

Veteran Of The Battle Of Bad Axe River In 1831

By R. M. Harrison

It was about mid-April, back in 1837, when two men sat before a smoldering fire, that flickered on the hearth of an old miner's cabin, which stood near the bank of Grave Creek, about three miles below the little burg of Leland, in Josephine county. One of these men was Peter Van Slack, 85, a remnant of what was once a glowing youth, of boundless ambition, strength and courage, but now as he sat before his fire this April evening, he had realized that he was only the faint shadow of his former self, a helpless, broken-down and old frontiersman, pioneer, miner, trapper and trail blazer, of the great west.

Peter's companion that evening, as he sat before his fire, was Bob Monroe, in his mid 20's, who was hired by the miners of that district, to take care of old Peter, who had become very feeble, and it was thought by some that the end was not far off. Bob had only been there a few days and had noticed that the old man was not taken with the idea of some one being with him, as it seemed to bring out the truth that he was in reality helpless, and the thought rather irritated him so, that he would sit for hours and not speak a word. This state of affairs was not any too pleasant for Bob but he kept on with patient care-taking of the old fellow's wants.

During these several days that Bob had been there, he had noticed that the old man was falling very fast, that his feet had swollen, until his lower limbs were almost helpless. For many years, it had been common knowledge among the folks of the district that old Pete, as he was known, was a man of mystery, that he had never told any one of his early life, or where he had come from; he was kind to all, had many friends, and all they knew was that he was Peter Van Slack, six feet six tall, large dark hazel eyes, heavy dark eyebrows, heavy whiskers and hair and was a sphinx of silence.

Knowing of the air of mystery that had grown out of the silence that old Pete had for so many years maintained, many of his friends were curious to know what great tragedy or act it could be that old Pete had so securely locked up in his deepest thoughts; was it some cruel act of Dan Cupid? Was he the Wandering Jew? Was he walking the earth beneath the curse of Cain? All this was speculation, but like the hand of bygone civilization it found fertile soil in the minds of the dispensers of folklore.

After the evening meal, on this mid-April evening, as the two men sat by the fire, Bob noticed that the old man was in a more cheerful mood, and as the old fellow sat in his easy chair, holding to the top of his cane with one hand while in his other he held his old cob pipe, he puffed slowly, but with a tinge of nervousness, and as he smoked, he talked rather intermittently about his first visit to the Grave Creek diggin's, and how he had packed his supplies on his back for long distances and how plentiful the game used to be.

As he had talked he was fighting his pipe to keep it alive and, when he found out that the old pipe was really dead, he quit talking for a moment and, seeing his opportunity, Bob chimed in with, "Well, Pete, were there any Indians here when you came here?"

At this query the old man leaned forward and placing both hands on the top of his cane, placed his forehead on his hands as if in deep meditation, rested for some moments, and then leaned back in his chair, and said, "Only a few; they passed occasionally over their old trail."

"Yes," he said, "Indians, and they bring to my mind scenes of many years ago. I was born in West Carroll county, Louisiana, at Oak Grove, and, owing to circumstances in my father's home, I ran away when I was 19 years old, and worked my way out on a river steamer. When I got up to Cairo, Illinois, the Black Hawk war had broken out and I enlisted in the service, under General Street.

"This was in the spring of 1831 and, being a lad of 19, I was just ripe for adventure and the idea of being a soldier struck me just about right. You see, I was the eldest one of the family and my father had a very heavy hand with me and I was used to kicks and cuffs so the army life would not be much of a hardship to me on that score. After a few days of preparation, the outfit I was with, an infantry division, started out for the seat of trouble and, after some days of travel, we landed at Fort Dubuque, Iowa, from which place we were to outfit for the campaign.

"You see, the Sioux Indians, under the big Chief Black Hawk, had gone on the war path, and were giving the white settlers a lot of trouble, and

as the tribe was very strong, it was going to take a good-sized army to stop them. The greatest trouble was along the Wisconsin and Bad Axe rivers, and when all was ready, the outfit which I was with was sent to Bad Axe river where there was a large village, with a large force of very tough warriors.

"The advance guard was cavalry, about three companies, and about six companies of infantry, part of which were the heavy dragoons, of which I was one, and the light rifles served as rear guards. As we marched up the Bad Axe, we had very little trouble but when we got within a few miles of the village, we ran into an ambuscade and we had tough going from that on, until we reached their first breast works; but after several days of hard fighting, we finally had them on the run, as they had evidently run out of powder and arrows.

"It was about mid forenoon when we got orders to charge the town, and we sure did go, with the cavalry in the lead, but there was no resistance, as the warriors had all fled, leaving their old men, women and papooses to face the music. Everyone of us was hoppin' mad, and hollering at the top of our voices, 'Kill every one of the devils,' and 'nits will make lice.'

"Well, we made short work of them and it wasn't long until the whole town was in flames. By mid-afternoon everything was quiet, except an occasional shot, which was to finish up some wounded red.

"The next thing in order was to round up what few of the Indians were left and to put a watch over them, then to look after the dead ones. I was put on detail to do this work and, when I was out along the stream bank, I saw there, under the big oaks, several women and their papooses, lying dead, and one of the little fellows was moving his hands."

At this the old man leaned forward and rested his head on his hands and, in a faint hoarse voice, said, "I can never forget that day." Bob watched the old man as he sat there, his weary old frame shaking as he tried to suppress the sobs that would come in spite of him.

The old man sat there for some minutes, then slowly raised his head and, in a smothered voice, said, "I am so tired, and I want to lie down." Then he took from his jacket pocket a little worn and dingy New Testament and handed it to Bob and said, "I will take this along with me." As the old man lay on his bed, his large dark eyes staring blankly at the ceiling, Bob was trying to catch the feebly-mumbled words that fell from his lips, but all in vain.

As Bob sat there by that bedside and watched the life that had burned for so many years, flickering away, he thought, no wonder he was silent, for in his youth he was ambitious, daring, and in the heat of conflict, the red haze of madness had robbed him of his reason and anger had slammed the door of remorse to his soul, and now he, too, had come to the boundary of that land from whose bourn no traveler returns; he could now view these scenes in a different light and, no doubt, in his mind as he lay there staring blankly at the ceiling, he could see the Snowy Wings of Peace hovering above these little forms lying there, so still, so cold, and, too, he could hear that gentle voice saying, "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

It is here in the life of men, great and small, comes the realization that the "Mills of the gods grind slowly but they pulverize exceeding fine."

On a little bench on the western slope of the hill, overlooking Grave Creek and beneath the spreading madrona and oaks, are four rude mounds, and beneath one of them, rests the remains of the once veteran of the Black Hawk war, pioneer, miner, trail blazer, and the little dingy and worn Book, marked on a blank page, "from mother to Peter," is with him. Some four years ago, when this same Bob stood by that mound, he lifted his hand and said, "Peter Van Slack, I salute your ashes."

—By R. M. Harrison as told him by Bob Monroe.



Washington, D. C., May 10—Pasco, Wash., is listed for development by the navy department within a few months. There are to be 225 aircraft stationed there and a hangar is to be constructed for the flying machines. Also the navy needs more water and will dig four wells. At present there is only one well, and the admirals do not wish to take the chance of having the water supply curtailed. For the water development, the navy has asked congress for an appropriation of \$107,000 with an additional \$407,000 for the hangar.

The naval air station at Shelton, Wash., has hazards to flying, and these are to be removed at a cost of \$50,000. The obstructions to the runways are clumps of trees. Whidby island will have an additional investment of \$2,002,000 in the 1946 fiscal year. One development will be construction of a wharf and runway at an estimated cost of \$1,733,000. There is now no facility in the Pacific northwest from which planes can be loaded upon carriers. The new installation will be permanent. There has been a smoke nuisance at Oak harbor on the island, and the navy proposes abating this at a cost of \$30,000.

Sun Valley, in Idaho, has become a naval hospital with a capacity of 1,059 beds and with a large staff. The summer resort is under lease from Union Pacific railroad, and sailors are sent there for rehabilitation. A gymnasium is to be built and equipped at a cost of \$73,000.

"The navy no longer confines its activities to the immediate shoreline, as is attested by the Sun Valley and Farragut developments. It has decided to make permanent the ordnance plant at Pocatello, Idaho. Navy guns are re-ported at this establishment and put into condition for further action. More than 1,000 civilians are employed at the plant at the present time, and after the war it is estimated that there will be permanent employment for 800 in addition to the marines, sailors and officers stationed there for guard purposes.

There is a prospect that the Pocatello installation will be expanded even more than it is now and in the immediate future a \$40,000 cafeteria will be constructed which will be able to accommodate the three shifts. The guns which are to be rejuvenated are shipped to Pocatello by rail from various points on the west coast.

Docks and yards division of the navy contemplates spending \$10,965,000 at Bremerton navy yard in the fiscal year 1946. One-third of this sum will be for widening, an 80-foot pier to 200 feet in order to better handle the airplane carriers and another third of the money will be used for the establishment of radio and radar shops. Heavy investments have been asked of congress at Terminal island, San Diego and Los Angeles.

Testifying before the house committee on appropriations, admirals explained that the Puget sound work would cover a period of at least one year and that other installations would require 15 months at least. As the fiscal year does not begin until July 1, 1945, and no funds will be available before that date, the improvements at Bremerton would not be completed before June, 1946, and at some other stations not until the end of next year.

It is the opinion of the admirals that the war with Japan will be long drawn out, for the new facilities could not be in full operation until early in 1947. The admirals declined to state whether, if the war with Japan terminated before the installations are completed, work on the jobs would be immediately stopped. They dodged that interrogation by observing that what they propose building will be needed in the future some time, but that they would take their orders from the commander-in-chief.

As to the size of the post-war fleet, the admirals would not even hazard a guess. They said the American fleet is now the largest in the world, as large as any other two fleets. It was admitted that some of the present warships will be too old to repair and maintain efficiently and that they will probably be scrapped, but as to the size of the fleet—silence.

There are a limited number of men in the armed services coming from the Pacific northwest who are 42 years old and up. In all the armed forces, it is estimated the total number of these does not exceed 50,000.

According to a new order of the war department, these men are now eligible to discharge upon their own request.

If you knew that your waste tin cans would save the life of your boy, what would you do?

Calling cards, 50 for \$1.00.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Notice is hereby given that the undersigned was on the 8th day of May, 1945, duly appointed by the County Court of Coos County, Oregon, as Administrator of the Estate of R. B. Cameron, deceased, and has qualified as such; and that all persons having claims against the estate of deceased are hereby required to present same, duly verified with proper vouchers attached, to the undersigned at the office of O. C. Sanford, Attorney, in Coquille, Oregon, within six months from the date of the first publication of this notice. Dated and published first time May 10, 1945.

G. R. Griffith, Administrator

IN THE COUNTY COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF COOS
In the Matter of the Estate of William Thomas Brady, Deceased.
Notice of Sale of Real Property
Notice is hereby given that by virtue of an order, decree and license of the County Court of Coos County, Oregon, made and entered on the 27th day of April, 1945, in the matter of the estate of William Thomas Brady, deceased, I will, on and after Friday, the 1st day of June, 1945, proceed to sell, at private sale, to the highest and best bidder, for cash in hand, and subject to the confirmation of said court, all of the right, title and interest of said estate and those claiming under it, in and to the following described real property, to wit:

Beginning at a point 216 feet South 89° 40' East and 285 feet South of the quarter section corner on the line between Sections 35 and 36 in Township 27 South of Range No. 13, West of the Willamette Meridian in Coos County, Oregon, running thence South 172 feet to the Northwest corner of small tract of land owned by the Misses Smith; thence North 79° 10' East 337.6 feet along North boundary of said tract to a small stream; thence South 30° 30' East 193 feet, more or less along said stream to the North boundary of the Coquille-Marshfield Highway; thence approximately North 76° 10' East 282 feet, more or less,

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along said North boundary of said highway to a point 18 feet West of the East boundary of the V. G. Weekly land; thence North 0° 40' East 276 feet, more or less, along west boundary of an 18 foot proposed roadway to a point which is North 84° 52' East of the place of beginning; thence South 84° 52' West 715 feet, more or less, to the place of beginning, containing 3.23 acres of land, more or less, situated in Section 36, Township 27 South of Range 13 West of the Willamette Meridian; Bids will be received by me, as executor of said estate, at the office of J. Arthur Berg, in Coquille, Coos County, Oregon.

J. H. McCLOSKEY, Executor of the Estate of William Thomas Brady, Deceased. 18th

BEAVER SLOUGH DRAINAGE DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that there will be a meeting of the owners of land in the Beaver Slough Drainage District, held at the City Hall in Coquille, Coos County, Oregon, at the hour of ten o'clock in the forenoon of Saturday, the 19th day of May, 1945, for the purpose of electing one Supervisor for said Drainage District who shall hold his office for a period of three years and until his successor is elected and qualified; and for the transaction of such other business as may lawfully come before the meeting.

Dated this 3rd day of May, 1945.
Signed: G. L. Smith, Jens Jorgensen, Rose Garrett, Supervisors, Edna A. Robison, Secretary

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned was on April 23, 1945, duly appointed as Executor of the last will and testament and estate of Inez Boles, deceased, by the County Court of Coos County, Oregon; and that all persons having claims against deceased are required to present same, with vouchers attached and verified, to the undersigned at the office of O. C. Sanford, Attorney, in Coquille, Oregon, within six months from the date of the first publication of this notice. Dated and published first time, April 26, 1945.

Norman W. Boles, Executor.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned was on April 9, 1945, duly appointed as Administratrix of the Estate of Martin Elmer Nye, deceased, by the County Court of Coos County, Oregon; and that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby notified that they are required to file such claims, duly verified and with vouchers attached, to me at the office of O. C. Sanford, Attorney, in Coquille, Oregon, within six months from the date of this notice. Dated and published first time April 12, 1945.

Ruth E. Donated, Administratrix.

IN THE COUNTY COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON, IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF COOS

In the Matter of the Estate of Hugh Thomas Downey, Deceased.
Case No. 4888
Notice of Sale
Notice is hereby given that by virtue of an order, decree and license of the County Court of Coos

County, Oregon, made and entered on the 27th day of April, 1945, I will, on and after Friday, June 1, 1945, proceed to sell, at private sale, to the highest and best bidder for cash in hand, and subject to the confirmation of said court, all of the right, title and interest of said estate and those claiming under it, in and to the following described real property to wit:

Beginning at the Northwest corner of the Northeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section 36, Township 27 South, Range 13 West of Willamette Meridian, the said point being approximately on the easterly boundary of the County Road; and running thence southerly, following the said easterly boundary of the County Road to a point on the North boundary of the tract of land deeded to Falconer, the said point being a distance of 1526 feet north of the south boundary of the Southeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of the said Section 36; thence East to the line of the foot of the hill; thence N. 42° 40' E. for a distance of 2.86 feet to the center of Budd Creek; thence N. 51° 26' W. along the center of Budd Creek; for a distance of 175.44 feet; thence N. 42° 40' E. for a distance of 390.35 feet; thence S. 58° 07' E. for a distance of 134.00 feet; thence S. 49° 48 1/2' E. for a distance of 202.25 feet; thence S. 38° 58' W. for a distance of 55.33 feet; thence S. 64° 03' E. for a distance of 93.20 feet; thence S. 42° 31' E. for a distance of 229.21 feet; thence S. 86° 04' E. for a distance of 80.6 feet, more or less, to a point on the east boundary of the said Northeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section 36; thence Northerly along the said East boundary of the Northeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of section 36 to the Northeast corner thereof; thence West along the North boundary of the said Northeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section 36 to the point of beginning; containing 27.5 acres, more or less, and being a portion of the Northeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section 36, Township 27 South, Range 13 West of Willamette Meridian.

Also a gateway roadway easement fifteen feet in width, following along the line of the foot of the hill on the easterly side of the Budd Creek bottom lands, the center line of which is more particularly described as follows: Beginning at a point in the Northeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section 36, Township 27 South, Range 13 West of Willamette Meridian, the said point being situated 1710.3 feet North and 801.9 feet East of the corner to the Southeast corner of the Southeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of the said Section 36; and running thence N. 58° W for a distance of 140.0 feet; thence N. 28° W for a distance of 39.65 feet, to a point on the boundary of the tract described in the foregoing description.

Also excepting easements heretofore granted: Bids will be received by me, as administrator of said estate, at the office of J. Arthur Berg, in Coquille, Coos County, Oregon.
Elbert Schroeder, Administrator for the Estate of Hugh Thomas Downey, Deceased. 18th

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