

HAYING AT ROARING SPRINGS IN 1933

BLITZEN WAS THEN A TOWN, NOW THE GHOSTS OF THE PAST CLAIM IT. THERE WERE RANCHER FAMILIES IN THE VALLEY USING BLITZEN FOR A MAIL CENTER AND SENDING THEIR CHILDREN TO CRANE UNION HIGH TO LIVE IN THE DORM. THEY DROVE THE DIRT ROAD ALONG THE SEVERAL MILES OF ROARING SPRINGS LAND.

THE BRADLEY FAMILY, BAILEY FAMILY, AND THE, FRANK HENRY FAMILY CONSIDERED THEMSELVES NEIGHBORS TO THE RESIDENTS OF THE ENTIRE VALLEY.

THE RANCHES IN THE ROARING SPRINGS CHAIN ARE STILL PRETTY MUCH AS I REMEMBER THEM FROM THE FIRST TIME I SAW THEM IN THE SUMMER OF 1933.

MY FATHER, I. E. SMITH, HAD CONTRACTED TO "PUT UP THE HAY" FOR ROARING SPRINGS AND HAD ESTABLISHED HIS HAY CAMP AT THREE-MILE. A HANDSHAKE BETWEEN DAD AND JOE FINE, REPRESENTING A MAN NAMED SWIFT WHO WAS EASTERN OREGON LIVESTOCK, HAD ESTABLISHED THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS EACH TO THE OTHER.

MY BROTHER VERN, AGE 12, AND I HAD BROUGHT PART OF THE HAYING MACHINERY AND TWO MILK-COWS FROM DENIO DOWN LONG HOLLOW TO THREE MILE IN A MODEL B FORD TRUCK. WE WENT THROUGH FIELDS, PASSED THE MC DADE RANCH AND THE SONNY HOLLIS HOMESTEAD, AND DROPPED FROM PUEBLO VALLEY TO CATLOW VALLEY. THE TRIP STARTED AT DAYLIGHT AND FINISHED AS THE SUN WAS SETTING. (TODAY THIS TRIP WOULD TAKE LESS THAN AN HOUR.)

"HAYING "IN THOSE YEARS WAS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM TODAY. NO ROARING DIESEL PUFFING MACHINES MARRED THE TRANQUILITY OF THE LARGE EXPANSE OF GREEN MEADOWS THAT RAN FOR MILES ALONG THE VALLEY FLOOR. HORSE DRAWN MACHINES MADE LITTLE NOISE, BUT THE CYCLE-BAR GLIDING ITS FIVE OR SIX INCH WAY BACK AND FORTH AS IT SEVERED THE MEADOW HAY FROM ITS EARTHLY CONNECTION WAS A PLEASANT SOUND THAT PROVIDED BACKGROUND FOR THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE DRIVER AND THE TEAM THAT PULLED THE MOWER. THE FLATTENED GRASS WAS NEXT TO BE RAKED INTO WINDROWS FOR THE HOT SUMMER SUN TO CURE. AFTER IT WAS DRY ENOUGH TO PREVENT MOLD, IT WAS PUSHED INTO BUNCHES CALLED SHOCKS BY TWO-HORSE BUCKRAKES AND LATER YARDED [PUSHED CLOSER TO THE STACK YARD] WHERE THE SLIDE WAITED.

PREPARATIONS HAD BEEN MADE FOR MOVING THE SHOCKS TO FORM A TWENTY TO FORTY FOOT LONG PILE OF HAY. A TRENCH HAD BEEN DUG ABOUT FOUR FEET FROM THE BASE OF THE SLIDE AND A LONG CHAIN TIED TO A TWELVE-TO-FIFTEEN-FOOT LONG PIPE OR POLE WITH UP TO SIX SHORTER CHAINS FASTENED SO AS TO LIE FLAT ALONG THE GROUND WHEN THE POLE DROPPED INTO THE TRENCH .

THE STACKING CREW CONSISTED OF TWO, OR SOMETIMES THREE, MEN ON THE STACK, A DRIVER FOR THE PULL-UP WAGON, A SADDLE-MOUNTED PULL-BACK RIDER, AND A NET MAN. THE NET-MAN WAS THERE TO CHECK THE POLE AND CHAINS POSITIONS BEFORE THE YARD-MAN SHOVED THE SHOCK OF HAY ONTO THE NET, THEN THROW THE CONNECTED CHAINS OVER THE HAY TO THE PULL-BACK MAN WHO CAUGHT AND HOOKED THE CONNECTION WITH THE ENDS OF THE CHAINS FORMING A SLING OR NET.

“TAKE- ER- AWAY,” LED A STACKER TO DROP HIS PITCH FORK AS A SIGNAL TO THE PULL-UP TO PUSH THE HORSE-POWER INTO ACTION AND SNAKE THE NET OF HAY UP THE SLIDE. THE POSITION OF THE STACKER GAVE A HINT TO THE PULL-UP AS TO WHERE HE MIGHT TRY TO POSITION THE RELEASE OF THE HAY FROM THE NET.

THERE WAS NOT MUCH LEAWAY WITH A LIMITED ANGULATION AT THE TOP OF THE SLIDE ROLLER, BUT STACKERS WERE VERY FOND OF A PULL-UP WHO DIDN'T JUST GO STRAIGHT UP THE MIDDLE, BUT LEFT THEM WITH LESS PITCHING BY PUTTING THE HAY IN A CLOSER POSITION TO WHERE IT WAS NEEDED.

“DROP-ER” AND THE RAISED PITCHFORK CAME DOWN TO SIGNAL THE RELEASE OF THE NET CHAINS.

THE CALL AND DROPPED FORKS WERE ALSO A SIGNAL TO THE PULL-BACK TO WRAP THE COILS ON THE SADDLE HORN AND PULL THE OPENED NET BACK INTO THE SLOT FOR THE NEXT SHOCK OF HAY READY FOR THE SHOVE ONTO THE NET.

A GOOD STACKING CREW WAS NOT ALWAYS EASY TO FIND, AND DAD HAD TO FOLLOW THE NET UP THE SLIDE WITH THE SHOCK TO CREATE A PROPER SYMETRY.