

**Oral Interview with Ted Dunning on
June 19, 1974**

Interviewed by Jonathan Anderson

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**Ted Dunning
November 19, 1901 – March 27, 1989**

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Ted Dunning's background

JA: This is the 19th of June, 1974. I'm Jonathan Anderson and we're up around Redfeather Lakes (sic) talking to Mr. Ted Dunning.

OK, let's start out. Tell me where you're from and when you were born and how you got here?

TD: I was born in Nebraska in 1901 and my father was a pioneer. He'd started out in Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Nebraska and then finally Colorado. I'm 73. I ended up, after my father died, in Sterling, Colorado. I worked as a bookkeeper for an oil company and my boss had a cabin in Redfeather. Why, I don't know, but he did. He didn't use it, he'd rather stay home and go to picture shows and play golf and read and stuff like that. So we got to using the cabin; that was long before I was married. Different ones of us would come up and go fishing, and I took care of his cabin for him.

Buying a Store in Redfeather

JA: When was this about?

TD: 1928. I came up here the first time in 1928. Redfeather isn't like Redfeather was then. There's a picture right behind you that was taken 50 years ago. There were about 100 cabins when we first came here. Now there's around 700. But he didn't use the cabin, so I then started using it. There was a little store up here and the lady had been trying to sell it for a couple of years. One day I went to work and the boss's wife bawled me out and that's the first time I'd ever been bawled out in my life by either one of them. He was more like a father than he was a boss. It hurt my feelings so (by that time I was married) I said to my wife, "Let's go to Redfeather and buy that little store." She said, "All right."

JA: There was a store for sale?

TD: The one right behind here. So, in the late '30s, we just decided that was the thing to do and we came up and traded our house in Sterling and what little money we could buy, borrow or steal, and bought the little store. I've never been able to get money to leave since.

JA: And you wouldn't if you could.

Life in Redfeather

TD: I wouldn't if I could. Only in the winter time. The first 15 or 20 years, it was great to live here. But as you get older, you get tired of the winters. There isn't anything to do unless you want to go out and snowmobile and fish and ski, and I don't do that. I'm too old. I used to, but I don't any more. Redfeather is a good place, and I'm sure that the nicest people in the world come to Redfeather. Back in those days, that's been 35 or 40 years ago, we'd have maybe in the wintertime not over 25 people in the area any time. There was one winter, I think that was the winter of 1942 and '43, and there were only 3 families of us that lived in Redfeather. In those days, fishing wasn't near what it is now. The lakes weren't stocked as well; there wasn't money to do anything. People just didn't come to Redfeather. It's just been in the last 20 years, I'd say, that people have kind of discovered Redfeather. But to go from 100 cabins to 700 in 30 years, that's pretty good.

JA: Was there one point when the big influx came?

Redfeather's population boom

TD: Oh, I would say that the real boom time was in the 1950s, after the war was over and before the Korean War got going real good. People started to discover Redfeather. Up to that time we had practically no road at all in here. It was a trail, but you wouldn't call it a road. In another couple of years, we'll have an oiled road all the way in. That'll bring too many people. There were no subdivisions around. When we first came here, you could buy a cabin up here for \$500. It wasn't unusual to buy a cabin for \$500 and fix it up and hopefully sell it and make a nickel or two. The old-timers are just about gone.

JA: That's what I hear all over the county. It just seems like in the past 10 or 15 years a lot of the old-timers have died off.

TD: There isn't one single person in Redfeather now that lived here when we came. Not one, only us. There are people who had cabins that are still coming but as far as the people living here are concerned, that are just all gone. Either moved away or died or made a lot of money and retired someplace else.

JA: When you first came up here, when you came to just use the cabin and stuff, you said how many people were around about then?

TD: Well, in the summertime, there'd be several hundred perhaps. In the wintertime I'd say that there never was more than 25 that wintered all winter here, until the CCC Camp came in, which was in 1935. That was about a mile and a half southwest of here, of the village.

JA: That's the Civilian Conservation Corps?

Civilian Conservation Corps Camp near Redfeather

TD: Mostly Oklahoma boys. That was during Franklin Roosevelt, the Depression. They started the CCC Camps all over the entire country and the boys that we had, they had about 350 boys, were almost all from Oklahoma. Then there was another camp down by Buckeye out north of Fort Collins. Most of their boys all came from Nebraska and Kansas and Arkansas. When the CCC Camp came in, we had kids running out of our ears. But there were a lot of nice kids, too. I believe that they got \$30 a month and the boy got \$8 and sent \$22 home to the parents. But they'd give them their board and room and clothes and schooling.

JA: What kind of work did they do?

TD: They built the road. This road in here that comes into the main road into Redfeather, they built it. They built the road from here to the Poudre Canyon.

The road to Log Cabin

JA: The one that goes past the Boy Scout Ranch?

TD: The one that goes west of the Boy Scout Ranch (CR 68C). See, there's a road from here right straight to the Poudre Canyon. Goes out by Bellaire Lake and on down over Pingree Hill. The road that goes by the Boy Scout Ranch was built before the turn of the century and Redfeather wasn't even in existence then. The mail route would come out of Fort Collins and come up to Ingleside and then up to Livermore and then on up to Log Cabin. That's where you turn off to go to the Boy Scout Ranch. That was Log Cabin. In fact, there's a picture of that; that second picture is the hotel and the store that used to be at Log Cabin. That was quite a hotel. It burned, I believe, in the winter of 1930.

The Log Cabin Hotel

JA: Can you describe it at all, what was it like?

TD: I think there were 10 rooms that they could rent out, and then they had a dining room downstairs where they sold candy and pop that they'd keep on ice. You could buy pop for a nickel, good pop. They had real good meals there. All of the people that were going to go up the Poudre. See, there wasn't a road up the Poudre. That road wasn't finished until 1921, I believe. Through the Big Narrows I believe is where they had their hang-up. They had really good meals there. We'd always stop there either going or coming from Redfeather. We didn't have a post office in Redfeather until 1934. There was a summer post office here, but the real post office didn't come until 1934.

JA: People just stopped at Log Cabin along the way then?

The "Home" mail route

TD: The mail route came to Log Cabin, and then went over Pingree Hill and up the river to Zimmermans. The name of the post office was "Home."

JA: So it went down next to the Boy Scout Ranch and over to where Rustic is?

TD: Yeah. Home was on up above that. You know where the fish rearing ponds are? That's Home.

JA: That's where the old hotel was?

The Keystone Hotel

TD: Right. The Zimmermans built that way back. The old Keystone Hotel. That was a sad day when they tore that down. That was terrible.

JA: That's what everybody is saying; it was really too bad that they took it down.

TD: It seems like every time there's a landmark, somebody thinks, "Oh, that's an old junky place, let's get rid of it." So they tear it down or burn it.

The road between Log Cabin and Redfeather

JA: At that time from Log Cabin up to here, what kind of road was there? The main road went from Log Cabin south.

TD: It was a horse and buggy road. There was one place down here about four miles that you had to make a double S curve and there was a big sign there. I'll always remember that. It said, "Six miles an hour, one-way road." It was a one-way road too. You couldn't get two cars through there. They didn't do anything with that road until about the time the CCC Camp came. They did an awful lot of work on the roads. After I came here, I got to be Postmaster and so I got real close to the CCC Camp. We'd only get mail three times a week, every other day. The mail came to Log Cabin and up around Elkhorn every day. Then on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays they'd bring mail to Log Cabin and leave it for Redfeather. On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, they'd bring mail to Redfeather. We didn't get daily mail service until about 1950.

Post Office in Redfeather

JA: You said your own post office got put in here in '38.

TD: '34.

JA: Who was postmaster then, do you remember?

TD: I can look it up and tell you exactly.

JA: When did you get to be postmaster?

Ted Dunning – Postmaster from 1940

TD: 1940. Six years after it started.

JA: How did you get to become postmaster?

TD: When I came here and bought the store, back in those days they were all just fourth class offices; the lady who owned the store was postmaster. Mrs. Hastings. Goldie Hastings. When I bought the store from her, she moved out and I knew some good politicians so I got to be postmaster. In those days, we were all good Democrats. Then I was postmaster until I retired six years ago.

JA: Was that an appointed job then?

TD: Oh yes, strictly an appointed job. It was under Civil Service.

Gardening in Red Feather

We have a real nice little garden. Cabbage grows the most beautiful here you ever saw in your life. We always have a little garden.

JA: Is this pretty good land to grow stuff on?

TD: Oh yeah.

JA: I thought it would be a little rocky or something.

TD: Well, when we built this house we blasted out this part of the basement. This was all just a sloping hillside all the way up here. We were building a lake over at Nokomis Lake. I had about 75 truckloads of dirt hauled in for a garden. It's pretty rich soil. We had a cabbage here last year that was 13 inches in diameter. That's a lot of cabbage. You cut it, and it just cracks like a watermelon. Tomatoes and a lot of your tender stuff, you can't grow them at all here. But you can this other – carrots, we can grow the best carrots in the world.

JA: Did anybody around here ever focus just on vegetables or anything like that? Farming or anything?

TD: No, not really, just for their own use. Not commercially at all. I don't think it would be feasible. You got a growing season of not over 70 days. A week ago Saturday, we had a couple and a half feet of snow. It was down in the ... our last freeze was on the 17th (June?). It was below freezing. That isn't very conducive to growing good crops, believe me.

JA: Did they run cattle around here?

Ranching in the Red Feather area

TD: That's about all they can do – just ranching. See, the Currie Ranch down below, is now the Crystal Lakes deal you know. He was one of the best ranchers in the whole country. They ran cattle out on Black Mountain and then the Beckstead place, which is now Stuart Maxwell's. I think he's probably running in the area of 500 cows, so that means he has 1,000 or 1,100 critters.

JA: Now why is there a difference there?

TD: Well, 500 cows and each one of them have a calf.

JA: Is that how you count? You don't count the calves or anything?

TD: Oh yeah, if you're going to just count so many head, you count the whole thing. But ordinarily they say, "It's a 100-cow" ranch, you know. That means that you can raise 100 calves if you're that lucky to have 100. He's got enough room for approximately a 500-cow ranch, which is a pretty good size deal for up here. The price land is getting, it's an awful good deal. I doubt that anybody ever raised to sell any crops up here. They couldn't.

JA: Were there some older big ranches? You mentioned one.

TD: Not real big ranches. Now Clarence Currie, that's below Log Cabin about five miles, and on the right hand side as you go down there's a real nice brick house and a little lake. That was the old Clarence Currie ranch. Then Wesley Swan had a ranch just below that. Clarence Currie was a big rancher – the stuff that he owned and the stuff that he had leased from the government, the permits. He probably controlled 75,000 acres of land at least. He was a good rancher, too. Clarence wasn't the best-liked guy in the world, I'm sure.

JA: Why not?

TD: Well, mostly jealousy. He didn't like people trespassing on his place. He didn't like hunters in there in the winter because they were always shooting cows, you know. He was always kind of picky about people trespassing. But there's one thing about it, he was a rancher and he was a good rancher. He never asked a guy to go out and do something that he wouldn't do himself. He worked just as hard as the guys that worked for him.

Hotel in Redfeather

I think Redfeather probably had a reasonable start of being something in the early '30s. From about 1927 to 1931 they put on a campaign and they sold lots all over the country. Sight unseen. It was in the late '20s. Then the Depression came, they kind of went to pieces. We had a hotel up here that used to sit up on the hill about a couple of hundred yards up here. That one picture is the hotel. Oh, they had a tea room up there that I guess in its heyday was a real nice sort of a deal. Compared to today's standards, it wasn't much of a hotel. When you first came to Redfeather years ago, there was only one road that came in over here by the big

club house. You had to stop and register to get into Redfeather. Not so much from a security standpoint, but from an idea they wanted know who was here and see if they could sell them a lot. Just the one road in here and then when the Depression came along, Redfeather just about went by the board. You could buy any number of lots during the depression for \$25 apiece. In 1940, the first three things that I ever did in real estate, I sold three lots for a guy for \$25 apiece, which was \$75 and I made \$7.50. That was the biggest \$7.50 I'd made in six months. You just didn't make money in those days.

JA: What kind of way did they advertise for those?

Advertising campaign to sell lots in Redfeather

TD: One of the biggest campaigns they had; they printed brochures and then they had salesmen that worked on commissions and they could go out all over. They all had maps, you know, and advertised in newspapers. They fixed up a film that the main salesman had some copies made. They'd go around to like Lion's Club, Rotary Club and what have you, and show these pictures. Hopefully sell some lots. Then they got the idea of putting out red feathers. I'll bet they gave away 100,000 red feathers. Just all over the country.

JA: How wide was this advertising campaign?

TD: I'd say it was mostly Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas; I'd say it was concentrated in those three. They sold lots in Oklahoma and Minnesota and even some from New York. A few west of here. Not many people come here from the west part of the country. They all come from the east. You take Idaho and Montana and Wyoming. They've got the same thing there that we have here. But Nebraska and Kansas don't have the same type of thing.

JA: And this is the nearest thing. I understand originally this area was called Westlake, is that right? How did it come to be changed to Redfeather?

The Akin Ranch and Nettie Poor's lake development scheme

TD: Along about 1921 Myron Akin and D. H. Princell and a couple of other guys in there that I can't think of their names for the moment. They bought a ranch in this area and then they called it the Akin Ranch for a long time. In 1922, they started to subdivide it to sell. Myron Akin was really the guiding light in the deal. They subdivided the various subdivisions. There were six of them. Then they

went out and just sold lots. Just like they're doing nowadays in the housing developments.

JA: How did they get control of all that land?

TD: Well, they had bought the ranch. See, these lakes, they're natural lakes to a point. They go back into the 1880s when Nettie Poor first came to this area. She started to develop the lakes and build the dikes.

JA: She was the first one out here?

Buying the lakes

TD: No, she wasn't the first one, but she was the first one to really start developing the lakes. Then Jake Mitchell came into the picture and that's the reason these lakes are called the Mitchell Lakes. She went broke and he took over the building of the dikes and built up enough to make it an irrigation deal. These lakes were all used for irrigation purposes up until we bought them in 1947.

JA: Who is we?

TD: The Redfeather Storage and Irrigation Company. You see, the Larimer-Irrigation- Company owned the water rights and every spring they'd fill the lakes and every fall they'd drain them. That doesn't do a country much good as far as development is concerned. I mean, to sell lots and make a summer resort. When we first came here, we started a campaign of trying to get the Fish and Game Commission to buy the lakes so that they wouldn't drain them twice a year. We never could get it done and finally a bunch of us got together and decided we'd just buy them ourselves. So we went to the Fish and Game Commission and they said that they would buy Dowdy, West Lake and Bellaire if we'd buy all the others. So we got together and formed a corporation and bought them. They've never been drained since. So we keep pretty good fish in them that way all the time. Jake Mitchell was the original person that built the main part of the dikes. Mrs. Poor started it and ran out of money, and then he took it over. He built it and then later the Larimer-Poudre Irrigation Company. Did you ever read that Redfeather book? Then Jake Mitchell had it for I don't know how many years and sold it to Larimer-Poudre Irrigation Company. They finally sold it to the Tunnel Water and Supply Company. Then that's who we bought it from. We have rebuilt a number of dikes since we've owned it. You have to work on them all the time.

JA: Where's the profit from the lakes?

Membership to fish in the lakes

TD: Well, the only way you can fish in these lakes is you've got to be a property owner in Redfeather in one of the subdivisions. Then you have to pay your dues.

JA: What about tourists and campers?

TD: They can't fish here. There's six public lakes where they can fish, but they can't fish in any of the private lakes unless they're a member. Membership is \$100 the first year and then \$50 a year after that. It gives us enough money that we can do a lot of things with the lakes that way. Like rebuilding a ditch and like rebuilding a dike, and we're going to build another new lake. It'll be Apache and it'll be about a half mile north of here. We probably will have to have it completed according to law. It's got to be completed in four years.

JA: Why is that?

TD: I don't know. Once you get an adjudication for a lake, they give you four years to complete or your water rights are no good. In other words, the idea is so that you can't go out and get a water right and then just do nothing, and just own a water right. If you have a storage right, you've got to use it. You have to prove a beneficial use for it. Of course, the more water we have here, the better it is for everybody down below. You have a certain amount of seepage all the time. It keeps the spring running and it keeps the downstream flow going all the time.

AJ: How did it get to be called Redfeather now?

Why Westlake was renamed Redfeather

TD: When these fellows took it over to make a resort-type thing out of it, they didn't want to call it Westlake because it didn't sound so good. The legend has it that Chief Redfeather came here. He was a Cherokee and he came out from South Carolina.

JA: Oh, I didn't know this.

TD: Oh yes, didn't you ever read the *Legend of Redfeather*? I've got one; I'll have to let you read that. But anyhow, Chief Redfeather supposedly came out here looking for a place to get away from the other tribes that he was having to fight

with. So he came to Colorado and he found Redfeather he said, "This is the place where we'll be." Just like Brigham Young did, you know. So they started it and then Chief Redfeather got in a battle with a tribe of Omaha Indians over towards Cherokee Park and he was killed. He's buried here in the Redfeather area. This is legend now. But it makes a real good legend. There was an Indian girl who was an opera singer. She came up here when they had their grand opening and we got a lot of pictures of her. I can't remember what her name was, but it meant Redfeather. So she was Princess Redfeather. Well, Myron Akin and Princell got the idea that that would make a good name. We'll call it Redfeather Lakes. That's how it got its name, from Princess Redfeather.

Evelyn Foster Tamlin named "Princess Redfeather"

TD: You know there was a girl, I'm not sure that she's the only one that's been actually born in Redfeather. She was one of the Tamlin girls and she was born about three city blocks from here over the hill. They named her Princess Redfeather legally. That was her legal name. (**See Evelyn Foster Tamlin interview of July 9, 2010**) When the Second World War came on and she'd gotten married by that time. She had to have a different name to go with that. Legally she took a different name, but her original legal baptismal name was Princess Redfeather. She lives down here in LaPorte yet. We see her every once in a while.

Red Feather Mountain Lakes Association, John Ross and Quaintance family

TD: It was a big campaign of settling (sic) lots to make money and that's all it was. But in about 1931, John Ross loaned some money to the original Redfeather Mountain Lakes Association and took a mortgage on everything that they owned. They went broke during the Depression. The Redfeather Lakes Resort Company went totally broke and took bankruptcy, so naturally John Ross had to foreclose. He took over approximately 4,000 acres of land and the old fish hatchery and about 1,800 lots. When he passed on, he willed it, of course, to his only daughter, Mary Ross Quaintance. She still owns all of the land and has 1,000 to 1,200 lots yet. I've always handled their stuff for them ever since I've lived here. Taken care of their land and what have you. That's how come she got into the picture to own as much stuff as she does. John Ross was a real estate promoter in Denver at that time.

One of the stories that I always remember about him is that he broke his arm right between the elbow and the shoulder. Just broke it clear off. They took him to the hospital and he wasn't the kind of guy that they would just keep in a hospital. One day he says, "Nuts to you birds, I'm going home." That was Dr. Rupert. He got up and walked out. His bone never did heal. He had an arm from that time on that – his muscles could control it but there was no bone between the shoulder and the elbow. He was quite an old character, too. He was a smart man. He made lot and lots of money in Denver. The thing with Mrs. Quaintance apparently is there was an awful lot of money in the family and she didn't have time to bother with Redfeather because it was kind of an out-of-the-way place. The fact of the matter is, I could have bought everything that they owned for \$25,000. But of course in those days, there wasn't \$25,000 in the world. You couldn't get \$25 let alone \$25,000. My, if I would have bought that..... Wouldn't that have been something! I think I'm probably better off, though.

JA: How did you get interested in the history of the area? I noticed in that pamphlet *Redfeather, the First 100 Years* that you were part of putting that together. You were co-author or whatever.

TD: Well, after I retired from the post office, I didn't have as much work to do then. People kept saying "someone ought to write something about old time Redfeather." Well, I'm not an author, I know that. But I started writing things down. Some of the oldtimers that were still here, I'd hear stories from them, you know. I'd try to write the situation down.

Lou Young's bear trap and the legend of "Deadman Pass"

TD: In fact, Lou Young came to this area in 1898 and he lived over on the Laramie River a couple of winters and in 1905 he took a homestead out north of here. I got quite well acquainted with Lou. He was an old bachelor. In the 1920s he moved into Redfeather and started running a string of horses, to rent and what have you. One day we were talking and Lou said, "Well, I've got the bear trap that Deadman was named after." I said, "You haven't!" He said, "I sure have." So, I got the bear trap from him and I had it nailed up on the front of the store out here when I had the store. I had everything in the world nailed on the front of that store, as you can see in that one picture up there. There was a beaver tail and a bear foot, a lot of different horns, and that bear trap and some old guns. It looked like an 1850 trading post on the outside. But anyhow, I had that bear trap.

The story that goes with that: There was an old Swede trapper that every fall he'd go and trap up on Deadman for the beaver and muskrats and bear and whatever he could trap – coyotes and fox and so forth. This particular spring he didn't show up. Somebody said, "Oh, he went to Laramie for the summer." When they were running cattle up there, they found where he had set the bear trap and he caught a bear. Of course the bear trap, it isn't a solid thing. They put it on a drag. The bear had dragged the thing away. He went out and he shot the bear, but the bear reached out and belted him one and killed him. The horse was tied up on a picket rope and he starved to death. They didn't find him for – I suppose it was nearly a year before they found the camp where he was. There wasn't anything left, just bones. Just bones of the horse too.

Lou Young said that he had some of the pots and pans. He said, "I can remember seeing the rope where he had the horse tied. The rope was all rotted, of course, but it was still lying in the grass. So somebody got the wild idea of calling it "Deadman Pass." That's where Deadman Pass came from. That particular bear trap is now in the museum in Fort Collins.

JA: How did it get there? Did you donate it or what?

TD: Yes. It's on loan really. Cecil Weaver bought the old Putney ranch, which is now the Girl Scout Ranch. Cecil Weaver came up one day and he claimed that the bear trap belonged to Mr. Putney and he'd bought Putney's stuff and Mr. Putney told him to come and get the bear trap, which he did, and he had it down there for a little while. Then one day we were talking and we took it down to the museum for the people to see. You can't set a bear trap unless you've got clamps. That thing was, oh, I expect as long as this table. It had jaws about like that. All these jaws were at least two feet across. When the jaws came together they had clamps that would go in like this. Once a bear got into it, the only way he can possibly get out is – that bear trap weighed about 40 pounds. I always wanted to have somebody with a welding torch open it and take the temper out of it and then have it welded open. Nobody could get hurt with it unless had clamps to set it. But Lou is gone now and Mr. Weaver is gone. Mr. Putney is gone. They're all gone.

Mail Route from Fort Collins to Home

JA: I heard that just a few years ago, a homesteader by the name of Scott passed away. Is that name familiar to you?

TD: Oh yeah, Ben Scott. He came here the first time in 1917 and he was the mail carrier out of Fort Collins to Home. He came up through Log Cabin and they bought a ranch later and lived down there. Yeah, Ben died about 10 or 15 years ago.

JA: He carried the mail; how was the mail carried?

TD: In those days? He used a team for a while and then they got an old Dodge. I thought maybe there was a picture of it there. He and his brother Jes carried mail for about 10 years from Fort Collins to Home three times a week. That was quite a trip in those days. That was just quite a trip.

JA: How long did it take?

TD: They'd go up one day and then go back the next. Then just every other day they were on the road. In the wintertime when they couldn't do it, they'd come as far as they could with the outfit. Then they'd take a horse and take the mail on to Home. They didn't miss too awful many times of getting the mail through, either. The reason I wanted to write something, possibly to satisfy ego, I don't know, but mainly to get something down so that 50 years from now somebody would have an idea of what happened to Redfeather and where it came from. That big picture behind you was taken just 50 years ago. It was 1924. That was just when Redfeather was just barely getting started.

JA: How many lakes are officially involved in Redfeather?

TD: If you count all of the big ones and little ones, there's 21. The Storage and Irrigation Company owned 11 lake sites and there are 6 lakes that are built now that are big enough to keep fish in. The rest are all public.

Closing the Campgrounds around Redfeather

JA: I was up around the store yesterday. I noticed there was a petition circulating to reopen campgrounds. What's all this about?

TD: The Forest Service is trying to close all the campgrounds. They just want to get out of the business of tourism.

JA: Somebody up there said that the Forest Service claimed that the people of Redfeather didn't want the campgrounds open or something like that. She said she couldn't believe that was true.

TD: I can't believe that's true. The thing of it is, if they close the campgrounds, they're going to camp someplace. They're either going to be in a campground or out on somebody's private land. Last year or two years ago, the east and the north and part of the west part of Dowdy was all campgrounds. A year ago, on Decoration Day (Memorial Day), there were over 900 people camped over there. The Forest Service came along and fenced it off and cut the camping and they are cutting more camping out this year.

JA: Why, though?

TD: Just of the lack of money and to get out of the campground business. It's quite a chore to take care of a campground. Particularly a free campground. I hate like everything to see the Forest Service quit camping. People are going to go fishing and they are going to go camping. It's a way of life. If they're not going to be able to camp in a campground, they're going to camp alongside the road or anyplace else. That's not good for a country. We need a campground.

JA: When did they start making campgrounds around here?

TD: I would guess the first real effort to make a campground around here was around in the 1950s. You used to just go and camp anyplace you wanted. Along in the 50s they started in putting in real, regular campgrounds. They fixed up a trailer dump station, a sanitary dump station. They've got drinking water around all over the campgrounds. They're real nice campgrounds. The Forest Service does a real good job of taking care of them. But it costs money and they want to get out of the business. My contention is that it's tax money that's paying for them. What's the difference if the Forest Service stays in the campgrounds and takes tax money to do it or gets out of it and the tax money goes for something else? I think we need campgrounds. I think the Forest Service ought to stay in it. The Fish and Game Commission can't get in it because it's Forest Service property. They own the land and I can't think of a better utilization for the people. The Forest Service belongs to the people actually. But I wouldn't get too worked up about it. I'd sign any number of petitions. I'll go up and sign it a couple of times. They'll hopefully do something about it.

Postmaster for Redfeather

JA: When you became postmaster, how did you get to be postmaster? By knowing the right people, or what?

TD: That's right. That's exactly what it amounts to, yes. See, a fourth class post office at that time was an appointed job by the Postmaster General. If you knew the right politician.... Ed Johnson was a Senator at that time. Bill Cummings was a Representative. Noris (sic) Bockey was the State Supreme Court Judge. Harley Beary and Sam Neeley were State Democratic Chairmen. Otto Unfug was a County Chairman. Well, if you know that many people and they're on your side, you're going to get to be postmaster.

JA: What was the advantage of being postmaster?

TD: Oh, money to eat. You betcha! You take a little store with a population of maybe 50. You had to make your living in about four months in the summertime. If you didn't make a living in those four months, you were going hungry. When I came here the post office was strictly cancellation.

JA: What do you mean strictly cancellation?

TD: Well, you cancelled so many letters at 3 cents apiece. If you cancelled 100 letters, that was 3 dollars.

JA: Oh, you got kind of a commission basis on the letters?

TD: Strictly commission. That went on from I think it was about 1946 to '47 before they put us on a salary. We worked strictly on a commission up until that time.

JA: Just how many letters, and you hand cancelled them?

TD: Hand cancelled them and still do hand cancel them over here. If it hadn't been for the CC Camp – well, the first two months that we were here I think my salary was around \$45 a month. The first two or three winters that we were here after the CC Camp closed in 1942 – there was two or three winters along in there where if we got \$20 a month we did real well on cancellation because people just didn't write letters. Then as it got better all the time and then when they went on to a salary basis rather than cancellation commission, then it got pretty good. By the

time I'd been postmaster for 25 years we had a pretty good salary. It worked up to a real good thing. We were under Civil Service, even when I took it.

JA: GS ratings and everything?

TD: There weren't any ratings until 1946 or '47. Then we went under a PFS rating, rather than a GS, but it's the same type of thing. These were rough old days. If you could fix a tire and make 50 cents you were tickled to death. We didn't get electricity here until 1950 – the fall of 1950.

JA: What did you do before then? Kerosene lamps?

Kerosene lamps and ice cakes

TD: Kerosene lamps and I had a little light plant that I ran on an air compressor and a few lights. We put up ice until we got electricity. We'd put up about 110,000 to 120,000 pounds of ice and then sell it out. We figured that if we could make \$500 a year on that ice we did pretty well. That was hard work, believe me. These ice cakes came out at about 125 pounds. Cut them right out here. We'd put up a 1000 cakes of ice and hopefully you'd sell them for one half cents a pound and if you made \$500, that was a pretty good deal. That was clear profit. The post office went along with the CC Camp. That was a fairly good deal. Then when they left, we were pretty much on our own until we got a salary out of it. But it was fun being a postmaster. I enjoyed that.

JA: What was the most fun about it, do you think?

Conventions and Colorado Rep for National League of Postmasters

TD: I think probably the most fun, as far as I was concerned, were the conventions that I'd get to go to. We had a National Association of Postmasters. It's a very strong union now really.

JA: How early was that, do you know?

TD: Oh, that was started about 1920 or even before that nationally. I got real interested in that. I was a state president once, of the National League of Postmasters, and then I was a 5-state representative for the national league. I got to travel over Arizona and New Mexico and Colorado and Wyoming and Utah. Whenever they'd have a convention, they'd want a representative and I'd get to go

represent the National League of Postmasters. We had a convention in Denver – 1959 was the convention in Denver. There were about 5,000 postmasters. Two years after that, the national convention was in Hawaii.

JA: Did you go there?

TD: Yeah, we went to that and they said it was the biggest single convention up to that time that Hawaii had ever had. They originally thought that they'd maybe have 1,000 people that would go. Their first offer that had over 2,000, and they ended up with 5,500 postmasters. That's a lot of postmasters.

JA: Did you have to pay to get there?

TD: Oh yeah, you had to pay your own expenses to go. But they got special rates and there were so many of them that United was running a shuttle plane between San Francisco and Los Angeles and Hawaii. They did that for two days. Just go over and a load and come back and get another load.

JA: What did you do at the postmaster's convention?

TD: We had lots of fun. I don't drink so I didn't get involved in any of that kind of parties. They have work sessions all day supposedly. Parties all night.

JA: What did you do at the work sessions?

TD: Oh, they'd send out a lot of guys from every region and they'd put on seminars of learning new systems. (We'd) talk about the new postal bulletins that come out and the new directives that some oddball that would sit behind a desk and think up. They do a lot of that. There'd be a breakfast every day and a luncheon every day and then they had one banquet. I think there were 11,000 people at that banquet that night. Luau. I think probably the association with other postmasters and going to the various conventions and meetings – I think I enjoyed that.

AJ: Did you take your family out there too?

TD: Oh, you bet.

AJ: That must have been something really.

Retirement as “dean of postmasters”

TD: It was, and you miss that kind of stuff. When I retired I was, according to the newspaper, I was the dean of postmasters. I think that means that you're the oldest postmaster in the service in the country. That had a party and they surprised me. I never even thought of such a thing. They had a party one Sunday afternoon. I was watching a football game. My wife said, "Oh, they're going to have this coffee and I think you ought to go." I said, "Oh nuts, I'd rather watch the game." She said, "OK, Rene and I will go over to it and we'll be your representative" I wasn't dressed to go to anything. She was just like; "Well if you want to go, fine, and if not...." I got to thinking; "Maybe that isn't nice to do it." I went, and by doggies, there were 135 people there. I was so surprised I didn't know what to say. When I can't talk, there's something wrong.

Running a small post office

JA: What was actually involved in running a small town post office? What do you do? You don't have anybody working there except you, right?

TD: That's all, just you and a small fourth class office. They give you a record book that you have to keep and every two weeks you have to balance your book out and every three months you have to make a quarterly report. How much you sell, how many stamps and how much box rents there were. Later in this deal, we got a second class permit and there was a little magazine printed here and sent out over 25 states. We had to keep track of that kind of stuff.

JA: A magazine?

TD: The name of it was *Jessie's Homemaker*. It's still printed down in Fort Collins. It had a real nice circulation; that helped a great deal. You get your mail normally at about 10:30 in the morning. It takes about maybe a half an hour to sort the mail, then an hour probably to get the rest of the mail ready to go out. To cancel it and tie it out and sort it to various town and various states of wherever it went.

JA: You have to sort it then yourself? How do you sort it, by state?

TD: If you have ten letters for any one city you sort it by cities. We'd always have a package for Fort Collins and a package for Denver. Then the rest of it, you would sort by states. If you have ten, it's a direct package to a state. If you have less than ten, then you bundle a whole bunch together. Then you make your

reports and sell stamps and money orders. We didn't have any postal savings in those days.

“Deadman’s Cattle Association” and local cattle drives

TD: The old-timers around Redfeather, when we first came, they had a Deadman’s Cattle Association. Bart Griffith and John Boyle and the Hansens. There were five in the Association. They’d take their cattle up about the middle of June and leave them until the middle of September and just turn them loose up on Deadman. Then they would hire a couple of cowboys to keep salt out and keep the cattle scattered so they didn’t all eat in one place. Then in the fall, have a round-up and start pushing them back down. Get them down here to a sorting pen. The sorting pen is over where the Catholic Church is now. They’d sort them out and send them down the road. Jake Weber was one and John McNey. They’d put them in the holding pen, then they’d sort them out and send them down the road. A couple of hours later they’d sort somebody else’s. They’d keep them separated and that way when they got them home they didn’t have to sort them at home. Of course, they didn’t do a 100 percent job. The ranchers were altogether and if they found somebody else’s cow, why, they’d take it home to them.

JA: You had some drives going through here. I talked to some people up in Laramie River and they said they drove their cattle before the trains and trucks over Deadman and through here and on over to Tie Siding or Livermore. Down to Owl Canyon.

TD: They built a spur railroad there for the lime quarries and they’d drive their cattle down to Owl Canyon. They’ve still got holding pens. They don’t drive many cattle any more, but when we first came here they were still driving cattle to Owl Canyon.

JA: What was it like when they drove a couple hundred head over through here?

TD: They’d bed them down here and you’d hear them bawling all night long. They bawl all night. Just here last week Hansen was moving some cattle over Deadman to the Laramie River and they were bedded down over here. You could hear them bawling all night. Not that that isn’t a nice sound. It doesn’t keep me from sleeping. I enjoyed it.

A lot of Redfeather was strictly started as a promotion to sell lots and hopefully make a resort of it and make a lot of money some day. I'd say as a whole they did a real good job of it. Redfeather is a real nice place now.

JA: You think this is the place to be.

Ted Dunning's winter and summer homes

TD: For six months out of the year there's no place in the world better. The other six months, Mesa, Arizona. That's where we go. We bought a mobile home down there. We hope to get out of here in October and come back in the first of May. But the six months in the summer, they're my favorite.

Postscript

We did the interview in Mr. Dunning's house. Downstairs he has a real estate office, right by one of the lakes. It's really beautiful. He's such a surprisingly young man for 73 years old. I would have guessed he was around 65 or early 60s. He mentioned after I turned the tape off again what a lot of people have talked about in terms of the people around here being so wonderful, always helping each other. That's the one reason he liked it. He said Redfeather would always have a close place in his heart because of that.



Picture postcard Ted Dunning created of his place in the village.