CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE, BAKERSFIELD

CALIFORNIA ODYSSEY
The 1930s Migration to the Southern San Joaquin Valley

Oral History Program

Interview Between

INTERVIEWEE:	Lois Smith Barnes
PLACE OF BIRTH:	Washita County, Oklahoma
INTERVIEWER:	Michael Neely
DATES OF INTERVIEWS:	June 15 and 18, 1982
PLACE OF INTERVIEWS:	Orange Cove, Fresno County
NUMBER OF TAPES:	2
TRANSCRIBER:	Doris Lewis

Preface

Mrs. Barnes is a charming and vivacious lady who has many interests and is always busy. We had pleasant interviews and spent some extra time going over her large and fascinating collection of old photographs. Mrs. Barnes likes to write and she permitted me to read some of her work.

Mrs. Barnes lives in a home nestled among the trees of her orange grove. Behind the house is the packing shed where she and her husband pack their oranges. She enthusiastically operated the machinery and provided me with a complete demonstration. I found her to be very bright and alive.

Michael Neely
Interviewer

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INTERVIEWEE: Lois Barnes (Age: 59)

INTERVIEWER: Michael Neely

DATED: June 15, 1981

M.N.: This is an interview with Mrs. Lois Barnes for the California State College, Bakersfield CALIFORNIA ODYSSEY Project by Michael Neely at 24309 East Adams Avenue, Orange Cove, California at 1:00 p.m. on June 15, 1981

M.N.: What is the first thing that you can remember?

Barnes: I can remember coming to California in the truck with my folks. We were going to Armona to my aunt's place. I remember my mother telling me that I shouldn't do the Charleston anymore because my aunt wouldn't approve of it. That made me feel bad because I sure like to do the Charleston. I was four years old. It must have been about 1926.

M.N.: What was your mother like?

Barnes: She was a Christian lady. She was very hard working. She just loved her home. She liked to raise chickens and can food for wintertime so that we would have enough to eat. She sewed and was just a real good mother.

M.N.: What did she look like?

Barnes: She loved to eat. She was about five feet. She had beautiful eyes. She must have been Irish or German perhaps.

M.N.: What was your father like?

Barnes: He was pretty close to six feet tall. He was thinner and had dark brown eyes. That came from his Indian background.

M.N.: Was he officially Indian?

Barnes: No. His mother was half I think it was. His grandmother had

seen her parents killed when U.S. troops made the Indians leave Tennessee. The white people came in and killed all the Indians in one village. She and her brother and sister ran into the woods and escaped from it. Some good white people found them out there and took them home and raised them. That was a very sad thing.

M.N.: What was your father like?

Barnes: He was a very honest person. Hardworking. He didn't have much education since he was the ninth child of twelve children. That was back in Texas. They just couldn't send all those children to school. They could hardly feed them. He started working on ranches and riding horses. He just like the outdoors.

M.N.: Was he a good man to be around?

Barnes: Yes. He was. He had his special way of talking which was cowboy talk.

M.N.: What do you mean?

Barnes: Well, he swore.

M.N.: How did that set with your mother?

Barnes: I remember once I was pumping up a tube from a tire in the house and it made a funny sound. I said to my mother, "That sounds just like what Daddy says." She said, "What?" I repeated a four letter word and she really jumped all over me. She said, "Don't you say that again!" I said, "Well, Daddy says it." She said, "Well, that's Daddy's problem. You just don't say it." It was just his way. He never talked dirty or anything. It was just swearing.

M.N.: You had an older brother?

Barnes: Yes. He was three and a half years older than I was. He was healthy and strong and the outdoor type. I was skinny and little and just kind of spoiled I guess.

M.N.: Let's get back to that early memory when you were going to Armona.

Barnes: Times were hard then, even before the dust bowl. In 1926 my folks thought that they could get some work out in California. We went to Armona and stayed with my aunt a little while. Then we rented a house in Armona. I remember them talking about the Chinese who lived in Armona. I don't know if you've heard or not that it was an old Chinese place. I heard the grownups talking about there being underground tunnels there. I don't know whether it was true. There were tunnels from one store

to the other.

M.N.: What else do you remember?

Barnes: My brother started to school there at Armona Academy. I remember going to school with him one day in preparation for going to school the next year. I got so tired that I decided I wasn't going to stay there at school. I just started off for home by myself. I never would have found it. My brother, fortunately, saw me leaving and ran and caught me.

We moved again out in the country near Armona. I don't remember much about that. After that we moved to Visalia. That was about 1927 or 1928. We just had a tent down there west of Visalia near the stream or river. There are beautiful homes there now. At that time there was nothing.

My aunt came to visit us. I guess they decided that it was just a little bit too hard for this little skinny kid. They took me back to their house and took care of me for about a year. After that we moved to a farm out west of Visalia. It was just right out in the open field. I loved that place. We had animals around. My parents were working. That's where I met Eileen Brown. She was my dearest, dearest friend. There was an irrigation ditch that went through there. At that time, parents didn't worry about their children swimming in the ditch. It was not unhealthful. We would just run down there and kick our shoes off and have a lot of fun.

There were no trees around there. My mother built an arbor. She put four poles up and covered it with some palm leaves that she picked up somewhere. She was so ambitious. She could use a hammer and saw and make things. That was our shade.

She built most of her chicken pens and raised chickens and turkeys there. She started an egg route in Visalia. She picked up mushrooms out in the fields and took them to her egg customers. They always were so glad to get these nice, fresh mushrooms. She knew the bad ones from the good ones. She never made anybody sick from her mushrooms. She was very careful with them.

M.N.: Sounds like a happy time for you.

Barnes: Yes, it was. I just loved that farm. It was a three room house. Just a little place. There was the kitchen and the front room and then one long room where my mother, father, brother and me all slept. Most of the time my brother would rather sleep out in the barn. He'd take his bedding out there. He liked it better than being in the house. There was no inside plumbing. It was hard on my folks but I don't remember it bothering me.

M.N.: Did you have a lot of animals?

Barnes: Yes. Horses, cows, chickens, turkeys, dogs, kittens and a pet goat. We also had a dove we had raised with loving care.

M.N.: Were the horses work horses?

Barnes: My father didn't work them too much there. He worked on other people's farms. I don't think we even farmed that place except for a garden of fresh vegetables.

M.N.: What kind of work did your father do?

Barnes: Farm labor. That's all he knew. He liked it when he could get work around horses.

M.N.: He really liked horses?

Barnes: He loved horses. In fact, his nickname was "Tex" because people saw his cowboy hat and they figured he came from Texas. That made him happy. He always wore cowboy clothes and boots.

M.N.: Was it hard for your parents to make ends meet?

Barnes: It was hard. It wasn't as hard there as after we went back to Arkansas. That was the hard part.

M.N.: What year did you go back to Arkansas?

Barnes: 1932. My mother lost a lot of her egg customers because people just didn't have the money to buy. She'd lose a customer now and a customer then. We saw it wasn't going to keep us in food. My father lost his job.

My grandparents in Arizona had some property in Arkansas that they had homesteaded about 1900. They had eighty acres. They told my folks that if they'd move back there they would have free rent. That would be one less expense so my folks started getting ready. They built two or three great big boxes about three feet long and a couple of feet wide. We'd pack our quilts and things in there.

My mother started canning all the fruit she could get. She saved pieces of cloth because she knew that back there we wouldn't be able to get to the store to buy things. She was really a worker. She tried always to take care of her family.

M.N.: How did you get ready for it?

Barnes: I wasn't much help. I don't think I did too much. I didn't look forward to moving again.

M.N.: What was the trip like?

Barnes: My mother drove this little Ford. My brother was along. We had our beds set up in the back part with canvas over it like a covered wagon. We'd sleep there at night. Under the bedding were boxes of canned fruit and things.

We both left August 26, 1932. It was late morning. The Ridge Route was just a two lane road. How brave my mother must have been to start out with two kids in a car like that to go 2,000 miles.

M.N.: Where was your father?

Barnes: He went in the wagon at the same time. We just went on. He rode down the highway in this wagon with his mules and his dog. They wouldn't allow that now. He didn't go over the Ridge Route. He turned off and went through Lancaster.

M.N.: How long did it take him to get there?

Barnes: That trip was 80 or 90 days. We got only one letter from him. We thought something must have happened to him. When no more letters came we really worried. Finally, he came into Arkansas where we were.

M.N.: He was all by himself?

Barnes: All by himself with his dog. At night he would stop, camp, build a fire [and eat] biscuits and fried potatoes and always his coffee. He was raised like that. That was nothing unusual to build a fire out to fix your food.

We did the same thing as we went back. We camped along the roads. We'd never go to a motel. We didn't have fresh milk. We just had canned milk. In the mornings we'd have Post Toasties and canned milk. We got used to it.

M.N.: How long did the trip take you?

Barnes: It must have been eight or nine weeks.

M.N.: Do you remember arriving in Arkansas?

Barnes: Yes. We went to an uncle and aunt's place there near Kingston. That's Madison County. I remember them showing me how they kept their vegetables. They'd dig a hole in the ground and put them down in there. That kept them from getting too cold in the wintertime. The folks could always go out there and dig up some turnips. They also had lots of basements. They had to have those basements and little smokehouses to store their food for the winter.

About a month or two after that we went across the mountain where my grandfather's and grandmother's homestead was. Then my father built a little two room house very, very fast because winter was coming.

M.N.: What was that place like?

Barnes: It was out in the woods on top of a mountain. We had a spring to get our water. We didn't even have a pump. We just had to go out and dip it out of the spring.

M.N.: Was it good water?

Barnes: Yes. It was very good. In fact, I think Arkansas has just about the best water in the whole country.

M.N.: Was that a pretty place to live?

Barnes: Yes. It was just lovely there. In the fall the trees are gorgeous and then in the springtime there were mayflowers out in the woods. They're white. They smell nice and sweet. I'd never heard a whippoorwill before that. There wasn't any work there either. It was just as bad there as it was in California. My father would cut down oak trees on my grandmother's place to make ax handles. He would whittle them out in the evenings sitting around the fire. He'd sell them for a little bit to make some money. He also made staves. I remember him saying, "Well, I have to go out and get another load of staves and take them in."

M.N.: It was a really hard time for your father.

Barnes: Yes, it was. The only place to build a garden there was a rocky slope on a hill. I remember him building something called a sled with some boards. The mule would pull the sled. My brother and I would go out and pick up rocks off of the little area where we were going to plant the garden. We got enough rocks off of that place to build a rock wall all around it. Then we planted corn and tomatoes and things.

M.N.: Did it do well?

Barnes: Yes. It did. We had to really carry a lot of water from that spring.

M.N.: What else did your father do to make a living?

Barnes: That was just about it. There was no work at all around there. We got very hungry. One time all we had to eat was turnips. We just got so tired of turnips. My father said, "I think our blood is going to turn to turnip juice." We had corn bread a lot. Then we ran out of salt. We got used to eating corn bread with no salt. I still like corn bread.

M.N.: But you don't like turnips?

Barnes: Not very much.

M.N.: Did your mother vary the way she made them?

Barnes: Yes. There weren't too many ways to do it.

M.N.: How long did that go on?

Barnes: A month or two. Nothing but turnips. One time some folks came over the mountain and brought us a big jar of sorghum molasses. Someone must have heard that we were having a hard time. That was all they had to share but they shared it.

M.N.: They were probably hungry too?

Barnes: Another thing that made it perhaps easier for them and not so easy for us was that my mother and my brother and I wouldn't eat pork. My father would but he wasn't real crazy about it. So we didn't have the meat. We had lamb sometimes. I asked where he got the lamb. Well, it just happened that some sheep strayed onto our place and he went out and killed it. That's the only dishonest thing I think I ever knew my father doing. I suppose he reconciled it with the fact that his kids were hungry.

We spent two winters there. It was tough in that little house. The house was made of wet lumber and as soon as it started drying, cracks would appear and the wind would whistle through. We'd get cardboard and nail it up on the walls. Then, to make it prettier, we would get old magazine pictures and paste them up.

M.N.: It was a fairly simple house?

Barnes: Very, very simple. No windows at first. I think later on we did get two windows. When it was first built it was warm enough.

M.N.: How many rooms did it have?

Barnes: Two, the kitchen and the bedroom.

M.N.: Did you go to school when you were there?

Barnes: Yes. We went to a little one room school. It was called the Campground School. My mother had gone to that school when she was a child. My brother and I walked there. It wasn't too far for kids to walk. The teacher was an eighteen year old boy. He'd probably finished one year of college and needed the job. It was a good thing they had a fellow teaching because there was a lot of big boys there that needed reprimanding.

We had a stove in the middle of the building. It was just one room. The blackboard was just wood painted black. It wasn't a real blackboard. The chalk wouldn't stick very well but it was enough to where the teacher could use it. We didn't have any water in the school. The kids took turns going across another hill and down a little valley to a spring to carry water. All the kids would drink out of the same dipper. I remember thinking that was not healthful, I would start drinking closer to the handle so my lips wouldn't touch where their lips touched.

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M.N.: I remember you mentioning a black family that worked for you.

Barnes: Yes. That was in Oklahoma. I was about three or four years old. My father was raising cotton on the shares. This black family lived right next to us. Their name was Smith, the same as ours. We hired them to help us. They had a thirteen year old girl who really loved to dance. She would take me by the hand. We'd go out there and start doing the Charleston.

M.N.: Did she teach you to do the Charleston?

Barnes: Oh yes. Out in the cotton field. She was supposed to be picking cotton. I was riding on my father's cotton sack. I was too little to pick cotton.

M.N.: Riding on his cotton sack?

Barnes: Yes. The sack was long. It's made of canvas. There is some way to put it around the shoulder. They just drag it along behind them. They pick the cotton and put it in there.

I wasn't very big. I guess it wasn't much more of a load for my dad as he was picking cotton. The girl would come along and she'd say, "Come on. Let's go." We'd run a few rows away and start doing our Charleston. My mother would see the dust out in the field and know what we were doing. She didn't care. She did start caring later when people would start giving me nickels and pennies to dance for them. She saw a dancer there. She thought, "Oh, my daughter is going to grow up to be a dance hall girl." She didn't like that very well. I think she was glad when we moved to California where she could get me into another environment.

M.N.: Do you remember how things turned out for that black family?

Barnes: No. I don't.

M.N.: Let's get back to that school. Where were you?

Barnes: In Arkansas. The Campground School. They used to have camp meetings there in earlier times. The school was also used as a church. It had a big bell on it. Around the school was a graveyard so we couldn't play in there. We did play Hide and Seek behind the gravestones. That is where I learned to alphabetize lists of words and names. The teacher sent us out to alphabetize the gravestones. I had a great uncle that was buried there.

M.N.: You liked school didn't you?

Barnes: Yes, I did.

M.N.: Were you a good student?

Barnes: Not as good as my grandchildren are. Considering how many schools I went to, I suppose I was good. I did like it.

M.N.: What was your favorite subject?

Barnes: I liked reading. I didn't care much for arithmetic. I liked to read history and poems. One time at recess, we heard an airplane at that little one room school. The kids were so excited because they had never seen an airplane before. Can you imagine? That was in 1932. I said, "I've seen an airplane." We had been in Visalia. They had the airport there. Nobody paid any attention to me. They were looking at that plane. I kept trying to impress everybody how important I was because I had seen planes. I went around telling how I had even seen a man jump out of one. I don't think they paid any attention to me.

That was quite a place. I remember one young couple who went to Huntsville to get married. Huntsville was about 20 miles away. This eighteen year old couple were each riding a horse going to Huntsville. They stopped by our house to visit with us a little bit. They had never seen a train. They were interested because they were going to get to see a train while they were on their honeymoon.

M.N.: They were going to the big city?

Barnes: The big city of Huntsville. The population was about 1,000.

M.N.: What else happened during that period of time?

Barnes: We had made a friend in Armona. His name was Jack Ostrander. He lived alone. He was a widower. He worked in the depot in Armona. He liked us kids. When he found out that we were going to Arkansas he thought how much we were going to miss. He He had the Fresno Bee mailed to us. Every Sunday we got one of the papers. We wanted to see the comics. We always looked forward to going to Kingston and getting that paper. That's in Madison County. It was the closest town.

M.N.: Did you walk into town?

Barnes: Oh yes. That must have been about four miles. The water was up in the Kings River. We'd have to take a boat and row across.

We went two seasons to school there. The first season we went to the little one room school. The next season we went into Kingston to the bigger school. We had to walk four miles.

M.N.: What was that school like?

Barnes: I didn't like it very much. It was big and I was just a little kid. My brother was always getting in fights.

M.N.: Why would he get into fights?

Barnes: I think all kids give the new kid a hard time. We were always the new kids. He was doing the protecting and I was doing the running. When the weather was too bad we couldn't go out to play. We would go down in the basement of the school and do square dances like "Skip to My Lou."

M.N.: You liked that, didn't you?

Barnes: I liked it. I didn't know the routines so I didn't get to dance too much. I was just a little scrawny kid. There were a lot of bigger, prettier girls. They always got asked to dance and I didn't. It was fun anyway.

M.N.: Were the teachers as good there?

Barnes: Yes. They were better. That's the reason we had to go into that school. They didn't have enough teachers for the little school out in the country. Everybody had to go into town. They were good teachers.

M.N.: Did things get better for your family?

Barnes: It wasn't getting any better. My father had some New York Life Insurance. We couldn't pay on it anymore. We just didn't have any money. The only way we could get out of those mountains was to write and ask them to send the insurance money. That's how we got enough money to get out of there.

M.N.: What year did you leave?

Barnes: That was in 1935. We went over directly to King City. We heard there was work there. My father and my brother started working near Salinas and Watsonville.

M.N.: Do you remember your family getting ready to come back out to

California?

Barnes: Yes. I remember how happy I was too.

M.N.: Why were you happy?

Barnes: I didn't like it there in Arkansas. For one thing, my dear friend was in California. It seemed like California was my home because my formative years had been here. We got pretty hungry in Arkansas. Plus the fact that I was used to level land and back there we were up on the top of a mountain. All that we could see was the top of the other mountain or down in a valley. I felt hemmed in. On the other hand, I suppose most people who grow up in the mountains don't like the lowlands. I love the big open sky.

M.N.: What was the trip back out here like?

Barnes: There were two cars. My uncle, aunt, their family and another fellow went with us. We would camp along the road and fix our food on campfires. My mother usually made biscuits in a big iron pot. She'd put some coals under it and put the biscuits in there. My father loved biscuits. We usually had fried potatoes that tasted really good. Sometimes, out in the desert, there wasn't any wood. I remember my uncle and my father going out with "tow sacks" picking up cow chips and bringing that back and burning it.

M.N.: Did you eat better at that time?

Barnes: We'd got that money from the insurance company and started eating good.

M.N.: Do you remember how much you got?

Barnes: It wasn't more than a few hundred dollars. It kept us until we got to King City. We rented a little house. At that time rent was very cheap. We must have paid $8 or $10 a month for a little two or three room house. My father and brother started "bucking sacks." That's picking up the sacks of grain and putting them on the wagon or the truck out there in the grain fields.

M.N.: Pretty rough work.

Barnes: Oh yes. But my father was strong and my brother was big.

M.N.: That's pretty hard work for an almost 50 year old man.

Barnes: Yes it is. My brother was around seventeen. Then we worked in apricots. My mother got to cut apricots and put them on the wood trays to dry. I was very upset because I wasn't allowed to do that. They could see how little and skinny I

was. They knew I couldn't do it. So I got a job babysitting with a little girl.

M.N.: Was that really hard work in the apricots?

Barnes: Yes. It's hard work cutting them and taking the pit out. You put the apricot on the tray and somebody takes it out in the sunshine to dry.

M.N.: Sounds like they kind of took care of you?

Barnes: Yes. I was the baby. I always felt loved. In fact my brother and I were always loved.

M.N.: What was your house like?

Barnes: In King City? It was just a little two or three room house. One thing I remember about King City was the beautiful pepper trees there. They were just lovely.

M.N.: Are they still there?

Barnes: Yes.

M.N.: Did you start in to school right away?

Barnes: No, I think we came over to Selma and I started school there at the Roosevelt Grammar School. I graduated in 1936. The next year I went on to Selma High School and went there for three years. That was the longest I ever stayed in one school.

M.N.: Did you like it there?

Barnes: Yes. It felt like home.

M.N.: Was church a big part of your life?

Barnes: Yes, very much. My mother always took my brother and me to church. We couldn't go in Arkansas. We were too far away. When we came to California we could go back to church. That was another thing that made it just feel better to me. There was security, happiness and singing.

M.N.: Then church was a big part of your life?

Barnes: Yes. It still is. I don't know how a person can live without a foundation. Faith is very important to me.

M.N.: It sounds like it had a strong impact on your family.

Barnes: Yes, it did. My father was a good man but he never went to church with my mother. I think one of the reasons was that

he didn't want to get dressed up. He wanted to wear his cowboy clothes all the time. He didn't want to put a suit on. I suppose he could have gone in the clothes that he wore. Anyway, he just didn't go.

M.N.: Your father doesn't sound typical. He doesn't sound like what a I picture a Grapes of Wrath person looking like.

Barnes: Oh no. Every morning he would get his mirror out, his pan of hot water, his shaving mug, and shave. He was very proud to keep clean and shaved like that. I remember how he would sing a lot. He liked to sing when he was out working with his horses.

M.N.: What would he sing?

Barnes: Cowboy songs, whistle and kind of yoddle. Cowboys have to sing to their cattle to keep them quiet. That was his life.

M.N.: When I say Grapes of Wrath person, do you know what I mean?

Barnes: I never saw the movie and I just read a little bit of the book. I didn't really like the book too much.

M.N.: Why not?

Barnes: It offended me a little. It just wasn't like my family. My mother didn't want us to carouse around or anything. She was very particular about what friends we had. She was always telling me how I should go to school and get all the education I could. She could see the results of not having an education. I remember how glad she was when I graduated from high school. She was very proud of me.

M.N.: Your family wasn't just following the crops around?

Barnes: No. Not too much. The only time I remember them following the crops around was that one summer. When we came back from Arkansas we had to get the money fast. That's when we went to Armona where we cut the apricots. We spent just the summer there and then settled back in Selma. My mother did want us to be sure to go to school. We'd travel around when there wasn't any school.

M.N.: How did you live when you were picking apricots?

Barnes: We lived in a tent, ate outside and camped.

M.N.: What was the tent like?

Barnes: It was just enough room for a couple of beds. We cooked out under an awning near some trees. A very primitive way of

living. It wasn't really comfortable. We didn't complain because we knew that that was all my folks could afford. You just have to make the best of it.

M.N.: Did other children give you a hard time when you were in school?

Barnes: It was hard to make friends. You go to a school. Everybody knows everybody and you're the new kid. By the time you really get a friend, you're gone to another school. I became rather shy and my brother did too.

I know other families were poor too but I always had that feeling that we had to be very careful what we said. We had to keep very clean so that they wouldn't know that we were poor. Once I got holes in the bottom of my shoes. We couldn't afford more shoes. My mother said, "You just hold your head up and you smile. No one will ever know that you have holes in your shoes." That's the way it was.

M.N.: Did you have new clothes?

Barnes: Yes. My mother did a lot of sewing. She would make clothes and even shirts for my brother too. If we didn't have store material, there were always the feed sacks. They make pretty nice little dresses. She was a good seamstress. If she had any spare time she would be making quilts. One of the earliest impressions I have is standing by the sewing machine and her sewing hundreds of squares of material for quilts.

M.N.: Did she make them to sell?

Barnes: No. Just to use. I still have a lot of her quilt tops.

M.N.: Well now. What year are we up to?

Barnes: Let's see. We're in Selma in 1939. Then, in 1940, my folks stayed in Selma and I decided that I wanted to go somewhere else. I went to visit some friends down in Glendale. I was barely seventeen. They found I could stay with a family, be the mother's helper, and go to Glendale Academy. That's what I did. I met the Harold Richards family. They had four children. I did what I could to help there. They were very nice to me.

M.N.: Was Glendale Academy a high school?

Barnes: Yes. It was a private Adventist school. My mother wanted me to get some Christian education. That's why I went there.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

Session Two June 18, 1981

M.N.: What about the inspection stations? Did you have any contact with one of those when you came across from Arizona?

Barnes: When I was about four years old we had the worst time. I remember my folks talking about the trouble they were expecting. They had heard others who had gone through the inspection telling how rough it had been. When they packed their Model T truck back in Oklahoma, they put their canned goods right up behind the truck seat. They built a false wall there because they had heard that at the inspection they always took the people's food away from them. These poor Okies would come in and have nothing to eat. They thought it was just orneryness that the inspectors did it. So we had all of our canned food up there. When we got to the borderline we thought that they were going to have us unload our truck. Sure enough. They did. Everything had to come out. They wanted to go through everything. The inspectors came to that false wall in the Model T truck and they didn't go any further. We were just so happy because we were going to have our food with us.

M.N.: That would be significant loss for people who were counting on that for their food.

Barnes: Truly. Because we'd have to eat canned peaches until we got some cotton picked.

M.N.: Well, let's go on now to when you were in Selma.

Barnes: I went to the last year of grammar school and the first three years of high school there at Selma High.

M.N.: Were you living with your family?

Barnes: Yes. My folks were still there. But then my folks stayed there. I got a job with Harold Richards and his family and went down to Glendale to school. He had four children. They needed a mother's helper. I was good as a mother's helper because I knew how to clean house, wash and iron. I was just barely seventeen.

M.N.: Was this Mr. Richards an evangelist?

Barnes: Yes. He was an evangelist with the Seventh Day Adventist Church. He was starting "The Voice of Prophecy" programs at that time. That was one of the early religious radio programs on the air. It is still being broadcast. It's heard all over the world.

M.N.: Were you deeply religious before you went there?

Barnes: Yes. But it really enriched my life because they were really fine people.

M.N.: You were at an age where that would have a strong influence on you.

Barnes: That's true.

M.N.: So how did things go when you went to work for them?

Barnes: I still didn't have much money. All I was getting there was room and board but it was saving my folks money because they didn't have me to feed anymore.

M.N.: Was that important?

Barnes: Oh yes. I'm sure every penny counted at that time. I contributed a little bit to the family welfare.

M.N.: Was the Richards family from back east?

Barnes: No. I think they were from Canada.

M.N.: Did you have an accent at this time?

Barnes: I don't know. I was so used to going to different schools that it was just another thing to me. At that time it seemed that schools didn't all teach the same things like they do now. One district would be far ahead of another district. I would go into a grammar school and they would be much further ahead in arithmetic or English. I would be trailing along trying to catch up.

I went to school during the day. I helped Mrs. Richards at night and babysat while they went to meetings. I wasn't much bigger than the kids but I was older. They were very active. I have been able to get along with kids pretty well. They seem to like me. I thought I would like to be a schoolteacher because I like kids. I found out later that that isn't all there is to being a schoolteacher. It takes a lot of stamina.

M.N.: Did the Richards treat you well?

Barnes: Yes. Very much. I wasn't able to go home for the whole nine months of the school term. They made me feel welcome. Then I came back to Selma. The next year I started in at Reedley Junior College. It's called Kings River College now. I started my teaching studies. At the end of that year my folks were talking about moving again. The same old story.

This time they moved to Brentwood, California. That is up north near Stockton. I thought I might as well get another job and work for my room and board and go to school where it seemed most like home. The war was getting pretty bad. We could see that things were going to be really upset. I couldn't see another three years of college before I could start work.

It was really necessary for me to earn my living. I thought I would go into clerical work so I could start working sooner. I went to Central California Commercial College in Fresno that next September. I took bookkeeping and shorthand.

M.N.: Did that turn out to be the right decision?

Barnes: I was working then for my room and board. I remember when Pearl Harbor happened. I was out hanging clothes in the back yard. A neighbor called over and said, "Did you know that the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor?" It's still very clear to me that terrible, terrible day.

I had met Wes, who would be my husband. We knew that he would be drafted. We couldn't stand to be apart, so we got married in April of 1942. In December of 1942 he went into the Army. I went to live with my folks up at Brentwood. I didn't have any other place to stay and we were expecting a baby.

The next spring I got on a train and went back to Louisiana. He was stationed at Camp Livingston, Louisiana. Our baby was born there in 1943. When she was eighteen days old Wes got his orders to leave. All the fellows got orders to take their loved ones home because they were going to be shipped out. We got on the train with this little tiny baby on a pillow. There were no seats available. There were just trains filled with troops at that time. For miles and miles and miles we stood in between the cars in that little place where you walk into the car. There was a big crate there. We put the pillow up there with the baby. We just stood there and held her. That's the only way we could get out of Louisiana.

M.N.: That must have been hard on you too.

Barnes: Yes. I hadn't been out of bed very long. I was really thin.

M.N.: He brought you back to California?

Barnes: Yes. It took four days on that troop train. It was filled with soldiers. They were even sitting in the aisles. Finally the conductor came through. He got one soldier out of a seat and let me have it and hold the baby. After miles and miles finally someone got off so Wes could get a seat. From then on we could both sit. We sat all that time. We didn't have a berth.

I had to go down to the dining room to heat the water to put in the baby's bottle with her formula. We would take the bottle of sterilized water, put the formula in it, and then put the bottle next to our bodies. By the time of the next feeding the bottle would be warm enough to where it wouldn't give her colic. That's how we fed her. We both didn't dare sleep at the same time because we were afraid the baby would

fall off of our laps. We'd take turns sleeping in the chairs.

M.N.: You were under stress too because you knew your husband was leaving.

Barnes: Yes. Definitely but even that time I was so thankful that we had gotten married and that we had the baby. I thought if something did happen to Wes at least I'd have Marjorie. She was always a blessing to us.

M.N.: He got you back to California?

Barnes: Yes to my folks at Brentwood. He was able to stay there a few days. The baby was one month old when he left to go back to camp. He didn't get back to see her until she was two years and four months. He was gone all that time. He shipped out of New York harbor in October that year. He went to England on the Queen Mary. There were 17,000 fellows on that one boat with no escort. They only thing they did to evade submarines was they would zigzag across the ocean. Every few minutes they would turn. They avoided submarines that way. There were a lot of submarines.

M.N.: Today I don't think young women would be able to cope with that kind of separation.

Barnes: At that time it was just "for the duration". "Until we get through with you you're going to be gone." The only way the soldiers could cope with it was that they would joke. They would kid each other. Sometimes pretty mean, too.

I remember my husband telling about when they left New York. It was British people running the Queen Mary. As soon as they got onto the boat the British wanted all the G.I.s to go below and not stand by the rail. The G.I.s just would not do that. They wanted to see the Statue of Liberty as long as they could. They stood there and watched it against orders. There wasn't much the officers could do.

My husband did one ornery thing to a buddy. Wes was sitting on the deck reading a letter from me. This friend came up and said, "Hey, was there a mail call?" Wes said, "Sure. See here's a letter from Lois." Vernon took off running and went to where they handed out the mail. He asked if there was any mail. They really kidded him because they were only a few hours out of New York and here he was wanting mail already. All the men were very lonely. Letters from home were important.

M.N.: Made a fool out of him?

Barnes: Yes. But he's a real nice person and really patient. Those fellows were together most of the time. They were in the 93rd Medical Gas Treatment Battalion. During World War II it

it was expected that the Germans might use mustard gas like they did in World War I. So they trained all of these fellows what to do in a case like that. Fortunately it didn't happen. They served as medics on the front lines.

That mustard gas would have been terrible. In Louisiana they wanted to show the soldiers the effect of mustard gas on the body. They had the soldier pull a hair out of his head and stick it in this mustard gas which had been diluted many, many times. They would put it on their arm and then immediately wash it with water. It made a terrible scar. Wes still has that scar after all these years. You can see what would have happened if either side had used mustard gas. It would have been a terrible thing.

M.N.: What year did he come back?

Barnes: 1945.

M.N.: How did things go for you?

Barnes: Good. Well, not real good at first. He got to come back a few days earlier by plane because his mother was dying of cancer. They didn't think she would last long enough for him to come back on the troop train. She lasted about a month after he got back. That was a sad thing.

Then he got a job from Wes Mitchell in Fresno. The same man that he was working for before he went to the service. He had a sheet metal shop. My husband's training was in sheet metal and air conditioning. He's still working in it.

M.N.: That's a trade very much in demand.

Barnes: True. Especially in the summertime.

M.N.: Did you have more children?

Barnes: No. Our daughter, Marjorie, is the only one we had. We were so busy working and we didn't know if we could afford any more.

M.N.: How did your work life go?

Barnes: I worked in business offices most of my life. I didn't work at one all the time. I would take off time to be with our daughterin the summertime and so forth. It was not easy, but it was work and we were glad to have it.

M.N.: Did you like working?

Barnes: In fact, I worked right up until last fall. I finally quit.

M.N.: Did you just decide it was time?

Barnes: Well, we also have this farm to take care of. I was pretty busy. I guess I'm tired too.

M.N.: Do you own this farm?

Barnes: Yes. We bought this in 1958, on a shoestring.

M.N.: Has that turned out well?

Barnes: Yes, but it's been a lot of work because we were both working in Fresno. We've lived out here. Our daughter was still going to town to school in Fresno. We would get up early in the morning and rush in to work and then come back at night. We would do our irrigating at night. Then in the morning, the same thing over again. Weekends were very busy.

M.N.: Was the farm set up when you took it over?

Barnes: Most of it was planted already. There were only about two acres that we had to plant. It's paid off okay. There were a couple of years when all the crop froze. We really lost a lot of money those two years. As all farming goes, you don't make it every year. It takes awhile to get caught up again.

M.N.: Is that going to be your retirement income?

Barnes: Yes. That's the reason we bought the place. Wes didn't want to retire and do nothing. He just wouldn't like that at all. He couldn't sit around and watch television all day.

M.N.: Sounds very intelligent.

Barnes: I think a person is healthier when he or she keeps busy. We both were raised on country sunshine and we like the country.

M.N.: Do you still work on the farm?

Barnes: Yes.

M.N.: What do you do?

Barnes: I irrigate. I spray weeds to kill them. I do all the book work and anything that's necessary.

M.N.: I just can't imagine you out irrigating.

Barnes: Well, the irrigating isn't so hard. It gets hot in the summertime. Wes has fixed it up very nicely. He has put in the return system. The water goes down the rows and into a pipe. Then, by gravity, it comes back to the pump again and is reused. It just recirculates. All I have to do is go along to each standpipe and open it or close it. When the water gets down to the end, I have to see that the leaves are

raked out. It isn't hard. I take my big dog with me. We just kind of enjoy it.

M.N.: What kind of fruit do you grow?

Barnes: All navel oranges. This last year we decided we would like to pack our own oranges. That's a new experience. We had to buy about $20,000 worth of equipment. It's a dumper. It takes the big bin of oranges which weighs about a thousand pounds and hydraulically dumps it onto a belt. That belt takes them through the brushing and waxing process.

M.N.: You do that?

Barnes: This machine does it, yes.

M.N.: So you're a complete operation then.

Barnes: Yes. The oranges come out onto what's called the grading area.

M.N.: Do you employ people to do that?

Barnes: Mostly my husband and I did it, with our grandchildren. I would do all the grading.

M.N.: How much fruit are we talking about?

Barnes: Twenty acres of fruit. This year we've had about 12,000 field boxes of oranges. It's a lot of work.

M.N.: You have your own brand?

Barnes: No. We were selling to Blue Anchor here in the Valley. There's another problem. The Navel Orange Administrative Committee regulates the flow of oranges. Since there was such a big crop of oranges this year, they wanted to have about 30 percent eliminated. In other words, we farmers were supposed to throw away 30 percent of our good oranges. We can sell them to juice but that is barely breaking even. I think a farmer should throw his oranges away rather than send them all to juice. A farmer hurts himself by building up a big stock of juice because next year oranges are cheap again.

M.N.: I don't understand the mechanism. When they ask you to throw away 30 percent, do they compensate you?

Barnes: Oh no.

M.N.: You mean it's just take it?

Barnes: Oh yes. The government does not help us like they do the cotton people. We're not paid for anything that we don't grow or

that we have to throw away.

M.N.: You just have to absorb it?

Barnes: Yes. They wouldn't allow us to pick many each week. They would just say, "This week you can just pick 300 field boxes." The oranges were getting riper and riper. When they get so ripe they fall off on the ground. That is how we were forced to eliminate.

We could see that with our little operation that we weren't going to be able to get all of our oranges picked this year. We contacted a packing house in Porterville which has had a lot of export orders this year. On the export you're not prorated. You can sell all that you want to on the export. They could promise us that they could clean all of our oranges up without us having too many fall on the ground. We lost about 30 or 40 bins. That is 1,000 pounds to the bin. We lost about that many on the ground. We still feel we were fortunate. This year we had good sized oranges. So we did okay.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1

M.N.: It's just hard for me to imagine people asking a small business concern like yours to absorb a 30 percent loss.

Barnes: A lot of the large places are owned by doctors and lawyers who want to make a loss. They've made so much money on their business that they need to lose for tax reasons. They buy up all these orange groves. That hurts us little farmers who are trying to make a little money on it. It keeps the property taxes high. But, Wes and I still like the country. It'll be okay. With retirement and this we won't have to worry.

M.N.: What kinds of problems over the years can you remember that are directly related to coming from Oklahoma.

Barnes: Well, I suppose it has warped my personality.

M.N.: How's that?

Barnes: I think I'm almost frugal in my way of living. I save everything, which is kind of ridiculous. I won't throw anything away if I can patch it and use it.

M.N.: You think that's because of your family having to struggle when you were young?

Barnes: Yes, I do. That's the way they had to live. You just don't go down and buy a new chair if it's broken. You take it outside. You get your hammer and nails and nail it back together. My parents always made their kitchen table and

some of their chairs. I remember my father making a heating stove. We couldn't afford to buy one back in Arkansas. He took an oil drum and he cut out the front, cut out a hole in the top, put the pipe in it and ran it out the wall. That just did fine.

M.N.: You developed a sense of self-reliance?

Barnes: Yes. I guess that's made me too independent. Maybe that's the reason I wanted to get out on my own when I was so young. It wasn't that I didn't love my folks. I thought I was old enough to make it on my own.

M.N.: It certainly seems to have turned out all right.

Barnes: Yes. My grandchildren tell me, "Well, Grandma, the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree, does it?" Our daughter is the same way. She's very independent. She's raised her children to be independent. In fact, they've been at Wawona Junior Camp up near Yosemite. It is a camp for children that's run by our church. Last year they were counselors. Karen was fifteen and Kevin was seventeen. They took care of little kids 24 hours a day. They had one week of camp where they had blind and disabled children to care for, to teach and entertain. They had a learning and character building experience there. I asked Kevin and Karen if it wasn't a lot of work. They said, "Yes, but we enjoyed it."

M.N.: That's very similar to what you went through.

Barnes: Yes, very much. Taking care of children.

M.N.: When you look back on your experiences, do you regret the things that have happened to you?

Barnes: I think I regret having to move to Arkansas. I had to leave my very dear friend, Eileen. We've kept in touch all these years and we're still friends. She calls on the phone and I call her. We visit. It's just like we had seen each other day before yesterday, the way we start to talk. I think that our family would have been better off financially if we hadn't moved to Arkansas. However, I suppose it gave us a little insight into how other people live.

M.N.: It's a hard way to get experience.

Barnes: Yes. It is.

M.N.: Did you see the dust storms at all?

Barnes: No.

M.N.: What shaped your development the most?

Barnes: I think my mother's love and care. She was such a fantastic person. We didn't have any money. We never had a Christmas tree. We didn't miss it because Mother made it fun. I remember one year she took cardboard and cut stars out of it. Then she covered those with tinfoil she had saved. I don't know how she got all that tinfoil. She covered them real pretty and then she put string on one tip of a star and tacked it to the ceiling of the living room. We would go in and see all of these stars turning and shining. That was her way of celebrating Christmas.

M.N.: Did you try to treat your own child that way?

Barnes: I think so. We had more money and we were able to take our daughter skiing and things that my folks would never have been able to do. Maybe she would have been happier if she'd had a brother or sister. She never complained.

M.N.: What kind of advice have you passed on to your daughter?

Barnes: Faith in God is very important to her too. We each arrive at it by ourselves but our parents guide us. Independence. "If someone else can do a certain job, you can too. You just start in and try." That's what my mother always said. That's what my husband and I have told Marjorie too. She is a nuclear medicine technician in Fresno Community Hospital. She's been there several years. I have walked into her place and watched her as she worked. She didn't know I was there. She was always kind to the patient, talked to them very carefully and tried to make them feel at ease. That made me think, "Well I guess I haven't been such a bad mother." I like the way she's turned out. She takes care of her children like that too. She never raises her voice but she's stern with them. She makes them mind. She never yells at them. They seem to do all right.

M.N.: Do you like the way you've turned out?

Barnes: Well, I'm a happy person. I guess I must like it or I wouldn't be happy.

M.N.: How do you look on the future?

Barnes: I think my husband and I will be happy in our retirement. I hope we get to travel some. I'm optimistic because I believe that God's going to come and if we remain faithful we're going to be going to heaven.

END OF INTERVIEW

Frank Smith
b. 1888, Parker Co., Texas
[His parents from Tennessee]

Grace Young
b. 1890, Lake Co., California
[Her parents from Arkansas]

Lois Smith Barnes

b. 1922, Washita County, Oklahoma

Education: Associate of Arts degree

Church: Seventh Day Adventist

m. 1942

Wes Barnes

b. 1919, Fresno Co., California

Marjorie Barnes Hansen
b. 1943
Nuclear Medicine Technician

Ancestor Chart

Name of Compiler: Lois Barnes
Address: 24309 E. Adams Ave.
City, State: Orange Cove, Ca.93646
Date: December 20, 1981

Person No. 1 on this chart is the same person as No. ____ on chart No. ____.

Chart No. ____

b. Date of Birth
p.b. Place of Birth
m. Date of Marriage
d. Date of Death
p.d. Place of Death

1 Lois Mae Smith
b. June 14, 1922
p.b. Mt. View, Okla. (Washita Co.)
m. April 2, 1942
d.
p.d.

2 Frank Sublett Smith (Father of No. 1)
b. Apr. 30, 1888
p.b. Millsap, Texas (Parker Co.)
m. Feb. 25, 1911
d. Mar. 24, 1968
p.d. Dinuba, California

3 Gracie Josephine Young (Mother of No. 1)
b. Jan. 13, 1890
p.b. Kelseyville, California
d. May 6, 1967
p.d. Dinuba, California

4 Joel Baker Smith (Father of No. 2)
b. Mar. 22, 1850
p.b. Lewis Co., Tennessee
m. Oct. 31, 1872
d. Mar. 28, 1929
p.d. Snyder, Oklahoma

5 Matilda Caroline Brickel (Mother of No. 2)
b. Nov. 12, 1852
p.b. Hickman Co., Tennessee
d. Apr. 28, 1919
p.d. Salt Lake City, Utah

6 Joseph Andrew Young (Father of No. 3)
b. Feb. 12, 1853
p.b. Marietta, Indiana
m. June 27, 1886
d. Dec. 18, 1933
p.d. Benson, Arizona

7 Fannie Alexanna Stallcup (Mother of No. 3)
b. Feb. 28, 1857
p.b. Newburg, Arkansas
d. June 19, 1957
p.d. Little Rock, Ark.

8 Jason Smith (Father of No. 4)
b. 1806
p.b. Tennessee
m.
d.
p.d.

9 Nancy (?) (Mother of No. 4)
b. 1815
p.b. Tennessee
d.
p.d.

10 John G. Brickel (Father of No. 5)
b. Apr. 24, 1808
p.b. Tennessee
m.
d. 1854
p.d. Hickman Co, Tennessee

11 Annis Baker (?) (Mother of No. 5)
b. Apr. 27, 1815
p.b. Tennessee
d. Dec. 11, 1871
p.d.

12 James W. Young (Father of No. 6)
b.
p.b.
m. Sept. 17, 1854
d. about 1863-65
p.d. Indiana

13 Nancy Ann Lee (Mother of No. 6)
b.
p.b.
d. about 1863-65
p.d.

14 Beaufort Benson Stallcup (Father of No. 7)
b. 1830
p.b. North Carolina
m.
d. June 3, 1875
p.d. Fulton Co., Arkansas

15 Mary Elizabeth Harley (Mother of No. 7)
b. Aug. 18, 1842
p.b.
d. Mar. 18, 1918
p.d. Hanford, California

Wesley Everett Barnes (Spouse of No. 1)
b. Feb. 5, 1919
p.b. Fresno, Ca.
d.
p.d.

16 b. m. d. (Father of No. 8, Cont. on chart No. ____)
17 b. d. (Mother of No. 8, Cont. on chart No. ____)
18 b. m. d. (Father of No. 9, Cont. on chart No. ____)
19 b. d. (Mother of No. 9, Cont. on chart No. ____)
20 b. m. d. (Father of No. 10, Cont. on chart No. ____)
21 b. d. (Mother of No. 10, Cont. on chart No. ____)
22 b. m. d. (Father of No. 11, Cont. on chart No. ____)
23 b. d. (Mother of No. 11, Cont. on chart No. ____)
24 b. m. d. (Father of No. 12, Cont. on chart No. ____)
25 b. d. (Mother of No. 12, Cont. on chart No. ____)
26 b. m. d. (Father of No. 13, Cont. on chart No. ____)
27 b. d. (Mother of No. 13, Cont. on chart No. ____)
28 b. m. d. (Father of No. 14, Cont. on chart No. ____)
29 b. d. (Mother of No. 14, Cont. on chart No. ____)
30 b. m. d. (Father of No. 15, Cont. on chart No. ____)
31 b. d. (Mother of No. 15, Cont. on chart No. ____)

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HUSBAND Wesley Everett Barnes (adopted) — Son of Gustaf Fresk — son of

Birth Feb. 5, 1919 — Place Fresno, California — Oswald Fresk — son of

Chr. — Place — Pehr Fresk — son of

Death — Place — Lars Fresk — son of

Burial — Place — — son of

Father Gustaf Oswald Fresk — Mother Kirstine Nielsen — — son of

Married April 2, 1942 — Place Fresno, California — — son of

Other Wives (If any) — — son of

WIFE Lois Mae Smith — Dau. of Frank S. Smith — s/d of

Birth June 14, 1922 — Place Mt. View, Oklahoma — Joel B. Smith — s/d of

Chr. — Place (Washita County) — Jason Smith — s/d of

Death — Place — — s/d of

Burial — Place — — s/d of

Father Frank S. Smith — Mother Gracie J. Young — — s/d of

Other Mar. (If any) — — s/d of

children

Marjorie Grace Barnes — address Fresno, California

Born June 12, 1943 at Alexandria, Louisiana (Rapides Parish)

Died — at

Md. 1962 — to James Dallas Hansen — who was

Born Aug. 28, 1942 at Fresno, California

Died — at — Son / Dau.

of Peter Hensen — and Ella Jane Weston

Maiden name

children

Kevin James Hensen — address Fresno, California

Born Jan. 15, 1963 at Tujunga, California

Died — at

Md. — to — who was

Born — at

Died — at — Son / Dau.

of — and

Maiden name

Karen Janette Hansen — address Fresno, California

Born Dec. 14, 1964 at La Crescenta, California

Died — at

Md. — to — who was

Born — at

Died — at — Son / Dau.

of — and

Maiden name

address

Born — at

Died — at

Md. — to — who was

Born — at

Died — at — Son / Dau.

of — and

Maiden name

address

Born — at

Died — at

Md — to — who was

Born — at

Died — at — Son / Dau.

of — and

Maiden name

(OVER)

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