

HARNEY COUNTY HISTORY PROJECT

Av-Oral History #446 – Side A

Subject: Roy Heinz

Place: Hines, Oregon

Date: June 28, 1979

Interviewer: Elwyn Swearingen

This is an oral interview by Elwyn Swearingen of Roy Heinz who worked on the Oregon Northwestern Railroad, which runs from Burns to Seneca, with the purpose of hauling logs. This interview was done on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1979.

(Done for the Horner Museum, Corvallis, Oregon, Number 979130-A.)

ELWYN SWEARINGEN: Just to get started, now you worked for the railroad, right?

ROY HEINZ: I worked for Thompson and Otley who were doing the construction work on that particular piece of road up there.

ELWYN: About when did they start?

ROY: I don't know for sure what year that was. I think that probably, let's see, it was about '27 or '28 something like that. And I did various things up there. And that was on, up on the, oh you know on Trout Creek there, just over from the Ranger Station. And the, they went down the canyon there. I worked on two or three different plows there. Once I drove up, I drove a fresno with four horses on it. And they took me off of there and wanted me to drive a truck backing up to the ... there, out of one of those big cuts.

And then they put me up to, pumping water up to a diesel, not a diesel shovel, it was a steam shovel. And then they took me off of there and put me over to, onto what was a Fordson tractor on, with railroad wheels on it so they could, and it pulled a two-yard car back out onto that trestle, which I didn't enjoy too much, because that trestle was made out of pine poles.

ELWYN: Oh.

ROY: So --- and they had had one accident there before, so I was a little uneasy about it. And --- but I worked up there for about ---

WOMAN: Pardon me, but Roy, did you want to leave that ---

ROY: Oh, so I probably worked up there about, oh I was up there about two or three months, three months I guess.

ELWYN: Well while you were working up there did you guys stay at a camp, or did you go back and forth?

ROY: Well they had a cook tent up there, and several of the fellows from here, local fellows, worked up there on that project; and that part of the road anyway. And I had the, and the wife, we had, we camped down, oh just off from that project, just a little ways where there was a spring there. And we camped there. So I'd go home every night, back up there. But the little girl, the one that she ... she stayed with us, but the other one she didn't like it that much, so she went back to stay with her Grandma.

ELWYN: Oh.

ROY: And that was just, it was work done to just complete the roadbed before they put the rails on.

ELWYN: You didn't work it, on it, putting the rails on; you just worked on the roadbed?

ROY: No, no, just on the construction work, building up the roadbed.

ELWYN: Well we were just kind of wondering what, you know; kind of what life was like working on that.

ROY: Well, we'd been up, during the morning we'd go down and we'd --- first we'd feed and take care of our horses. We had to go down a little early, or at least I had to, I had to walk about a mile. And then we'd have breakfast, then go back up and harness these old horses all up. And they gave me one old mule, I couldn't keep him tongue tied on him, he'd slack them ... everything. And it made it a little unhandy loading the thing.

So I was kind of glad when they --- Joe Fuller up here, used to be up here, some of his people are here yet. They offered me a job to drive that truck and one past the washes that they could use me over there, and so he let them have me, because they were short one man. And so the diesel shovel would ... was on the steam shovel. It would, we'd back up, drive ahead, and he'd load us up with a lot of rock and dirt and whatever. And then we had to back out of there, out to the edge of the dump. And that wasn't so, well about all you do is bury the hind wheels, if you went too far up, and somebody would have to pull you out.

Then they got, put me up on the road bed, just kind of leveling, filling in the holes, and we had a shovel, for two or three days. Then they, well maybe a week. Then they wanted me to go on, pump water up to this shovel they'd backed it up, oh probably a mile from where they had been. And I had my job with the, keep that steam shovel in water.

ELWYN: Uh huh.

ROY: Pumped out of the creek down there. Then they put me from there, why he come down one day and said I hate changing men around, but a lot of fellows don't like to be changed, he said. And he said, "I wonder if you'd go up and drive that tractor on there." It had had, well two fellows got hurt on the darned thing before I went up there. And so I went up and I said. "Yeah." Well he said, "I hate to ask you," but he said, "I've got to have somebody I could move around." Well I said, "I didn't come up here to tell you what I was going to do, I come up here to help do what you wanted me to." So he changed me around. (Laughter)]

ELWYN: How large a crew did they work on that railroad? Do you remember?

ROY: Oh, I think probably there was probably twenty men in it altogether. They had a diesel shovel, and a steam shovel that worked from that camp. And then they had a, those fellows with the team of horses with the fresno. That was down where the old trestle was. A lot of people know where that is. But it's right at the mouth of the canyon there as you break out into the meadows going up Trout Creek, or going down Trout Creek.

ELWYN: Oh.

ROY: You break out into those ranches there. And so we --- but they was filling in there next to that trestle. But since then it has been changed to, they filled the whole end, rather than the trestle.

ELWYN: Well when did that camp that they had there in the Silvies Valley along Trout Creek, when did it come into being?

ROY: Well I think, I don't know just for sure, but as soon as that road was completed, they had to have the maintenance crew, you know, and they had what they called the Jap Camp there. You've probably heard of that.

ELWYN: Yeah, I've heard that name.

ROY: Yeah. And they was up there for years. And that started, I think immediately after they got the line through.

ELWYN: That was just maintenance crew there?

ROY: Yeah, that was --- yeah.

ELWYN: I was just wondering. I was wondering if it had anything to do with the building. That was just maintenance after the ---

ROY: No, that's just maintenance afterwards. Oh they have to do so much work on there. I suppose that sometimes the tracks spread a little bit, you know, or something up there.

ELWYN: How, what kind of hours did you generally work on that?

ROY: I think we worked about nine hours.

ELWYN: About nine hours.

ROY: I think that --- and we probably got them --- I believe we got about \$3.00 an hour.

ELWYN: That wasn't bad then.

ROY: No, it was all right. You can make more money at that. According to the prices of everything, I think you had more money to spend then than now, that isn't free money you know. There wasn't much, there wasn't no taxes coming out.

ELWYN: Now what was the basic purpose of the railroad, was it to get logs or lumber?

ROY: It was hauling those logs out from up around Seneca, and Bear Valley. Well they did haul a lot of them, as soon as that was ready. And I think they logged with the trucks at first, you know, out of the Ochoco here, and maybe some out of the Malheur.

ELWYN: Uh huh.

ROY: But ---

ELWYN: Was there any particular thing that the guys on the crew would do in the evenings for entertainment, or ---

ROY: Well there wasn't very much they could do up there. They just, there at the camp, and some of them had their tents out there. And I don't know what they --- I just --- maybe some of them come to town for a picture show or something. But that was about the size of it.

But these two fellows, of course, Otley, Henry Otley and Frank Thompson, they were local guys raised down here by Lawen. And they done some --- they built a lot of roadbed down there, a section of road. And then I helped fence the first ten miles; we went from almost to Lawen from Crane. We started at Crane and fenced that road on both sides. And I lined pretty near all that fence, on account my brother and my dad had the contract. And their eye site wasn't so good, about lining things. Oh, it was quite a life up there, but those fellows of course all knew one another. And they just visited around you know.

ELWYN: Uh huh. You mentioned a while ago about using the horse fresno, now I've personally seen those work, but there might be some people that wouldn't. Could you

kind of describe so somebody listened to this they would know what you are talking about, you were talking about using the fresno, how it worked.

ROY: Well we had that four horses abreast there, and hooked on to this fresno, and it had a big, what they called a Johnson bar on it, that was the hand. And so --- we had somebody who had come back there, whenever we went out and dumped our load, we could dump it. All we had to do was lift up that handle, ... dump it. But we had the fellows back there where we loaded; there was a couple of fellows there, and they'd pull down that Johnson bar and that would level the grade off so we just scoop up a --- Well I don't know, I guess the darned thing held a yard of dirt or better. And they'd get us loaded and then they would turn us loose with that. A load of dirt, we'd go on up there, and it had a rope on the end of it. That Johnson bar step up high as a head, you know, and then they had a rope tied in the end of it so these fellows could get a hold of it and pull it back. And so all we had to do was lift up on the handle bar and of course the horses pulling on it, automatically dumped, you know. It was fixed so that there was --- get a little out of bounds when you're dumping it, so we had to be kind of careful some time and watch that darned bar, it would come up and you'd dump it in the wrong place.

(Laughter)

ELWYN: How long did it take them to build that railroad there from here to Seneca, do you have any idea?

ROY: I don't know, three or four years I think, three years maybe. They built that up here from Crane up to here, and then they went on, later on up there. Oh, they might have got it done in a couple years I think, before they could go on it. Of course once the

railroad, the bed was completed, why then it didn't take long for them to, for them to lay the rails up there. Oh it took quite a little while at that, but ---

ELWYN: What ... rails did they use? I mean did they have machinery or ---

ROY: Yeah, they had rails on a car I think, on the flat car. And they put down these ties, you know; lay a lot of those ties. And then they come along with these rails and they --- I think they'd lift them up. But they had a bunch of men back there, they were called gandy dancers. They picked up that rail; it would take several men to pick up one of them rails.

ELWYN: Did the ties come from the local mill here?

ROY: I think so; I think they were sawed out here, yeah. Yeah they were, they sawed a lot of them down here at the mill.

ELWYN: What size ties did they use, do you remember?

ROY: No, I think probably a standard size. Now what that is I don't, probably 8 x 10 something like that. And whatever --- I suppose they were six or seven feet long I think. I know they were quite heavy, because I worked on the railroad down at Crane before, on the section crew there.

ELWYN: Do you remember any other interesting incidents you can think about that happened during the time, any little sidelines or anything you can think ---

ROY: Oh, the only other one I can think of right now is that a fellow by the name of Bull Dog Brown had, he was kind of a powder man; but he had the contract getting some of this road bed ready too, same as we did up here. Well he was up at the upper end of Silvies Valley up there someplace, and they had this rock cut in there to make, and they



was putting the powder in, but first they blew the hole, you know, enlarge it so they could put in a bigger charge. And he went to tamp that, and of course you don't tamp powder with an iron bar or anything, and he knew better. And the fellow that was helping him, he saw him pick up this crowbar and he said, "My God, Bull Dog, don't do that." But he run. He did, he poked that down there to push the powder on down, and the darn thing went off and just drilled him, or just killed him right outright, you know. And his name was Bull Dog Brown. That was a nickname of course; I suppose the Bull Dog part.

I don't know about too much other incidents that happened there except my brother-in-law used to haul, oh fresh vegetables and, that they raised up there in Silvies Valley over to the camp here where they dug the tunnel. There is a tunnel up at that top. Did you know about that?

ELWYN: You mean by Idlewild out there?

ROY: Yeah.

ELWYN: Yeah.

ROY: Yeah. And there was, oh I think that was longer, that was all done by handwork, you know, the forest and --- Once a fellow was in there --- but it was --- Anyway I went a time or two with my brother-in-law Nick, he was selling them something, fresh vegetables, because they weren't too plentiful then.

ELWYN: No, they weren't.

ROY: We was driving this, he had a team there he drove. One of these fresnos, and where we were going out at ... running a circle, and make our rounds, you know, but before that it was a big doby chunk there. So they put a hole in there and put a whole can

of black powder down in there, and they touched that off. It didn't do much on it, made a hole down there, you know, it kind of blew out. But as we went along they took the top off of that, and pretty soon one of them horses fell in that hole. We had quite a time getting him out of there. What he did, he just whooped up this way, and into that old sticky mud, and he just held together, but he just made a big hole in that, about four feet deep at, after he broke through, you know. And they had quite a time getting that horse out. And him hooked to the fresno too.

ELWYN: What did they use to get him out with?

ROY: I really don't know. I wasn't there at the time. But I was there I think the next day or so, and I saw where he fell in. (Laughter) And that was quite a time up there.

ELWYN: How many years did you work on that?

ROY: Oh, just about three months, I think.

ELWYN: That's real interesting.

ROY: Yeah. Yeah, and I worked --- Earlier that spring we fenced a road down yonder, and down by Crane. That's about all the work I done on there. Except I fenced --- I did take a contract from, that's about four miles of this highway up Poison Creek, and a mile of it here up to where you cross the railroad track when you're going up to Idlewild. I fenced that on both sides. That was quite a job. Over on the hillside, I packed the posts over. But I used a team of horses. We camped there at ... That's about all the work I ever done on that thing.

(End of Tape)

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