

March 16, 1990

Interview of ROGER DEAN WAY by Roberta Yoder & Martha Glauthier

My grandparents were married, I think, in Indiana. They moved to Nebraska and had a farm near McCook, Nebraska. That's where my Dad (Ollis) and his older brother, Jake, were born. They were 'hailed' out several years in a row and he would have to take his teams and go over to Colorado and work for other farmers to keep things going. So they sold the place and came to Long Beach, up on Signal Hill. They couldn't even raise chickens there because on the east side of Signal Hill where Lakewood Village is now, was just like a swamp. There were packs of coyotes that lived down there, and they would dig under 2 or 3 feet of fencing to get at the chickens. That was on the Bixby Ranch. I think they had a small lease area and I think they raised cabbages or some darned thing. They moved from there to Whittier and lived there about a year, just as a place to stay more than anything, because Grandfather then came farther up here and he was looking for land. He found an area where they could farm and they farmed the area where Citrus College now is. At that time it was a pie-shaped slice with a stream that ran through. They farmed that, but he found this property up here and it was high enough at about 1000 feet - down there fog would come up through the Whittier Narrows and they would get lots of fog in the springtime. They raised berries and they weren't getting them on the market early enough because of the fog. They sold the berries to the Santa Fe and they were used in the Harvey Houses as far east as Albuquerque, in season.

Q. Any idea as to years?

My Dad was born in Nebraska I think in 1893. He was 5 or 6 when they moved here. They moved here before the turn of the century. There was some citrus, but most of it was in grain yet. Dad said we sowed grain over where it all became citrus.

Q. Can you tell us about the little house that was moved from Azusa?

You mean the little house where my great-grandmother lived? That was on the west side of the big house. She lived there until she was in her late nineties, and then all of a sudden she went down the hill. It was too difficult for her to wander around on the side hill. She was doing everything for herself and she could sit out on the porch under the pepper tree and look clear off to the Whittier Narrows, Montebello Hills, and Signal Hill - you could see most everywhere in those days. They moved her down to my grandfather's sister's place who lived at the bottom of the hill - Virginia Meyers' grandmother - After that time, that little house was pretty well torn up. One afternoon there was one of these windy Santa Anas coming over the mountains. All of a sudden my grandfather who was out milking, heard this sound and looked up and the whole top (which was of heavy planking) of the reservoir just began to rise. It sat there in the air about 10 feet above the reservoir and slowly tipped and started to kind of turn and came down the hill like a tin can lid. It wiped the little house out, tore up part of the pepper tree and did a little bit of damage with pieces falling off here and there. Levelled all the avocado trees, and some of the citrus, and some of the pieces went clear into Fifth Street. This was after Great-Grandma had gone down the hill and had died. She went down there and lived for about a year, but they wouldn't let her do anything. That was in the 30's. Hazel Stuart took care of her - she was 98 when she died.

Aunt Pearl kept spraining her ankle, going up and down that hill. They figured they'd have to get her off that hill before she got old, so later when they sold the place, she moved down on Fourth Street.

My Grandmother was a Crane. My Mother was a Hoover. My great-great grandparents, the Cranes, lived on the corner of Cataract and Fifth, the southwest corner. Right straight across, my grandparents the Hoovers lived, southeast corner. The northeast corner was the Hartmans'. That's Howard Hoover's parents, he was my uncle.

Q. How was Mrs. Bussey related?

She was my grandmother's oldest sister. Her name was Richter. She had that beautiful grove at the corner of SanDimas Avenue and Commercial.

Q. Tell us about Howard Hoover.

My mother and Ernest Hoover, her younger brother, - they were all born and raised in Wisconsin. They had a big panic way back in 18-something. My grandfather sold his property there and they bought some property sight-unseen in Missouri. They figured to get away from the winters and they ended up someplace way out in the hills near White Plains, Missouri. It wasn't too good and all the farm equipment that he took down from Wisconsin couldn't be used because it was nothing but flint rock. He ended up with a Shetland pony and a great big St. Bernard dog and people used to come out of the woods to see the dog as big as a horse, and a horse as small as the dog. They had a "Town Liar" that had been to St. Louis and had seen houses that were 12 stories high, and he was the Town Liar. No one ever believed him.

They lived there for a while, then went into Oklahoma when it was Territory. My grandfather was a Land Agent. They had a claim near Okarchee, Oklahoma and lived a while in Enid and they had more property later and lived in Elk City. He had the newspaper there, and I think they had the fairgrounds on his property. He had the fairgrounds on his property in Wisconsin, too. At that place in Clinton, Wisconsin, back before World War II, you could still see the contours of the race track. His business was raising trotters and pacers and what they called roadsters in those days and Clydesdales and Percherons. He had a beautiful farm. That was so well made that everything was still standing and the names of his prize stallions are still on the box stalls in that big barn, the weathervane that an old Scotsman who was a horse trainer made, was still up on the top of the barn. I was the only member of the family, I guess, that ever did visit my mother's home. He had big boxes of ribbons and cups that his horses had won in different competitions all over the country. He had one Percheron stallion named Bernadot that was never beaten in competition. When they went into Oklahoma that was all kind of behind them, but he got to where he had a pretty good farm and he had the newspaper. That was where my uncle Howard Hoover began learning newspaper things. My grandfather had the first Domino bull in Oklahoma, as far as we know.

Q. When did your Uncle Howard come to San Dimas?

My Uncle Howard left Oklahoma and went to Oregon first. He ended up being manager of a cooperative packing house for apples. He traveled around - over into Idaho where they raised a lot of apples. This was in Hood River, Oregon. That's where he met my Aunt. She was Swiss. He was the last member of our family to learn to speak German. My great-grand-father lived at their farm in Wisconsin. Even though the family had been here a couple of hundred years, they never learned English. They had come from Schlesswig-Holstein. Many people in that area didn't speak English, in Wisconsin, that is. That area in Europe was sometimes Danish and sometimes German. I think they left it when it was Danish, but they considered themselves German.

Howard Hoover felt that he had had enough of the apple business, so he asked his girl to get married and they would go to California. He had learned quite a bit by then, but he was lousy with horses. My mother said if it hadn't been for other people, some horse would have killed him! So they came to California, and in Los Angeles, he ran into Compton, C. L. Compton who lived right across the street here (620 N. San Dimas Ave.) He was a Jonothan Club member and he was in Los Angeles all the time playing high stakes bridge. He made his fortune that way. He could run the paper. He did his editing with a pair of scissors and Uncle Howard ran the whole paper. Compton would go down to Los Angeles and spend 3, 4, 5 days at a time, playing around the clock - big business. He always wore gray suits, light gray felt hat, sometimes a straw hat in the summer. As I remember he smoked a pipe. He drove a nice Chevrolet, and next to Charlie Fairbanks, he was the worst driver in town. When he'd come to a corner and it was cold weather, the window would be up, and he'd just knock against the window and turn. Scare everybody to death. I've ridden with him a number of times. I wouldn't ride with Charlie. He had a Chrysler that would go twice as fast. He sat so low and there would be about 'this much' bald head sticking up above the windshield. He'd come up San Dimas Avenue and turn onto Fifth and drive on the wrong side of the road, flat out, all the way.

Mr. Compton sold the paper to R. E. Lee Aldrich. He took more of an interest in the paper.

Q. Tell us about the berries up on the hill.

All I know is what I remember them telling, because by the time I was a small boy it had already been converted to lemons on one side and Valencias on the other.

Q. What kind of berries did they grow?

Yes, they were all vines - no strawberries - blackberries and raspberries. Youngberries came along later, then Loganberries. They went from this to citrus. They also had their own deciduous fruit trees to the west. They were able to grow cherimoyas, avocados, up higher on the hill - it didn't freeze up there.

Uncle Jake had a bad spot for freezes. He had a grove on North San Dimas Avenue, just at the bottom of the hill (north of Gladstone) where the horse corral is now. Jake had one son and one daughter, Adrienne and Eileen. Someone else owned the grove closest to the hill, Jake's was next. They had to fire up first for smudging. Anything south of Allen was colder than stone and T. Roe Hobbs had enough problems with his nursery stock over there on Walnut.

Q. How about riding the big Red Cars?

Oh, did we have fun! There was a time when I was in high school, 1935 or '36, you could buy a pass on the week-end and ride and ride for the day for \$1, anywhere you wanted to go that the tracks went. They went to Newport Beach, I never went any farther east than Upland. They'd go up into Pasadena. The line came out to Glendora, which was a dead-end line. I was still using that when I was in service. I'd get home on leave - they'd take me over to Glendora, I'd get on the Red Car and go downtown Los Angeles to the bus terminal or train station.

Q. Where did you catch the Red Car? Did you catch it down here on San Dimas Avenue or over on Cataract.

Well, years ago they had what we called the "Jitney". This was a car that went from this station on San Dimas Avenue to LOne Hill Junction. It just went back and forth. They took that out and old Bill, the bus driver, drove the little bus from one station down to the other. Mr. Owens was the Station Agent. You could buy your ticket here. On our Sunday trips, we'd go to Manhattan Beach, Santa Monica, San Pedro, Long Beach.

One time we went by automobile to the Wilmington area where they brought in the ship "Old Ironsides". Everybody donated pennies to rebuild it. They brought it by tugboat from the East Coast, through the Panama Canal, because the Navy didn't have anyone who knew how to sail it. It was in tiptop shape.

Roberta - In the 30's we went on a school trip to Santa Barbara to see the Mission. That was after it had been repaired, because it was damaged in the 1933 earthquake.

Dean - Harry Westgate and my father had gone up to Santa Barbara to a Postmasters' Convention. That was when they had that big earthquake and one of the towers in the Mission collapsed. The towers that you see now are not the original.

They were raising money to repair the Mission and all the school children took trips. The Southern Pacific Railway put those on and we also went down to Salton Sea. I think it cost a dollar. The whole train was made up of school kids. When we went to see Old Ironsides, my Dad, who had that huge old Packard, and Mrs. Mann and a number of other people took carloads of kids so that the whole class went down there together. We'd often ride the Red Cars to Pomona to see picture shows.

We'd also pedal our paper routes, Ray Lussier, Bob Belknap Jim Godfrey, Elmer Sapp, William Bowers, these were kids that had routes. Evenings sometimes or on Saturdays, we'd ride the Red Cars to Pomona. In those days they went clear down and stopped, right across the street from the Fox Theater. More often we rode our bikes after our paper routes.

We had routes that ran from $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles, $7\frac{1}{2}$, $9\frac{1}{2}$ and 17 miles.

Roberta - We used to walk to the Fair - also we walked to school. It was nothing to us. I used to get scared walking down those streets at night, with orange groves on both sides - no shoulders.

I remember one going west of Yamashita's place, before you get to Rowbothams' - the papers had come late and it was winter and it was dark, right along by Harry Smead's orchard, a couple of coyotes came out of the grove and ran so close in front of my bike that I almost hit one of them, darn near knocked me off the bike.

I remember when I worked at the fire station, we were sitting having coffee, and here came a deer running right down First Street, right out of Lillard's grove, right across the lawn and went around the building and down the alley, disappeared around the garage and on down toward's Johnstone's.

Roberta - The deer used to come down the railroad right-of-way. That was their natural path for all of the animals.

Q. Where did you serve in the War?

I joined in Los Angeles - the Coast Guard. I had been working up in northern California as a quarantine officer at the Border Inspection Station I went to Chaffey, and did quite a bit of reading at the Cal Poly Library, study rules and laws. Then I passed the examination and took a job up south of Klamath Falls. When I got my notice, I could enlist for just one year. I thought that was the best - I enlisted for 3 years, and ended up with 6.

After the War, I came back here. I ended up in the Phillipines, and I stayed on the ship until we got right to San Pedro, and was paid off there - got my PE fare to Los Angeles because that's where I enlisted -

Q. How late did the P.E.cars run?

All night! During the War, the last ones would come out of Los Angeles about 2 in the morning.

I was at sea the whole time I was in Service - I spent 3 years, 10 months in the Alaskan waters.

In High School, I worked for Clarence Johnson at the filling station, just east of the feed store. After I came back from the War, I didn't do much for a while. I drove a truck, hauling steel, then I went to work in El Monte. They had 6 test rigs. I was a Road Test Technician for DuPont - testing tires, spark plugs, fuel blends, lubricants, very interesting.

Q. Let's go back again - You were born in 1919 -

Yes, and had 2 younger brothers, one died. My Dad went to Bonita. My Mother came here in 1912 to be with Howard's wife when Lawrence was born. She stayed here and worked at the Press for a while. Then they got married, I think in 1918. My Dad was in the Submarine Service during World War I. When he first went to school, he had to walk to La Verne Heights, then they went to school in the basement of the Carruthers house, in the southwest corner of the basement. My Dad and Rose Palomares were in the first graduating class of Bonita High.

Q. Did you go to any of the churches?

Yes, I went to the Christian Church. Later, a lot of my friends went to the Community Church, so I went to church there. I know my baby picture was in the Methodist Church, but I never actually went there. The Ways built the Methodist Church - because the Baptists wouldn't let them take communion with them. So they came up here and built their own church. My mother's church was the Christian church.

Q. Tell us about the 'Friendly Indians' group.

That was a YMCA-oriented group of boys. We used to go to Jenks Lake YMCA camp. We used to go on Model T trips up San Gabriel Canyon. They had a place up there to spend the night. I didn't go to a lot of those things, because I was always busy making a buck. Whatever we could scrounge - you might be getting low on shoes - your dad couldn't afford them for all four kids -

Paper routes held a little prestige. I had a charge account at Ewart's and John P. Evans in Pomona on the basis of my route and my Dad couldn't even get charge accounts there. Everyone in town knew their paper boys and if there was a complaint, you phoned them. You could not take papers except on a bicycle - the insurance read that way. Mrs. Miller ran that show - she was - like an old-maid school-teacher. It took time to get a route. You first were a substitute and that might go on for years. I kept my route until I was a Senior in high school - I had it four years, and my substitute took it from there. My route was 81, and was 17 miles long, south of town. There were 80-some routes. I'd get the papers about 4:30 and I'd get home about 6:30. The papers came on the Red Cars - he'd boot them out the door when he stopped down there. We'd grab them and start on them. Then later Bill would bring them up here to San Dimas Avenue station and we'd roll them here.

Q. What about San Dimas Canyon?

In 1939 it all washed out. Before that there were many cabins there. The big Moose Hall and everything washed away. Something like 70 cabins. It destroyed the whole character of the canyon. They were all up above the Dam. Mr. Calabutti that had the little store up at Wolfskill Falls - he just carried "goodies" - I went up there with my wife and daughter walking all the way (I got permission). We went all the way up to the Falls. After the Fire debris came down upper Wolfskill Canyon and filled the entire Falls and I found the rim where the water used to go over. The stream doesn't even go there any more. That was one of the most beautiful places you've ever seen.

Roberta - Even in those days they really didn't approve of us hiking there. We used to hike back down in the stream, and the water would be almost up to our waist, and flowing pretty fast.

Dean - There was a very narrow road that went up to the falls. They cemented the fords, and there must have been at least 10 different places you had to ford the river. The flow averaged in the summer, 600 miner's inch flow, I can remember my Dad saying. That's a lot of water. We'd have to get off our bikes and push them across the fords. There were wild leopard lilies - bright orange with little black spots. Ferns - really beautiful. Brown native trout. Now the whole thing is part of San Dimas Experimental Forest. Used to be lots of deer.

Bobbie Mann and I, I think when we were Freshmen, would take a bag of raisins and walnuts and stuff, a 22 rifle and a blanket and start hiking. We'd go clear over to the East Fork, go up the Prairie Fork, climb up the side of Mt. Baden-Powell, spend the night, at least one night, look into the desert, and then come home. There were places where there were no trails. Places where there was solid manzanita that would be high enough that you couldn't get through it. You could see under it, so you'd have to crawl under it on our hands and knees. We didn't go anywhere without a gun, and water.

Q. Where did the P.E. line go up the canyon?

That went to Quarry 80, up Sycamore Canyon - just to the west of the present San Dimas Park. A lot of the rock from there was used in docks and moles at San Pedro. East end up there was Gillette's and the west end was Al Stevens' property. When they first built the Park up there, they would run three of the big steel cars hooked together to bring Elks' Conventions up there. The cars stopped this side of the wash, and the people would have to walk across the wash. The Cars went either way - the motorman just reversed polarity and they went the other way. Pull the trolley down and put the other up.

Q. Was there a camp just beyond where San Dimas Camp is now?

That was Camp Bethel. I think non-denominational, but there was a charge. Different church groups would spend time there. Paulsen was the family's name who owned the Camp, ow perhaps they only ran it.

Q. Was there also a Throne Camp?

That might have been Camp Bethel - a later name.

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