

a conversation with

Eugene Brady

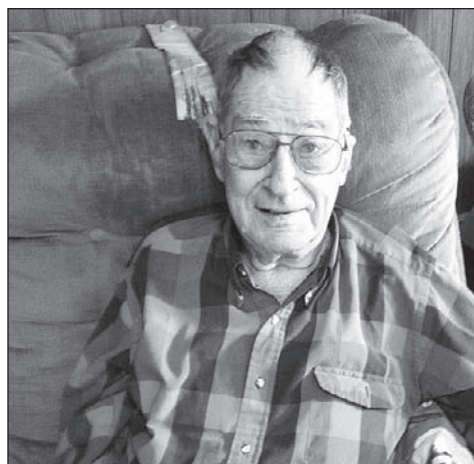
Gulf Oil Pump Station, CCC, and World War II

Those of us living in and around Pulaski County become used to a certain landscape. The natural landscape consists of high hills and deep hollows in the south and a gently rolling prairie in the northern section. And, of course, lots of trees. The built landscape, particularly in the rural areas, features primarily one story bungalows. The largest structures are usually barns. Imagine the surprise while driving a rural state route near Nebo to see looming ahead two large rusty oil tanks. They might belong in some refinery town or along the Mississippi, not sitting so out of place in the pastoral countryside of Laclede County on Highway U. But there they were, as out of place as two flying saucers.

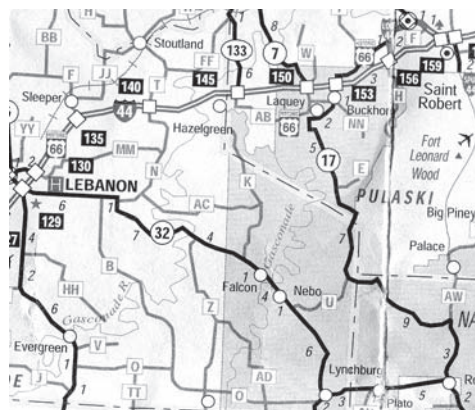
We asked Bob Morgan if he knew anything about these tanks. Bob and Dorma Morgan told *Gazette* readers about the cattle roundup on Fort Leonard Wood when it was closed in the late 1940s (see the 2010 *Old Settlers Gazette*). Bob said we needed to talk to Eugene Brady, who lived near the old pumping station.

A few days later, we located Mr. Brady's tidy brick farm house. We waited a few minutes on the porch after unanswered knocks, enjoying the smell of a mid-October day. As we were about to leave, a white flatbed truck skidded into place in the front yard. Bounding out of the cab of the truck was Mr. Brady, a nonagenarian. He had been cutting a "jag" of firewood for the cooling nights. He asked what he could do for us.

We set a date to interview Mr. Brady about the pumping station. It turned out he knew a lot more than that. Mr.



Eugene Brady



Gulf Oil Corporation bought 45 acres between State Routes 32 and 17. The crude oil pump station was erected on the north side of what became Route U, located about where the "U" is on the map.

Brady was one of the "boys" in the Pulaski County Civilian Conservation Corps Camp near the small community of Palace. He also served in the United States Army in World War II in the Pacific, a member of Tom Brokaw's "greatest generation."

Eugene Brady has lived more than nine decades, a life he characterized as "one lucky thing after another." Also present at the November 1, 2010 interview was his daughter, Marsha Prock.

Brady: My name is Eugene Dewitt Brady. I was born a quarter mile from this place which I own now. I was born on February 16th, 1916.

OSG: How long have you lived here?

Brady: Well, take off the 13 years that I was away and I have been here the rest

GULF COMPANY TO BUILD FINE PLANT
Site Purchased Near Nebo
For New \$250,000
Pump Station

Laclede County has been selected for the site of another \$250,000 pumping station, announcement having been made yesterday of the purchase of a 20-acre tract of land by the Gulf Refining Co., for the location of its new station. The site is four and one-half miles east of Nebo and will be within two and one-half miles of the proposed location of the farm-to-market highway in that section.

The land was purchased from the Greenleaf estate.

It is reported that work will be started on the new pumping station within a few weeks. The company has been engaged for several week in obtaining rights-of-way for its pipe line and several condemnation suits have been filed against various property owners in the territory through which the line will pass.

Lebanon Rustic, September 25, 1930.



These large rusted oil tanks dominate the abandoned tract of land that was once the site of the Gulf Oil crude oil pumping station. Photos by Terry Primas.

of my life.

OSG: What did you do for a living?

Brady: Farm.

OSG: What can you tell us about the pump station?

Brady: Well, I can tell you anything and everything.

OSG: Tell us what you know.

Brady: It was built in 1931, the fall and winter of '31. It operated until up until, oh, I'd say, until the 1960s, maybe the 1970s.

OSG: And the purpose? Who built it?

Brady: Well, it was the Gulf Oil Company. They came through and surveyed a line through here and then they came back with another surveying, laid out the pump station here on the hill.

OSG: What did they pump through it?

Brady: Crude oil.

OSG: Is that the only thing that has gone through it?

Brady: As far as I know. Now when they quit, then telecommunications laid a line through the pipe.

OSG: Were there people who worked here at the station?

Brady: There was seven regular employees, plus they always had one or two local people working doing extra outside jobs.

OSG: What were their duties?

Brady: They had a telegraph operator and an engineer to run the engine. Then the extra people like myself, I worked there some, were digging ditches or going out and fixing a pipe leak or this or that.

OSG: Where did the oil go from here?

Brady: Well, it went plum on through to the east coast, I guess. Went on up north, anyway.

OSG: Do you remember when they were building it [pump station]?

Brady: It was built in 1931 and 1932.

OSG: Were you around here then?

Brady: Oh, yes.

OSG: How old a person were you then?

Brady: I was probably twelve or thirteen, or ten or eleven, I guess. My dad was the first guy that was hired [to help with construction].

OSG: Your dad worked there, too?

Brady: In building it [including homes for the pump station personnel].

OSG: Did they buy the land from a local farmer?

Brady: No, they bought the land and they brought in people from Oklahoma and Texas that had been working for the Gulf Oil Company. There was engineers running the engines and telegraph operators.

OSG: Whom did they get the land from?

Brady: They got the land from Forest Hill. They got 25 acres from him and twenty acres of timberland from somebody else.

OSG: Can you describe the engines that ran the pump station.

Brady: Yes. They were three cylinders, big engines. They had a catwalk up there eight feet high. You went up the catwalk to go around the rocker arms [of the engine].

OSG: Those engines were eight feet tall?

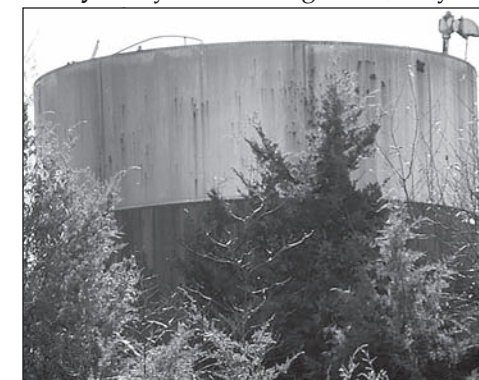
Brady: Well, that was eight feet up the catwalk and it was still waist high up to your rocker arms and all that.

OSG: So the engines were even taller than eight feet. What kind of engines were they?

Brady: They were big diesel engines that burned the crude oil that they pumped through the line.

OSG: Oh, really. They burned the oil that came.

Brady: They had two big tanks, they're



This much smaller tank was used to store the best quality oil coming through the pipeline. It was used as fuel in the huge diesel pump engines.

sure into the big tanks. Then we pulled it out of the big tanks and pumped it on to the next station.

OSG: Why did it have to go into your holding tanks?

Brady: Because they could vary the amount they were pumping. In other words, they could rev the engine up to pump more oil and sometimes they would get that big tank almost full. If they lost communication, it was a guy's duty to keep checking that. My brother was the engineer up there. One time they were knocked out [of communication]. The chief engineer had to drive over past Lebanon to communicate with the office because they almost had that big tank almost full so they told the other people on back down the line to increase the pressure. My brother was checking the tank here so he started the engine up, he started the third engine up and pumped the oil out. The chief drove wide open trying to get back home to see if they pumped that tank over [full].

OSG: What would happen if it filled up?

Brady: They had a big terrace around the tank which would have held the oil if it spilled over. It would have been a big spill that had to be cleaned up.



The main engine building of the Gulf Oil pump station still stands. Most of the roof of the sturdy brick and steel building is missing and the two huge diesel engines are long gone.

OSG: Did the pipeline come from Oklahoma?

Brady: It came plum from Texas through Oklahoma in this ten-inch pipe to the refineries. When this ten-inch line started to deteriorate and cause trouble, they built another larger pipeline about 50 miles north of here.

OSG: So there is no working pump station around here?

Brady: No, and this is a disgrace to the community. They declared it hazard-

ous. We had a big ice storm and it tore the building up some and it sits locked up, forty-five acres just growing up. It's just a disgrace to the community.

OSG: Did they get the big engines?

Brady: They pulled all the equipment out. I don't know if they reused it or scrapped it. Well, just the [engine] base was 35 or 38 ton. They had the top of the engine, the rocker arms, and the big drive shaft was a 15-ton piece. I guess the whole engine weighed 50 ton.

There were three engines. When they changed the bearings on the crankshaft, the bearing would weigh about 200 pounds, something like that. I've helped change them out.

OSG: We are also interested in other aspects of Ozarks history. What were you doing during the 1930s, our Depression time?

Brady: Well, I went to high school until the fall of 1933. My father died and I had to quit and I farmed. I took care of the farm during 1933 and 1934. I put in a crop in '34. Then January 2nd of 1935, I went in the CCC camp over here at Palace. I was in there three and a half years. I wound up in southeastern Oregon. When I was discharged I went to southern California. I worked in a citrus by-products factory for three and a half years. The Army come along and got me for another three and a half years.

OSG: Where did you go with the Army?

Brady: I was in the states for almost a year and two and half years in the Pacific, through New Guinea and up into the Philippines. I was in antiaircraft. We had four guns, four 20 millimeter guns. I was chief of the section of radar. We tracked the enemy planes. We made



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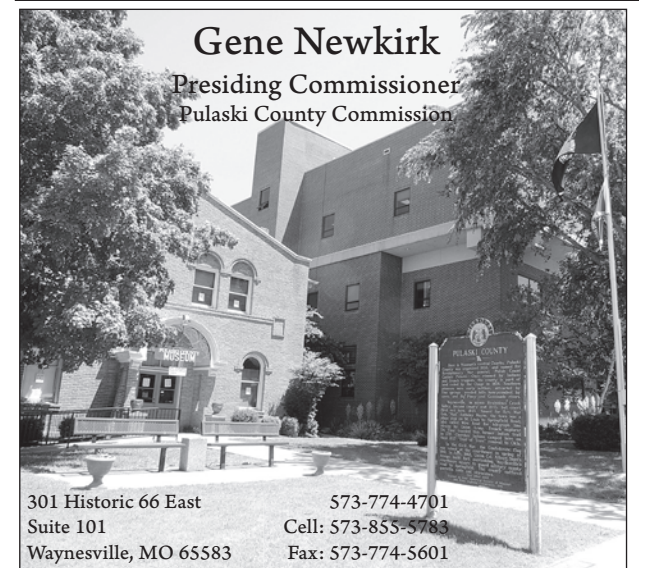
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seven landings. I built five ball fields [laughs].

OSG: Well, got to have a ball field.

Brady: We would go in on a landing and set up around the bay. There was always coconut palms that would knock us off from tracking planes. So the first thing we would do when we got the radar set up, I run the area marking trees that needed to fall. I'd go tell the captain that I had to have a bulldozer. He'd look at me, he knew what I was up to, and he'd say "Don't you push out a tree you don't have to. That costs the government \$25 for every one of those trees you push." I just jumped up and down, throwing an awful fit. "You mean to tell me they're paying Palm Olive Pete 25 dollars for every tree I push out." He'd put up with a little and then say, "Get your fanny out of here. I got work to do." I'd push out four or five trees and then go push out the jungle and make a ball field. I ran graders and dozers in the CCC and knew a little bit about them.

OSG: Tell us a little bit more about your days in the CCC camp.

Brady: I spent a year and a month, a little over a month, over here [at the Palace camp]. I could come home on the weekends. I helped build a bridge down here on the Roubidoux. We had lots of drilling by hand to bolt it down. When others went to camp at 3 or 3:15, I'd stay down there and drill holes for an hour or two and then come up home. I'd go back the next morning and work an hour or so drilling more holes. So whenever we got the bridge far enough along, I got ten days or two weeks off. A neighbor down here was a Local Experienced Man. When I went in, he was building a bunch of garages for the Forestry trucks. He and a new foreman were doing that and they had four or five guys working with them.

The foreman needed someone to help him measure and I slept right across from him in the barracks. He kept me to help him measure five or six times. At the end of the month, the foreman came out on the bridge crew as bridge crew foreman. From then on, any special little job the foreman gave it to me. When I left here I went to the Redwoods on the west coast. From there we went over to Nevada for a summer camp for six months. There we were building fences. I got the job of stapling the wire to the post while the other guys were digging holes. I've had a lot of things just break my way. I became a team leader.

OSG: Did you get more money for being a leader?

Brady: We got five dollars as a member and 25 dollars went home to the family. An assistant leader got eleven dollars and a leader got twenty. I was able to save a little from my twenty dollars a month which got me down to California after I got out.

OSG: How many boys were in a camp?

Brady: A hundred and eighty to two hundred. There were five barracks and each barracks would hold 40 men but normally there would always be two, three, or four vacant in the barracks.

OSG: So the Palace Camp was as big as the Blooming Rose Camp?

Brady: Oh, yeah. Maybe even a little bigger.

OSG: What brought you back to Missouri?

Brady: It's just in my blood. No, I met a girl from Arkansas out there in Anaheim and we got married before I went in the service. I was overseas two and a half years. We'd saved money and I knew of this 200 acre farm that joined the eighty that we had so we bought this farm.

OSG: Thank you, Mr. Brady.



Mr. Brady spent over three years in the Civilian Conservation Corps. He joined the CCC in 1935 at the Palace Camp, above, located immediately southwest of the present day south gate to Fort Leonard. The CCC was part of President Roosevelt's New Deal and provided work for unemployed men during the Great Depression. The average enrollee was eighteen-and-a-half years old. The minimum term was six months and the average stay was nine months. By law, the maximum term was two years, notwithstanding Mr. Brady's three-and-a-half year stint.

The work was primarily reforestation, soil conservation, and fire control. The "boys," as they were called, built 125,000 miles of road, 46,854 bridges, planted 3 billion trees, and strung 89,000 miles of telephone wire. By far, it was the most popular New Deal program, even more popular than another New Deal innovation, Social Security.

For a more extensive look at the Civilian Conservation Corps in our area, see "The Civilian Conservation Corps at Blooming Rose 1934-1938 by Terry Primas" in the 2005 Old Settlers Gazette, available online at <http://www.oldstagecoachstop.org>.



Fire lookout towers once dotted the Ozarks landscape. The towers and accompanying watchers' quarters were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps. During the last couple of years of operation of the local fire tower, Mrs. Brady was asked to become a fire lookout. When the tower's operation was discontinued, Mr. Brady bought the cottage and moved it a short distance to his farm.



Housing for the pump station workers was constructed by Gulf Oil on Highway U, which fronted the station complex. Mr. Brady's father worked on the several employee bungalows, such as the one above that is now a private residence.

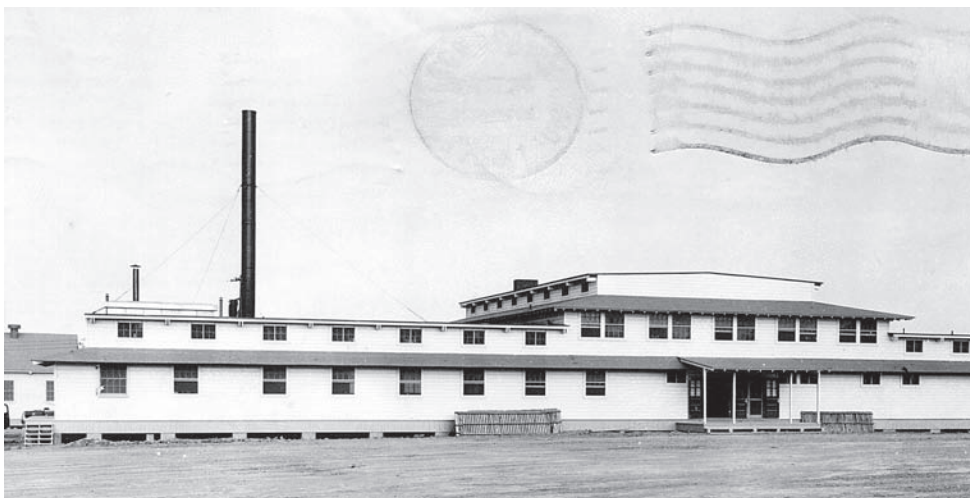


The neighborhood's store, above, is repurposed as a private residence, as is the school, a short distance away.

FORT LEONARD WOOD 1941













The picture above is from a series of photographs shot in 1941 by Wide World Photos titled "Soldiers - - All Dressed Up With No Place To Go!" The photo was labeled for release on Sunday, December 7, 1941, the day Pearl Harbor was bombed, leading to the United States' entry into World War II. The caption for the image reads, "Fort Leonard Wood, MO. - Uniformed window shoppers fill the sidewalks of Waynesville, Mo., every Saturday afternoon. There is little else to do in the daylight hours besides 'walking post on Main Street' in this small town, situated eight miles from camp." This is the business row on the south side of the square in Waynesville, looking east. Courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas.



One of the Service Clubs built in 1941 and frequented by soldiers when they could not go to town. Postmarked October 24, 1941, the card is from "Maynard" and addressed to "Malene" in Churches Ferry, North Dakota. Maynard describes the club as "one of the places that we get our toilet articles and tobacco. It is a large place." Courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas.

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 Old Stagecoach Stop	 Ft. Wood HQ 1941
 Old Courthouse	 Miller's Market 1962
 Ft. Wood Main Gate 1943	 Rigsby's Standard Station 1950
 Rigsby's Standard Station 1950	 Rigsby's Standard Station 1950
 Devil's Elbow Cafe 1935	 Hooker Cut Route 66