

ORAN ABBEY'S DIARY - 1923

April 4 - Jim and I are leaving Beulah today for Montana.

April 5 - Arrived in Killdeer last night. We got drunk in Zap. Came near staying there. We don't know yet how we'll get to the main line. The stage is loaded. There is snow on the ground this morning. We slept in a depot last night.

April 6 - Just arrived at ___?___ and it's colder than hell. Made Glendive yesterday, but then at 4:30am rode a red-ball out of there. Boylan (?) got tough and we had to kick the hell out of him. He's plumb meek now. We're having quite a time with Boylan. In Dickinson he went into a ___?___ parlor thinking it was a poker ___?___ and asked them what they had in the hole.

April 7 - Met L----? And Jim in a restaurant last night, in Forsythe. They are bums, too. We had a real bedamdest night. Went to bed at 3:00 and slept until 11:00 this morning. L----? And Jim are travelling with us for a ways. We boarded a fast freight for the next division and she sure was a speeder. Whenever any of us got cold, we'd hop off and walk along side of her till we got warm. Had quite a crap game after we left Forsythe. It was Jimmy's lucky day though, and he broke the bunch. Our engine stopped at Custer though, and he set 'em up.

April 8 - Stopped at Laurel, Montana last night. Ate supper with the HiBrow of all the painted women. Yah, they had 'em. We are travelling along the Yellowstone. A most wonderful valley. There is a great big mountain up ahead. We passed a pretty little girl along the track just out of Park City. I yelled at her and she jumped in the air and turned around about three times. When she came down she was four feet from the track. She said, "Gee, you scared me." Then I very politely offered my hand to assist her in the car, but the little whelp stuck her tongue out at me. But she g---? after we ate and bid us a fond farewell before we passed from her. Bless her little heart.

April 9 - We made Livingston for supper last night. Played a few games of 1-15 ball (POOL) in which Jimmy and I were victorious. Then we went out and had to move like hell to catch our train. We landed in Butte this morning at about seven bells. Just before we got to the yards, a kid of about 12 came out and jumped on a car of coal and began heaving her off to beat hell. About the time he had enough, brakeman came along, and as the train had gone by a ways, on the car of coal, they had to uncouple the caboose and load it on again. The kid took a round about way for home.

April 11 - We waited at Butte for a freight from 10:00am till 8:15am. We landed in Deerlodge at 12:00pm. Went up to the RR Restaurant and had lunch. Then we sat along the RR track on the bank of a river, just across from the Pen till 4:15am. At the present time (7:30am) we are 43 miles from Missoula on the bank of another river, side-tracked for some damn thing. I guess we'll have breakfast about noon, if we are lucky.

April 19 - We arrived at Sam's Wednesday, April 11 at about 7:00pm. I had a good time there, stayed a week. The first night we were there, Jimmy's socks were so strong we had to lock them up in the closet and then they kept raising hell so, trying to get out, jumping against the door, etc, that we couldn't sleep. We hunted deer and elk for a day but didn't find anything but a lot of tracks and crap. We also ran the tractor for over a day. We are experienced mechanics now. Think we'll go engineering for the NP. We left Sam's at 9:00 on foot and walked 11 miles before the stage caught us at 11:30, 3 miles from the Potomac.

April 20 - We left Missoula last night at 6:45. This morning at Hope, Idaho a pair of lady bums joined us, but left us at Sand Point. They're from Butte, "Nuff said".

April 21 - Spokane, Washington. Landed here last night at 9:00. Had supper and an opportunity, but was too tired so we went to bed and slept till noon today.

The other night, as we sped along in our Pullman, Jimmy was up jumping around and stomping his feet trying to keep warm while I lay comfortable sleeping. A perfect picture of beauty and innocence. Jim said, "Ain't you cold?" Abbey said (drowsily) "Uh-huh" Jimmy said (disgustedly) "Oh you SOB. You ought to have your ass kicked." Sore as hell 'cause I wasn't cold. We took in a circus today, walked from one end to the other and Gracious! How we blowed ourselves. We are becoming regular spendthrifts. We bought two delicious cones of ice cream at 5 cents a piece and went to a most marvelous show which cost 10 cents per ticket.

Insertion by Jim: That damn Abbey is one awful bonehead. Came along the other day and he says to me, "Oh hell, this must be Sunday, ain't it?" And I says, "Of course you poor bitch. Didn't you know they had a show in Spokane last night?"

April 22 - Monday morning. We left Spokane last night at 7:00pm. Rode all night and arrived at Pasco, Washington this morning. At the present time we are playing in the sand on a cut-bank along the NPRR. This sure is the life. We haven't a care or responsibility in the world. We still have about \$12 and we haven't gone hungry yet. There hasn't been but one night that we haven't slept in a good bed and that was in Killdeer or when we were riding a red-ball.

Continued April 22 - We are for sure 'nuff damn fools. Here we are 32 miles from town. Decided to go to work on a stone crusher and got transferred to the wilderness. Of all the dirty, dusty, filthy rotten places I ever saw, this has them all beat. We shook dust off our bedding for 20 minutes after we got here, and still if we snore it raises a cloud of dust that looks like a dessert sand storm.

April 24 - Our work is as simple as hell, all we have to do is to roll out big rocks and make little ones of them. We have had a half-day of it.

The other half.

I got promoted this afternoon. I'm assistant drill man now. It's a snap, but it won't last. Poor little Jimmie has blisters all over his delicate, little paddies, poor child.

April 26 - I went down to the crusher this morning about 5 minutes before work. Jim came tearing down the road shortly after, with his face all wreathed in smiles. We had found that the timekeeper was going to town, so he told him to figure up our time and we'd go in with him, as we had to have a shave.

April 27 - This morning at 3:00 we left Pasco and landed in Pendleton about 7:00am. Went through Hamley Saddlery and down to the round-up grounds.

At 11:00am we left for LaGrande, the next division point. We had to go through the Blue Mountains and it took till about 2:00am this morning to make a 72 mile trip.

We are going to bed now at the Ronde Valley House and we won't get up till we damn well please tomorrow.

April 28 - Jimmie is still sawing logs. I just got up; it must be 2:00. This burg don't look so bad, but I think we'll catch a train out as soon as we have chuck.

April 29 - Seven of us caught a passenger out of LaGrande last night at 9:30pm. Rode as far as Baker, Oregon. We stopped there to get work and I guess we found too much - Jimmie, the lazy bastard wouldn't take any of it, so we caught a passenger at 12:23 and we are about 47 miles farther. Just as the train started we made a run for it and the Engineer yelled, "Stay off! Stay off!" But we couldn't hear him and we climbed on her anyway.

April 30 - Rode all night last night and arrived in Glenn's Ferry this morning at 9:30. Caught a freight out of there at noon. The drag stopped at Shoshone. We got lunch and climbed back on. A dirty shack tried to bluff some money out of us. We couldn't come across, so he made us get off, but we got back on. He chased us around over the train till we got tired of it and got off. He threatened Jimmie, and Jim has been peeved at the world ever since for not beating up on him.

It's the first we have been kicked off since we've been on the road. If we ever meet that SOB off the RR, we'll buy him a cigar. AMEN.

May 1 - We got a bed in Shoshone last night. Bought it for just one, for 4 bits. Then I happened along as Jim's friend. He took me up to his room and I forgot to come out till the next morning.

We caught a freight from Shoshone and it averaged about 25 per hour. We are now in Pocatello and having a hell of a time to get out. Two trains left right under our noses today. A shack kept us off the first one and a bull off the other. SOB's. We are still in Pocatello waiting for a red-ball.

May 2 - We caught our drag at about ten bells and dodged shacks till we got to Brigham, Utah. There we got kicked off. We came the rest of the way to Ogden on the highway.

May 3 - Arrived in Salt Lake City, Utah last night. Got a bed and a bath for a dollar. Got up this morning at 11:45. Went through the capital building, sat in Brigham Young's chairs and went through the Temple grounds. Are leaving tonight. We are about broke. We bought wieners and a loaf of bread. Went out in the jungles and roasted the wieners. Had quite a feed even if the bread was dry.

May 4 - Caught a freight just as we finished our lunch, made 2 divisions and are in Elko, Nevada. Looking for a job and a square meal.

"LATER"

Didn't find a job nor a meal, either. We had 28 cents and spent that for a hunk of dog and a box of crackers.

May 5 - We found a job this morning going out to a sheep ranch.

May 6 - We are 55 miles out of Elko. Got here yesterday at 3:30, had dinner prepared by a Mexican cook, then chopped some sage brush and put up our teepee. Jimmie is helping the cook today and I'm herding sheep. The outfit has about 3000 head. There are 10 men on the job. Had breakfast at 3:30. Ain't it hell.

"LATER"

Walked at least 20 miles this forenoon and had dinner at 1:30. Ten hours between meals. "More Hell"

Just captured a horned toad, he's a cute little SOB and all I've got to talk to except a Mexican herder. Of the two, I prefer the toad.

We are punching woolies in Nevada

Not cause we wanted to

But cause we had to

Twas a case of being lanky

And it made us awful cranky

And we are still in a rage

Cause we had to hit the sage

We were too honest to steal

But we tried to bum a meal

And the bastard told us no

And for us to onward go

Also that times were good

And that we could labor if we would

And that folks would give us work

But they knew damned well we'd shirk

We said Mister that's all well

But you can go plumb straight to hell

We've managed for years very nice

And we never asked your damned advice

You pot-gut of the idle rich

You're a dirty louse bound SOB

May 17 - Arrived in Roseville, California at 2:30 this morning. 18 miles out of Sacramento.

May 21 - Started work on a steamboat running from Sacramento to Frisco.

May 24 - Left the boat today. Jimmie has hog cholera or colic.

May 28 - Got a job here in Frisco today. We are going to work on the highway. \$4.50 per day. Board \$1.25. We are going to do manual labor for 20 whole damn days. Maybe.

June 4 - Went over on the old country road.

June 5 - Worked on the county road again today. Took ½ hour nooning and arrived home at 4:30.

We've got enough of punching sheep,

We hear them bleating in our sleep.

Our nights are filled with troubled dreams,

Tryin' to manufacture schemes

Of how we can depart

Without bustin' the bosses heart.

June 21 - Yah, we stayed 21 days and made \$130 besides \$18.50 I made in a black jack game.

June 25 - We went to town yesterday and got us a limosene. Now we are broke and back on the same job.

June 26 - We are leaving the Sky Line in the morning. Jimmie quit this afternoon about 1:30. I've been boss on Co----- all buck and Jim has been holding Fresnos.

June 27 - This morning we are going to crank up the Packard, go to Frisco and purchase the rest of our outfit. We have \$30 coming this time.

June 28 - We purchased an auto tent, some provisions, dishes sets, and are now on our way to LA - 443 miles.

We are camping out of Frisco about 30 miles. Our Cadillac is working grand.

June 29 - Left camp at 10:00 yesterday. Went through Redwood, San Jose, Gilroy, and other very small towns and stopped at Salinas about 125 miles out of SF. Drove about 100 miles or so yesterday. We got a job driving nails at an Army Post 5 miles out of Salinas. 8 hours per day, 60 cents per hour and \$1.00 per day for board. We have to wash our own dishes though. Ain't it hell.

June 29 - Yet - we had a golden opportunity today. Leut Stafford offered to let us work some over time after supper, but "Calamity Jim" thought it wouldn't be right to work 8 hours and take the work away from some poor folks who needed the money.

(Insertion)

Since we left Missoula we have only slept indoors 11 nights. Since April 19. There was some more I wanted to say, but I forgot it.

We haven't heard from ND since we left Nevada, or I have not. Jimmie got a letter when we first came to Frisco. I've had several letters form Mother and Ruth. If the ND folks don't want to write, they can go to hell damn 'em all.

July 2 - Had a terrific water battle last night.

July 4 - No firecrackers, no pink lemonade, no ice cream, no nothing but a lot of damn nails to drive. "Ain't it hell". We had a most brain-racking, blood-curdling battle. We don't know what it was about, but it was Jimmie's fault I'm sure. Those Other Champions, Dempsey and Gibbons are also fighting today. Last night we had an encounter that, could you have seen, it would have fairly caused your hair to

stand on end, your eyes to bulge with horror and your knees to quiver and become wobbly. "The Cause"

James got fully a half-inch of his elbow and part of one foot on my half of the bed, damn his heart. Then he said that I had more than my share, isn't that incredulous. ME, with all my innocence and love of peace and good fellowship accused thus. Could anyone expect me to accept such slander without offering resistance. The battle then began. All over the tent from top to bottom, from side to side we fought till at last I was able to mount his carcass with an air of Lordship.

July 9 - We are through tonight at the Army Post and will leave Salinas in the morning. I guess. We have worked 10 ½ days. Made \$100.80 before deducting our board. Have made \$512.55 or rather have had that much since we left home. Jimmie ate a red pepper the other day by accident. He don't think it was funny, but I do. We don't get along very good 'cause he's too ornery and scolds me too much.

July 12 - We went to Monterey from the Army Post. The oldest city in California. Took in the 17 mile drive. The scenery was great, part of it was along the coast. We camped on the outskirts of Pacific Grove. Jimmie became angry with me and threw the axe at me. It accidentally missed me.

We came back through Salinas from Pacific Grove and are on our way to LA. Made 100 miles yesterday on 6 gallons of gas. Swede is with us. He's a carpenter we were with at the Army Post. He is buying us a tire for a ride to LA. We also have 3 suitcases, the tent, bed, two extra tires, our provisions, our clothing, 3 extra pair of shoes and a lot of other junk. It's about the equivalent of 5 men and then the Ford made almost 27 miles per gallon of gas. Ain't that wonderful. A dog got into our grub box last night, and ate the cheese, bacon, buns, and cookies, damn 'im. The first fat dog we see, we are going to have for dinner.

July 19 - Well, we arrived in LA Friday the 13th and hadn't been in the city an hour before we were arrested twice. We were supposed to report at the Police Headquarters within 24 hours. We decided to be independent and let them look us up if they wanted us. They haven't found us yet. One charge was for parking close to the fireplug. And the other for not having our registrations or transfer card on the car.

We only came through one town of importance on our way down from Salinas, Santa Barbara. San Louis Obispo was a fair sized burg. We camped just out of there one night.

July 20 - We went to Signal Hill yesterday to the oil fields for a job but failed to secure employment. Signal Hill is within the city of Long Beach. We went from there to Watson. They told us that we might get on if we got up at 3:30 this morning and came down here. We are still without a "yob". They say we can get on if we stick around. We'll see.

I got a letter from Carmichael's yesterday. The first since we've left Nevada.

On the way down from Frisco we each ate a box of strawberries about 3 times a day. Sometimes Jimmie likes salt on his instead of sugar. We had a passenger from Salinas, a big Swede, Axel Hedburg is his name.

Last Tuesday, the 17th, we went out to the beach at Venice and took a dip, sure enjoyed it. Haven't cared for any salt in our meals since, though, got plumb stocked up.

July 23 - This is Jimmie's birthday. He's 21, feels big as hell. I think he'll try to vote for something or somebody tonight or tomorrow. I'm glad he's of age at last. I won't be compelled to take anymore of his lip. Until now, I've had to submit to his nastiness without raising a hand because California law deals harshly with anyone who abuses a minor. But now I'll sure raise hell with him.

We are working for the Shell Oil Co. or rather the Bent Bros. (Contractors). I'm dumping fresnos and Jimmie is driving. Started work here July 20. Our hours are from 5 in the morning till 3:00pm. We eat breakfast at 4:00am. Dinner at 9:30am and supper at 4:15. They run two shifts and \$5 per day. Board \$1.35 per day. We went over to see the Wright's yesterday, or rather to see Irene. Jimmie did, I think, but she is married, I think. Things are kind of funny there. We can't figure out who her man is, anyway we aren't going back.

July 24 - Jimmie is terribly innocent for a boy of 21 years of age. He doesn't understand the anatomy of a goat at all.

A Mexican asked me today what state ND was in, Colorado or Chicago. I explained that it was a state of it's self. He then asked if it wasn't the other side of New York. We went to church with the folks a week ago last Sunday and there enjoyed wine, women and song. When the wine came by I was dreadfully worried Jimmie would take some and then get a cramp in his elbow.

July 29 - Ancient History - There never was but one time where Jimmie and I worked together that we got along alright.

Mexico line and about 30 miles from Gallup, NM.

It rained too much today. We have had some tough roads, mud a yard deep. We've got our bed laid down in the mud. It's nice and soft anyway.

There are some other tourists here, too. They sure are nice folks. We had a chuck together tonight. They are from Kansas.

We slept in the car last night and the night before.

We stopped last night about 12 miles the other side of Holbrook. A bridge was washed out and we had to wait until this morning to cross.

The other day we passed 7 or 8 big cars that had slid off in the ditch, just the other side of Seligman. Our Ford is all right even if it is ornery at times.

We had an awful time at Needles trying to stop our oil from leaking.

Just before we got to Topock, Arizona we gave a garageman \$5 to turn on our gas. We broke a spring between Barstow and Ludlow, California. I guess we have troubles as well as the folks back home. The other night Jim went to sleep driving the car and run into the ditch. We just stayed right there till morning. That was 5 miles the other side of Flagstaff, Arizona.

There are a band of Indians about a ½ mile from where we are camping tonight. They are holding a powwow tonight.

August 12 - Tonight we are camped at Blue Water, NM. Almost 8 miles this side of the Great Divide and 833 miles from LA. We only made 80 miles today. The roads are about as bad as they make 'em. We are still travelling with the same people we were with yesterday.

August 13 - Our friends are still travelling with us. Mother is mending my shirt at present. They sure are fine people. We drove from Blue Water, NM today to Santa Domingo, NM. The roads have improved a heap. Our good roads started about 30 miles the other side of Los Lunas. Drove 156 miles.

August 14 - San Domingo - 5:30am. We have had breakfast and will soon be ready to ride. Jimmie didn't get up first. We go over Hair Pin grade the first thing this morning. It has 27 turns in a mile and a half and an elevations of 2000 feet. 98 miles from LA. Crossed the Rio Grande River twice yesterday.

We are now on the La Bajada Hair Pin grade. I just took a picture of it.

"LATER" We are now in Las Vegas, NM. 87 cents is our whole capital. We are looking for work. Just left Sheperds. They turn off our trail at Trinidad.

August 15 - Well, we didn't get work in Las Vegas. Spent 23 cents for stamps and drinks, so I guess we'll live cheap for today. We are going to try to make Raton on what gas and oil we have. It's about 100 miles from Las Vegas, and as we drove til 9 o'clock last night we are over halfway. The roads are fine. It's all prairie here and as level as can be. Jimmie is still asleep, he won't get up till "Ol Sol" warms things up a batch.

We could have gone to work for a road outfit just out of Las Vegas, good wages too. 11 hours per day at 30 cents per hour. And maybe sometimes they would let us get in a full day by working overtime. We didn't stop by a damned sight. "No Sir" Not with all this 55 cents in our pockets. We have to be almost broke before we'll go to work at common labor anyhow.

Well, we are about broke. Our capital has gradually disappeared. We found a new two-dollar waterbag and when we got to Raton I sold it at a second-hand store for 4 bits. So we were able to make it to Trinidad, Colorado. We had fried spuds for supper and oatmeal for breakfast. We didn't have dinner, but it wasn't because we

couldn't for we had enough oatmeal left for a lunch at least. We didn't care much for it though, 'cause there wasn't any milk or sugar for it.

I picked an orange as we came over the Rocky Mountains between Raton and Trinidad.

We went up to the Chamber of Commerce and got a job as a couple of ranchers. Jimmie is to work for Hughes and I'm going to work for Walker. We'll be 2 miles apart and 14 miles from town.

We hope supper will be ready when we get there. Not because we are hungry, but because we believe in the regularity of meals.

August 22 - We left Trinidad the 19th, Sunday afternoon, or rather left the ranchers. Jimmie worked for Gregory instead of Hughes.

We made 213 miles from Trinidad to Denver, came through Pueblo. We are now in Greeley, Colorado looking hard for a job. Trying the canning factory. Don't know how we'll come out. We had 17 cents to buy our supper last night, but it only took 11 cents of it. We got bread with that. Not bred - but bread. A half loaf was all there was on this menu. There will be less today. We will have to quit tonight to get our money so as to eat. We slept in the car last night on Main Street. The day we left Walkers a bee stung me on the little finger, it's swelled yet. Jimmie thinks it's funny, but I don't.

August 23 - We went to work at the canning factory yesterday morning at the rate of 30 cents per hour. 10 hours per day and more if we wanted to work. Of course we wanted to - like hell. I swiped 3 cans of peas in the afternoon and prevented starvation. And last night we threw a whole 6 gallon case of cherries out the door by mistake, of course, and later we went around there looking for an old box for campfire, and lo and behold, there were all these cherries. They got stuck in the box we wanted for fire, and we just had to take them, to get the box, we sure hated it too, 'cause they were so heavy to carry.

Well one day was enough to can beans. They tried to can 'em all in one day. It seemed that they knew we wouldn't stay long and they were going to do it all while we were there.

We got a check a piece for \$2.92 for 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours work and left Greeley, Colorado.

We traveled about 50 miles and burned out our lights. We were just 4 or 5 miles out of Cheyenne, Wyoming. So we camped till morning.

We drove into Cheyenne this morning and then east to Kimball, Nebraska.

August 24 - We learned of a couple of jobs from a red-headed young heifer. We don't love her much. Our jobs are about 20 miles north of Kimball - right on our road. Jimmie is working for Nelson and I'm working for Blake. We're farming, also we are getting along fine. We are three miles apart though. Perhaps that's the

reason I sowed wheat today, and tonight, just as I was ready to quit, my team run away and busted the drill all to hell. The team run into a fence and 2 horses got each side of the fence and "My goodness gracious, land sakes, Well! I just do says" How they did mow down cedar posts. It was most interesting as long as it lasted. They didn't hurt the drill such an awful lot. Just busted up the box, bent the axel, broke a wheel, broke the tongue, a single tree, 3 or 4 castings, and the harness was tore up considerably. The boss didn't can me yet. I'm going to quit tomorrow night. We're only getting \$3 per day.