

ORALE HISTORY WITH VERA DOOLEY

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U.S. History

6th hour

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(Me) "O.k., this is my orale history project with Vera Dooley, my mom, on the 5th day of May, 1996. O.k., I'm going to start out, mom, by asking you some questions, um, just so it will be like an oral history, um, Tell me when you were born and if there were any unique circumstances-if you were born early or late or if it was really late at night...just tell me anything you can about when you were born."

(Mom) "Well, I was a baby, so I don't remember exact circumstances about being born, but I was born in Gerome, Idaho, on September 18th, 1954. Um, my mom was in labor a long time with me, as well as with my older brother. Um, she had a difficult delivery with both of us, but other than that, um, really nothing unusual."

(Me) "O.k., thanks. Um, I understand you grew up kind of on a farm. Your grandma, which would be my great grandma, um, had a farm and had animals on the farm and things. Can you tell me a little about your experiences on the farm with your grandma."

(Mom) "I LOVED the farm! Um, my grandparents had a really huge farm. Oh, at the time I believe they had about 300 acres of farm land. It was a WONDERFUL place to stay as a kid. We used to go there, especially during the summers."

We'd spend all summer there, helping with the chores and whatever else needed to be done and the reason it was so much fun, I guess, was because we had sooo many fun places we could play or hide. One of our favorite places to go was the "Coolie"--We called it a "Coolie"--and it was--a "Coolie," is not a, I guess, as big as a canal but it's a lot bigger than a ditch. It was big enough we could go swimming in it and we used to go swimming there all the time and there was one place that was a lot deeper and it was quite wide. Um, it was hidden down off the side of the lane, that ran--they had quite a long lane that ran up to the farm, and it was a dirt road and we could hide down where there was these trees around by the "Coolie," and that was our swimming hole. We use to play all kinds of games down there and chase each other around and jump on frogs--squish frogs--and just, you know, dumb kids' stuff. Um, what I liked about it was they had all different kinds of farm animals. They had, um, horses and cows and pigs and sheep, and um, cats and kittens and they also raised chickens commercially, so they had huge, big, um...well, they had incubators for the baby chickens. It was kind of unique to go in and gather the eggs there cuz' all the chickens, when they laid eggs, the eggs would role, it was like a little ramp-thing and you could just go and collect them. Uh, at the end of this little ramp-thing, because, like I said, they sold them commercial to some big out-fits up, ya' know, out of state, and so that was kind of fun going in there and seeing all the new baby chicks in the incubators. And we used to go in and hold them and had baby pigs.

We used ta'--sometimes the mother's wouldn't have anything to do with the babies and so especially the pigs, sometimes, and so grandma would bring the pigs in a little box and put em' behind their old wood-burning stove that was inside the house and then we would have--take turns bottle-feeding these baby pigs and they would squeal and you'd hold em' just like you would a real baby. They were sooo cute! And I remember that--that was a lot of fun. Sometimes we'd climb up in the trees at Grandma's house, and um, Grandpa always hated the sparrow eggs and so he said we could collect as many as we wanted with those, he didn't care what we did. I remember one time, my older brother and I had climbed up this tree to get some eggs and we put these little bird-eggs in our pockets and we were sliding back down the tree. I slipped and squished all the eggs that were in my pocket and so I had ta' (laugh) walk around with egg-yolk fallin' out of my pockets till we got back to the farm-house and grandma had to make us change....But they had a really hard life, actually, um, my grandmother never had an in-doors bath-room--they had an out-doors and um, they had old-time ringer-washing machine. This probably dates me--makes me sound like I'm really old, but I remember her running clothes through this old ringer washing machine, and then hanging the clothes out to dry. I remember, um, when it was time to kill chickens, we'd used ta' have--and that was my--I hated that job worse than anything that we had to do on the farm--was...was that's cuz' grandpa would--or grandma, whoever was there, would chop the heads off the chickens and these bodies would be running around the yard with no heads on,

and flapping around and once they dropped over dead it was, because we were younger, it was, um, my job to go run and get the chickens, pick them up by the feet, and put them into these tubs of boiling water that grandma had ready and the worst part was having to pluck the feathers, back then, off of every single chicken...EWWW...and they'd stink--I hated that! But they had, like, horses we could ride and they had a big bull that was out in the pen, that had a ring in its nose and he was mean and had--grandpa had got him real cheap from a guy that had, I guess this bull had supposedly killed the previous owner and so grandpa told us we weren't allowed anywhere near the bull--the bull was set quite a ways from--from the barns and any place else and I remember this one day, I'd never really seen grandpa get mad except this one day. Um, my brother and I were teasin' the bull. He'd got in the pen and was trying to get the bull chase him and then when the bull started to chase him, I'd jump in the other side and start taunting the bull, um, 'till he'd snort and, you know, turn around, and start chasing me and grandpa came upon us one day, when we were doing that. He haled us over the fence rail and--and spanked us and that's all I ever remember my grandpa spanking us. We really scared him cuz' he said that the bull was mean and shortly after that grandpa sold that bull. I guess he didn't want to take the chance of the--the bull would get loose or hurt one of us. Um, but they had cattle-dogs, sheep-dogs, that were really good dogs. I remember this one dog because I used to get teased 'cuz I have eyes that are kinda' two different colors, and they had this old sheep-dog that had two different-colored eyes. One eye was blue, and one eye was brown. 'And,

um,..but he was really smart--and that's why I keep thinking--
(smile) well--well, and he was real smart--so, um, he was kinda' my
favorite on and--and another dog that they had that was real good
and real smart was a dog that was black and he was called "Satan,"
and those were really kinda' fun, uh, they followed us everywhere,
us kids, they--ever since I was little, I guess, they just kind of
followed us around and they were real protective of us. And we'd go
down, somewhere, where we weren't supposed to be and they'd start
barking and--'till my grandma would come out and she could see we
were headed down the wrong place and come after us. But the dogs
never would let us do something we weren't supposed to do and we'd
use to push em' , get mad and push em' out of the way and they'd
stand right in front of us. They wouldn't let us go down certain
places where, I guess, they new we weren't supposed to play. So
those are kind of some fun things and my grandpa had a pony that
was a buck-skin horse. It was a BEAUTIFUL thing! The mother was
beautiful and the colt was beautiful. But the colt kinda' got
spoiled by grandpa. Grandpa nick-named his colt "Sugar"--"Sugar-
Baby" and he followed him, my grandpa around just like he was a
dog. He never was din a pen or corral or in a field. Um, once he
was old enough, he just followed my grandpa around the farm and
grandpa spoiled him rotten. And he was--he had--was supposed to a--
raise him so he could sell them, but grandpa got too attached;
could never sell him. And then they had, a', we used to go out in
a certain time in the evening--around five or six'o'clock in the
evening,a', ta' bring the cows in so they could be milked and there
was, a', one cow that's called "Old Bess."

Um, she was really quite old; she was a leader. When, she knew exactly when it was time to start being milked. She's turn around and they'd be way out in the field and she'd start commin' home--headed back to the barns, uh, when she new it was milking time and all the other cows would follow her. We never had to herd em' and um, so she was kind of a unique old cow. It was kind of fun, um, I remember staying, um, I remember staying--we used to stay overnight a lot at grandma's house and I can remember sleeping on the couch that made out into a bed, listening to the porch, uh, the front door would be open door would be open and we'd be listening to all the night sounds, you know, on the farm and it was sooo cool, and they had these big elm trees lined up the lane on both sides, um, all the way up and their were a huge, long stream of trees and the wind used to come through there and make these rustling sounds. It was so neat to listen to and you'd listen to the bull-frogs and the crickets and--cuz' they had some ponds out by their farm and there was lots of bull-frogs that would go out at night. It was--it was just a wonderful place to go. We worked hard but we had a lot of fun, too. You know, we had--we had some pay-backs: Um, being part of the farm, picking the strawberries and eatin' em' as fast as we, you know, picked em'! And then we'd go in with empty buckets and I remember eating so much we got sick. And then there was a time my brother--my older brother-- that's-- Frank who's eleven months older than me, we got (laugh) grandpa used to smoke these real smelly, Cuban cigars and they were grosse--just stinky things and grandma hated them--they were always--she was always giving him a hard time about his stinky cigars.

And this one time, my brother Frank and I had stole a cigar--he had stole a cigar from grandpa and we decided we'd see how, you know, we wanted to try it, and we, (laugh) we lit this big, old Cuban cigar...Ohhh...it was soooo grosse! Both of us were sooo sick and we--we just turned green and about that time grandpa came around the side of the barn and caught us smoking back there--we were sooo sick we couldn't run or cover it up and he started laughin' and he laughed and laughed and he said he didn't think he'd have to punish us because we pretty well punished ourselves because we were so sick. We never tried it--we never tried that again! It cured us from wantin' ta' smoke, um, because it was so awful. But, uh, we used to go into the barn to help grandpa milk the cows and the baby kittens would come in and grandpa had some special dishes that were set around and he'd just squirm some of the warm cows milk into the baby dishes--or into the kitty dishes and they'd drink out of them there and ya' know, he'd tease us sometimes, we'd walk by him sometimes and he'd squirt milk at us...you know, just fun things and what I remember most about my grandpa on the farm was every where he'd go, he was singing. He'd make up songs about where we were going, who he was with, and he'd just make em' up--off the top of his head, and he sang everywhere he went--that's what I remember most about my grandpa. My grandma was--Ohh...she could cook, make pies, rolls--like--ohh they were wonderful! And so we always had, um, you know, those--those things. Some smells that I associate with the farm, even to this day, is the smell of coffee.

Don't like to drink it, don't like the taste of it, but I love the smell of it because I think it brings back memories of wakin' up early, you know, like, five'o'clock in the morning--we'd wake up to the smell of coffee brewing and bacon frying and so those are happy memories. They--I think every kid should have the experiences of growing up on a farm."

(Me) "O.k., and you were the only girl, weren't ya'? You had three brothers, isn't that right?"

(Mom) "Yes."

(Me) "What was that like? Tell me, were you and your mom really close--or..."

(Mom) "Uh, not so much when I was a kid but later, uh, when I became a teenager we were a lot closer. I guess I was kind of a tom-boy--Well, (giggle) I KNOW I was a tom-boy. (laugh) Being the only girl, my mom said that she was hoping I would get into dolls and frilly dresses, but all the barbie-dolls and stuff she would buy me, I'd never play with. Um, friends would come up after school and they'd be playing with my dolls and I'd be in the dirt playing trucks with my brothers and they'd be playing with my barbie-dolls. Um, I was kind of a disappointment to my mom, I think, because she said that I never did take an interest in dresses--or, I always wanted to wear jeans and shorts and T-shirts and I still do to this day. I'm more comfortable in jeans, but...."

I was second to the oldest and I had an older brother that's eleven months older than me and two younger brothers. One that's four years younger than me, and one that's six years younger than me. Um, we had--we used to fight a lot. I'd get teased a lot, but what I hated most was when I started dating. My boys--my brothers would give the boys that I dated the third degree, it wouldn't be my dad. They'd come in, um, and say--ask really embarrassing questions like: "You're not going to kiss my sister are ya'?" Ya' know, things like that and you'd die! Ah, so, I got, you know, they used to tease me a lot but they were--on the other hand, they were really protective of me and their was a boy who asked me out, this one time, who had a reputation and, um, I had excepted a date with him and my brother hit the roof and said, "You're not really gonna' date that guy, are you? Um, do you know what kind of reputation he has?" So they were kinda' OVERLY protective that way. Ah, we got along really well....What was fun was when we were--since we're all, especially my older brother and I, were so close to the same age, we thought we were twins! People thought we were twins because we looked alike. We both had blonde hair and freckles and were the same height--people thought we were twins because we were so much alike, until he started into first grade and I didn't and, you know, they were really surprised that we weren't twins! We used to do some really fun things--CRAZY things together. The fun part was when we'd go double-dating or when he'd have a date, and I'd have a date.

Whoever came home first, the other one would wait up for 'em and have cookies and milk set out so we could talk about our dates and it was from him that I learned about kissing and all that stuff. It wasn't from my parents, it was from him. He taught me the facts of life, and--or, (grin) what he THOUGHT they were. So that was kind of a special thing. You know, we fought a lot when we were younger, but we younger, but we got along when we were just, you know, growing up more mature and stuff. We were close--really close. Um, we used to--just, it was fun to double-date, go ta'--we even went to proms and stuff together. We'd double-date and with--it was a lot of fun. He's the one who taught me how to dance, um, you know, and I'd be the one that my younger brothers would practice on before they would go to dances. Um, is that what you wanted? (laugh) "

(Me) "Uh-huh, (laugh) That sounds goo. Um, can you tell me--every kid has a so-called "magical age"--they turn a certain age and, you know, that seems to be THE age that they wanna' be.....Like down here, sixteen can be a "magical age" because we get our driver's license, or 18 because because we move out of the house and go to college. You know, was it--do you remember a "magical age" that you just couldn't wait to turn when you were growing up?!"

(Mom) "Fourteen."

(Me) "Is that because you could get your driver's license that young?"

(Mom) "Ya'--ya', um, in Idaho you could get your driver's license when you were fourteen even though you couldn't drive at night until you were sixteen."

(Me) "Uh-huh..."

(Mom) "So that was kinda' a fun thing to me--we couldn't wait until the day we actually had our driver's license--"

(Me) "Uh-huh."

(Mom) "--and could drive.."

(Me) "O.k., um, growing up was there any major events--world events--such as wars, or presidents or--do you remember anything like that that happened during that time?"

(Mom looking hopelessly at the recorder) (said slow and drawn out..) "Uh...no...I know the Vietnam War was happening when I was in High School. That was kind of a traumatic thing for everybody, um, 'cuz some of the kids had, um, brothers that had to go off and fight in that. I can remember that was kind of a tough thing, um, as far as not--OH! I can remember when I was--I can remember when President Kennedy was--when he was shot."

I was in elementary school and the reason I remember it so much was because I had--all of us--had come in from lunch recess--uh, from playing, and we'd never seen her cry before and that really spooked us. We asked her why she was crying and she said that they'd just heard, uh, word had just come--by means of the radio or whatever--that, ah, President Kennedy had been shot. So we all started crying, too, though we didn't understand it, but on teachers did. I remember it made an impact on me because all the teachers in school were crying--"

(Me) "Hmm..."

(Mom) "And the principle was crying and he came in and talked to all the classes about what had happened and that's why it was such a big thing for me--in elementary school, I still remember that."

(Me) "Hmmm...who else--who became president after that--who--how many presidents were you alive ta'--"

(Mom) "Oh, gee, I don't know."

(Me) (chuckle)

(Mom) (chuckle) " I don't know, I never counted them, I guess."

(Me) "Can you name any presidents during that time besides Nixon?"

(Mom) "Uhm, I--I don't know. (chuckle) I can't remember, I'd have to go back and figure it out, I guess, I can't think of it off the top of my head."

(Me) "O.k., um, did you keep a diary when you were growing up?"

(Mom) "Oh, on and off, it wasn't a real consistent thing."

(Me) "O.k."

(Mom) "If I thought about it sometimes, I'd record things. When I went on a mission I kept a diary, faithfully, but up until that time it was...if I thought about it every once...in a while..."

(Me) "So, um, every kid learns lessons, especially, probably, during their teen-age years. What were some lessons that you learned growing up?"

(Mom) "Oh...um, I think I learned how to be a hard-worker. We were taught that at a very young age--not just with my grandparents, but with my parents as well. We had responsibilities, chores. We always had to take care of the garden, the weeding. We did chores around the house--lawn chores--, and I had yard chores just like my brothers did and my brothers had to do their, uh, share of dishes like I did. So that was kinda' an equal thing, but we learned how to work hard."

My dad--I know--my mom tried ta' teach us to be honest 'cuz I remember one time we'd gone swimming and, a', we didn't have a swimming--pool--they do now, but they didn't when I was growing up. Everybody swam in the Shoshone canal or the Shoshone river and, um, we found an inner-tube one time, we'd been tubing down the river, we found a tube and it didn't have anybodies name on it, so--or, we SAID it didn't have anybodies name on it--there was a small name on the one--back side of it. We brought it home...there was, like, two of 'em and my dad saw us when we came home and asked where we had gotten the tubes. We just said we found them, and he turned them over and saw the names on the other side, and he said, "You didn't find these, you took them!" He made us go back down and take them to the people they belonged to, and that we had stolen them, and that we were sorry and I can remember one time, when I was young--we had to be not even in kindergarten or younger--we had an older lady who was a retired school teacher who lived two houses down. My brother and I and a little friend that was my age, had gone into her house and we took marshmallows and, um, we found some paint she had in her back yard, and we took the paint and started painting; we thought we were helping her out but then we heard my dad hollering at us! We knew we were in trouble and we dropped the paint can and brushes and we had a package of marshmallows, still, partly eaten that we dropped, and we ran and we hid up in a tree. We could hear him talking about us. Her name was Mrs. Mackenzie, I can still remember her name and she came back and found the paint mess. We'd left the door open when we'd gone in to eat marshmallows and, of course, my dad knew it was us.

The hardest thing we had to do was we had to go back and clean up the mess we'd made and try ta' clean up the paint we'd made--the mess we made, and tell her we were sorry. We kept saying, "Spank us, dad, just spank us!" My dad wouldn't spank us. He told us "NO," our punishment would be to go take care of the thing that we had done wrong. So, that made an impression on me to be honest and when you do something wrong, you pay the consequences and you have to make it right. So, I guess, that was something that I was taught. I was taught to believe in God; to believe that he was real and that I should trust in him...my parents instilled those kinds of religious values in me."

(Me) "O.k., tell me about your family traditions."

(Mom) "One thing we did, and I still do now, and Jenn knows this, is choosing your birthday suppers right down to the cake and ice cream. My brothers used to get mad at me because I always chose pancakes for my birthday super. The house was always decorated for every occasion...Christmas decorating, and we always had a pizza party on Christmas-Eve, and we'd invite some of our friends over...we each got to invite a friend and we'd, uh, meet at our house and we have, uh, a pizza party on Christmas Eve, and that was really a lot of fun. Um, some other traditions that we used to have, uh, we'd have family reunions. In the place where I grew up, we were related to just about everybody, um, and so there was always a lot of family get-togethers, um, for birthdays and anniversaries."

You know, in the summer for reunions...so those are all kinds of traditions."

(Me) "Uh-huh--O.k., what about trips or vacations?"

(Mom) "We did a lot of, a', camping trips. My parent weren't very well off, so we didn't get to go on, like, Disneyland and those kinds of trips, and those were fun...Ah, tent camping--we didn't have nice tailors like we've got now. We did all tent-camping, and that was really a lot of fun. Um, after I had been in--what...about elementary school, I guess, our church purchased an old logging and lumber mill, and they converted it into a place where you go, and rent it out, and you could stay as families or for church groups, and it was called, "Camp Manapoo," and I LOVED that place! That was sooooo fun! We'd stay in these big cabins that had these big, huge fire-places. In one was a cooks cabin and you'd go in and it was huge--everything was in big-scale proportions because it had been used for lumber-jacks, and uh, that was a wonderful place because it was up in the mountains and in Southern Idaho--or Northern Idaho, I guess it was, and we'd go up there and we'd meet--go up with other families. We'd reserve the cabins and we'd go up and stay and we always stayed in this one that was a two-story cabin and it had lots of rooms in it and uh, we'd throw our sleeping bags on the floor and the adults had--they had beds in there that were--the mattresses were kind of lumpy, but they actually had beds in there and the cabin I liked the best, that we stayed in had a big swing that could hold four people in it.

You could swing and it was in front of the fire-place and it was huge, and that was a fun thing. That was one of my favorite places to camp--"Camp Manapoo." Uh, so those are some--mostly our family did mostly camping and fishing things together."

(Me) "Can you remember the styles growing up?...What were the styles?"

(Mom throwing her head back and laughing) "Ohhhh...looking back now, well, my own--my own kids laugh! Uhm, I used to laugh about MY mom's hair-dos and styles back then, but our style, for the girls, was loooong, straight hair. I guess it was like the hippie-age, and so, you know, we'd wear the bell-bottom pants, bell-bottom jeans...uh...plat-form shoes, beads, um, head-bands....we'd ware all that stuff. But, the girls had looong, straight hair that parted in the middle and so that was kind of the style, you know, it was like the hippie-era and so we--the blue-bottom--the blue-bottom jeans were big back then. The guys would wear shirts that were open with medallions on...and that was--that was kind of the norm--..."

(Me) (Laugh) "O.k., um, tell me about high school...um, were you in any clubs or organizations, things like that, tell me what were your experiences in high-school?"

(Mom) "Um, when I was in high school, I was, uh, vice-president in the National Honor Society through all my years of high school.

Uhm, I was a good student, I guess, because I had to be in order to stay in the National Honor Society, ah, as an officer, um, I was in the drama club, speech club, uh, I did really good in those. I did a lot of school plays. I had leading parts in, um, there was a'-- "Snoopy"--"Charley Brown and Snoopy," I was in one of those plays. Ah, I was in "Arsenic and old lace," "Bowel in a China shop," and I had leading parts in all of those. Um, I really liked doing school plays. We'd put on a major production, like twice a year. It was really a lot of fun, like, in the Spring and in the Fall we'd usually put them on--or sometimes just once a year, but usually about twice a year we'd put them on--on the plays. So I was usually involved in those. Um, I was involved in the Pep Club, I was on the Drill-Team all through high school, um, I was treasurer, um, Jr. and Senior years. Um, I was on our school newspaper. It was called the "Tattler"--I was on the "Tattler" staff, um, I played basketball--it was on of my favorite sports--, I was on a softball team, on volley-ball teams--I was into that BIG time. Um, I can't remember anything else...It's hard to remember..."

(Me) "What's some fun high school memories that you remember?"

(Mom) "Ohhh...the proms were always real fun. We didn't go as all--out as they go now, as far as--the dresses weren't quite so fancy or as elaborate because most of ours were made. We made our prom dresses and I never really was a very good sewer so I had a friend who always--her mom always made my prom dresses."

(Me) "O.k. That's all the questions I have, but I want to thank you for tying up your day and talking to me about your life. It sounds like it's been pretty interesting so far. You're a great mom, and I love you with all my heart, and hey,...this interview is now OFFICIALLY done!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"