



# Eastern California Museum

## Oral History Collection

An Interview With  
**Quintin Ronald Wood**

Conducted By  
**Unknown**

On The Date  
**Unknown**

Assigned ECM ID Number  
**2025.25.1**

© 2025 by Eastern California Museum

**Eastern California Museum**  
155 North Grant Street, P.O. Box 206  
Independence, CA 93526  
(760) 878-0258 / [ecmuseum@inyocounty.us](mailto:ecmuseum@inyocounty.us)

This is an unedited transcript of an interview conducted for the Eastern California Museum. Place names and names of individuals have not been corrected or verified for spelling accuracy.

The reader should realize that an oral history document is spontaneous in nature, and portrays information and impressions as recalled by the interviewee.

Researchers are welcome to use short excerpts from any of the transcriptions without obtaining permission as long as proper credit is given to the interviewee, the interviewer, and the Eastern California Museum. Researchers must, however, obtain permission from the Eastern California Museum before making more extensive use of the transcript and related materials. None of these materials may be duplicated or reproduced by any party without permission from the Eastern California Museum.

Narrator: Quintin Wood

Interviewed by: Unknown

Date: Unknown

Transcribed by: Irene Reti, July 2023

Reviewed by: Linda Hubbs, August 2025

Reviewer's notes: The unidentified woman is probably his wife. Ancestry.com says in 1959 he married Kate Carrigan from Lone Pine. He was 59 and she was 51. He passed away in 1986 and is buried in Independence. She died in 1992 and is also buried in Independence.

Audio: <https://californiarevealed.org/do/561e7e09-9534-4634-a5ba-667a268963a9>

**QuintinWood\_000127\_t01\_a\_access.m4a**

**Interviewer:** Let's see, let me have your name now.

**Wood:** I am Quintin Ronald Wood and living in Lone Pine. I started to work for the Department of Water and Power in 1919 in Los Angeles. And after working a few months, I got tired of the inside work because I was assisting the paymaster. I wanted to get outside so I told him I was going to quit it because I wanted to go out and get fresh air.

**Interviewer:** You were single then, I guess, weren't you?

**Wood:** Yes. So they gave me a ticket to Independence and they guaranteed me to get fresh air. So I went to the Union Station in Los Angeles and caught the train.

**Interviewer:** This is the Southern Pacific.

**Wood:** Now this was in the spring of 1920, when they sent me up here permanently to stay, in the spring of 1920. We stopped at Mojave and changed cars. And then we came on up through to Owens Valley and stopped at Owenyo and everybody on the train, about 25 people, ate at the restaurant in the station at Owenyo. I don't remember whether it was in the railroad station or next to it, but it was a large restaurant. It took care of all the people. So then we changed over to the narrow gauge and went on ahead and I got off at Independence. And I don't know how far the train did go and how far those other passengers went. But when I got off the train at Independence, there was a cab waiting for me with a big brass sign on the side of it which said Independence Hotel.

**Unidentified Woman:** Tell him about the type of car, auto it was.

**Wood:** It was a Twin Six Packard and a man with the name of Milt Levy with a conductors cap on that said Independence Hotel in brass on the front of it took my suitcase and brought me to Independence Hotel. I told him I wanted to see Mr. James Jones. And he told me just to sit out in front of the post office and he'd be along in a few minutes ago because he came to the post office several times a day. So pretty sure enough pretty soon Mr. Jones came.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember his first name?

**Wood:** James E. Jones.

**Interviewer:** What did he do here? What was his position?

**Wood:** He was the engineer in charge of the water company. So he took me up to the office and showed me around and arranged for me to stay at the Independence Hotel. And so I started to work there and worked there all of 1920, all of 1920 I worked there. So in the winter—

**Interviewer:** Where was this? Was this their headquarters or someplace where you were, or were you in an office job or—

**Wood:** I was hired as a chain man on the survey party. And I was to work with Mr. Paul Rich. I worked with Mr. Rich for about four months or so. And then Mr. Rich quit and went to Oregon. So that left me all alone here for a while. And they had another man who came to work for us, John **Tophamer** and he worked with us for a while. And so then in 1921 I transferred back to Los Angeles and worked out of that office until 1945. Until 1945 and transferred back and worked out of this office in Independence until 1965. And then I retired. I've been retired ever since.

**Unknown Speaker:** Let's see, did you tell them about your trips back and forth? You come on the train and then you said you had a Tin Lizzie, or a horse and buggy, or what was it now?

**Wood:** Well, we made several trips to Los Angeles from up here. We went on the train once in 1920; in the fall of 1920 went on the train to Los Angeles. The train went to Mojave and it would take a long time to wait for the next train. So we took a stage, an automobile stage from Mojave to Los Angeles. And there was five people in the stage. It was a Packard touring car run by a private company. And several times during 1920 we made the trip to Los Angeles in a

Model T touring car. It took two days to get there every time. Two days. We'd stay overnight in Mojave and then go on in.

**Interviewer:** You mean you'd start from Independence? What were the roads like then?

**Wood:** The roads from here to Los Angeles were all dusty roads.

**Interviewer:** One lane, or was there room for two cars?

**Wood:** One lane. Dusty roads. When we tried to pass another Model T in the fall of 1920 about opposite Haiwee the road wasn't wide enough to pass it. So we both met head on. We were going full speed which was 15 miles an hour. We met head on, but we pulled the cars apart and both cars went on. (laughs) Both cars went on.

**Interviewer:** Well, was the road like that from Mojave south, a dirt road?

**Wood:** Well, I don't remember much paving until we got down close to Saugus. I can't remember any paving till we got down by Saugus. Then we ran onto oil paving down by Saugus.

**Interviewer:** This Model T, did it belong to the company?

**Wood:** Yes, it belonged to the Water and Power company, the Model T. The one we had was about a 1915 model.

**Interviewer:** Did you have any flat tires on the way?

**Wood:** We had an average every time we went, an average of about 25 or 30 flat tires, every time we went.

**Interviewer:** 25 or 30? That's a round trip.

**Wood:** Yes, 25 or 30 flat tires every time we went.

**Interviewer:** What caused the flat tires? What was doing it?

**Wood:** Most anything. They would blow out, very seldom punctures, generally just a blowout. Sometimes the casing would blow out and sometimes the tubes would just go out to a crack in the side.

But we would pull over. There was no shops to fix the cars. We had to just pull off the side of the road. If there was anything wrong with a car we'd take it apart and fix it. We put in rear axles several times and we even alongside the road we put in new rings one time, alongside of the road. And all these tires, we fixed them ourselves. And we were just amateurs.

**Interviewer:** If you had a big repair job, a mechanical job, how did you get the parts for it?

**Wood:** To get parts we would have one fellow would catch a ride on a wagon or a car, or walk or anyway, go to the nearest town and contact the garage. And he might have to wait a day or so for the parts but we would have to wait at the car for a day or so wherever it was. Several times we slept two nights in the car waiting for parts.

**Interviewer:** Well what time of the year was this? Was it in the hot summer?

**Wood:** We went different times, all times of the year.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever get caught in the rain?

**Wood:** Plenty of times, It rained on us all the time we were there. But that was in the day's work. (chuckles)

**Interviewer:** Well now when you were driving on the road did you pass horse teams and buggies or anything?

**Wood:** Yes, we would pass more teams and buggies than automobiles. In fact, we very seldom passed an automobile. Mostly it'd be teams, wagons and buggies. And very seldom passing automobile.

**Interviewer:** Well now, was it that way below Mojave, south of Mojave?

**Wood:** South of Mojave we would pass an automobile at least one automobile every day. We'd figure on passing an automobile every day.

**Interviewer:** We still had a lot of horses in teams then. Did you run into more autos closer to Los Angeles?

**Wood:** Yes, the closer to Los Angeles, the more automobiles.

**Interviewer:** Well then, how did you eat on the way on these trips? Did you pack picnic lunches or what do you do?

**Wood:** Well, we would take some lunches with us, but if we could we would go to a farm house and pay the people to let us eat, if they would let us eat. Or we'd go to the nearest town and buy our food. But generally we went to a farm house or a house along the road. And they were pretty agreeable in those days for letting people eat and we were always willing to pay for the food.

**Interviewer:** You never cooked along the way.

**Wood:** Well, a little bit, not much.

**Interviewer:** No more than you had to.

**Wood:** No more than we had to. We would cook some, along the way. In fact, when I came up here, the city furnished me with a buckboard and a team and a saddle.

**Interviewer:** What year would that have been?

**Wood:** Well in in the spring of 1920, they furnished me with that because before that I wasn't here permanently. But in the spring of 1920, they gave me a permanent team and a buckboard, and a saddle. So I carried a sack of oats for the horse at all times. carried a little knapsack with dishes and skillet, salt, and a little bit of food with me at all times and a blanket roll for me. So when I would go out on jobs here, if I didn't make it, I would sleep overnight.

**Interviewer:** Just stay wherever you were.

**Wood:** Yes, stay where we were. And generally, the hotels we had was a corral or a horse barn. We would spread our blankets on the hay.

**Interviewer:** That was a general hotel.

**Wood:** (laughter) It was very comfortable to spread our blanket on the hay, very comfortable. 'Course sometimes the hay would have barley beards on it and they would give you the itches. Well, I can remember rolling over and over all night long those barley beards. Gosh!

**Interviewer:** Did you ever lay down on a hen's nest in the hay?

**Wood:** Well, I can remember hearing a lot of hens cackle around. See, whenever they had any hay, generally they had chickens. Oh, yeah. Well, now my grandfather was a traveling evangelist and he traveled all over the West with wagon trains, see, preaching and stuff with wagon trains.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember or could you recall about when this was? He started in in the 1890s?

**Wood:** My grandfather did most of his traveling in the 1870s, in the 1870s, round in there, that period. So my father got old enough to be a traveling evangelist in 1895. So from 1895 until about 1915, or 1920, around in there, my father was a traveling evangelist. He traveled on the trains. He traveled on the trains most all the time. And took a family of seven children and his wife with him.

**Interviewer:** Well, now he didn't have to pay anything for himself, did he? Or did he pay a little for himself? And then did he pay for each one of his children and his wife?

**Wood:** Well, he paid a certain amount. I don't really know just how much it was. But it was a very reduced rate for the family. Very much reduced rate because we traveled all over the United States with him preaching, preaching. We spent quite a bit of time in Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, North and South Dakota, Florida, Texas. In the northeastern part of the United States we didn't spend too much time because the traveling evangelist didn't—it wasn't too much of a call for them there. There was more permanent churches in the Northeast.

**Interviewer:** Did he get tired of going on the covered wagons, or the wagon trains, so that's why he took up the train?

**Wood:** No, because the wagon trains began to play out by 1890. When the trains started traveling in the 1890s on, why people took the trains in preference to wagons.

**Interviewer:** What denomination would he have been?

**Wood:** Well, he called it the Church of Christ.

**Interviewer:** We had the Church of Christ here.

**Wood:** It was sort of a Baptist church, I think. Fundamentalist, sort of a Baptist church. And then he made enough money doing this where he could support the family. That's right. He made enough but his family was not supported very well.

**Interviewer:** Did he take it take any musical instruments along with him, any hand organ or anything like that?

**Wood:** Well, it's a long story and there's a lot to it. He, quite often, he had a big tent. And he would send a man ahead and plaster the town with little bills and have everybody waiting for him when he got there. And so he had a man who showed views, stereo-optical views. Then he had a singer who went with him, and the man showed the views of all over the world. And the natives in these little towns, most of them had been there all their life and never got away so they were very much interested in these views of the world, stereo-optical views of the world. They was very much interested. Now, to be a traveling evangelist in the early days, why you had to be a pretty rugged individual (laughs) I because I can remember on some of my

father's hand bills he said, "The Wonder Man is coming to town, the cowboy preacher. He will answer any question, ride any horse, or wrestle any man." (chuckles) Now, that's quite an act. I appreciate it. I can remember those old bills.

**Interviewer:** You don't have one of those, do you?

**Wood:** No, I don't. My mother might have. It would be nice to have one of them. Yes, real nice. But when you travel so much, you can't hold on too much. When you travel so much, you don't take much with you so you can't keep many keepsakes. Many keepsakes. My father was in this rush to the Cimarron. He was a young fella during the Cimarron rush in Oklahoma. And he wrote a book on it. He wrote a book on the Cimarron rush. And he told about his experiences in the Cimarron rush.

**Interviewer:** Did he take up land in there? Or did he just follow as a preacher?

**Wood:** Well, his father took up land, my father's father took up land, but my father, as I remember it, just went ahead to kind of save the souls. He was young preacher just starting out. In his early days when he was 15 to 20 years old, why he did a lot of cattle herding, herding cattle, my father. That's where he got his money to go to religious school to be a preacher. He went in Salt Lake City. He was taking cattle from Salt Lake City to Chicago herding cattle all the way from Salt Lake City to Chicago. And it get paid very well. And so when he got back to Salt Lake City one year, he just spent all his money and went about a year and a half to school, a religious school, and became an ordained minister.

**Interviewer:** In Salt Lake?

**Wood:** In Salt Lake. That was way back in about the early 1890s.

**Interviewer:** That must have been before he was married.

**Wood:** Before he was married. In the early 1890s.

**Interviewer:** Did he marry one of the church workers?

**Wood:** Well, he married a girl he met while he was holding preaching. He met a girl while he was on tour. I don't remember just what state it was in where they were married.

**Interviewer:** But did your folks ever get into Inyo County?

**Wood:** No, they never got into Inyo County as I remember it.

**Interviewer:** You're the only one that came here. Did you marry an Inyo County girl?

**Wood:** Well, the girl I married was from Germany but she lived in Inyo County.

**Interviewer:** Oh yeah. How many children did you have?

**Wood:** Well, I had two children. I was married twice. I had two children from my first wife and none from my second wife.

**Interviewer:** Your second wife is living now.

**Wood:** We are living now in Lone Pine.

**Interviewer:** You're both retired. Let's see. Oh, I want to ask you about this train, the narrow gauge train that brought you from Keeler to Independence. Did you say it started from Keeler in the afternoon?

**Wood:** We had lunch in Owenyo and transferred from the standard gauge to the narrow gauge. And we caught the train as it came from Keeler and went on north towards Bishop and then I got off at Independence.

**Interviewer:** Oh you had lunch at Keeler, didn't you?

**Wood:** No, at Owenyo.

**Interviewer:** And then from Keeler to Independence, I mean from Owenyo to Independence, what would that take, about half an hour's train travel?

**Wood:** Well, by the time you get on and off. Actually on the train only took about 15 minutes or so. Of course, the train didn't go very fast. That's why it was slow going.

**Interviewer:** Did it stop anywhere on between? You remember?

**Wood:** As I remember. Well, I really don't— It's kind of vague as to where it did stop or not between Owenyo and Independence. I don't believe it stopped.

**Interviewer:** Well, you must have got off at Kearsarge.

**Wood:** I got off at Kearsarge

**Interviewer:** Did you know Mr. Gracie?

**Wood:** Well, later I knew Mr. Gracie, but not then.

**Interviewer:** What color were the cars, the passenger cars? What color were they? They weren't orange or yellow then, were they?

**Wood:** Well, I really don't remember. As far as I know, they were kind of brick red. As far as I can remember. I don't remember.

**Interviewer:** I was wondering if they were Pullman green or coach green, so many of them were.

**(Quintin to someone else in the room, his wife?)** You remember that? The color of the cars on the railroad train, what color—

**Unidentified Woman:** It seemed to me they were dark. I remember some of them had kind of red plush—

**Wood:** What do you remember about the inside?

[tape paused and then resumes]

**Unidentified woman:** He said when he came to the country in 1870, and he said that they used to go so slow, they used to get off and cook their meals. And then they'd jump off and get pick up sagebrush, or whatever there was, you know, along the lake, as they went along.

**Wood:** Well, you see between 1870 and 1920, there was quite a bit of improvement. The trains were pretty good in 1920. I think they were about at their top, really.

**Unidentified Woman:** I guess it was winter of 1918, it was the time of my life. I went by myself. And I went on a Pullman. They put me on a Pullman and I had my shoes polished by the porter.

**Wood:** You think you transferred in Mojave?

**Unidentified Woman:** Well, I don't know what they did, but it fascinated me because I couldn't imagine they stopped here and then they'd back up and they did that a lot. And I was fascinated because I didn't know there was so many buildings along the way. You know, I just didn't know.

**Wood:** Oh, I remember that Mojave was quite a place to stop. They had a big restaurant there and everybody would go in the restaurant. It was right in the depot.

**Unidentified Woman:** We always went to the Harvey House.

**Wood:** Yeah, that was it, the Harvey House. It was very good restaurant, right in the depot, the Harvey House. I stopped there several times and then going from Los Angeles up the coast. I made several trips up the coast. We always stopped at the Harvey House if we could.

**Unidentified Woman:** Well, when we went in the car later we always stopped at the Harvey House too.

**Wood:** That was always a delight to stop at the Harvey House to get something good to eat. They ought to build a monument to Harvey for all the good food he served.

**Unidentified Woman:** Yes I know how the Harveys owned that down in Death Valley.

**Wood:** I remember when riding on the narrow gauge train the conductor came through in the dark with a long stick of some kind with a light on it and what kind of lights he lit I don't know. But he lit the lights. I saw him light the lights.

**Interviewer:** These lights hanging up in the ceiling, the chandelier.

**Wood:** They were up on the ceiling. It seems like he took one stick and yanked the light open and lit it and shoved it with the stick. And then he went on to the next and pulled it off with one stick and lit it, and he went on to the next one. Now what the light burned, it must have burned some kind of gas. It may have been it may have been kerosene; it could have been carbide too. I believe it was carbide.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember it, was there a carpet down the floor on the aisle?

**Unidentified woman:** It seemed to me there was something on the floor but I don't remember

**Wood:** Yes.

**Wood:** Now I rode it again, the train, in 1927, I rode it again. There was dynamite on the aqueduct about that time, see.

**Interviewer:** I want to hear that.

**Wood:** We had to come up here to work on it. I'm not absolutely sure. It was around in that time of year.

**Unidentified Woman:** Let's see now, there was a dynamiting in November of 1924.

**Wood:** I do remember one year the No Name Siphon was dynamited. That was a quite a big deal. I had to work on that no name site when it blew up, was blown up. I had to work on it.

**Interviewer:** Where was it located?

**Wood:** In Little Lake, just south of Little Lake.

**Unidentified woman:** Kind of the back end, it's a little hard to get at.

**Wood:** Water and Power built an enormous mess hall there and just one day and they had a couple 100 people there a short time, I remember that. They put that up in a hurry.

**Interviewer:** Do remember any kind of a railway station at or near Little Lake?

**Wood:** Oh, I got on the train there one time at Little Lake.

**Interviewer:** Well, was the station where the post office is now?

**Wood:** It was on the west side of the tracks.

**Interviewer:** That's where the post office is now.

**Wood:** Yeah, well, that's probably where the station was because I remember I crossed the tracks to the hotel to get on the train.

**Interviewer:** Did you stay overnight at that hotel that's there now?

**Wood:** There was another hotel made of wood when I stayed all night there in 1920. I stayed there for quite a while in 1920. And it was made of wood. There was a lot of room underneath it because from the floor there was these big timbers went clear down to the ground. And I was afraid they were going to break and the building was gonna fall. (laughs)

**Unidentified Woman:** Right, built this other hotel the day before, I think—

**Wood:** Right, it was later that he built that other one because when I say it was just wood. It probably burned down.

**Unidentified Woman:** Somewhere I think we have a picture about a postcard size of that. But somewhere in our files we do have—

**Wood:** Now there are some people who have pictures of it. Now, one fellow, James Jones, he would have pictures. You remember Mr. Jones? He would have pictures because I took a lot of pictures and gave to him. And he had a camera. He loaned me his camera quite often in 1920, he loaned me his camera. And Mrs. Rich had a quite a few pictures. She lived in Bishop and I think her relatives have a lot of pictures, early pictures.

**Interviewer:** Where does James Jones live now.

**Wood:** Well, he lives out near La Crescenta someplace. I get letters from him quite often. He sent me a Christmas card with a letter in it this year.

**Unidentified Woman:** Ask him about the picture sometime.

**Wood:** I'll ask him about some pictures.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I would like this very much. I'd like to contact him some way so that maybe he will let us borrow these photos and have pictures made of them.

**Wood:** He should have more pictures than anyone.

**Interviewer:** Well, when you're writing when you ask him if he's willing for the museum to copy his photos?

**Wood:** I will. See in 1912 he took over this office. He came right from college, was a college graduate, took over this office in 1912.

**Unidentified Woman:** You're talking about Paul Rich.

**Wood:** James E. Jones is the guy I'm talking about. Paul Rich came in about 1919 or 1920. He came later. Because I was here when he came, Paul Rich.

**Unidentified Woman:** Is Elizabeth still alive, his wife? Last time I saw her she was living in Bishop.

**Wood:** but I haven't about it lately, whether she's still alive or not. But her son— She had a nice home in Bishop. Last time I saw her was at her home in Bishop and I would be very interested to see her again if I ever because her husband was very active in taking pictures. Those two—James Jones and the Richs should have the best pictures of the valley.

**Interviewer:** What was Rich's first name?

**Wood:** Paul Rich. He is dead but his wife lives in Bishop. She owns a home there in Bishop.

**Unidentified Woman:** The daughter-in-law is a Lone Pine girl named Katrina Johnson.

**Wood:** James E. Jones. I'll contact him. I'll see if I can any.

**Interviewer:** I wish you would. She would really be helping us an awful lot here. And we only want to borrow them to take pictures, so they'll get them back safe. And we wouldn't think of keeping them.

**Wood:** Because every time Mr. Jones writes he wants me to stop by. And his wife. I liked her very much. Do you remember Mrs. Jones, his wife, a very tall one. She was very interested in the valley and liked it very much. I can remember the barbecue we had in the spring of 1920 in front of the courthouse. The courthouse that they have now, they were just starting to build it in 1920.

**Unidentified Woman:** I was 15 or 16 but I was at the dedication.

**Wood:** And they had this big barbecue right out in front. And I thought, won't it be wonderful to have a new courthouse here. So the courthouse wasn't built in 1920. It wasn't finished. Because I remember now thinking won't it be nice to have a nice new courthouse here. I can remember thinking how nice it would be to have a new courthouse, while sitting there eating the barbecue. So then the next barbecue happened in Gray's Meadows. Everybody went in horse and buggies to Grays Meadows.

You know who did the barbecuing then? I really don't. But I know that they buried at the meat. I know that they buried the meat in 1920. They buried the meat. I think her husband does that. I don't remember. Oh, I know. It was quite exciting up here in them days. Mr. Van Norman. Claude Van Norman. He, was an exciting man. Oh!

**Interviewer:** What did he do?

**Wood:** He was a labor foreman for the water company. A lot of people remember that. Claude Van Norman was very exciting man.

**Unidentified Woman:** I remember him. And his wife I always liked her, Mrs. Van Norman. She came to see me two weeks before she died.

**Wood:** I know in 1948 or sometime, she was up at the cabin visiting us. Must have been about that time she died.

**Unidentified Woman:** She died in 1950. She died several weeks after my father. My father died in January of 1950.

Break in the recording-

**Wood:** It was wrapped around his hand and his finger and went, just a string, it went onto the lead mule

**Interviewer:** Hey, start it from the beginning on that. I've got it going again. I want to get this going again.

**QuintonWood\_000127\_t01\_b\_access**

**Interviewer:** You say you went from Olancha to Darwin before there were any roads. Did you go by auto?

**Wood:** We traveled in a Model T surveying the power lines for the city from Olancha to Darwin in 1920. The summertime, in the middle of the summer.

**Interviewer:** It must have been pretty hot.

**Wood:** And we went in a 1915 Model T. And we, we had to survey across the country. So if there was any roads, we didn't see them. But we did pass several ore wagons with 20 mules hooked to them.

**Interviewer:** They were coming from Darwin?. Where were they going?

**Wood:** They were going to Keeler. They were going to Keeler from Darwin. And the driver was asleep on all of them. The driver was asleep because we tried to wake him up to talk to him and he kept on going. The mules were just going. There was no talking to him.

**Interviewer:** You mean you hollered at him.

**Wood:** Yeah. We didn't get up and shake him, but he was asleep.

**Interviewer:** You think maybe he was drunk?

**Wood:** I doubt it. It looked to me like it was monotonous driving along there and he just doze off. But the mules knew where they were going. And we couldn't follow them because those big wheels left three foot ruts and our car wouldn't go down that same road. We had to go across country. We couldn't possibly follow him.

**Interviewer:** You mean the ruts were three feet apart.

**Wood:** Three feet deep.

**Interviewer:** Three feet deep? Really?

**Wood:** These big wheels left those ruts about three. And so the mules had no trouble following the road.

**Interviewer:** Oh, they couldn't do anything else if they wanted to. And you say some people doubt that there were all these mules.

**Wood:** Yeah, I've had several people just come right out and say nah, nah, there weren't not many mules. There was only 12 mules. (laughter)

**Interviewer:** Did you count them?

**Wood:** Yeah, we counted them. There was twenty mules on the ones we saw.

**Interviewer:** What were the wagons carrying, silver or lead or what, or gold?

**Wood:** We really don't know. It was it was our impression they were hauling lead ore, that was our impression. That was our calling, lead ore. And as a young fella, it was very interesting to me to see that driver setting up there with that little string hooked onto the lead mule. That's all he had. As far as we can see, we couldn't see anything else. If he had any more they were tied up someplace. But that's all he was holding, was that string. It was tied around one finger, or it's tied around his hand or his one finger someplace, tied around his hand someplace. And it was hooked onto the lead mule. And he navigated that way. In other words, he'd jerk. If he wanted to be able to stop it, he'd jerk so many times and if he wanted to go he'd jerk. Gosh, darn.

And the country was infested with prospectors. All over you'd meet them. We'd cut across to survey and all right over the mountains wasn't uncommon to meet a half a dozen prospectors during the day. And these prospectors had no home. They lived there. They lived wherever. They had one burro, most all of them, and everything they had was tied on that burro. And they always walked behind the burro throwing rocks at him, they were always cursing the burro and throwing rocks at him. And they seemed to be all kind of off, batty. All the prospectors seemed to be a little bit batty. But they knew where they were going. You couldn't stop them or anything. They knew when they were going, to make a fortune someplace. But if we could, we'd stop the prospectors and talk to them, which was very interesting, talking to a prospector. We always gave them what food we had, every day because they were hungry. They hadn't had anything. Some of them were coming from Death Valley where they'd been weeks without any food or hardly.

**Interviewer:** How were they getting by?

**Wood:** Well, they were just trying to make it to some little place where they could get food. They call it a grubstake. It's just like a dream, a mirage, a grubstake, looking for a grubstake. They'd come over to one little town here and get enough bacon and stuff to last them 30 days and they figured, well, we can get so far in 30 days. And maybe they'd make it and maybe they wouldn't. But the hills were full of prospectors then.

**Unidentified woman:** Yes, they were. We kind of miss them now.

**Wood:** Yeah, they all had a burro just going over the hills. It amazed me that they just nothing in view, just barren mountains, no water and they'd have a little canteen and they'd just head for the hills. But they were going to get rich. If you talked to them they had a bonanza someplace up there.

**Interviewer:** Is that all they would talk about?

**Wood:** They just they were just maniacs. They would just talk about a mountain of gold up there, mountain of gold, there's gold in thar hills. (laughs) You figured it out they was absolutely batty when you talked to them because they knew that gold was up there and they was going to get it.

**Interviewer:** Each one had that obsession.

**Wood:** Well, a lot of them had been there, most all of them had been there before. Whenever you met one that wasn't his first trip, generally. He'd been for 15, 20 years out there, see. But he'd come. He had someplace where he'd come and get a grubstake, see. He might come to Independence and camp there for six months or something because someone would grubstake him. Someone would fall for one of these stories and grubstake him. Well, it didn't

take much. If you'd give him five dollars it would last him thirty days. It was that cheap. Food was that cheap. Five dollars/ You get all that mule could carry, bacon, flour, and salt, and a few things like that.

**Unidentified woman:** He got a quite a bit for his money.

**Wood:** I'd say he got a lot for his money. A can of pretty near anything, a large can of anything would be a nickel or something like that, see, a large can of food. Groceries were very cheap in those days. They didn't drink much whiskey. When they hit the bonanza, then they drank whiskey. Then they'd get drunk when they hit it. Once in a while one of them would hit it. Generally, I've heard several of them that hit it would go crazy when they hit it, they just go raving maniac. After walking through that hot sun for 15 years looking for something and finally finding it they just go crazy.

**Interviewer:** Well, did you ever see them going more than one, or was it just one of them always?

**Wood:** I mean, it was it just always one. Almost all we ever had. It was always one.

Now, Paul Rich was an Indian. He was born on the reservation and raised on the reservation. He was an Indian. All right. And he got started to work for the Bureau of Reclamation when he was a real small boy driving stakes and sharpening stakes and driving the buggy. So he studied at an international correspondence school while he was working. So when he grew up, he got to be a surveyor, and a good surveyor. Rich was a good surveyor, a very good surveyor because he had worked with good surveyors all his life; ever since he was real small boy, he'd worked with good surveyors, government surveyors, and they taught him and he studied at

international correspondence school. So he was a good surveyor. He had good teachers. He was one of the smartest surveyors I ever worked with, that is for actual surveying. He did very good work. His work was always accepted and very good. And he was smart enough to not to get entangled with something that couldn't be straightened, get away from real problems are real problems. You that's one thing about surveying, you have to stay away from the things you can't straighten out and not give anyone a definite answer.

Well, he had contact with the land office all the time, Paul did, so he everything he did was with information from the government land office. So he worked with them at all times. He contacted them for every job he did. Every job he contacted the government land office, so he would do it the best it could be done. And Water and Power is very lucky to have had him. I didn't get to work with him very much but when I did work with him I really appreciated him.

**Interviewer:** Were you connected with the surveying all the time you were with Water and Power?

**Wood:** I started 1919. I started as a bookkeeper in the main office at Seventh and Olive [in Los Angeles]. And I got transferred to the paymasters office and worked out for the paymasters office. Then that's when I got tired of working inside and came to the Owens Valley for fresh air.

**Interviewer:** And you were in surveying from then on?

**Wood:** All the time. From 1920 until 1965, 45 years I was surveyor.

**Interviewer:** Did you get tired of the fresh air?

**Wood:** No, I never did. I never got tired of it. I even go out now, every time I get any spare time, every day I go out across the desert right now.

**Interviewer:** Do you drive or walk?

**Wood:** Well I drive and walk. Now see I don't have any surveying to do, I hunt old Indian arrowheads and old bottles. Have something to do, just to have something to do. Not that I want them. I don't even want them but I just have something to hunt for.

**Unidentified woman:** Yeah, it gives him an objective.

**Wood:** That's right. I've picked up a lot of Indian heads and lots of old bottles.

**Interviewer:** Gosh, you must have quite a collection.

**Wood:** Well, the last 10 years, I've almost quit hunting arrowheads. Almost quit. But about 15 years ago, we started counting the ones I had. And I brought home around 10,000 perfect arrowheads.

**Interviewer:** Oh, that many. Gee. What suggestions and tips can you give to a fellow to how to find an Indian arrowhead? Now, I haven't found one single Indian arrowhead because I haven't had time to get out and look, but when I started out, how will I? What should I look for to help me locate them without having to scour the whole desert?

**Wood:** Well, I really can't tell you. You just have to go with someone who knows how to hunt for them for a while and get your own idea how to hunt for them. Because knowing all the good places I might go out and look for them and not find one. And yet I might go out and look one day and come home with 100 of them, see. You look at the best places and sooner or later

you're going to hit some, if you look at the best places, where they're most likely to be. The same way with old bottles, the same way. If you look where they're most likely to be, sooner or later you'll hit them. Just don't give up. So anytime you want to go out and hunt arrowhead, so I'll take you out and show you.

**Interviewer:** Hey, would you put your address here. How do I find you?

**Wood:** I live at --- in Lone Pine. We just moved down there from the cabin. And it's Quint Wood. That's what everybody called me. My full name is Quintin Ronald Wood.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, that's interesting. Wasn't one of the Roosevelt boys named Quinn?

**Wood:** His name was Quinton. I was named after, frankly, after Quentin Roosevelt. He was reading that out loud to us as children and he said we got your name from the French knight Quentin. And I thought they got it from Quentin Roosevelt. Oh, they said yeah, we got partially got it from him, but we really got it from this French knight.

**Interviewer:** Well, thanks so much, Quentin. Appreciate it.

[end of interview]

Quintin Wood\_000127\_t02\_access

[This seems to be a complete short interview by a different female interviewer, transcriber]

**Interviewer:** Could you give me your full name?

**Wood:** My name is Quintin Ronald Wood.

**Interviewer:** And where were you born?

**Wood:** I was born in Fordland, Missouri, December the 17<sup>th</sup>, 1899. And my father was a traveling evangelist. And so I traveled with him, my brothers and sisters, all over the United States where he held meetings in every state. And we was up in the Northwest, and we came down through California in 1910, and went on back east to Missouri and round, and came back to California in 1912. And we lived in the Boyle Heights section of Los Angeles while I went to school, until I was 18 years old when I went in the service in the First World War. And after getting out of the service in 1918 of the First World War, I came back to Los Angeles, and got a job for the [Los Angeles] Department of Water and Power. And after working in the main office for several months, I told them I didn't like to work indoors. I wanted to get fresh air and get outdoors. I was going to quit. They said, you don't have to quit. We'll give you a ticket to one of our offices outdoors. So they gave me a ticket for Independence. And I got fresh air.

**Interviewer:** And how did you come here?

**Wood:** So I came on the train from Los Angeles to Mojave and transferred to another train and came on up to Owenyo and transferred to a different train. And I ate dinner at a restaurant at Owenyo. There was about 15 of us that got off the train and ate there. And then we came on north and I got off it Kearsarge Station. I was the only one that got off. And I was met by Milt Levy from the Independence Hotel. And he had a large old car, a Packard, with a big brass sign on it that said Independence Hotel. And he had a brass sign on the front of his cap that said Independence Hotel. He saluted me and took my suitcase and put it in the car and whisked me in a hurry over to the Independence Hotel. I told him I was interested in meeting

Mr. James E. Jones, who was in charge up here. So he told me just to have a seat on the front of the hotel and Mr. Jones would be along pretty soon.

So he came along and I introduced myself and we went over to his office and I got started to working up here. That was in the spring of 1919.

**Interviewer:** What was your job?

**Wood:** My job, I was sent up here as a surveyors aide to help on a survey party. And I was introduced to Mr. Paul Rich and Mr. John Weston Tophammer. Paul Rich was in charge of the survey party and John Weston was an aide with me. We were aids on the survey party. He was a young fella just out of college. And we had a good time roaming these hills and surveying for about a year and a half. And then I went back to Los Angeles and went into the service in the United States Marines, and after I was in there for two years, I came out and went to work for the Water and Power in Los Angeles and worked with them down there as a surveyor's aide. And very often they would send me up here with different parties to work up through the valley. I wanted to get back up here, so in 1945, they transferred me back up here permanently, so I stayed up here all the time. But in the meantime, I'd been up here quite a bit on different jobs. And from 1945 until 1965 I was stationed in Independence permanently.

**Interviewer:** Mr. Wood, what were some of the towns along that the railroad stopped at?

**Wood:** Well, when we came up, the only town I remember stopping at was Owenyo. That's where we ate and changed cars. But that's about the only town I remember stopping.

**Interviewer:** And do you remember what some of the towns were along here? Or was there anything left at the towns when you came up in 1919?

**Wood:** Well, I was given a team of horses and a buggy when I arrived here, which was for my own use. So I used it in measuring. I was the only hydrographer in the valley and I had to measure all the water in the valley with this team and buggy. And I had a saddle with me. If the buggy wouldn't go I would put the saddle on one of the horses and go on up in the mountains. And I remember going over by the Reward Mine surveying and there was several houses there and lots of orchards where the sagebrush is now. There was quite a few orchards, large orchards up near the base of the mountains and some large houses in there but they're not there anymore.

**Interviewer:** And that would have been Kearsarge?

**Wood:** No, that was the town of Reward, Reward Mine. There was quite a few local people there.

**Interviewer:** Do you think there was a post office there?

**Wood:** No, I do not remember any post office at Reward. There could have been one there but I don't remember seeing anything like a post office. But there could have been one because it was a very old town. It was really started to mine there about 1850, somewhere around there they started a mine there, so it was very old town. It died out several times and then they started mining all over again. I know the old mine, the old original mine played out by 1875 or something, and then it all went back to dust again and it was built up again years later when the railroad came through there in 1882. Why then it built up again, the town of Reward. And that's about all the towns I remember along in there.

**Interviewer:** And most everything was gone, I suppose.

**Wood:** Well, the town of Manzanar was bustling. A lot of people lived around Manzanar. There was a store there and a schoolhouse and the schoolhouse was full of children and the store was operating. And you could buy things in the store at Manzanar.

**Interviewer:** And there was a fruit ranch and packing.

**Wood:** There was fruit ranches everywhere at Manzanar; the whole country was covered in beautiful fruit ranches. In the fall there the trees were loaded with apples.

**Interviewer:** What years you think that was the end of those ranches, or did they dwindle away?

**Wood:** Well, they dwindled away real slowly. It took them twenty years to dwindle away, about twenty years to dwindle away slowly. People would move in and out and neglect everything and they wouldn't water the trees and fires would burn them and finally the houses would all burn up. It finally just all disappeared because the city bought the land and wasn't interested in maintaining the houses.

**Interviewer:** You were talking about the town of Elna? Where was that located Mr. Wood?

**Wood:** Oh, there was a little mining town, Elna, along the railroad about two miles north of Tinemaha Dam. But the water in the reservoir has covered it up now and the railroad was moved over out of the water to the west, west of the dam.

**Interviewer:** Now, there were other little towns along there too, weren't there?

**Wood:** There were several other little towns along there but none that I remember. Further up the above Elna about five miles was a large ranch where they raised potatoes. I don't just remember the name of it. It's on the map though.

**Interviewer:** Well, how long were you surveying through this area? How many years?

**Wood:** Well, I surveyed constantly from 1945 to 1965. But I was often on up here from Los Angeles from 1923 to 1945. I was intermittently up here.

**Interviewer:** And your activities ranged throughout the county.

**Wood:** Yes. I surveyed all the way from Bishop and Long Valley and all the way to the harbor, all the way. I covered the whole system.

**Interviewer:** And when you say survey, does that mean—

**Wood:** Field surveying.

**Interviewer:** For what would it be for exactly?

**Wood:** Water. For water.

**Interviewer:** And for checking out how the water flowed?

**Wood:** That's right. And maintaining the city property lines, you know, locating property belonging to the city and construction work. Construction work for the city, surveying for construction work.

**Interviewer:** But you've ranged over most of this area just on your own as a hobby too.

**Wood:** Oh, yes. Whenever I have any time. Hunting, fishing, and hunting old bottles.

**Interviewer:** Did you ride the railroad, the Narrow Gauge railroad more than that one time when you came up?

**Wood:** I rode up on the railroad about three times, rode upon the railroad. And I went down in Model T automobiles several times during 1919.

**Interviewer:** What was the roads like then?

**Wood:** All the roads were just the same as desert trails. They were just winding in and out amongst the sand dunes. Just wagon tracks.

**Interviewer:** Would you get stuck?

**Wood:** Oh, quite often we'd get stuck. But those Model T's were remarkable for getting out. You could lift them out. (laughs)

**Interviewer:** Oh, sure. If you had trouble, I suppose you could fix them too.

**Wood:** Oh, yes. You had to fix tires, sometimes 18 to 20 tires going to Los Angeles.

**Interviewer:** (laughs) Did you camp along the way, or did you go there in one day?

**Wood:** Well, we generally either stayed at Little Lake Hotel or Mojave, at the hotel at Mojave, we generally stayed whenever we stayed like that.

**Interviewer:** What was the Little Lake Hotel like in those days?

**Wood:** Well, that was before they built the rock one that's there's there now. They had just a little wooden hotel there. Just a little wooden building. But later on, they built that big stone one that they have there now.

**Interviewer:** You had your meals there?

**Wood:** Yes and they had a room. Still quite often we would take a roll of blankets with us just in case the rooms didn't have any blankets.

**Interviewer:** Oh, that could happen.

**Wood:** Yes. And in 1919 we surveyed the power line to the town of Darwin. We surveyed from Olancho to Darwin in a Model T and we never found a road all the way over. We just cut across the desert with the Model T all the way. And we set stake for these power poles. And the poles were put in and they're still in today.

**Interviewer:** How long did that take you?

**Wood:** Well that we figured it would take us about a month but it only took us a week. It only took us a week. We were younger and more active than we thought we were.

**Interviewer:** What were some of the other projects that you did? Probably so many.

**Wood:** Well I measured the water in all the creeks. That was one of my jobs, to keep track of all the measurements of all the water in the creeks and to assist in all the surveys.

**Interviewer:** Do you think you were the first one to do that?

**Wood:** Well there was Mr. James E. Jones. He was the first one. He was in charge and I worked with him. He was in charge. He was the first surveyor up here.

**Interviewer:** He went into the mountains too?

**Wood:** Yes, we went into the mountains.

**Interviewer:** In the winter, heavy winter.

**Wood:** Well, not too much, not too much in the winter.

**Interviewer:** If you had to go in, did you go on snowshoes?

**Wood:** No, I didn't go in on snowshoes. We just went in in the summertime mostly then. The snow survey started in a little later. They started with the snow surveys in the mostly in the 30s.

**Interviewer:** Oh. And now, where did you meet your wife?

**Wood:** My wife I met her in Lone Pine. So we've been married now for 18 years. So we now live in Lone Pine.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember the accommodations on a narrow gauge, what was it plush? What were the seats like?

**Wood:** Well, they were just what you'd call a second grade seats. Kind of hard. I knew quite a bit about railroad trains because my father being a traveling evangelist, I'd traveled over every railroad in United States see? I traveled over every railroad in the United States. So I knew quite a bit about railroad train.

**Interviewer:** The early life must have been interesting.

**Wood:** And he had about a quite a few children. He had seven children, so we took up quite a bit of the train.

**Interviewer:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Wood. I appreciate it. It will be wonderful for the museum.

[tape paused]

**Interviewer:** Could you tell us about the opium bowl that you have here at Eastern California Museum?

**Wood:** We were digging about 1955 while surveying and we were looking for survey points, and we found a bunch of cans and, and amongst them was a ball of lead foil. So we picked it up and started unrolling the lead foil and it took quite a while, about 15 minutes to unroll the lead foil and finally in the metal was an object. And so the fellow started trying to decide what was One fellow says a gearshift ball handling? No. No, it couldn't have been because this has been here before the head gear shifts. And so we thought about it a long time. So I said, well I'll take it long with me and see if I can find out what it was. So when we got to town, we started looking around and what another fellow says, why it looks like an opium pipe. And sure enough, we recognized it as being an opium pipe.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think it was wrapped that way?

**Wood:** Well, they probably wanted to—it was probably valuable to whoever had it and they wanted to keep it in good condition. So all the metal in the dump has rotted away but the glass

and if this hadn't been wrapped in lead foil, it wouldn't have been there. That's the only thing that preserved it in perfect shape, that big ball of lead foil.

**Interviewer:** And do you think it belonged to a Chinese person?

**Wood:** Well, I think it belonged to some Chinese who were working on the mines in that neighborhood, probably belong to some Chinese who are working on the mines of that neighborhood.

**Interviewer:** Were there are a lot of Chinese in this area?

**Wood:** There were lots of Chinese worked in the early days in this area, lots of Chinese, so it evidently belonged to one of them.

**Interviewer:** And Mr. Wood, there is another item you brought in.

**Wood:** Well, we brought in a seal for an oil company. We were asked or ordered by the city to locate an oil well on the east shore of Haiwee reservoir. This oil well had been drilled about 1900 by a Doctor Merritt and his son and they drilled quite aways down, several 1000 feet, and they didn't find oil. And the way I got the story from the old timers was that they poured some oil in the well and then got a bunch of people out there to see it. Then they sold stock in it. But they were found out and put in jail. And when we were locating the well I found the remains of an old foundation where their office had been and we found several old bottles, and we found this seal, and from all the information we could get, this was the seal that they used in selling that bogus stock.

**Interviewer:** That's very interesting. I don't think we have that on our file. Wow, that's very good. Thank you.

[End of oral history]