

(Numbers on pictures are on green tabs. Same numbers appear in text where related to photos. These numbers and instructions not to appear in final text.)

Earl Cash. Foreman of bridge construction and maintenance. Born in Douglas, N.D. at a time when lignite (soft coal) sold for 50 cents a ton. Earl called a spade a spade: shot straight from the shoulder, no pussyfooting around.

(Following is a conversation I had with Earl in 1981. His comments tell better than anyone else could, about working on the Camas Prairie Railroad and its earlier days. Earl and I were randomly looking at his photographs and this is his story about those pictures.)

EC. "Williston, N.D. had the largest lignite coal mine in the world. Now they've struck oil there -- they had it on the news the other night."

HR. "Didn't they convert, or change, the fireboxes on the GN engines to use lignite?"

EC. "Years ago they did. You know anything about lignite?"

HR. "Well, we burned it up there during the second world war years in the (Conscientious Objector) camp I was in. It was smoky as the dickens and all fell apart as it burned."

EC. "I've mined it."

HR. "We used to pay \$1.50 a ton in Williston."

EC. "Oh hell, I've sold many, many tons for 50 cents a ton. Where I lived there in North Dakota you could go out there to the Missouri River and that coal will crop out of the bank. When I was a snot-

nosed kid, they had the mines about six miles from where we lived. You'd take a team of horses and you'd strip off 6-7 feet of dirt and then you'd have a foot of slack coal in big knots, and then you'd have a 6 foot vein of coal and then you'd have a foot and a half bottom vein of coal. It comes in three sections. It was my job to go down and run the pump to pump water out of the pit."

HR. "Is the right word "scoria"-- the clay on top of lignite? The lignite might catch fire somehow by lightning and fire the clay above it? Sort of a brick-colored stuff."

EC. "That's right. Used to install it all the way from an inch to a foot thick on top of the roads. Have it on the Camas Prairie -- but it's mouse-colored back there, practically white -- yellowish white."

HR. "You liked working for the railroad, didn't you?"

EC. "Yes, I enjoyed working for the railroad. I worked there 47 years and I never missed a payday. They always knew where I was at and I was always there. I went to work on the 9th of June, 1920 and I was made assistant foreman the 1st of July, 1921; and I was foreman September 1925. I went right up the ladder. I wasn't doing it by sitting on the fence with my thumb up my ass."

HR "Were you involved with construction or maintenance, or what?"

EC."Everything. We built that line from Orofino to Headquarters in 1925-26.

(19,45,47) "In 1933, around Christmastime, they had three feet of snow and then they got a Chinook wind and rain and it just wiped that whole country out. Changed the creek channel when they rebuilt the line. Hell, we rebuilt, and built, several bridges. I was the youngest foreman and I had to work nights. They had the track foreman working days. And they had this engineer who was always

drunk and raising hell. This guy and I didn't get along worth a damn. I'd do twice as much in the nighttime as they would in the daytime and that caused friction."

HR. "When you worked at night, what did you use for lights?"

EC. "We had lights on the piledriver and then we had big gas lamps. I had a Delco light plant that generated juice --110 volts. Then I had a string of lights, about 100 feet long that had lights about every 30 feet. I had them in my car. I keep that on a reel and just reel it out and stick it up on some poles and hell, it was as bright as daytime." (1930-34)

HR. "Did you work on bridges on the Grangeville line?"

EC. "Oh yes. All of them."

HR. "When did they put that new highway (US95) through up near Horseshoe Tunnel?"

EC. "In '53 or '54 -- somewhere in there. Because I was supervisor when it was put in."

HR. "They had to build a new bridge for the railroad, did they?"

EC. "They built two of them."

HR. "How old are the trestles way up above? (Grangeville Line)"

EC. "They was built about 1900."

(sic)

HR. "Well, they must have been replaced since then."

EC. "Yes."

(7) HR. "Say, you're a good looking guy.(1926)"

EC. "Damn right I was a good looking guy!"

(3) HR. "This is bridge #46?" (1921)

EC. "Yep, just this side of Cottonwood."

(31) EC. "This was taken in 1920. We had a big washout down here at Wilma (about 6 miles west of Lewiston). Tied the road up for 31

days; there are 3 or 4 handcars.(1920)

(8,13) EC. "Here's an engine here; went into the river about 2 miles east of Lewsiton. We was taking it out of the river."

(1929-34)

(5,6,21) EC. "Here's a weed burner, way down the track. I had a model T Ford motor car. I borrowed a spray tank from my daddy-in-law; and we had four such cars with barrels of water. I'd be right behind them pretty close, and we'd go along after the weed burner to put out the fires.(1930)"

(56) EC. "This is Lawyer's Canyon bridge under construction in 1908, up the Grangeville line. That's the only damn picture I know of in the country of that bridge (under construction)."

(X1) EC. "There's the Sweetwater depot. (1924)"

(41,42,43) EC. "This is bridge #40, I think. When you lift those timbers down you had to put a line over there to pull them timbers off the bridge. (1921)"

(1,4,10,12,22,23,24) EC. "This is Lawyer's Canyon bridge and we're getting ready to renew the ties. (Bridge #23, 1923 & 1942)"

(50) EC. "This is up above Pierce, MP 22. We was putting a couple of culverts in here. (1959)"

(44,46,49,53,54) EC. "This one is 5 miles above Orofino. (The creek) just washed that bridge out completely. It was a nice place to fish. (1934)"

(27) EC. "This is a train - engineer probably went to sleep - and ran into the rock slide. Nobody got hurt. (1946, above Lenore, engine #1618)"

(29,35) E.C. "Here are some pictures of rock slides. This happened this side of Reubens on Easter Sunday, 1940."

HR. "This rock wasn't too heavy?"

EC. "Oh no. This is my hand made "crab". We put a counterbalance over here. That didn't cost the company a dime to make that thing; it's the best thing they ever had."

(2,14) EC. "Here, this is tunnel #3. We cut one tunnel on top of another tunnel and we used several boxcars of cordwood. (May 21, 1925)"

(X2) EC. "This is at Reubens. These guys are going hunting snowshoe rabbits."

(52) EC. "This is a picture of the canyon at Nucrag. Named after a conductor. It's the first bridge you go underneath after you leave Culdesac."

(20,26) EC. "Here we are puttin' in ties; and that's me swinging the (hammer?) (ca. 1934)"

(9,11,16,17) EC. "That's in 1925; that's bridge #66. Used to be up near Grangeville, but it's filled in now. No bridge any more. (1925)"

HR. "These are good pictures---"

(33,36) EC. "These are snow pictures; train caught in a drift. We were to help get it out. We were working 5 days a week. I wanted to work half a day on Saturday and half a day on Monday so we could take the train down. (ride the train back to Lewiston). But the guys didn't want it that way; they wanted Saturdays off. So I took the train and said, 'Go ahead and do what you want to do'. Sunday morning it was raining here, and I got to Nucrag. One guy stayed up there; he said between 7 o'clock in the morning and 7 o'clock at night they had 26 inches of snow. They couldn't get back up with the motor car that 8 miles up there." (1937)

(34) HR. "You probably don't like this gas electric--- "

EC. "That was on a trial run. That's me on the left. We stopped and

had lunch up at Nucrag. My wife was cooking." (1935)

(Hal's photo 211-20B) EC. "Here's that bridge you were talking about." (Half Moon Bridge.)

(32,37,38) EC. "There's more snow pictures; shows you how high the snow (gets up in the cuts on the prairie). That's a passenger coach. (1937)"

(15) EC. "There's another picture of that bridge; that picture's wrong, it says 190 feet. It's only 90 feet high. (the road) comes through there. Now it goes clear to the top. (ca. 1930?)"

(28) EC. "That's Kamiah; they couldn't get in. That's the bridge across the river there." (1929)

HR. "What, spring thaw?"

EC. "Yep."

(57,58) EC. "This is the coal dock, right here in Lewiston. They neglected the damn coal dock and it got rotten and they were pulling up a car of coal one day and the goddam thing gave way. Nobody got hurt, by the grace of God. It hung there by a big cable, and everybody stood around with their mouths open. So I got an axe and cut that goddam cable and let the thing fall. (ca. 1944)"

(25,30) EC. "That's down the river here a way. Freight train just went by. There's a lady across the river, got up early in the morning - about 5 o'clock - the freight train had just gone by and there was a sharp crack of lightning and thunder and the hillside come down just as the freight train went by. Nobody got hurt. (ca. 1949)"

(55,59) EC. "---this thing capsized. This is that engine I was telling you about --- the moosh (?) boom, right here in Lewiston right across from the depot. And here's an aerial picture I had taken of the wreck." (1951)