

Idaho Panhandle Oral History Project
Interview with Harold Theriault
October 24, 1979
Avery, Idaho
Interviewed by David Barton
Questionnaire Information

HT = Harold Theriault
DB = David Barton

Tape 15; Side 1

HT: You know, but for families and so on, I think our town is just as good now as it's ever been.
DB: What did people used to do for fun? You say they used to go down to the rail yard...?
HT: Lots of dances. And, sometimes, everynight of the week there would be a dance.
DB: Where were the dances at?
HT: Schoolhouse.
DB: At the schoolhouse.
HT: Yea. He-he-he.
DB: So that was the community center I take it.
HT: You bet. Well, they'd go down to the train and see the train come in and somebody'd say, "Let's go have a dance."
DB: Were there live musicians around here?
HT: Oh, yes. We always had...our own...some played the piano...
DB: Any guitar or violins, or anything like that?
HT: Not much in those days, not many. That come later.
DB: Did people participate in the Grange around here?
HT: No.
DB: How about Chautauquas, did they ever have those?
HT: No, one time there was a circus come here though. A one ring circus.
DB: When was that?
HT: Probably 1911.
DB: Was that because of the railroad? Did they bring it in because of that?
HT: You bet. But this was a real circus too. A good one.
DB: Did there used to be more taverns in town here?
HT: Lets see...one...yea, at one time there was one more than there is now, and I think there was three at its peak.
DB: Were there people...did a lot of people gamble back in those days?
HT: Not too much, anymore than they do now.
XF: Tell 'em about the bootleggers.
HT: Yea, he-he. Yea, after the country went dry, of course, like other places, we had our bootleggers and distillers, and so on.
XF: Can I get you a cup of coffee?
HT: Ah?
XF: Coffee?

HT: Yes, sure. Go ahead.
 DB: No, thank you.
 HT: You drink coffee, don't you?
 DB: No.
 HT: No?
 DB: What kind of bootleg booze did they make?
 HT: Whiskey.
 DB: Whiskey? Was that corn whiskey, or rye whiskey, or...what kind of whiskey?
 HT: Probably corn.
 DB: Corn?
 HT: Yea.
 DB: I see. Did...do you remember any stories about bootleggers?
 HT: Oh...
 XF: Tell 'em about Bobby Stouffer. Harold, tell 'em about Bobby.
 HT: What about?
 XF: Why how he'd come down and get the corn, and he had that...this still up the St. Joe _____.
 HT: No, I'd sooner not.
 XF: OK, sorry.
 HT: He's a good friend of mine, and... We all know about him so, but to put it down black and white...I'd sooner not.
 DB: Now, were there mostly single men back in those days, in the '20s?
 HT: Yea. Around here lots of single men. That's what I was saying we had just as many families around as we had then.
 DB: When did people start getting married?
 HT: I'd say the married ones moved in here. We hadn't had many weddings around here, had we?
 XF: Ha-ha.
 HT: He-he-he.
 DB: Lot of single men are interested in gambling and prostitutes, did you ever have any prostitutes around here?
 HT: Not many, but some.
 DB: Where were they in town?
 HT: Up at the east end of town there was a saloon, ah...called '49, it was named after an old '49er that owned the property there.
 DB: Do you remember the name?
 HT: Sam Williams. He was an Arkansawyer.
 DB: And he had a few girls upstairs in the tavern?
 HT: Well, he didn't run that, he owned the property and other ones run the...run the saloon and the girls.
 XF: Tell them a little bit about Grand Forks.
 HT: Yea, and up 12 miles up here where the... Have you ever heard the history of Taft? What's the other town down there, the wild one? Pierce, isn't that, now. Do you know anything about Pierce? Well, Grand Forks was a town of all saloons and sports, and that's all it amounted to when they were building the railroad there. And Taft also. There's

many murders at Taft. But only one or two up at Grand Forks.

DB: Was this when you were living in this country?

HT: That's when we come here, when I was a little boy. So I, most of it's all hearsay with me.

DB: Do you remember any of the stories about the murders?

HT: No, I don't think so.

DB: Were there prostitutes up there too?

HT: Where?

DB: Up at Taft and Grand Forks?

HT: Oh, Taft had 100s of them, it's the second Barbary Coast. Like San Francisco, heh, so was Grand Forks, and St. Joe. But Avery never got like that. Avery was always...

DB: Were these towns like this just during the construction?

HT: Huh?

XM: Were these towns like Taft and Grand Forks real short-lived towns?

HT: Yea. Yes. During the railroad construction, and...

DB: Why did Avery not get that reputation?

HT: Well, railroadmen were restricted, to start with and that was their...source of income was the railroad, so I don't suppose they _____ like they did other places.

DB: What do you mean by restricted?

HT: Railroadmen, according to the book of rules, couldn't even enter a saloon. You know, one in the transportation end of it. And, of course they did. I started firing when I was sixteen. And ah...over in Alberton and in Deer Lodge, I'd go to the saloons with the rest of the gang, and never once was I questioned. I never drank but ah...I could have if I wanted to.

DB: You said there were some Japanese that lived in Avery, where did they live and what did they do?

HT: You know where the big oil tank is down there, you see that, well, that's where their camp was, where the oil tank is, in that canyon. And then later, they moved down where the landing is. And, the peak of their crew was around 80 men. They all worked at the roundhouse, some on each shift for three shifts. They was the laborers. And ah...they was all very nice, clean people so that's why the saloon didn't refer to these men as the Japs.

DB: What year did they come and about when did they leave?

HT: They come in '10 and the last of 'em probably left in '55 or '60.

DB: Were there ever any Chinese here?

HT: No. They did around Murray and over in there but we never had them on this side.

DB: Why do you think there were no Chinese here?

HT: There's nothing for them. No placer work or no launderies, he-he-he.

DB: How about blacks, were there blacks here?

HT: Never. We had one black in the early days, a cook that was here. And ah...then there's one colored lady that homesteaded around Marble Creek.

DB: D'you remember her name?

HT: Mrs. Logan.

DB: When was she there?

HT: 1903 till about 1907.

XF: Tell 'em about the soldiers during the Fire.

HT: Yea. We had the...during the 1910 Fire they imported the...got soldiers from Fort Wright in Spokane. It was an all colored fort. And ah...we had a company here and the town was under martial law, and all of them were veterans from the Philipines--the Spanish American War. And ah...they had white officers.

DB: Did they get along very well with the people who lived here?

HT: Oh yea, they stayed entirely to themselves, they never...the town being under martial law, they stayed in their camp and done their patrolling, and they would change every four hours, they way they do when they were on patrol, like they'd have a...there's a couple patrolling at the Forest Service, by the office 24 hours a day, couple at the depot, then a couple more at the sporting house. Then, I think every four hours they would have to change guard, the same as the Army does now. And, ah...when the others would be doing different things, I can't recall all of it.

DB: Where was their camp?

HT: Right where the substation is, that big building.

DB: Were there ever many Italians in this country?

HT: Yes.

DB: What did they do?

HT: Section men, and ah...the ones we had, many years ago, wonderful people. I think, lots are living yet on pensions, and so on. They all are very true friends. So, I think we were fortunate we had a very good class of Italians.

DB: How about Swedes, were there many Swedes?

HT: Lots of Swedes and Norwegians, they always followed railroad construction and lumbering.

DB: Did you ever hear any tales about buried treasure, around here?

HT: About what?

DB: Buried treasure? Or gold in the woods, or anything like that?

HT: No.

DB: Are there any haunted places around here you have ever heard? Haunted Places, ghosts or anything like that?

HT: No.

DB: You never heard any stories?

HT: Heard one out here a homestead. What did they call it?

XF: Grace Seley's.

HT: Yea. But what did they call it though, the haunted house or what?

XF: I don't know, I never did hear the story behind that. I don't know that.

HT: I don't know either. It's closer, her place is.

DB: How far from Avery is that?

HT: 14 miles.

DB: And what's the creek name?

HT: Lund.

DB: Lund Creek.

HT: Yea.

DB: Did there ever used to be any good storytellers around in these parts?

HT: Oh yes. Yea, we had a captain on the boat down on the lake. Captain Laird.

DB: Which lake was that?

HT: Eli Laird, did you ever hear of him?

DB: Which lake was that?

HT: Coeur d'Alene, you've seen pictures of boats out on Coeur d'Alene, haven't you? The old steamers years ago, when they...electric train used to run down there and connect the boats and...Have you ever seen all that?

DB: I've seen pictures of 'em. Does anybody in town here have any historical photographs?

HT: Oh yea.

DB: Who's that?

HT: He-he-he.

DB: When did you first get a camera?

HT: I never took any pictures.

DB: Oh you've just collected them?

HT: Right, collected them.

DB: Have you ever heard any stories about the Forest Service?

DB: What are some of the stories you've heard about them, I mean you told us about a ranger not wanting to start a backfire, remember that?

HT: Well, I really couldn't tell you nothing about the Forest Service, ah...we're all very close here. The town people and the Forest people has always been one. There was a short period about five years ago that there was a little...didn't get along so good but it is wonderful again now and ah...And we couldn't get along without them--Forest Service.

DB: Can you remember any stories about the Civilian Conservation Corps?

HT: Well, I was here through all of it but ah..

XF: Tell him where the camps were.

DB: Yea, where were the camps, I was just going to ask?

HT: Yea, one at Hoyt, one at Marble Creek...

DB: About how far up Marble Creek?

HT: Right at Marble Creek.

DB: Right at.

HT: Yea.
DB: Where was the one at Hoyt?
HT: Where the ranger station is, that's there on the CC grounds. Then the one at Avery; that one's down there at the log landing. Then we had another big one at Conrads, another one at Turners Flats, up here, at that...what's the next one right above it?
XF: Tin Can?
HT: Yea. Tin Can.
DB: OK, so there's six or seven in these parts?
HT: Yea.
DB: What kind of people came to those camps, do you remember?
HT: The ones that built the bridge here was Idaho boys, and ah...I think that was our choicest group, of course we was more familiar with them. Then we had some Italians from New York, that's kind of a live outfit, then the...
DB: What camp were they at, the Italians?
HT: At Avery, we had quite a bit but...In fact one of them come back last year and visited. He was ah...But they changed; we had different ones. We had Missourians, Arkansawyers, then...but an Idaho group built the bridge, they was...
DB: That's the concrete bridge?
HT: It's right here. And the Idaho kids all know how to use an axe and...you know, like they are out camping and..
DB: What part of Idaho were they from?
HT: I'd say north part, north of the Clearwater.
XF: Tell 'em what some of the things they did, their work and how the roads changed the community and...
HT: Well we didn't have any roads before CC come in. Did have the Wallace road but they improved it, and they built up Fish Hook Creek, built a tunnel up there, and they done a lot of wonderful work. All under supervisors of the forestry, of course. They had a supervisor for each different group, like on the bridge for the concrete work and the carpenter work, and gravel and all that. They all had to have government overseers, that showed them--you know, the blueprints and that. But the kids would run the machinery and, such as that.
DB: Do you know where any of the old Indian monuments were, they called them siwash or skitwash; you ever seen the stacks of rocks out in the woods, they're just piles of stones?
HT: Sandy can answer you that. What about the one at...
HT: Yea. Tell 'em about that.
DB: Where is it?
XF: Monumental Buttes.
HT: Yea, that's a mountain range out south of here; it looks like that rock work probably done a couple of hundred years ago, wasn't that?
DB: Do you remember where it is on the butte?
XF: I don't know.

HT: I think it's on the east butte. There's three buttes. And I think it's the east butte, where the trail goes down across over the surveyors.

DB: Have you seen any other ones out there?

HT: No. And ah...what other ones do we know of Sandy?

XF: Ahm, St. Joe Baldy.

HT: Yea, St. Joe Baldy. You see that also from where you are. They have some evidence up there of early markings.

XF: And part of a puberty rite.

DB: Well, there are quite a few strange names for hills and stuff around here. I was thinking, maybe I could name some off, and if you could tell me some of the origins, if you've ever heard stories about them. There's Hill 36, around here, do you know where that came from?

HT: I imagine that's Section 36.

DB: Hm-hm, from when they did the surveying?

HT: Hea, that was...ya...that was right straight back from Marble Creek.

DB: How about Prince Peak?

HT: Huh?

DB: Prince Peak?

HT: Prince? That's in that location also. That would be a little to the side, of the...

DB: But do you know where that came from?

HT: Probably from the Copper Prince Mine. That's probably where the creek heads from.

DB: How about Mastodon Mountain, do you know where that came from?

HT: No.

DB: OK, there's Marcus Cook Point.

HT: Hm?

DB: Marcus Cook Point.

HT: No, I don't know that.

XF: That was named after a man killed in war action.

DB: Which war was that, the Indian War?

XF: No, World War I, I think.

DB: How about Mozier Peak? M-O-Z-I-E-R.

HT: Mozier.

DB: What did Mozier do?

HT: I don't know that, I'd be guessing.

DB: How about Kelley pinnacle, did you know a Kelley?

HT: Kelley? Yes.

DB: Who was he?

HT: Ahm, that was not the Kelley's here, that Kelley was another one, that was...That's near the head of the St. Joe, there's a Kelley Creek up in there. Then there is another Kelley Creek up at Adair that goes north, it ah...

DB: But you know who the Kelley's were?

HT: The Kelley that that creek was named after evidently was an early day miner. Early miner of Coeur d'Alene. That was all patented property up in that district.

DB: How about 49 Gulch, do you know how that got its name?
HT: Yea. There the old locator that had this homestead it was...name was Sam Williams, an Arkansawyer, and he was a '49er in the gold rush, come in here. He always went by '49er, nobody ever knew his name even.
DB: Do you know when he passed on?
XF: 1908.
HT: Eight? Yea.
DB: OK, how about Swede gulch?
HT: That, Swede's Gulch?
DB: Swede...just...there's no 's' on it.
HT: I don't know that.
DB: How about Bullion Creek?
HT: Near Bullion, huh?
DB: No, I mean how did that get its name, do you know?
HT: Bullion? There's a Bullion mine up near the head of the creek. And, you have there...that's one of the mines that they worked in the early days, and they hauled the Northern Pacific brnach on the Montana side with teams and wagons. And, a man by the name of Taylor was the superintendent, and the owner. And, he was a on a big fire crew during the 1910 Fire.
DB: How about Point 81, how did that get its name?
HT: I don't know.
DB: How about Tin Can Hill?
HT: That would be back at Tin Can Flat up here, 12 miles up the river.
DB: How did it get named though?
HT: I don't know, and I don't know how the Flat got its name.
DB: How about half-way hill, how did that get its name?
HT: That's half-way to the St. Joe Quartz Mine. Ah...which was 30 miles, and it's 15 to Half-Way Hill. And the railroad...the river, made a big S and they couldn't get through there...with the horses and so on, they'd have to go over this hill on the Indian Trail; and that's half-way hill.
DB: What Indians were those?
(BREAK IN TAPE)
DB: I've got that.
XF: OK. Excuse me.
DB: How about Hard Pan Point?
HT: I don't know.
DB: Fuzzy Point?
HT: Fuzzy Point was named after a man by the name of Fuzzy Ibead(?). Was an early timer here, was structural iron worker that come here when they built the railroad. Then he stayed here and went prospecting and so on. And that was named after him, he had property up there.
DB: When did he pass on?
HT: Probably in '12.
DB: How about Fuller Mountain?

HT: I don't know.
DB: East Sister Peak?
HT: Setser Peak?
DB: Sister.
HT: Oh, Sister. The Three Sisters. That's a head of Sister Creek, that's south-east of here. And there's three peaks.
DB: How were they named, who--after who?
HT: I don't know. They...if they three look alike, and I suppose they could name them the three sisters, but...
DB: How about Bone-Head Hill, how did that get its name?
HT: Which?
DB: Bone-Head Hill?
HT: I don't know. Should know?
DB: How about High-Low Peak?
HT: I don't know that.
DB: There's Prospector Ridge.
HT: That's in the Pole Mountain District. That's...there's a lookout there, Prospector's lookout. I don't know how it got its name.
DB: How about Skookum Hill? S-K-O-O-K-U-M.
HT: Skookum.
DB: Yea.
HT: That's the same as Half-Way Hill, and that's up near Six Mile. There's a canyon--Two Mile Canyon, that they couldn't get through and they had to go over the hill, so...and the creek at this end of the hill is Skookum Creek. And ah...no doubt, the Indians named that.
XF: Tell them about...well, Ranger Daws...named quite...oh, he didn't name that though...excuse me.
HT: What?
XF: Daws named...gave quite a few Indian names.
HT: Oh, did he?
XF: Yea.
DB: How about Benchmark Hill, how did that get its name?
HT: I don't know.
DB: There's Trago point.
HT: Trago point that's...I can't tell you how that named...Must be the contours that they named it after.
DB: How about Dunn peak.
HT: Dunn Peak? That's south, here--north here, that's...I don't know where it got its name.
XF: Forest Service. It was a Forest Service man.
HT: Was it?
XF: Yea. Who was killed in a fire.
DB: How about Big Dick Point?
HT: Big Dick? He was one of the early homesteaders. And this homesteader was up North Fork up here, about eight miles. There must be a peak.
DB: Do you remember him? Did you ever see him?
HT: Yea, the big Dick. Ah?
DB: When did he pass on?

HT: I don't know, he left here, I don't know, when he passed on.
DB: Did you ever meet him?
HT: Yea sir, you bet. When I was a little boy.
DB: Did he have a ranch out there?
HT: No. Just his homestead. He pole boat on the river.
DB: He was a pole boater too?
HT: Then there was another one--Long Liz, was his partner.
Long Liz and Big Dick, I knew them both.
DB: What did Long Liz do?
HT: Both, they both boaters and homesteaders.
DB: When did they come to these parts?
HT: Well, that was before my time. They left about the time I
come here.
DB: How about Flash Peak, how did that get its name?
HT: I don't know, do you know?
DB: How about Point Henry?
HT: Which?
DB: I don't know that.
DB: OK. There's Craddock, the town...
HT: Craddock Peak.
DB: Aha.
HT: I don't know how its got its name.
DB: How about Kelley Pinnacle?
HT: That would be the one to Kelley Creek no doubt.
DB: How about Pocono?
HT: Pocono? Is down the river, it's the second side track.
And, evidently, now I'm just guessing, don't...evidently
some of the civil engineers, when they built the railroad
associated that with the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania.
DB: Pennsylvania.
HT: And, that's the only place I know the name'd come from.
DB: How about Quarles Peak? Q-U-A-R-L-E-S.
HT: Yea, that was a ranger station for many years. I don't
know where it got its name.
DB: How about Wishard Peak?
HT: I don't know.
DB: Then there is Dominion Point.
HT: That'd be the head of Dominion Creek.
DB: do you know how it got its name?
HT: Dominion Creek is on the Montana side, opposite to Burt
Creek on this side.
DB: How about point Siam, do you know how that got its name?
HT: I don't know.
DB: How about Peggy Peak?
HT: I don't know that.
DB: And then there is Attention Peak.
HT: I don't know.
DB: There's Bernier Peak? B-E-R-N-I-E-R.
HT: Which?
DB: B-E-R-N-I-E-R. Bernier.
HT: Oh, I don't know.

DB: And then finally, Adams Peak?
HT: I don't know.
DB: Don't know that name. Well, those are about all the names I wrote down here.
XF: Did you want...Packsaddle?
DB: Huh?
XF: Packsaddle.
DB: How about Packsaddle Mountain?
HT: That'd be from Packsaddle Creek towards Nelson Peak.
XF: Tell him how it got its name.
HT: Oh, It was...A prospector was coming down the river in the fall, and he got snowed in. So, he had to kill his pack horses, and he hung all his saddles in the trees. It's the old saw-buck saddles. And after I come here the saddles were all still in the trees and some of them had the leather hanging on them--the cinches. And ah...so they named Packsaddle Flat, after the packsaddles, and the creek. And the tourists they kept taking parts of the packsaddles, so finally they was all gone.
DB: Can you think of any old stories from the old days; stories about Avery? Entertaining stories.
HT: I wouldn't say so. Now the other day they had a piece in the paper about Clyde Clangborne being decorated for somebody. He was the first man who flew the Pacific. Did you see that in the paper the other day? He was a St. Maries boy, and two years he worked as commissary clerk up here at the ranger station. And during vacation...
DB: When was that, what years was that?
HT: Ahm...In the teens--through eighteens. And then, in fact, he carved his name in a big rock, on top of Skookum Hill. In fact, I'd like to go up to see if it was still visible. But he had a hammer and chisel, no doubt.
XF: Tell them a little about the Father de Smet Trail.
Ht: About what?
XF: About the old Montana Trail--Father de Smet Trail.
HT: Oh, yea. The trail started in Walla Walla, the head of navigation--on the Columbia, and then Fort Benton, the head of navigation on the Missouri. So they had a trail going across, before the Mullan Road was built...

(END OF TAPE 15; Side 1)