

# CHARLIE ZIEGLER

## Interviewed by Ivan Donaldson — 1967

Ivan: Today, we will have an interview with Mr. Charlie Ziegler, who came to this region — When did you come to this region, Charlie?

Charlie: 1907.

Ivan:: From what State?

Charlie: Washington. I came up here from Kelso, Cowlitz County.

Ivan: And from whence did you come from the east? Where? Nebraska. You were born there? In what year?

Charlie: Do I have to tell? 1879.

Ivan: This interview will pertain to ferries Mr. Ziegler has known in the Northwest since he came out here near the turn of the century. What year did you come out here from Nebraska?

Charlie: 1898.

Ivan: And we might first start with the ferries you have known on the Columbia, will you?

Charlie: I don't know any exact date. I know the ferries that were running when I was here

Ivan: Those are the ones we want.

Charlie: I know one ferry Charlie Smith was operating from Stevenson to Cascade Locks (inaudible). Prior to 1926.

Ivan: And this was run by Charlie: Smith - 1907. Do you have any knowledge of when he might have started the ferry?

Charlie: No, I haven't.

Ivan: And the ferry continued until the bridge was completed in 1926?

Charlie: That's right. He also had a ferry at The Dalles.

Ivan: Did he also have other ferries up river?

Charlie: Well, that's up river.

Ivan: Beyond the Dalles?

Charlie: None that I know of.

Ivan: Vantage, or any place up there?

Charlie: None that I know of.

Ivan: Did you know of any ferries below Cascade Locks on the Columbia?

Charlie: No, The Astoria ferry.

Ivan: How long had it been in operation?

Charlie: I don't know.

Ivan: Let us return to Charlie Smith at Cascade Locks for a moment. Was this a powered ferry? Did it have a motor in it, propeller driven, or was it current driven?

Charlie: Propeller. He had a motor in it.

Ivan: Do you remember some of the operators he had — as Charlie Rosenbach?

Charlie: He operated it mostly himself. Charlie Rosenbach worked part time.

Ivan: And did they have trouble when there was an east wind or with ice in the water?

Charlie: No, when it was frozen over they could not operate.

Ivan: You've seen the river frozen over?

Charlie: I've walked across on it.'

Ivan: Where?

Charlie: Right here.

Ivan: Cascade Locks-Stevenson vicinity?

Charlie: I don't know what year it was.

Ivan: Just one year? Have you seen it frozen over any other time?

Charlie: Not completely,

Ivan: What year would you estimate when you walked across? Just guesstimate.

Charlie: Oh, between 1912 and 1916, I don't know exactly.

Ivan: You are aware that the Tahoma with Captain Nelson was stuck in the ice down below Multnomah Falls in 1916, when they had the valuable bull on board? Could that have been the year?

Charlie: No, I don't — it possibly was, but I don't remember anything about that. In fact, I never heard of it.

Ivan: It was stuck there in the ice for six weeks and . . .

Charlie: Yes, that was the year.

Ivan: Was it. Very well. Anyway, they had to take feed to this bull and he was an ornery, mean critter I've heard. All right now. But in your movements over the estates up in the western portion of Washington you must have known other ferries also.

Charlie: Well, they built a bridge at Kelso in early years, but I don't know what year it was. I know the bridge was in operation in 19--. The reason I know there was no crossing at Kelso. The company I was with skidded a donkey at Collins(?) between Kelso and Castle Rock and had a mill there. It was the only mill that cut timbers 50 and 60 feet long.

Ivan: Those were long pieces of wood,

Charlie: Yes.

Ivan: Where did they have a market for this type of lumber?

Charlie: Mostly in the shipyards.

Ivan: Building boats?

Charlie: And ship masts, of course.

Ivan: About what year was this?

Charlie: 1904.

Ivan: How long did they continue cutting such long timbers?

Charlie: Oh, I don't really know about that. I wasn't around there very much. That's where I met my wife. That was in 1904. We were married in 1905. It's a long time ago.

Ivan: Then you entered the logging industry?

Charlie: Well, I didn't the first year — whatever I could get to earn a few dollars. I worked on . . .

Ivan: On the Columbia?

Charlie: Opposite Cape Horn and I went to work, maybe 6 months. I went into the woods in my 20th year. I made the high sum of \$1.75 a day, 10 hours.

Ivan: Well, 17¢ cents an hour. Now, you spoke of this bridge or river across which you skidded a donkey and . . .

Charlie: I didn't skid across the river because at Collins there was no ferry there. The people living at Collins at the opposite side, they used row boats.

Ivan: No ferry?

Charlie: No, I don't think they ever had a ferry. Not to my knowledge. In the dry season they had a fjord there; they fjorded the river. In fact, I fjorded the river with a wagon. I fjorded the river at one time.

Ivan: About what point on the river was this?

Charlie: At Collins six miles north of Kelso.

Ivan: And did you know any other ferries in the Pacific Northwest?

Charlie: Well, only in Portland; no bridges in Portland.

Ivan: In 1907 there was no bridge in Portland?

Charlie: They had a big ferry. In fact, I spliced the cable there for that ferry.

Ivan: This was a cable ferry? Yes. No power on the ferry?

Charlie: I don't remember about that.

Ivan: I see. No bridge across in 1907. How many ferries did they have, would you estimate?

Charlie: Well, this was the lower end, St. Johns. They called it the St. Johns Ferry.

Ivan: There were ferries above that though?

Charlie: None that I know of.

Ivan: No? Would it not seem reasonable that they would have other ferries where the city proper was located?

Charlie: I wouldn't know that. I presume that if it was necessary they would have, but the population was mostly on the west side of the Willamette. There was very little on the east side.

Ivan: Then the east side grew up later.

Charlie: But the biggest ferry that I ever mentioned was the one from Vancouver across to the Oregon side and back. I hauled malt for a dairyman from the brewery in Vancouver.

Ivan: They had a brewery in Vancouver?

Charlie: Had one old horse that was blind . . .

Ivan: Feel around with the front feet when he stepped off the ferry? And you hauled malt over to Portland?

Charlie: Yeah, to a dairyman. He had about 120 milk cows — fellow by the name of Henry Roth.

Ivan: He would use this exhausted malt to feed his cattle?

Charlie: Yes. As a side issue he had other feed, of course, but they loved that malt. I didn't care so much about the malt because I never fell very heavy for beer. e They used to bring beer out while they loaded the malt. The beer tasted awful. I didn't like it and I never have cared for it.

Ivan: Was there just one ferry there at that time, Charlie?

Charlie: Yes, just one.

Ivan: What year was this?

Charlie: 1920-(1921).

Ivan: Was there a railroad bridge there at this time?

Charlie: By golly, you've got me. No, there wasn't. But the big ferry that I wanted to mention was between Kalama and Goble on the Columbia where the Northern Pacific train crossed to the Oregon side. There was no railroad on, from Vancouver north, and when they put a road in there they called it the milk route. It took all day to go one way — from Vancouver to Kalama.

Ivan: Was this a train ferry you spoke of?

Charlie: Train ferry.

Ivan: It ferried trains from the Oregon shore over to Kalama?

Charlie: And Kalama to Oregon shore. But I crossed on that ferry, my wife and I, in 1905. The last time I crossed it. I don't know how long it was in operation.

Ivan: I think that can be determined by study of historical notes, because the Transcontinental train came through in 1883 to Portland and I believe shortly . . .

Charlie: Continental train? From the east?

Ivan: Yes, in 1883. This must have been quite a sizeable ferry to take railroad cars and locomotives?

Charlie: Oh, yes they did take the locomotives and the whole train.

Ivan: Entire train? How many cars?

Charlie: Well, it depended on how many were in use. Holidays there were a good many.

Ivan: Might have taken the locomotive and four or five cars then?

Charlie: Yes, whatever, I don't remember now, I just rode in one.

Ivan: And was this a powered ferry?

Charlie: Oh, yes, up to date. It had a good polish on it.

Ivan: That was a remarkable ferry then of that size, and that crossed between Kalama and Goble?

Charlie: Yes.

Ivan: By that time the railroad had been extended down from Portland to Goble on the Oregon side?

Charlie: Yes, to Astoria, I believe so.

Ivan: We can establish that date from study of history books.

Charlie: I think so. Astoria was a very popular place even in earlier days.

Ivan: Do you recall any other ferries on the Columbia?

Charlie: No, I don't Ivan. I was always doin' somethin' besides keeping that stuff. I'd have done a lot better if I had just had a book to keep track of that.

Ivan: Oh, yes. A diary would have been most interesting and valuable historically.

Charlie: All I ever tried to do was find a place to sleep and eat.

Ivan: Well, a noble occupation. Did you get down to the Willamette Valley at all, to see any ferries down there?

Charlie: Yeah. I didn't know of any. I wasn't down there in the early days. The only time I was down in the Willamette Valley was the time my partner and I — in the winter of '21 — we wanted to go to Tillamook—and we took the train to North Yamhill. It was 55 miles from North Yamhill to Tillamook City, and we shipped our belongings on the stage, a 4-horse stage and the road was just like this. They changed horses at the ½ way, and we had dinner at ½-way, but we had left at daylight — before daylight. We made through the 52 miles without any rest.

Ivan: What time did you get in at night?

Charlie: 8 o'clock. When they got to the divide they had, ah, we could see them lights of Tillamook City and we didn't walk, we trotted.

Ivan: By this time you were on foot then?

Charlie: All the way. Yeah, we walked it - 52 miles.

Ivan: But you sent your baggage by stage. That's quite a walk.

Charlie: When we started out in March, we shipped our stuff by boat to Portland, no, to Astoria, and we walked it, 40 some miles from Garibaldi, that's the lower end of Tillamook Bay, and we got down to the Chehalis, no, what is that river? Anyway, there was a fellow on the boat there. He was an Indian.

Ivan: An Indian running the ferryboat on this stream?

Charlie: A rowboat. Took us across, and charged a dollar apiece. That liked to broke our hearts. After we got to the \_\_\_\_\_ House about 4-o'clock that afternoon we thought, well, we're gonna' get our dinner, and we went up and rapped on the door. A lady came to the door - very pleasant. We asked if we could get somethin' to eat. Told her we'd walked from Garibaldi. Well, she says, "You know this hotel's closed during the winter months. I want to ask you do you like fish?" We told her we love fish. She says my husband caught a steelhead in Elk Creek this morning before he left, and we started to lick our chops, you know. She says, "I can prepare that fish in an hour if you want to rest."

Ivan: And she baked it in an hour?

Charlie: And had potatoes boiled with the skins on. She said, "Alright, you fellows can eat now, what there is." Had lots of coffee. Well, we cleaned up that steel-head. It weighed probably 8 or 9 pounds.

Ivan: I suspect that you were hungry?

Charlie: Oh, boy, a 42-39 mile walk. We got up to leave and I says, "What do I owe you?" "35 cents apiece." I says, "Here's a dollar, God bless your heart all that work, it was worth four times that much," We walked on up to Astoria that evening, and went to a hotel and stayed over there. That was an awful (?) I'll never forget it.

Ivan: And what ferries were there across the river at Bonneville during the construction time?

Charlie: That was Smith's ferry, but none of us used it. They had an over head skiff, great large box built like a scow, it takes 20-25 men.

Ivan: It would lift you up in the air, aerial tramway. Well, did not Bill Sams run some kind of a launch during construction of the dam?

Charlie: I don't know whether he did or not. Fact, I knew very little about Sams. I



know most of them now.

Ivan: You're aware that Bill served as my boatman on the fish mortality patrols for many years, I came to know Bill very well, and he helped me prepare the manuscript of Fishwheels of The Columbia. Actually, he's more the author than I am. \_\_\_\_\_ putting it together and knowledge from him and Eric Enquist. Did you know Charlie Olin here on the river at Cascade Locks? He was a fisherman who had a set net right there at the downstream navigation locks channel?

Charlie: Charlie Olin? That's a very familiar name. Oh, I had a feller working for me in the woods name of Olin. I knew the operator of the fishwheel. What was his name?

Ivan: Ed Cook?

Charlie: All I know he had a couple of red headed boys, Roy and Unar Al Hendricks? Yeah, I knew him well. He's given me many a fish.

Ivan: He worked at the dam in later years after the dam took away his livelihood on the fishwheels. He then joined the Corps on the fishways until he retired.

Charlie: Well, I never stole any \_\_\_\_\_ but a lot of fellows round here that did.

Ivan: Did he operate the wheel above the rapids or below the rapids, which one?

Charlie: Well, the one below the rapids was run by, I think, Peterson. They lived right there at Shadow Lake.

Ivan: Very likely.

Charlie: You know one thing that kinda sticks in my craw — down to them wheels they always took a sledge hammer — left 'em there — see why. It was dangerous to go in that box with these big sturgeon; they get excited they'd beat a man to death.

Ivan: Those wheels, particularly that one below the rapids, caught a great many sturgeon?

Charlie: Yes. They'd knock 'em in the head and push 'em out of the way.

Ivan: Why you do that?

Charlie: Well, he says, "If I don't, they come right back."

Ivan: In other words they were just destroying them, just killing them? Were there many large ones?

Charlie: Oh, some of them the limit.

Ivan: Hmm, 8 or 10 feet in length?

Charlie: Yes.

Ivan: We had records of some sturgeon being caught cut in twain (two) by the turn of the rotor. They could not get down through the chute into the fish box.

Charlie: That's possible.

Ivan: You've actually seen those large sturgeon in Wheel 19?

Charlie: There were 3 or 4 sturgeon about carrying weight size by (it took) two men (to) put into Shadow Lake, and they got to be huge.

Ivan: You've seen them then?

Charlie: Yes, I've tried to catch 'em. One time I put on, well, I didn't have any bait, couldn't get any bait or \_\_\_\_\_ told me he wanted them out of there. Told him I'd put out a set line. I had some chickens and I tied them \_\_\_\_\_ grew along the bank. I had a heavy cord. 100-120 some test, and I, well, it was two days before I went down there. When I went down there this \_\_\_\_\_ was all torn up just like somebody'd grubbed it.

Ivan: You mean you'd hooked a sturgeon and he'd pulled the line and pulled this brush out?

Charlie: He didn't break the line but he'd pulled the brush out. But any metal that goes into a sturgeon's stomach, it deteriorates in a short time, an acid of some kind.

Ivan: This is true.

Charlie: I caught one in Garrison Eddy one time, had a big knot in his middle like he had swallowed a hook, and I just turned him loose.

Ivan: You mean the hook had caused some kind of growth, a tumor or abscess?

Charlie: Well, I didn't know. I didn't want to have anything to do with it.

Ivan: This growth was apparent though, externally?

Charlie: Yeah, the nylon leader, part of it was hangng out of his mouth, so I knew there was a hook somewhere. You see a sturgeon's throat here is different from a lot of other things there's a knot here. Anything gets over that never comes back up the same way. Pete had a pond there and he had a hatchery, I helped him out on the hatchery. In fact, I got him started. He didn't know anything about it.

Ivan: This was Mr. Peterson?

Charlie: Yes. He had some rainbows that I'd spawned for him and he put 'em in a pond. Oh, just a small place about ½ the size of this little garden out here. He had a 3-ft. sturgeon he took out of the wheel and he wanted to keep it, see if it could see, and he put it in that pond and he had his fish counted. He had plenty of fish in the pond: rainbow, like that.

Ivan: 14-15 inches long?

Gharlie: Yes, and he went out one day and saw half a fish laying there. He'd (the sturgeon) broke it in two to get it down.

Ivan: The sturgeon had attempted to swallow this big trout and chewed it in two?

Charlie: Had to, to get over that lump

Ivan: In the sturgeon's throat?

Charlie: He found out the sturgeon was awful fat and he counted his fish and they were about ½ gone.

Ivan: I'm glad to hear this because I've always maintained that sturgeon are predatory, as well as scavengers.

Charlie: Of course, they are. Anything that will hold still long enough to get that mouth over it why . . .

Ivan: I know. They can make a sudden inrush of water by just opening the gills and mouth and this way just inhale — so to speak — inhale the fish.

Charlie: Yes, there were some pretty good sturgeon, but I guess they're pretty well thinned out.

Ivan: Do you know when Charlie first started that ferry at The Dalles ?

Charlie: No, I don't Ivan, I've crossed on it. The one at Cascade Locks I know you could find out from Esson.

Ivan: Esson would know?

Charlie: You can call him if you want.

Ivan: Now, I'm taping this interview for a lady up at Arlington who is preparing a history of the ferries of the northwest. We will transcribe this to paper and send it up to her. She knows Esson Smith. Therefore, she can gain that information from Esson. She may already have done so. I know she has had interviews with Charlie Smith and Esson and probably has that information already.

Charlie: Charlie Smith's dead isn't he?

Ivan: Yes, a few months ago,

Charlie: Time goes so fast.

Ivan: Could be.

Charlie: I've talked with Esson and Charlie: should have had quite a fortune. Esson said he gave all his money to charity.

Ivan: I understand that he and Frank Reed always had a fist fight.

Charlie: I came purt-near witnessing that.

Ivan: I've been told that.

Charlie: Smith was very aggressive, if he thought he had a chance.; And Charlie Smith had a (different?) wife then, Esson's mother. She had quite a bit of \_\_\_ about her . . . don't know how much she . . . to Charlie; but she . . . Charlie Smith was fishing, there's the way I got it.

Ivan: Where?

Charlie: Down near Reed's Island somewhere in there, close to Corbett, and they got into an argument. Smith, he invited Frank down, told him he'd knock his head off or something like that. Frank went down there and was standing in the water. Frank got in a good lick and knocked old Charlie in the water and he was under. Frank picked him up, put him on his feet and hit him again. Smith finally said, "That's enough." Smith was pretty aggressive. He had a little mill up here. He had one of the Fosters logging for him; couldn't get any

logs. His partner, old B. Bobitt went into the mill business with him and he built it like up on a bunch of toothpicks. I told him it would shake to pieces. Finally got to going; couldn't get any logs. Bobbitt came down said, "What 'er you doin'?" I wasn't working at the time and he says, "I'll give you \$10 a day if you'll keep that mill in logs." I said, "You've a man." He said, "You bring that boy up and he'll run the donkey there by the mill — Ray, 14 years old." The timber was felled the wrong way so I moved the donkey around and got it to going and the logging crew was setting around all the time. So Glen, my son, age 10, went up to punch whistle, No school — summertime. When we settled up I said, "What are you going to pay Glen? Whistle punks wages are \$3 per day." He said, "Oh, I thought he was just there to help you." I says, "You take it over." So I met him a few days after that on the road — he had an old car — I says: "The kid wants his money." He says, "What money?" I says, "Whatever it is. You've got his time and I have. "Can't pay it." Him bein' a fightin' man I was kinda scared.

Ivan: You, with 220 lbs. scared, wow?

Charlie: I reached up and grabbed him by the shoulder and set him down on the road. I says, "You gonna' pay the kid?" He says, "Yes, I'll pay him."

Ivan: You had me fooled there for a minute: 220 pounds of rawhide scared. I understand he was about 5 ft. 6 in. tall?

Charlie: He was more than that. Oh, he was probably about 5 ft. 8 or 9 inches. He was the biggest bluffer in the world. \_\_\_\_\_ horse racing \_\_\_\_\_. On the 4th of July\_\_\_\_, he bet on the wrong horse and lost his money; got to crabbin' about it. Con Lundy, him and Con got into it and that was quite a bout there. It was pretty good.

Ivan: They ended in fisticuffs?

Charlie: Yes. Con was quite a man. Smith, he made a swipe at Con, Con ducked and hit old Art Foster — blacked his eye and knocked him down. Art was crabbin' about that. Smith reached in his pocket and got a \$10 bill. He said will that fix it up?

Ivan: Did you ever hear the story about this particular individual, not naming him here, who was taking fish out of one of Frank Reed's fishwheels down near Corbett and . . .

Charlie: What's the matter naming him. I might know him?

Ivan: You know him quite well. You set him down a moment ago. Well, I guess Frank Reed opened the shot gun on them, sprinkled them pretty liberally

with shot. I had a tape recording of this story from Frank Reed telling about it. Do you know any more ferries, Charlie?

Charlie: I don't know any fairy tales even.

Ivan: Did you get up around Puget Sound at all?

Charlie: No. Oh, I've been up there.

Ivan: But did you observe any ferries in that region? (inaudible.)

Ivan: I could put on another reel, but this has to do primarily with ferries.