

Following is a conversation with Ron Jones, August 11, 1983.  
Much mumbling ....that old sawmill there, the sawmill belonged to Potlach, but east of that and from the road to the river, that's all Indian property, so I suspicion that the RR did have to get permission from the Indians when he came thru. And when they went up Lapway Canyon, up along Lapway creek, that went through some Indian property.

HAL: It would be interesting to know what the arrangement was. What they paid the Indians for it.

RJ: It probably would be in the deeds down at the court house. If you go down there, talk to Jim Lloyd, he could show you where they're at.

HAL: Wnder if it would be something like free rides for the rest of your life, or something like that?

RJ: No, we used to sell the Indians tickets when we had the passenger trains. Maybe at some time they had free passes, I don't know. With the RR coming in the Indian agents didn't want to stop it, they wanted the RR as much as anybody.

HAL: Were they agriculturally involved at that time? Why would they want the RR in there?

RJ: To travel, get from place to place. They liked to ride the trains. They had a lot of property up in Camas ~~Prarie~~, up in that area. They have a lot of property up in Camas Prairie that they still own and lease it out to the white people. For awhile the white people tried to buy it from them and the government agency put a stop to that. Indians, before that, would sell property and the money would last about a week.

HAL: They didn't seem to be able to plan or think ahead, did they?

RJ: When they get their allotment, or whatever it is, they'll go into town, into a store and buy \$500 worth of clothes at one stop. If they've got \$500 they'll spend it all for clothes.

HAL: Way back, before white people came, they didn't have to plan ahead. When hungry, go out and shoot something.

RJ: They're doing some things that isn't too good right now. Just this summer they went up and shot some moose up the south fork.

HAL: Your position with the RR was?

RJ: Auditor and agent. Verne took the job when I retired. But I had two jobs. I also ran the freight office and the big boy, Tom Miles, got that job and Verne got mine, so it took two guys to take over when I left.

HAL: What sort of things did you do in the freight office? What were your regular, standard duties?

RJ: The freight office was just to handle all kinds of freight shipments.

HAL: Was this CP? RJ: Mostly Burlington Northern and UP. Once in awhile, the only time ~~was~~ a freight shipment was a pure CP shipment, was when it originated and terminated on the CP itself. Same way with tickets. If you sold a ticket to somebody to Portland it was UP; if to Seattle, they'd go thru Spokane on the old Northern Pacific.

HAL: What sort of freight was handled? Grain? Lumber? What else?

RJ: Lots of cattle--they don't any more. Lots of sheep. We had sheep trains out of Grangeville. I've had cattle trains out of Grangeville. I've had cattle trains out of Lewiston for a big sale. Usually ran some big fall sales down there and we'd ship 30-40 cars of cattle. But that's all trucked now.

HAL: How recently ~~ya~~ did you ship any cattle or when did that cease?

RJ: Can't remember for sure but probably up until about 1965-67-68.

HAL: How'd you happen to lose that traffic?

RJ: Any route out of here, either down the river ~~through~~ via Pendleton, around the horn way to get east--most cattle went east to Omaha and Iowa for feeding. Going NP you gotta follow the canyon and go up to Spokane and go around thata way, so what it involved was virtually one extra stop to feed and water and rest, which they had to pay for. And time. It consumed time. The customer had to pay for this. The customer had to

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had to unload then, feed and water them, then reload them. They put them on trucks and hauled them down to the main line at Nampa. They did that for quite a while and now I think they're hauling them further in trucks. Cattle wasn't a money maker for RRs, so they didn't feel too bad about losing the business. More of an accommodation. RRs used to handle lots of livestock but it never was a real money maker. In some instances where they had these hog trains from Sioux City to Spokane or Seattle, they probably made money but just cattle shipments from the country to the feed yards, too many claims were involved.

HAL: Claims for cattle that died?

RJ: Injured, sick, shrank. HAL: Shrank? RJ: They'd claim you hauled them too long and delayed them too long, causing them to shrink.

RJ: There's a terrific shrink with horses. Farmer loads them up with water and feeds them and bring them in. He sells them and by the time the stand around and get into a car they probably shrink 5-10%. That's a big game. Still is.

HAL: Pigs would come from where?

RJ: Used to have what they called "pig palaces", big, double decked roller bearing cars. They used to ship a lot of hogs on those to these slaughter houses in Spokane and Seattle, Portland, Ellensburg. The farmers here used to raise lots of hogs. Now most of it is done back east in the corn country--Iowa.

HAL: What other commodities?

RJ: Right here on the Camas Prairie was a pure farming, agriculture economy. Lewiston, of course, is the first and biggest lumber producer through Potlatch mill. After World War II, lumber mills were started every place--at Grangeville we probably had 8-10 of them. All this lumber then began to move out on the RR. At that time it was all rail--no trucks. Grangeville, when I went there in '46 was pure agricultural--that's all they took care of--farm products. When I left there, that was a sideline for the agent to take care of. The biggest part of the work was handling all the lumber. Lumber produced more carloads than farms. Of course the pulp and tissue mill out here in junction with the lumber are big producers.

HAL: Is that business declining generally, or is it holding its own?

RJ: The lumber is not being produced in the small mills like it was. The big mills have gobbled up the little mills. Grangeville ended up now with one sawmill where they did have 6-8, but the one mill that's there saws more lumber than those old one-horse mills. The old small mills used to put out 35,000 to 50-60,000 board feet a day, whereby that Wickes mill probably produces up to 300,000 board feet a day. And the Lewiston sawmill out here, they run 800,000 a day.

HAL: What are the resources like, back out aways? Still got plenty?

RJ: Back in the Nez Perce forest, back of Grangeville, there's really an abundance of timber as long as the forest service people will put it on the market and let them bid for it and cut it.'

HAL: What type of cutting to do they--selective or cut a whole section down?

RJ: They put a lot up for sale, they'll tell them what it is--either Ponderosa, white fir, whatever. They'll bid on it, because the service will tell them there's some many board feet of this species, etc. They know pretty close before the M go in what they're going to get.

HAL: Does Potlatch own St. Mary's River RR?

RJ: Yeah. They took that over when the Milwaukee folded. They took over the old Washington, Idaho & Montana RR and now they call it the St. Mary's Northern RR. Potlatch bought part of it and they operate it, and BN took some of it down around Potlatch. I'm not sure if the UP

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took any of it.

HAL: The St. Mary's RR goes fromBoville up to Avery--no--to St. Mary's and then they go back to Avery and on over to Plumber. Connect with UP at Plumber?

RJ: Yesh, that's right.

HAL: They still use that route--the old Milwaukee route from Plumber into Spokane?

RJ: That's Potlatch's deal and I'm not sure about other industries on that road, but Potlatch has to serve them too, if they're still there. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ((Hal talks about difficulty getting OLD photos.))

RJ: The Tribune down here has old paper issues that did have some pretty good pictures of the old original depot and the old trains that came in.

HAL: I was down ther last year and picked out some photographs from them. Also, Potlatch has some old ones.

RJ: I never in my life thought I'd see the day when every station on the Grangeville branch would be closed. That just amazes me. The amount of business that used to come off of there was tremendous. The tonnage down the hill, I believe, was 3000 tons for a train. The grade was 2 1/2%, consequently they limited the tonnage. It was that way for years and years. Now its down to virtually nothing.

HAL: Well, all that cattle business is gone and grain and lumber left.

RJ: Of course with the farm business it was grain--wheat and barley. Barley shipments used to be large--lot of brewing going on. Than Montana started plowing up all their sheep pastures and started raising grain. The freight rates were a lot less so they supply Milwaukee, St. Louis, all those areas with brewing barley. We used to have a lot of peas--lot of seeds, besides wheat and barley. We used to raise a lot of what they called "Black peas" and they were shipped down the ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ southern territory--Texas, Mississippi, Carolinas--hundreds of thousands of cars of peas. They planted them in the fall, in the spring they'd plow them under for fertilizer--green manure crop. South found a way they could raise them themselves.

HAL: What originally induced the RRs to build was lumber, wasn't it?

RJ: Wheat, barley, oats and lumber and shingles, but you don't see shingles any more. Now, the RR here at Lewiston is shipping containers from Potlatch. This paper mill is producing of containers--most of them go overseas. White forzen food carton stock, milk bottle stock. A high quality paper board and that's going in these containers and going overseas. They have an extruding process where they spray plastic at a very high temperature on that paper board and it makes it plastic coated.

RJ: On the Camas Prairie, did you get pictures of the old bugs they used to run, the B-14, B-13? HAL: Yeah, I've got a coupée. I don't have one of the RDC that followed that. RJ: That should have been the easiest one to get. That just quit about 1968-70. I don't know if I ever took a picture of that thing. I bet I didn't.

HAL: What would be the size of a fairly full train, or an average train in the good days? Passenger train.

RJ: Oh, they never carried more than one baggage car and one passenger car. Engine and two cars. Years ago, I guess they used to have enough to fill up a couple of carsbut I never did see it.

HAL: In the good days of freight, one train a day about 3,000 tons from Grangeville?

RJ: Three times a week. It was up Monday, back Tuesday situation except during harvest. Lumber kept things going pretty good. And when you had a big harvest, then you had a train a day. Sometimes you'd have to run an extra to Reubens or Craigmont to pick up the tonnage.

*Spokane*

*And some grain maybe*

HAL: And 3,000 would be the maximum tonnage?

RJ: Yes, down the hill. Up, depended on what the locomotives could pull.

HAL: How much did you bring down in a day?

RJ: 3,000 tons a day per train. It wasn't safe, brakewise, to move more than that on a single train.

HAL: But did they have more than one train a day of 3,000 each?

RJ: Sometimes, during heavy shipping and harvest. A car would weigh about 25 ton and the load in it 50 ton, so that's 75-80 ton a car; so about 40 cars. I think we also were limited to the number of cars and I can't remember now. ((Much mumbling while apparently looking at pictures of property his brother bought along side the Camas Prairie. Mike not close enough to pick much up.))

RJ: ((Showing Hal old timetable)) <sup>bound</sup> Western freight trains were supposed to stop at Newcrag's 10 minutes and longer if found to be overhauled. At Culdesacs <sup>and Jacque's</sup> 15 minutes, coming down that Reubens hill you braked all the time and those wheels got hot you couldn't see the cars, just solid smoke off the wheels. They were supposed to stop and cool the ~~XXXXXX~~ wheels at Newcrag, that's half way down where the tunnel comes out and she switches around--10 minutes there.

RL ((reading from book)) Tonnage: Culdesac to Reubens ~~50~~ 550 ton and the GP-9's now, the old steam engines used to haul 500, the NPW class and the UP MacArthur class 550. Now 625. Reubens to Culdesac, 60 cars maximum, ~~XXXXXX~~ or maximum of 4,000 tons. ~~XXXXXX~~ Regardless of whether its steam or diesel.

RJ: Back in 1954 we still had, 324, 344 and 314 and 74 down the river. That 314 was the Spokane train. 74 is the UP train and 324 and 344 were Stites and Granville passengers. That's when this timetable was for--1954. It wasn't long after that that things started falling apart on the passenger business and in 1954 we had an agent every 8 miles. We had a ticket agent at Spaulding.

HAL: You don't have a picture of the station at Spaulding, do you?

RJ: No. It was a little shack, same architecture type that the old depots had--about 10-12 feet square.

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for reference in  
identify locos photos