we'd play with the horses, and oh, I don't know. And we didn't have the things to play with – toys and things. We didn't know what toys were. We just had a few things and we were satisfied with them. And we'd make mudpies and play like that.

S: Did you kids fight with each other the way they do nowadays?

A: Um–um.

S: No?

A: No. Mother used to spank 'em and scold 'em. We didn't know what fighting was, I guess.

S: Did you think very much of school when you went there?

A: Oh, yes. I never started school until I was about nine years old. And then when I started in it was kinda hard for me but I made out all right and I like d it.

S: Wait a minute. Why was this – why did you wait till nine to start?

A: Oh, Dad was careless. And then he built a house in town and we moved to town and there I went from there to school then.

S: Was there a school near you in the country where you lived?

A: Yah. There was a parochial school and there was a public school.

S: What in Genesee?

A: Yah.

S: Did you go to parochial school?

A: Yes, part-time.

S: Well, I'm still wondering how it was you didn't go out in the country. Wasn't there a school near by there? No?

A: No. No, it was too far from each side, you see. The schoolroom – after while they done away with 'em though. We had to walk to school and then and then they got rid of the country schools. And they just had the country schools – districts. And then the public school in Genesee.

S: Well, how far away were you in the country from a school?

A: Two and three quarter miles. And we'd have to walk that in the morning and then we'd walk that in the evening. We'd be awful tired too.

S: So you didn't even go. You didn't go until you were nine.

A: No.

S: What about your sisters?

A: They're younger than I was. I don't know much about how far they went to school or anything. Children those days didn't go to school so late – so early.

S: Well at nine, did you have to start in first grade.

A: Oh, yes. But they had different methods then. They had the grade school and then they had the grade schools and we started in little ABC books. And then we worked ourselves up.

S: Well, does that mean that you caught up then before very long?

A: Yeh, oh yeh.

S: Is it bothering you to talk? (Break)

A: ...all the kids in the country. And of course, when we were there we went to school and just continued just the same as now. And we got through. And I went out to work.

S: So how old were you when you started – to go out to work?

A: Oh, I don't remember.

S: You mean after school in the afternoons or after you finished going to school – when you stopped going?

A: Well, I was – I don't remember.

S: But you worked out?

A: Um-hum.

S: What kind of work was that you would be doing for other people?

A: Well, I cooked hotcakes and waffles and then I waited tables. Oh, it was 12 years before I was married.

S: I'm curious about the kind of work you would do working out. Would you keep house for people?

A: Oh, no. I never did any scrubbing or cleaning. I did restaurant work mostly – counter work. Like cooking hotcakes and waffles, and answering telephone, playing cashier.

S: In Spokane this was?

A: Yah.

S: What did you think of that work?

A: Oh, I liked it. It was clean work. I didn't have to put my hands in no dirty work or anything. Dishes and food and that's about all. Meet the public and answer the telephone and pay bills and do things like that.

S: What did you think of living in Spokane?

A: Oh, I liked it. It was alright.

S: How'd you happen to meet him?

A: Oh, he came in where I worked and ~~that~~'s the way it went.

S: Had he come from down here?

A: Philadelphia.

S: Oh, really. The wind is blowing.

A: Yap. He died just last week.

S: Did you go together for very long before you got married?

A: Yeh, two or three years. Not that long, I guess – must of been about that long – two, three years anyhow.

S: Well, how did you happen to move back to Genesee?

A: Oh, my daddy gave us a proposition, so we took it up and we stayed there. Raised crops and I raised lots of poultry and things like that.

S: When you say "proposition", what do you mean? He offered you to work on some of his land or what?

A: Oh, we bought the buildings and things. Bud, he raised the crops and I raised the poultry and calves and we milked cows and I made butter and sold it. It was awful hard work.

S: You said your grandfather picked out your father for your mother. He picked him out for her. Is that...?

A: Well, that's the way they used to do in the early days, you know. And then, mother was just a child, you know. She was sixteen in ~~October~~ and they were married in July. She was just a little frail girl.

S: Did that mean she didn't have any say so? He just told – said you're going to marry this fellow?

A: Oh, them days...

BREAK

S: ...big enough at six or seven to milk cows?

A: Oh, the cows were gentle, and we went out and didn't milk them dry, my dad always had to send us back two or three times to finish milking. And we'd have to go back for more milk. But we made it. I wish she'd kept track of what she made, but she didn't.

S: Kept track of what she made? What'd you mean?

A: Well, when she made all the butter, you know. How much butter she sold and things like that, she never bothered to keep track.

S: Would you say she made a lot?

A: Yah, she paid the groceries bill and things like that.

S: She paid the grocery bill?

A: Most of the time. Butter and eggs. She was a good butter maker and she had awful good luck making butter and it just seemed to come natural for her. Well, she was Danish and Danish people are great to make butter, you know.

S: Danish?

A: Yah, she was born in Denmark. Well, not born in Denmark but she grew up. Her parents were born in Denmark and then she ...I've got it down on paper – she was born in Denmark and then she was raised in this country. There was one girl and three brothers and her mother died and then he – him and the boys continued on the ranch. And then he took her when she was 11 years old, to the parochial school at DeSmet. Then she was five years and then she come out. And she was just passed sixteen when she got married. Grandfather thought it best for her to get married. She was a frail little woman.

I cooked hotcakes and waffles three years before I was married.

S: Three years? In Spokane?

A: Yah. In a place up there called Saddle Rock. And we had big business up there.

S: Saddle Rock?

A: That was the name of the restaurant.

S: Did you know the people that ran it up there before you went? How'd you meet them?

A: Well, I went up there to work and I asked them for work . And they gave me work and I advanced myself up. I got along fine. And then I married my husband and we moved down to the ranch and I raised poultry and stuff like that.

END OF INTERVIEW

typed and transcribed by Karen Purtee