

INTERVIEW SUMMARY-TAPE INDEX

NAME: Brebner, Anna
 DATE OF INTERVIEW: 6-19-75
 LOCATION:
 INTERVIEWER:
 REEL NO.

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END

This is an interview with Anna Brebner on June 19, 1975. The interviewer is Dale Anderson at St. Maries, Idaho.

DA: The following interview with Anna Brebner was taped on June 19, 1975.

The interviewer is Dale Anderson at St. Maries, Idaho.

DA: Why don't you just briefly talk about the advantages and disadvantages of rural living as you see it.

AB: Well I think it's real good to be out where we can raise a lot of stuff ourselves and it's; we don't have a lot of neighbors around to bother us. We have some real good neighbors, they are real nice to us. I just don't think about going back to town.

DA: Ok talk about some of the things that you and your brothers and sisters did.

AB: Well like I said, we went horseback we went skating. When we were in Coeur d'Alene we did a lot of swimming and we were right by the lake. Oh I don't know; I don't know that we went on so many picnics. We went on more picnics after we were married and I had children.

DA: Were you or your brothers or sisters expected to go on to school?

AB: You mean to college?

DA: Right.

AB: No that seemed to be up to whether we wanted to go. My sister wanted to be a nurse but she didn't have the health to go be a nurse and the other one went to Univ. of Idaho. She had a heart condition, but her's was mostly music, she played the violin, she played the organ, she played the piano.

DA: Did she do anything with the music?

AB: No because she didn't live long enough.

DA: How long did you go to business school?

AB: Oh I'd say about a year and a half.

DA: Is that the length of the curriculum?

AB: Yes it's how long it takes you to go, to get what you want done. To learn

the bookkeeping and the typing and the shorthand.

DA: Were the classes structured or was it more or less paced to your individual needs?

AB: Individually, yes.

DA: Were there many people going to this school?

AB: Oh there was quite a few, yes. At that time there were only two business colleges in Spokane then. Of course now I think they go to junior college but now there is that Telsey Business College in Spokane.

DA: I think there's another one, too and I'm not even sure what the name is but it seems like I heard that.

Ok why don't you talk about your courtship.

AB: It started in high school in 1912 and he lived over in My folks lived in Milltown.

DA: Where's Milltown?

AB: That was way over there out of town.

DA: How far?

AB: It's about a mile out of town.

DA: Does it still exist?

AB: No the mill isn't over there. There's lots of houses over there that were built when we were there and at the time we lived in there, my mother lived there, they had a little school there, that's where my younger sister started school. Now there's just houses, people live over there but I was gonna say that we walked the railroad tracks all the time, back and forth.

DA: Just for kicks?

AB: No that's the way; we never got on the road, we walked on the railroad tracks. You wouldn't walk a railroad track now, I don't think because the diesel goes so fast.

DA: You mean you walked down the center of the railroad track because that

was a nice way to walk.

DA: And the mill was a lumber mill?

AB: Yeah and I guess the thing was that Jim went to School in 1912 and 13 he graduated and I graduated in 1914 in St. Maries. I went to business college and he went; well he was in World War I.

DA: Did you correspond?

AB: He wasn't a good letter writer.

DA: But you were a good letter writer.

AB: Yeah, I was a good letter writer.

DA: Did you write him a lot?

AB: Not so much, not when he was overseas.

DA: Had you talked about getting married before he went overseas?

AB: I guess so.

DA: You don't remember.

AB: Yeah I think we did.

DA: How long was it after he came back that you got married?

AB: Well we didn't get married right away. He came back in 1919 and we got married in 1920.

DA: Were you working when he came back?

AB: Yes.

DA: When did you stop working?

AB: I stopped working, he was over in Montana and he come out here and we got married.

DA: And then you went back to Montana?

AB: Yeah

DA: So that was when you quit work?

B: Yes.

DA: What were some of your expectations before marriage?

AB: To have a family, I think, that was me. Jim wanted a family too.

DA: How many children did you want?

AB: Well I can't say; I just wanted a big family and I got it.

DA: How many children did you have?

AB: Seven

DA: What medical services did you have when you had your children?

AB: They had a hospital in St. Maries and all my children were born in that hospital.

DA: Where did you get your knowledge about childbirth?

AB: Dr. Cornwell that was here at the time.

DA: How long have you been in St. Maries?

AB: Since 1911.

DA: How long was he your family doctor?

AB: I think I had him quite a while, he must of been gone someplace when Helen was born because he wasn't there, Dr. Robbins was there. He was there when one of them was born but otherwise Dr. Cornwell was there all the time.

DA: Did you keep the one doctor for most of your life here?

AB: Yes until he died.

DA: Where did you learn about childrearing?

AB: Well I suppose I had a book or two after I got married.

DA: You mean about raising a small child? Or just raising children in general as they got older?

AB: No I just raised them, I didn't learn it.

DA: Just whatever came natural?

AB: Yeah

DA: What do you see as the future for your children?

AB: I think they're all doing real good.

DA: Have you ever put any expectations on them?

AB: No I think they do what they want to do.

DA: Did you ever encourage them to go to school?

AB: If they decided, then; now one of the boys, John went to Gonzaga for two years but then he got married.

DA: Did you ever push them at home in schoolwork or helped them in any way?

AB: Oh yeah I had to help them a little bit.

DA: At their request, did you ever have to sit them down?

AB: Oh no, they were pretty good.

DA: Do you read a lot?

AB: I don't any more. I have talking books now.

DA: But before?

AB: Yes I liked to read.

DA: Did your children pick that up from you?

AB: Yeah

DA: What do you see in the future for your grandchildren?

AB: Oh I don't know. I know the ones all in North Bend are all doing real good. There's one boy graduated last year and went to the Univ. of Idaho but he didn't finish his semester because he run out of money. But then he came home and went to work at the plywood and he says he's going back and the grandchildren seem to be getting married. We had five weddings last year, grandchildren married.

DA: Did you get to go to any of the eddings?

AB: We went to all but one. The oldest boy was married in San Diego and he was in the Navy, we went to that one and we went to; his sister got married in August and we went to that one and there was two got married here and one got married in Klamath Falls, we didn't go to that one.

DA: How many grandchildren do you have?

AB: Seventeen

DA: And great grandchildren?

AB: Four

DA: Do you ever look into the future and see what life might be like for your great grandchildren?

AB: No, I don't.

DA: Do you have any thoughts about how life styles have changed? Or how your lifestyle has changed?

AB: Well I don't think that my lifestyle has changed so much because I belong to the Grandmother's club but we don't go very much.

DA: What about your travels?

AB: Not to much.

DA: What about vacations?

AB: No we don't take a vacation. We didn't take one this year. We have been going over to North Bend for a few years and we went to San Diego for the wedding and to Coeur d'Alene to visit Jim's sister but that's about as far as we go.

DA: Your vacations since you've been married, were those to see relatives or were those for your enjoyment?

AB: Mostly to see relatives, we enjoyed that kind of vacation.

DA: Visiting relatives?

AB: Yes

DA: That's really nice.

DA: Do you just usually just kind of set aside some time during the year, like a week.

AB: We were going over to the North Bend in the fall after the garden but last year we went in the spring, before it was time to put the garden in. Jim had a sister that we went to California to visit her, she lived in Oakland and we enjoyed that, she was a widow, she took us to lots of places, we saw lots of places.

DA: Did you enjoy doing that type of travelling?

AB: Yes.

DA: What states have you been in?

AB: Not many.

DA: How many years were you in Wisconsin?

AB: Until I was about 13, and I've never been back there.

DA: Do you have any relatives in Wisconsin?

AB: No they're moved away; my mother had a sister that lived in Me ford, Wisconsin and she's gone. I don't think any of her family was there.

DA: What about your husband's family?

AB: He hasn't got many left, there's just his sister in Coeur d'Alene and himself left in the family.

DA: Is there anyone in Michigan?

AB: No

DA: And you've been to Calif., Oregon, Washington and Idaho. And you came by train out here?

AB: Yes.

DA: How did you travel to the other states?

AB: Well we flew to Calif. The first time I think we went down on the bus. We'd go to North Bend and stop there then we went down on the bus but we flew down there the other time.

DA: Would you rather ride the bus or fly?

AB: I don't like the bus. The only thing in riding the bus is you see more scenery but when we went to that wedding, our daughter and her husband and one of their boys, we went with them and we drove, that was a nice trip.

DA: What mode of travel do you like the best?

AB: I'd like to get on a train again, I haven't been on since we came to St. Maries. There was a passenger running through St. Maries. Everytime we went to Spokane it would be on a passenger.

DA: How many years did you have that service?

AB: I don't remember when that service was taken out. Another thing when we came to St. Maries, we came up on a boat, a big boat that came up to St. Maries from Coeur d'Alene.

DA: Up the river.

DA: What kind of boat was it?

Just a steamboat?

AB: Yes

DA: With a paddle wheel?

AB: yes

DA: What did you like about riding the train?

AB: I liked the train. I think maybe because I'd like to ride it again and they don't have them anymore. I liked it when the train used to go through St. Maries with the passengers. We went to Seattle on the train, we went to Seattle for the Seattle fair.

DA: Did you go to the Space Needle?

AB: Jim did but we went to some restaurant and I got sick from what I had to eat there.

DA: Did you go to the fair in Spokane?

AB: Yes

DA: Which one did you like the best?

AB: Oh Spokane was a lot better than Seattle.

DA: Really?

AB: Oh I should say; Our daughter came from North Bend and they had heard that the fair was no good. And our daughter that lives here took them up there and they spent the whole day and they thought it was wonderful.

DA: What did you like about the Spokane fair over the Seattle fair?

AB: Well there was more to see and more to do.

DA: My husband liked the Seattle fair better than the Spokane fair. That was the only one I've ever seen so I couldn't say.

DA: Have you ever been to any other world fairs?

AB: No

DA: Do you see more countryside in a train, versus a bus?

AB: I imagine it's about the same.

DA: What do you do now for recreation?

AB: We don't do much. We just go to the meetings and that's about all. Every once in awhile we'll take a ride up the river.

DA: And then you get together with your family?

AB: Yes

DA: On holidays?

AB: On holidays and birthdays.

(They are showing pictures of boats)

AB: Georgia Oaks and the Flyer, they came up every day from Coeur d'Alene at that time. There was always that one boat that came to St. Maries and they had a lot of passengers too.

DA: How far up the river did it go?

AB: It went from Coeur d'Alene to St. Maries and to St. Joe. But St. Joe there's no town there now.

DA: Why don't you describe what you've done around your house? The type of work that you do, your day to day life.

AB: I used to do a lot of embroidery work and a lot of crochet and sewing, but I don't do that anymore. I do just ordinary work, until noon time. We have our dinner at noon time and it takes me most of the morning to get everything done for dinner, you know, make a pie and make bread. I make bread every week. I make two loaves and put one in the freezer and two loaves last a week. I make a lot of cookies. I write letters, I have a tape recorder, a cassette, that's what I use to write letters now. My typing is going down the drain.

DA: Do you correspond with old friends or is it mostly family?

AB: Mostly family.

DA: What about the friends you had in high school, are they still in town?

AB: There's a few here but the one; there's one friend, she's a business woman, she has the credit bureau in St. Maries and she's still working. That's Marty Smith. There's a few, Mrs. Scribner's a good friend of mine but I didn't know her in school, she wasn't here at that time. She come here after she got married. At church it has changed so much, there are so many new people here, this plywood people and now the railroad people, so many people we don't even know, we're strangers in church.

DA: How do you feel about all the new people coming into the town?

AB: I think it's good for the town, I don't think there's as much unemployment in St. Maries as lots of places.

DA: How would you describe the town?

AB: It's a friendly town, the whole town.

DA: Does everybody feel that way about St. Maries?

AB: I think they do; there was one couple that was sitting next to us and they got up and left, I don't know they had something to do. They come from California two or three years ago and they just think that St. Maries is the most friendly town that they ever saw.

DA: Before the new industries and the new people came in was St. Maries a pretty stable town, were most of the people that lived here a long time, was it just recently that you've had a lot of new people coming in?

AB: Well after the plywood come in there have been a lot of new people.

DA: Do you know if those people find St. Maries a friendly town?

AB: I think they do, A lot of them, I don't know if everybody likes it. You know we don't belong to a lodge where we go like the Elks or the Eagles. I think a lot of people think that St. Maries is a really nice place. None of our children want to leave, The oldest girl, she was over in Seattle and she was in nurses training and her husband was in the Navy

but they have talked lots of times about coming back to St. Maries when they retire. They had one boy graduate from high school and they still have two boys and as long as they have children in school I don't think they'll come because they have that junior college over there and the boys, the whole family are good workers and are known to be good workers. I don't think they'll come, if they ever do they won't come until the children are out of school.

DA: How long have you lived on this land?

AB: We bought that place in '38.

DA: So you've been in this area for a long time. When did you all decide to move out here?

AB: We thought it was a good place to have a family, to have a garden. We owned that land. We had a garden up there and we were gonna build a house. Jim just wanted to own a farm and it was a good place for children.

DA: Have you lived in another area in St. Maries?

AB: We lived in town.

DA: Did you own a house there?

AB: When we came back from Montana we built a house and we sold that and we lived in some other houses. We weren't gonna move down there, there was a big house on this place and it burned down after we were down there. But we were gonna build a house up that way a ways on some land up the river quite a ways.

She was getting old and she wanted us go down and take over that place.

DA: Do you still can very much?

AB: Quite a bit, I think about 30 quarts of apples and pears, not to many peaches this last year. But they have lots of apples.

DA: Do you have one freezer or two?

AB: We just have a big freezer.

DA: Ok why don't you talk about your community and church activities.

AB: The church activities I'm not so active anymore, I go to church all the time but then we just don't belong to; I don't drive anymore so I can't get to town. The Guild meetings are at night. The group that I did belong to, we met in the afternoon. We did a lot of work for the mission. We also belonged to the Deanery which was all the catholic women in northern Idaho.

I don't sew anymore because I don't do anything in World War I they did all the sewing for the veterans for the hospital in Spokane but the Grandmother's club, that's a federated club. They're trying to build a home for grandmother's, I think it's in Florida. Well we really don't do that, we don't pay to much attention to that. They're gonna have a national convention in Portland, I think it's in September and there are some of them going to that, but I don't really care about going to those ^{CONVENTIONS} ~~meetings~~.

DA: Have you ever wanted to go outside of the northwest just to visit?

AB: We don't have to go out to visit. Most of the people we know are right here in the northwest, like Jim's sister who lived in California, she passed away so there's no one down there to go and visit.

DA: Have you ever been curious to see some countryside?

AB: I would like to have seen countryside before but it's too late now.

DA: What type of embroidery work did you display at the county fair?

AB: It was just dish towels and appliques but I had a lot of embroidery work that I made for my mother when I was in high school.

DA: Was it mostly pillowcases and towels?

AB: It was pillowcases and I have a 54-inch round centerpiece that's just got a lot of work on it.

DA: What do you mean?

AB: It's a flat piece and it's got roses embroidered. That's what I did a

DA: Did you do much tatting?

AB: Quite a bit of tatting years ago but I haven't tatted for a long long time.

DA: Did you ever do any embroidery on your children's clothes?

AB: I don't think so. I did a lot of knitting.

DA: You knit sweaters?

AB: Yes

DA: Where did you learn to knit.

AB: Probably some swede over in Washington when I was keeping books
over at a store over there.

DA: Did you like being a bookkeeper?

AB: Yes I liked being a bookkeeper.

DA: Did you like raising a family more?

AB: Yes

DA: Where did you learn to crochet?

AB: I was young when I learned to crochet, my mother didn't teach me because
she didn't crochet. Somebody taught me.

DA: Did you teach your children?

AB: I never did She did do that, the one sister in Cottonwood
she does a lot of knitting. The sisters at the convent, they can sew all
the baby things that they can make.

DA: Do you get to see your daughters and your sisters?

AB: Since they have changed, they have changed a lot.

DA: So they get to travel.

AB: Yes and the one has the birthday on their both birthday, Jim's birthday
and her birthday is on the 26th of April. So they come out quite often.
And one sister down there, she drives and she was coming up to a wedding
her nephew was getting married so my daughter came up with her.

DA: Are you both catholic?

AB: No he wasn't.

DA: Are you Catholic now?

AB: Yes he is.

DA: Did you convert him?

AB: Yeah I converted him after I got

DA: Has the church played an important role in your life?

AB: Oh yeah.

DA: Before were you always involved with church activity?

AB: When we came from Wisconsin we went to Coeur D'Alene we went to Catholic school and we went to Catholic School for four years and it made a lot of difference. They didn't have one in St. Maries when we came up here but they finally got one. It was here for about 40 years and it's gone now.

DA: Did you send your children there?

AB: All our children went there.

DA: Are all of them still Catholic?

AB: Bill over there joined the church afterwards. John and his wife didn't join but she went to church with him. Lucille's husband joined the church the same time Jim did and Frances Ann's husband joined the church after they were married.

DA: What suggestions would you give a young woman who decided to lived on a farm or in a small town or would you make any?

AB: Everybody wouldn't like it on a farm.

DA: If somebody had decided to do that.

AB: Oh yes, I think that's a good idea

DA: Is there any particular advice you could give them that could kind of help them make the change?

AB: No

DA: Do you feel as though you could do without a lot of modern conveniences?

AB: Oh yes.

DA: Do you make your own soap or have you?

AB: I never made soap, I've got a recipe but I haven't made it.

DA: Did your mother make soap?

AB: Yes

DA: Did you ever help her ?

AB: I don't know she might of made it over here when she was in this boarding house, too but she had a lot of help in that boarding house. She had a lot of men there and she had a man cook there.

DA: Did you help your mother with the boarding house?

AB: Yes, ^{waited on tables} and made beds.

DA: What about your brothers and sisters?

AB: My older sister did too. I don't think the boys did much.

DA: Well maybe they packed in wood, in those days they used wood.

DA: How did you like waiting on tables?

AB: It was alright.

DA: Describe your life and how the depression affected it or did it?

AB: Oh we had a hard time but we got by.

DA: Did the depression occur after you were married?

AB: Yes

DA: So you were living here?

AB: We were living in town the

DA: And what was your husband doing?

AB: He worked in the woods a long time.

DA: Did the depression hurt the lumber business?

AB: Yes it did.

DA: Were there men working all the time?

AB: Most of the time he was doing something. He built roads with his brother.

DA: Was it really hard for you or were you one of the luckier families?

AB: It was hard but then we had a garden. We had a bunch of children, we had

we had chickens. We didn't live; at that time the part of the town we lived in was not part of the city.

DA: I have no idea what it looked like during the depression. What happened during the war, how did the war affect your life?

AB: I don't know that World War I affected me.

DA: How about your job?

AB: I was working in the store.

DA: Was that business hurt during the war?

AB: I don't believe it was hurt. There was that only one store.

DA: Why did you move over to Elmira?

AB: Well that job was open and I went.

The boy that's here was in the army and they sent him to Texas and they gave him a medical discharge. The other boy was overseas. Jim was working up there in the logging. During the depression he was logging and those people in they had a store and we traded for groceries.

DA: Has your dependence on the grocery store changed?

AB: All we need is the staples; we have lots of vegetables. For instance for beets I would put two packages in a quart box and that one package in a cellophane bag, that would be enough for a meal so we had all kinds of vegetables, lots of peas, lots of potatoes, carrots, squash. We had a squash last week that had been raised last summer. That's the longest we've kept them in the wintertime.

DA: Does your husband hunt?

AB: Not anymore, he used to.

DA: What type of meat did you get?

AB: Venison

We have a son that lives across the river, he used to get Elk and bring Elk out here.

DA: Did you ever make sausage or anything like that?

AB: No

DA: Just froze the meat? Did you butcher your own?

AB: No

DA: How long has it been since you raised any cattle?

AB: Since we moved up here.

DA: Is it just space?

AB: No we just quit.

DA: What magazines and newspapers does your family subscribe to?

Reader's Digest, The Grit.

DA: What type of magazine is that?

AB: Oh it just has everything in it. I get the Good Housekeeping, The American Heritage and Post.

DA: Does your neighbor take the tapes of those?

AB: She makes the tapes of the St. Maries paper.

DA: But the others you subscribe to?

AB: Yes they come from Boise.

DA: I think I've heard of that sort of thing before.

AB: They send out a talking book topics and it's a record and it gives you the number of the book and tells you what the book is about they send a paper that has it all listed, it's an order blank and you just listen to that little record and pick a choice of books that you want and once a year they send out a catalogue of books. And sometimes I get lazy and they just send me some books. I like books about, like the book I have now is coming out west to the goldrush. I like the older books though. Some of the new books I don't like at all.

DA: Has your ~~change~~ taste of books changed over the years?

AB: I don't think so

DA: Do you like novels and these auticbiographies?

B: Yes; you can get any kind of book you want, fiction or non fiction, mystery, religion, geography.

DA: Which ones do you like the best?

AB: I haven't taken to much of the geography or mystery.

DA: Do you watch tv very much?

AB: Not very much anymore.

DA: What are some of the programs that you watched in the past?

AB: Most of the time we watch this "What's my Line" and "To Tell The Truth" "Hollywood Squares" Some of the stars on there are just absolutely no good. Then we just watch the "Waltons" and usually on Sunday nights we watch the "Wild Kingdom" and "Walt Disney"

DA: What's your favorite one?

AB: "Wild Kingdom" I never watch TV in the daytime anymore, we used to. There is so much police stories, one right after another.

DA: Do you ever go to the movie?

AB: We don't have a movie here, we haven't had a movie house here for a long long time. The people that had a movie house here, they fixed it so nobody could get a movie house in this town. Now they really need one, it would be good for St. Maries but they don't have one. The son started an outdoor movie at Plummer. Somebody really should have a theatre in St. Maries because I'm sure they would make money.

DA: Thinking back what are some of the most common things your husband asked you about?

AB: "What kind of pie do we have today?"

DA: Do you bake pies every day?

AB: No. I make smaller pies now than what I used to.

DA: When the children were growing up did you bake pies all the time?

AB: No not all the time. There was lots of milk to make puddings with and lots of eggs.

DA: Do you make puddings from scratch?

AB: Oh yeah and cakes from scratch.

DA: What kind of bread do you make?

AB: I mostly make white bread. My grandkids just love it, just plain rolls
You go over there at dinner and take a pan of rolls and they're gone.

DA: Were you all have any big decisions to make were they joint decisions?

AB: No not like they try to tell families to do now.

DA: What about you and your husband, just you as a couple?

AB: Yeah we make decisions together.

DA: When you started raising a family did you just decide you were gonna
have a family? Did you plan when you wanted your children?

AB: No we didn't, they just came.

DA: Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

How would you consider your life from your mother's life?

AB: My mother was a business woman and I wasn't.

DA: Would you say that you were happier than she was?

AB: I think I'm happier than she was, yes.

DA: Are you sure?

AB: No I'm not sure, that's what she liked and she really was a good one, a
good business woman and I'm not because I wouldn't want to go out and
(end of tape 10 side 1) I wouldn't want that kind of work at all.

DA: Did she find any comfort in raising children and running a business?

AB: I don't think so; when she came to Coeur d'Alene the youngest one was
just a little girl, she was just starting school and that man that had
the mill over there set up a school where there were just three or four
grades, he started a school. I think my mother enjoyed that kind of work.

DA: Did your mother seem to be a happy person most of the time?

AB: I think she was.

DA: She ran the boarding house before your father died?

AB: Then they went to, they had another hotel down here and she also had a confectionary store, she run that for a long time, the two of them. Then he went to Davenport, Wash. and had a confectionary store over there and when they came back to St. Maries they had that Coutney Inn.

DA: How would you compare your mother's way of raising children to your way?

AB: I don't know; mine I was with them all the time, of course she wasn't when we were in Coeur d'Alene, yes she was, her sister owned a big boarding house and we lived with her awhile and then we lived in a place of our own. When we lived like that she was always with us but we were grown like I was in; now my brothers were in grade school when we came to St. Maries. My sister was an 8th grader and I was a 9th grader. That youngest was a little girl, she was 10 years younger than me.

DA: What effect did that have on you as a child?

AB: I don't thing I was affected because we had lots of things, we worked in the dining room my sister and I and we had lots of nice clothes.

DA: Did you ever consider working after you got married?

AB: No, I helped my mother with the bookkeeping in the Coutney Inn but that's all I did.

DA: And you've always been happy here at home?

AB: Yes.

(end of interview on tape 10 side 2)