

Sentinel

COQUILLE, OREGON.

FEBRUARY 2, 1950.

The Doctor In Coos and Curry Counties

BY EMIL R. PETERSON

Dr. RODNEY GLISAN, though not a general practitioner in Coos or Curry county, is definitely entitled to more than a passing mention among the medical men of this region. In his fourteen months as chief medical officer with the Military forces at Fort Orford, he showed himself to be a man of culture, character, industry, ambition, and in every way a gentleman who was a credit to his profession, both as a doctor and as a soldier.

We can look back now, nearly a century, and realize and appreciate the heritage that he left to us, his book, "Journal of Army Life." Through his writings, we have an interesting and fairly vivid picture of that enticing section of the Oregon coast—in peace as well as in war time.

On his approach to Port Orford, on June 21, 1855, he wrote "I was vividly impressed with exhilarating and health-inspiring influence of the air. The evergreen forests of spruce, fir and cedar, which are still standing in all their primeval loveliness and grandeur, associated in a few places with the beautiful rhododendron, and the sweet-scented myrtle, covering mountains and vales, give a novelty and charm to the landscape unsurpassed by any thing of the kind ever seen by me before."

"There is not a more healthy place on the globe than Fort Orford—the only diseases here are some species of intemperance. Indeed, were it not for an occasional accident, there would be no need of a physician at the post."

As I have not thought of giving a lengthy report of Dr. Glisan's book in this paper, let us skip six months, and glimpse into his thoughts as Christmas time approaches. On December 24, he writes, "To-day is beautiful. All nature seems to be reanimated. The larks and robins seem to enjoy it wonderfully; and even the monsters of the mighty deep appear to be aware that the elements have ceased their warfare, for they may now be seen in large numbers in the harbor. 'Tis wonderful how high a whale can spout the water."

And the next day his thoughts turn homeward as he records in his book—"December 25, 1855—Christmas! This day of all others reminds us of home. Oh, how our hearts yearn for those fond ones left behind; for the many fire-side reunions of our childhood; when we felt supremely happy if our kind mothers allowed us plenty of ginger cake and lemonade. If our wants were as simple now how much happier we might be; yet, after all, there are few of us, I presume, who would be willing to exchange our present pleasures with the accompanying sorrows, for the happiness of childhood—for though our sorrows are greater our sense of pleasure is also enhanced."

Another six months go by, and he tells briefly of the Fourth of July at the post, including—a Federal salute of thirteen guns at dawn of day and thirty-one at noon, and at nine p.m. by five rockets from the highest point of the heads, to the great admiration and astonishment of the Indians, most of whom had never seen the likes before."

Dr. Glisan gives us a picture of the pleasant days of sunshine with their cooling breezes, but he also describes the fierceness of the storms. Quite an event as the months roll by is the bi-weekly visits of the steamer—usually the "Columbia"—on its regular trips between Portland and San Francisco, stopping when weather conditions permitted. And how folks at the post and in town looked forward to the ship's coming, with the news from the outside world, although it was already stale on its arrival—the papers from Portland or from San Francisco, according to whether the ship was northward or southward bound. And the New York papers, though weeks or perhaps months old on arrival, were highly prized and eagerly devoured. Sometimes the place would be a month or even six weeks without any news from the outside world, the weather conditions being unfavorable for the landing of the ship.

Early in January, 1856, Dr. Glisan records that the "Columbia"

passed down, having gone only to Astoria, "in consequence of the Columbia River being frozen over." He adds, "This is an unusually severe winter. The back country is covered with deep snow—and we have even had a few spits at this point, and the thermometer one night as low as twenty degrees above zero, Fahrenheit. . . . Exactly twenty inches of rain fell last month." (Dec. 1865).

The doctor tells about the three saw mills, two of them having to close during the summer, due to shortage of water. (I might add here that most of the pioneer saw mills were operated by water wheels.) The one that continued to operate was powered by steam.

The doctor gives us a very good picture of gold mining along the beaches; with the skin-games perpetrated on the dupes who were easy prey to get-rich-quick schemes.

With regard to the Indian troubles, Dr. Glisan showed himself to be a student. He searched for fundamental causes underlying the trouble between the whites and the Indians. His discussion indicates fairness and sound judgment. He realizes that there are two sides to every question.

He also gives his views on the relative efficiency of the military army-trained soldier as compared with the hardened pioneer of the woods or the mines, who goes in as a volunteer. The doctor sees and presents both sides of the problem.

With the rank of major (not certain—check this—ERP) Dr. Glisan spent weeks with the men in the field, or rather on the trail, in open camps, in the roughest, toughest brush and shrubbery on steep mountain sides and in deep canyons. His description of a trip from Port Orford, by trail, to the Agness-Illahie-Big Bend battle fields will give a bit of an idea of their "Army Life." Let us quote just a few lines:

"March 14th, 1856 . . . one hundred and two men . . . left Port Orford this morning to act against the Rogue River Indians . . . myself and some fifteen packers. . . . The trail is muddy and slippery. It is exceedingly rough, and lined most of the way with thick timber . . . single file, having to wade streams (one, Brush Creek, seven-teen times) . . . wet us to knees. "Not being able to get a good supply of pack animals . . . we have brought with us nothing but absolute necessities . . . not even tents. . . . Must endure the weather whatever it may be." (And just imagine what the weather might be in mid-March.)

But in the midst of hardships, privations and misery, Dr. Glisan seems never to have overlooked the beauties about him. He says while on the trip just mentioned, "The view from the crest of the mountain was grand. From our present position, we could see Rogue River and the ocean, were it not so foggy. The fog, which lies along the water courses, many hundred feet below us, looks very beautiful, as the sun, which is setting clear, adds to its charm. The snow-capped mountains of the Illinois shine with brilliant splendor. Altogether, it is the most beautiful landscape I have ever seen." (It is interesting to note that nearly a hundred years later, Roy Mason says of the same scenery, but from a different viewpoint, " . . . great expanse of mountain forests, covered with low-lying clouds, which at a distance show smudgy blacks and grays and big luscious chunks of Oregon Blue."—In TRUE Magazine, Aug. '49).

But I like Dr. Glisan's description better. In addition to telling about the battles and skirmishes with the Indians, while not otherwise engaged, he gives us an interesting description of Port Orford and its surroundings. It is interesting to note that much of the country, especially in the interior, is not greatly changed in these hundred years—the variety of the trees, the beauty of the mountains, the fish in the streams, the native berries and flowers, the deer and elk, the ducks and geese and gulls.

Dr. Glisan tells about his fishing trips on Elk River, and two kinds of trout—mountain trout and salmon trout. He takes us with him on a canoe trip down the coast in an attempt to reach Brush Creek, with two other men. A storm comes up; they get seasick, and narrowly escape with their lives. He takes us with, "hatched" down with sick and wounded men, "dreadfully small" schooner Gold Beach, on their perilous journey over the treacherous Rogue River bar, up the coast at night to Port Orford.

In this brief paper, I have not attempted to relate Dr. Glisan's descriptions of the military en-

gagements with the Rogue River Indians. That must wait till another time, or for another writer.

To sum up briefly, then, it appears to me that Dr. Rodney Glisan has made a real contribution to the literature of Coos and Curry counties. Not only is his "Journal of Army Life" a reliable original source of information about the Rogue River Indian wars of the 1850's; but it also gives us a fascinating picture of that something which even to this day makes people want to come again and again to this part of the Oregon coast.

[The foregoing notes, excerpts and comments are based upon the book, "JOURNAL OF ARMY LIFE" by R. Glisan, and published by A. L. Bancroft and Company, San Francisco, 1874. Presumably it is long out of print. I borrowed a copy from the Oregon State Library, Salem. Jan. 12, 1950:—Emil R. Peterson, Route 1, Box 528, North Bend, Oreg.]

TELEPHONE OFFICE HAS NEW LINESMAN

Roy Walters, who has been with the West Coast Telephone company in Coos Bay, has been transferred to Coquille as linesman.

CHI OMEGA SORORITY INITIATES COQUILLE WOMEN

Miss Patty Shaw and Miss Mary Gauntlett, who are attending Oregon State college in Corvallis, were initiated into Chi Omega sorority last week.

In Portland—Mr. and Mrs. Fred McClellan are in Portland this week. Mrs. McClellan is receiving medical attention.

Return From Wheeler—Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Zaddach have returned from Wheeler, Oregon, where they were called by the death of Mr. Zaddach's brother-in-law.

See "Spike" Leslie for insurance of all kinds, phone 5 or 95-L.

Epsilon Sigma Alpha cooked food sale Saturday, Feb. 4, at age's Coquille Electric. Money for Junior Hi Drum and Bugle Corps uniforms.



MRS. MARY MCGILVER, who this month retired after serving as night operator for the West Coast Telephone company in Coquille for close to twenty-four years.

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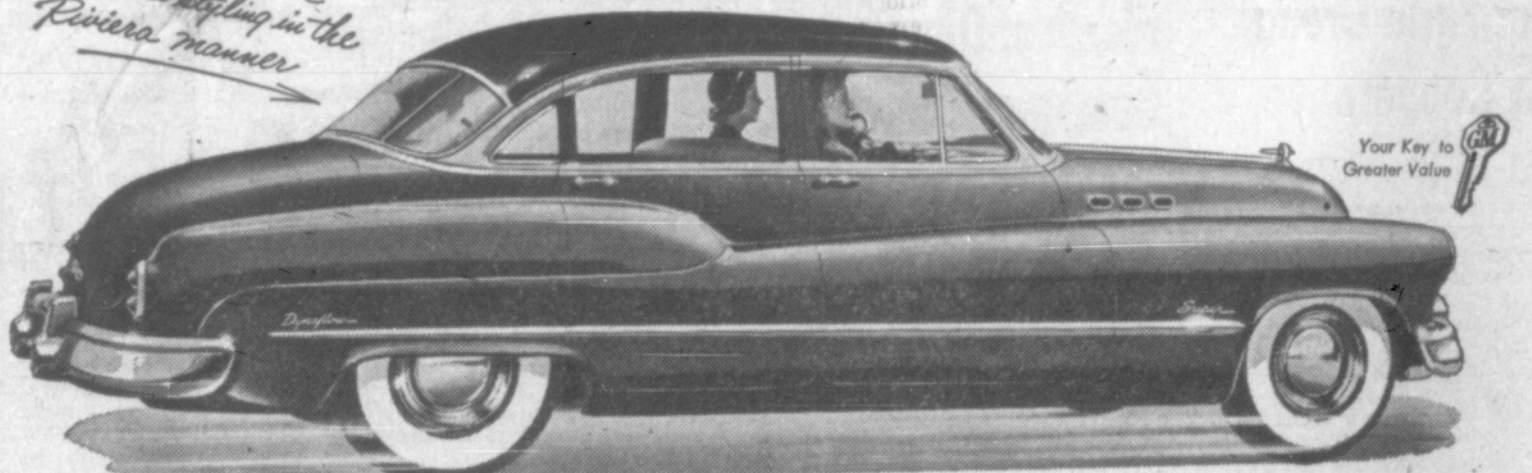
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TWO-WAY STRETCH

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Tune in HENRY J. TAYLOR, ABC Network, every Monday evening.

HERE'S THE NEW 1950 BUICK SUPER 126, companion body-type to the equally new ROADMASTER 130. Both are shorter than last year's 4-door Sedans—yet 4 inches longer in wheelbase. In both, the difference is used to give you real stretch-out room in the rear seat.

What the boys did here really calls for some medals:

We gave them the job of coming up with something that was bigger inside—for room and comfort—longer in wheelbase—always important to good riding qualities—yet unbulky and easy-handling in over-all dimensions.

Just look how well this tidy number meets these "impossible" specifications!

Item one—rear-seat cushions are a full foot wider than last year's SUPERS and ROADMASTERS.

Item two—in every dimension—leg-room, head-room, hip-room, shoulder-room—this rear-seat compartment is bigger than previous models—and nearly four inches longer, fore and aft, than other 1950 Buick interiors.

Item three—wheelbases are the longest of our 1950 line. On the SUPER, it is 125½" instead of 121¼"—on the ROADMASTER 130, it is 126¼".

Yet—and here's where the magic comes in—the whole car is shorter over-all. Actually less from bumper to bumper than previous Buicks in these series.

That means easier parking, easier tucking away in family garages, easier maneuvering in crowded traffic.

There are some other things too. An extra rear-quarter window not found in standard 4-door Sedans. A different upperstructure styling that makes this body-type stand out as something pretty special.

Even special names that let you say, "I drive a SUPER 126" or "Mine's a ROADMASTER 130," just by way of being different.

Yes, we think we hit on a happy idea in the "Longfellows," as they're coming to be known. They are not longer, on the outside, but there's a two-way stretch—in width and length—in the rear compartment.

You're going to like that—as you'll see by calling on your own Buick

dealer. If he doesn't have one on hand, he can get it pretty promptly—and at a price and on a deal you'll have trouble matching, much less beating, anywhere else.

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Features like these mean BUICK'S THE BUY

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EXTRA-WIDE SEATS cradled between the axles.

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