

30 YEARS IN CITY'S SERVICE

Sigel Grutze, 'Portland's Most Valued Employee,' Has Been Chief Deputy Auditor Continuously For Three Decades

By Earl C. Brownlee

"If you want to know just how much you will be missed when you are gone from public life, put your finger into a bucket of water and watch the hole that remains when you pull it out."

That is how Sigel Grutze, for 30 years chief deputy auditor for the city of Portland, appraises his own public importance.

Fortunately, however, there are others to sing the praises of this surprising civic servant. Among them is Mayor George L. Baker, who says:

"Sigel Grutze is the most valuable man in the employ of the city—and that includes the mayor and every commissioner."

Grutze, in the years of his public labors, has defied the lure of the gold rush; turned deaf ears to the dreams that would have taken him to other fields, to other rewards and in the one charge he accepted 30 years ago has to this day spent his energies.

ON THE JOB

Only once in the 30 years that have gone has he missed a meeting of the council for any other reason than his periodic absence on vacation. That once, absence was due to illness in the family.

And through it all Grutze has retained the unwavering confidence of every elected official, of whatever political faith, with whom his work has associated him.

He has outlived all but four of the mayors under whom he served the municipality. Only one member of the council that approved his appointment 30 years ago remains alive today.

Now that gold rush, years and dreams have gone, what is his reward for 30 years of service?

There is a vein of sentiment in Grutze's reply, yet it is tinged with the humor that helps mightily along the way.

"My reward," Grutze answers, "is a happy home and family, and a knowledge that I have done my best."

"If I can expect anything more, here's hoping I attain it in heaven."

ENTERS IN 1890

It was in January, 1890, that Sigel Grutze, memories of cow-punching days mingling in the background with a brief career as a school teacher, became deputy auditor for the city of Portland under Mayor Van B. DeLashmutt and Auditor M. H. Wood, both of whom are dead.

For three years Grutze had taught school in Eastern Oregon—in the days when brawn was as necessary as brain in instilling "larnin'" into the mind of youth. Then he came to Portland to attend a business school, where he taught for a year upon completion of his studies. Soon thereafter he entered the lighthouse inspector's office, where he spent 21 months prior to entering the auditor's office.

His youthful years had about them all the glamor of the great West. Born and reared in California, so close to the Oregon line that he styles himself a "half-breed," Grutze found the joy of life at ranching and at riding ranging broncos for a pastime and a livelihood.

Six weeks after Grutze became a deputy auditor, W. H. Wood, then in office four years, died and Grutze became chief deputy, although there was only one other deputy then to share the labors of the growing community.

FOR EFFICIENCY

This man, throughout the average man's working lifetime, has stuck to one job. Why has he remained? How has he been able to remain when other men in like

positions found themselves mere political buffets, cast here and there by office holders of varied political faiths? Why, in all these years, has he not sought elective office? And for each question Grutze has his answer.

"Why have I remained? The story is a long one and perhaps rather more personal than I should like to repeat. One thing after another, illness and the like, have forced me to forego other opportunities."

"As I see it now, I have been able to remain through political changes and all, because I have always adhered exactly to the truth in every dealing and have kept my nose strictly to my own grindstone."

"I have not sought elective office because I have always felt that I have been better off in my present position. I did not have to stand for election every two years, although I did have to worry now and then about the inclinations of incoming administrations."

"Office holding, in a political sense, has always been distasteful to me and, though I have been repeatedly asked to seek office, I have as often declined."

In his moral and business code and his lack of desire for elective office are the secrets of much of the success Grutze has attained as a public employee. In these things is shown his faculty for retaining always the confidence of all men with whom he has come into official contact.

That everlasting array of little things that hampers the attainment of human freedom has attended the 30 years of Grutze's public life.

GOLD LURE FAILS

In 1898, the nation agog with the dazzle of Alaska gold, young Portland mad in the lure of buried riches, a prominent citizen, confident of his man, offered Grutze a two year grubstake if he would join the throng and mush over the hazardous trail to the golden shore. But Grutze smilingly gave up the dream when his wife became ill—the gold that might have been his has lined other pockets.

But there are no more worries in the Grutze head about the incoming administration, even though it bring radical and sweeping change in political complexion that might, in the old days, have unseated even such a solidly implanted official as Grutze. For 13 years the rules of civil service, whose tests his wide knowledge made simple for him, have been operative and his seat has been secure against any political inclination that might cause a new office holder to seat a henchman in the place of a man of proved efficiency and knowledge.

Four sons, ranging in age from 34 years to 10 years, claim allegiance to the Grutze household. Fifty-seven summers have passed over the still young man who daily startles council meeting spectators with his astounding command of the city's business, gained not alone in the 30 years of his connection therewith, but in the 10 years he spent in the state before he became a municipal employee—the years since he crossed the line from California at 17 to seek his niche in the scheme of worldly things.

AN OLD FRIEND

While I was talking with Grutze a man with the stamp of Alaska on his rugged face interrupted. He was Jake Pitinger, councilman in the consolidation administration of 1891, who had been in Alaska for 19 years, out of sight and out of mind as far as Grutze was concerned, now returned to Portland to live.

Yet this man, 19 years absent, had no more than extended his hand in greeting until Grutze recognized him and called him by name.

It is that happy faculty of memory that has helped to make Grutze an invaluable public employee. At his tongue's end is a mass of facts and figures concerning the past, present and future of Portland's official business that would fill a library and that would tax the col-

lective knowledge of any dozen other municipal employees.

Grutze, still a young man in appearance, action and, after all, in years, has outlived eight of the 12 mayors under whom he served and to whom he proved himself a man the city could ill afford to lose.

OFFICIAL ASSOCIATIONS

Only one member of the council in office when Grutze joined forces with the city is alive today. That one is L. G. Castendieck, now a jeweler's engraver. This was the councilmanic line-up that year: Mayor, Van B. DeLashmutt; councilmen, first ward, L. G. Castendieck, R. Gerdes, Richard Hoyt; second ward, S. Farrell, W. A. Scoggin, C. M. Forbes; third ward, Tyler Woodward (president of the council), William Showers and William Fliedner.

Auditors Branch, Gamble, Devlin, Barbur and Funk, incumbent, remain alive to recall their associations with Grutze.

Other city officials in 1890 were: H. W. Munnaster, treasurer; W. H. Adams, city attorney; W. S. Chapman, street superintendent; E. W. Paget, surveyor; A. H. Tanner, police judge; S. B. Parrish, police chief; F. D. Mathews, overseer of streets. Adams is lost to Grutze, who has not heard of him in years. Chapman is statistician in the bureau of public works. Paget is cashier in the city treasurer's office. Tanner was a law partner of the late Senator Mitchell.

UNDER 12 MAYORS

The mayors under whom Grutze has served were: DeLashmutt, W. S. Mason (head of the 1891 consolidation administration and, after a lapse of some four years, again elected, and who died in office), George P. Frank, Sylvester Pennoyer, W. A. Story (elected from the council to fill out Mason's unexpired term), H. S. Rowe, George H. Williams, Harry Lane, Joseph Simon, A. G. Rushlight, H. R. Albee and Mayor Baker. The last four are living. The others have gone the way of the countless.

Pennoyer was elected to the mayoralty after he had already served as governor of Oregon. Lane was elected to the United States senate after he served as mayor. Lane died a few years ago while serving as junior senator from Oregon. The administrations of Pennoyer and Lane stand out in Grutze's mind as the most turbulent with which he was connected.

OTHER CITY HALLS

"When I went to work for the city," Grutze said, in recalling the history of his 30 years in office, "Portland's government occupied the second floor of the Council building, now known as the Breeden building, at the northeast corner of Third and Washington streets. This had a floor space of 50 by 100 feet to house its entire activity."

"After consolidation of Portland and East Portland, on October 1, 1891, larger quarters were found in the Bickle building at Second and Ash streets and the city government remained in the Bickle building until the present city hall was completed in January, 1895."

"There were nine councilmen, a fire commissioner and a police commissioner in those days, in addition to the mayor. The consolidation with East Portland provided 16 councilmen, although that number was later reduced to 11 and continued so until 1905, when the number was raised to 15, with five of the members serving 'at large.' "Fifteen councilmen were deposed when the city adopted the commission form of government in 1912, reducing the representation to the mayor and four commissioners at large."

CITY'S GROWTH

"In contrast to the present commission, the old council used to meet bi-weekly; there were not more than 250 city employees in all departments, as compared with about 1750 persons employed today."

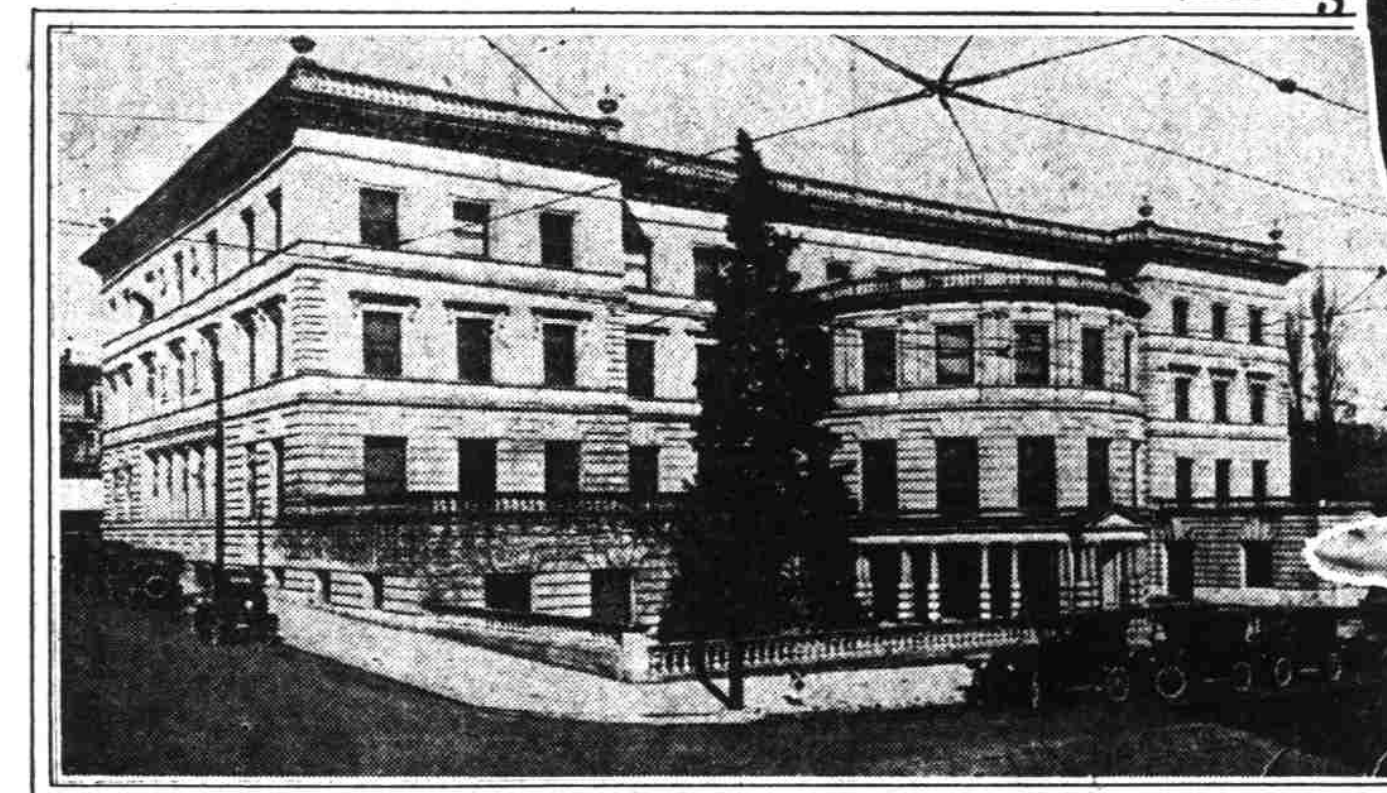
"The auditor's office had two deputies in 1890, and I was one of them. Today 30 deputies are reg-



SIGEL GRUTZE, CHIEF DEPUTY AUDITOR, CITY OF PORTLAND FOR 30 YEARS "IN ACTION" AT HIS CITY HALL DESK.



Old Council Building at Third and Washington Streets. The second floor of which housed Portland's city government 30 years ago.



The Present City Hall



L. G. CASTENDIECK, ONLY SURVIVING MEMBER OF CITY COUNCIL OF 1890.

PHOTOS BY LE ROY NORD, JOURNAL STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ularly employed and we call in extra help now and then.

"But in all these years, I think, no administrative action or ambition has caused more widespread comment and brought so much attention to the city as the zoning plan now under discussion."

READING CLERK

"The days of my service had been enlivened in many ways. Up to 1907 I kept the minutes of the council meetings, while the auditor served as reading clerk. Since that time I have acted as reading clerk."

"At almost every meeting during these years there has been some odd character before the council with his queer complaints or his peculiar interpretations of justice to the majority."

"Usually one such character remains, alone and undaunted, until something happens to cause him or her to stop the practice of being at every meeting and hearing every word. But immediately another bobs up. One year it will be a man—recently it has been a woman who has, almost at every meeting, expounded upon the evils of city government and propounded her own theories as to righteousness. Somehow, though, the council has

struggled along and Portland has continued to grow with the people who continue to come here."

FOR COMMISSION FORM

"I have seen the passing of the councilmanic form of city administration with a degree of pleasure. The commission form, I believe, gives the city a more effective and generally better government than did the councilmanic form. And, withal, the administration has been far more active and prompt."

"The old council met twice a month (between 1890 and 1902, without remuneration) and the commission of today meets at least once a week, with the average running much higher."

"Portland boasted some 40,000 citizens in 1890. In June of the following year, when Portland was consolidated with East Portland and Albina, there were 43,500 persons in the city. Later population was added, piecemeal, with the addition of Sellwood and St. Johns, but St. Johns withdrew again. In later years Linnton was added and St. Johns came back under the protecting wing."

FREE BRIDGE FIGHT

"Free Bridges," was the slogan

of the notable and sometimes highly exciting campaign for the consolidation of Portland and East Portland.

"The fire of the campaign ceased an hour after the polls opened," Grutze recalls, "when the opposition saw its fight was futile. All bridges and ferries were then privately owned and tolls were collected from all traffic."

"Bridges have been a hobby with me during these 30 years. With consolidation on a 'free bridge' slogan, the city proceeded to provide free bridges by purchase of the existing bridges from their private owners. Portland then had the original Steel bridge and the original Madison and Morrison street draws, together with the Stark street ferry."

"The public bought the Madison street span on November 11, 1891, for \$142,500. The Burnside bridge was built under a commission appointed by the state legislature, at a cost of about \$300,000. It never has been rebuilt."

"In 1895 the Morrison Street bridge was bought from its private owners and the Stark street ferry was taken over at the same time. The Morrison street span was rebuilt in 1904. The Albina ferry,

now discontinued, as has been the Stark street carrier, was purchased after consolidation."

"Portland's total investment in bridges alone in the 30 years is \$3,267,000, represented in outstanding bonds on account of the construction of bridges. Ferries cost \$115,000."

Thus, readily recalling facts, figures and dates, Grutze reviewed 30 years of Portland's history, but, denied the volumes required to set it forth, let me be content with this brief recital.

STILL GOING STRONG

And now, his lifetime given to the service of the city, Grutze, happy to hear others report that he has been faithful to a sometimes trying trust, has this to say:

"I shall be satisfied to remain as long as my health holds up, and, to repeat, if there is any other reward for me I hope I shall find it in heaven."

"The best part of the story," Mayor Baker adds, "is that Sig Grutze is still a young man and has many years of activity before him. For the welfare of the city I hope he spends every one of 'em as chief deputy city auditor."