

# IMPRESSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS OF THE JOURNAL MAN

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By Fred Lockley

The remarkable narrative of Jack Poil, near centenarian, is completed in this installment, in which he continues his Texas Ranger reminiscences and tells of two extraordinary horseback tours and of his eventual settling down in Oregon to stay.

Jack Poil, Texas Ranger, prospector, Indian fighter, ranch hand, adventurer, Oregon pioneer and for many years an employe of the state university, is taking it easy these days at his home in Eugene. He will be 98 years old on the 8th of next December.

"I was head janitor for the state university for over 20 years," said Mr. Poil; "but I had to give that up some years ago. You would have to make me a good long visit if I told you the experiences I have had during the past 97 years, but I can tell you of a few things that have happened that I remember most clearly. Yes, I have an excellent memory. Yes, I guess I am pretty active for a man of my age. Of course, the years and what the years have brought have left some scars on me. You can see that my thumb is a little skewgee. An arrow nearly cut my thumb off, and when the wound healed it left a bad scar. You can also see one of my ears is nicked. I served with the Texas Rangers 12 years—from the time I was 18 till I was 30. I have been in dozens and scores of fights, but I was always lucky. I was wounded only five times.

"Word once came to us that the Indians had raided a ranch, driven off the stock and captured a woman and taken her with them. I was detailed to track the Indians and see where they were headed for. As I was going along watching the trail I suddenly flushed an Indian who had stayed back as rearguard. We shot almost together. My shot gave him a one-way ticket to the happy hunting grounds, and his shot cut that nick out of my ear. I dodged as I saw him pull the trigger, or I would have taken the one-way trail myself. The powder from his gun put out my eye and filled my face with powder. Eight of us Rangers had formed an 'each for all and all for each' organization; so they all threw in and we raised \$575 for me to go to San Francisco and have my eye treated. Dr. Toland treated my eye, but he couldn't save the sight of it. He blistered my face, took the skin off and poulticed it so he got most of the powder grains out except the ones on my eyelid and just under my eye. I ate at the What Cheer house in San Francisco. He treated me for seven weeks, and his bill was \$575.

"I have seen a lot of Indians in my day, and I have come to the conclusion that the Apaches and Comanches were better fighters, as a class, than the Indians of any other tribe.

"In 1856, with seven other Rangers, I asked our captain if he could let us go. I had put in 12 years fighting Indians and bad white men, and the job was getting monotonous and I wanted some excitement and to see something of the world. Most of my boyhood friends were out of the service—most of them having been killed in our frequent brushes with the Indians—so I was sort of fed up with it all and wanted a change. The captain didn't want us to quit the service, for we were experienced men, but he gave his consent, so he had our discharge papers made out and wished us good luck.

"From Fort Yuma to Palm Springs is 80 miles. The country was full of hostile Indians, and we had to carry water for ourselves and horses. We traveled at night to avoid the Indians and on account of the heat. We went by way of Palm Springs, Corrisa creek, Warner's ranch and Cucumunga, and thence to Sacramento. From there we headed north, crossed the Siskiyou, came up through the Rogue River valley, on through the Umpqua valley, and into the head of the Willamette valley. On October 22 we camped under an oak tree where the Methodist church now stands here

in Eugene. On our way north one of our number, Ed Pierce, had decided to stop at San Luis Obispo, so there were only seven of us—Newt Albridge, Joe Guthrie, Doc Billsley, John Copeland—poor John missed death times without number, fighting the Apaches and Comanches, only to find death in Portland at the hands of a Chinaman. We rode on to Lafayette, where we stopped a few weeks and then rode on east of the mountains through the Yakima valley, through the Palouse country, and to Coeur d'Alene lake. We wintered at Walla Walla, where we divided. Four of us stuck together, and rode back to California and spent some weeks at San Francisco. Once more we divided, at San Francisco. Mason Hind and I stuck together and rode back to Oregon. I decided to stay in Eugene; so he wandered on. I took up a place where Springfield was later built.

"After a while the Civil war broke out. I was a Southerner. I stood it for a while, but when the Northerners began marching into the South, burning our homes and carrying on, I decided it was time to get busy. I knew there were a bunch of Southerners in Yamhill county; so I passed the word around and raised a company of 29 young fellows around Lafayette and McMinnville. They elected me captain. We got saddle horses, pack horses, grub and guns, and struck out to lick the Union army. We figured we would work South and enlist in the Confederate army. We went by way of Fort Comanche and on into Texas. We went to Fort Worth, but we found the Confederate forces were like hoar frost when the sun comes out—they sort of melted away, and Texas was full of men that had trickled away from their organizations. I was never very strong—for this right face, left face, shoulder arms, forward march, halt and salute your officers stuff; so we decided we would serve as the Oregon Guerrillas of the Confederate army. We found we could do as much good to the Confederacy and as much harm to the Yankees by acting as a sort of ex officio organization as if we belonged to a regular outfit. Two of my men—Enoch Holt and his brother—went out to do a little scouting and maybe run off a few horses from a Union cavalry company, but they ran into a bunch of the Yankee troopers. They killed seven of the Yanks and were themselves killed. Well, we hung around the edges of the Yankee troops, to do what damage we could, till the war quit on us.

"In the summer of 1865 I mounted my riding horse, and with my outfit on my pack horse I headed back for Eugene. I was married at Cottage Grove. Four children were born to us—three girls and a boy. The boy grew to manhood and died, and one of my girls died. One of my daughters is a teacher at Yoncalla. The other married Gene Tibbits, an engineer.

"In 1880 I got lonesome to go alone and see something of a country once more where there were no people—just nature and animals. My wife said, 'Why don't you strike out and make a trip and get it over with?' So I got a good riding horse, pack horse and camp outfit and struck out. I crossed the mountains, went through Central Oregon by way of Christmas lake and Silver lake into California, gradually headed east and north, and worked my way through wild country up into Montana. I spent some time in Yellowstone park, visited with the Blackfoot, Crow and Bannock Indians, worked up the Missouri river till it was a small stream, worked back to Bozeman, and decided it was time to head west to my home, my wife and my two babies.

"Since then I have done my traveling in my memory. I can think back about 93 years, to the time I was a little 4-year-old tot, and I find I have plenty to think about."