

Interview with

Bob Perry

October 19, 2004

by Richard A. Moore

for the

Highway 101 Association

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Interview with Bob Perry on October 19, 2004. Interviewer: Richard A. Moore of the Solana Beach Historical Society. Transcribed by Kristi Hawthorne

Richard: Today's date is October 19, 2004. I'm with the Solana Beach Civic and Historical Society interviewing Mr. Bob Perry on behalf of the 101 Highway Association and their oral histories program. Will you please tell me your full name and current address?

Bob: Robert Clinton Perry, 1485 Lake Drive, Encinitas, 92024.

Richard: When and where were you born?

Bob: I was born in Los Angeles in 1933.

Richard: And what are your parents' names?

Bob: My parents' names were Herbert and Hazel Perry.

Richard: How did you or your family come to Southern California?

Bob: I was born in Los Angeles so I came by way of stork!

Richard: What period of time did you live on or near the Highway 101?

Bob: Actually I worked on 101, but I really didn't live on the 101. We lived in Cardiff in 1964 on Summit Drive near Rubenstein, which is just a block off the 101.

Richard: When did you move to Solana Beach then?

Bob: To work? In the early 1970s.

Richard: Your shop was on the 101?

Bob: Yes. I bought into a partnership. There were two gentlemen that owned it. There was Foy Cates and Kurt Visher. I actually bought out Foy and he moved to Texas. That was in the early 1970s and we were partners for approximately ten years and then somebody bought out Kurt and I was there a total time for over 30 years in that barbershop.

Richard: What were the stores that were nearby you?

Bob: Beebe's drug store was on the corner. It was run by Chuck Steeples. At that time NAPA (auto parts) was right next to the barbershop in the old hardware store location.

Richard: That would have been Beed Hardware?

Bob: Beed Hardware. There wasn't a whole lot of stores around there then. I think Ruth owned that little shopping center to the south of us. She may still own it now. On the corner of Lomas

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Santa Fe and 101 there was a service station, I think it was a Chevron Station.

Richard: I remember that one. I think you're right, it was a Chevron.

Bob: I think when we first moved here it seems they were still flagging trains down. They had moved the old train station. I think it's in Leucadia or somewhere. But they were still flagging trains down. There was the old movie theater, too. Remember the movie theater?

Richard: Yes. That was back about a half a block from the –

Bob: Right next to where the Tight End is now.

Richard: So basically you've been on the 101 since you bought the store.

Bob: Since the early 1970s.

Richard: Until just a few years ago?

Bob: Until the year 2000. We've been here for 2 ½ years.

Richard: What outstanding event occurred that was meaningful to you that was related to the 101?

Bob: The only thing was leaving that barbershop after 30 years of being there. That was very meaningful to me.

Richard: You were there when the 101 went from being the only highway from Los Angeles to San Diego.

Bob: I lived here, but I think it was 1966 to 1968 when the freeway actually opened up.

Richard: Do you remember how old you were when you first rode on the Highway 101?

Bob: I honestly don't. I don't think my folks ever came down here. I probably came down here in the early 1960's when I came down to visit my folks who lived in Cardiff.

Richard: Do you remember your first trip when you yourself were driving?

Bob: That was it.

Richard: That was the first time you drove it?

Bob: Yes.

Richard: Can you recall some of the other buildings or businesses such as restaurants?

Bob: Well, of course there was George's down where the Chart House is now in Cardiff. The

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other main restaurant in Solana Beach was Steak House which is where city hall is now. Before it was the Steak House it was the Fire Pit, then it became the Fire Pit and the Fire Pit actually moved over to where the Poseidon is now. But then it was called the Fire Pit.

Richard: I think I remember that. That was during the period of 1964 or after.

Bob: Of course, Solana Lumber, then there was that Jolly Cone, it was a little ice cream and sandwich place right where Roberto's is now. I think the people that own that still live in town, a German couple. Seaside Trailer Park was probably the most interesting thing around here. Do you remember where that was?

Richard: That's up by the beach.

Bob: That's right. South Cardiff Beach. It was there for quite some time. In fact, a lot of racetrack people lived there and they had a hard time getting them out, a very hard time getting them out.

Richard: Was that the state beach?

Bob: I think La Costa bought it thinking they were going to be able to use it for a cabana type beach for La Costa, then they ran into some problems with the State and then they gave it to the State for tax credits because they couldn't do anything with it anyway. Actually, those trees down there that you see in that south Cardiff park, I planted all those trees that are in there now, all those palm trees. I planted queen palms. I was a member of the Cardiff town council and so we tried to help the Parks and Recreation help beautify that area down there. I put in all queen palms and they all died. I learned that the queen palms will not live right next to the beach so we had to put in the other palms that are in now. .

Richard: Was there any particular person associated with that stretch of road through Solana Beach?

Bob: You know, I remember one time there was a man who named Dahlia Street, which is a block west of 101, actually two blocks west of 101. He raised dahlias up there, Mr. Comstock. He worked for the telephone company and he was also a professional wrestler; a little short man with cauliflower ears. So he raised dahlias up there and when they were naming the streets—no one could find him, so he stuck a stick in there with the name "Dahlia Street" on it. So that's why they call it Dahlia Street today, he named it himself. Mr. Comstock. As far as a particular person, I think there was a business named Darby's which was a couple of doors south of the barbershop where they made trailers, camper shells and trailers. Every now and then you see one with "Darby" on it, that was made there and that was in the real early 1970s.

Richard: Do you have a favorite memory or trip or destination?

Bob: You know, actually I don't. I don't have any, bad or good.

Richard: Did you remember any bad accidents on the 101?

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Bob: Actually, no, I haven't. And I don't know any stories about officers or traffic cops or anything like that.

Richard: I thought perhaps you might have had one who was a particular nemesis for you

Bob: No, no--I think the speed limit was 35 through town.

Richard: Did you have a hand in setting that [speed limit], I think?

Bob: Not there. Actually, I worked for the Traffic Commission for Encinitas, and I was involved in dropping the speed limit from 55 to, I think it was 45, through Restaurant Row. I was on the Traffic Commission for, I think, five years.

Richard: Did you ever get a ticket?

Bob: Did I ever get a ticket? Yes, I did, right on Restaurant Row.

Richard: After you were involved in setting the speed limit!

Bob: After I was involved in setting the speed limit.

Richard: That's poetic something-or-other, I guess!

Bob: It was a sheriff, and he was a motorcycle cop. I don't know his name. I also got another ticket probably twenty-five years before, in Del Mar, going over the railroad bridge there, doing 55 in a 35 zone.

Richard: Do you recall any celebrities in any parades or such.

Bob: I don't remember any celebrity or anyone in a parade route; I assume they mean 101.

Richard: Apparently Franklin Roosevelt went through there some time ago. Do you remember the first traffic light installed?

Bob: The first traffic light installed, I don't I assume it had to be on Lomas Santa Fe and 101.

Richard: Was that installed on the roadway rather than on the railroad [crossing]?

Bob: I really don't remember; that was just my guess.

Richard: What service stations were along the route?

Bob: Of course, the only service station I remember was that Chevron station on Lomas Santa Fe and 101.

Richard: I knew there were a number of them along here. Didn't they used to call it Gasoline Alley?

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Bob: That was in Del Mar. Gasoline Alley. All the gas stations were really in Del Mar. There were six stations in Del Mar and only one (here).

Richard: Okay. I thought they had a batch of them along here but maybe that was at a different time

Bob: The only other one was that one station which was an oil station right across from the Cardiff State Park. I think it was a Union Oil station.

Richard: I'd understood that back in the thirties there might have been quite a few here.

Bob: As I recall, that's the only one. No, there was one other one. There was one towards where City Hall is now, called Bob's Service Station; it was an independent. I remember when we had that gas shortage, that was the only place you could buy gas. Like he had a pipeline out to his own special storage there.

Richard: Back in the late 60s, we came here about 1963, I remember Nick Fix. His station wasn't on the highway but on Lomas Santa Fe. And then I remember that Chevron station, of course, there at the intersection.

Bob: Those were the only two--the one independent, Bob's, and of course that Chevron. Going out of town the other way---I don't recall any others.

Richard: The [Women's] Civic Club did a lot of work, getting [all] the signs down. There were signs everywhere, I understand.

Anything else you'd like to add about your reminiscences?

Bob: I remember Kurt Visher wanted to -- there was a piece of property for sale; that triangular piece of property just as you get out of Solana Beach to the north. It's kind of like a funny-shaped lot. I think there's an insurance building on it now. Kurt heard it was for sale and so he thought he might buy it. They wanted 32 for it. He thought they meant thirty-two hundred and they meant thirty-two thousand! He said "they've got to be crazy! I'm not buying that!"

Richard: What year was this, for goodness' sake?

Bob: Probably [19]75, maybe, or something like that.

Richard: Okay! Well, thank you; we'll conclude the interview, and I thank you for your assistance and your help here.