

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

In the summer of Nineteen Forty Two, at the age of Fifteen, I went to work for Chicago Bridge and Iron Company building floating dry docks during World War Two. After five days, working as a laborer, I decided that coming home, covered with creosote each day, was not for me. One of my neighbors, a county agriculture inspector, heard that I was looking for a job and offered me two weeks of work eradicating Klamath Weed in the Miranda area and led to a summer job the following year as a foreman of a weed control crew in the areas of Bridgeville and Iaqua. Many of you will immediately refer to (Weed) as marijuana. In this case the plant was known as Klamath Weed, better known now-a-days as St John's Wort. It has certain medicinal properties used to treat human depression but is a very invasive plant, toxic in large doses to cattle, sheep and other animals. The plant had spread to large areas of the county and at that time was treated with granulated borax. Each worker would carry a bucket full of borax and walk abreast keeping a double arm's length apart as they slowly walked infested areas broadcasting the chemical on and around the plants. The first rainfall would drive the borax into the earth, killing all plant life that it covered. The weed was tough to rid of. If you did not spread the borax over the plant's complete root system, you might kill the main plant but the untouched roots would still re-grow. The need to examine the ground so closely sometimes brought other things into view that we could have done without. Most of the sixteen man crew had their first encounters with rattlesnakes. Attempts were made to burn the plants but the seeds could survive the fire's heat. To make matters worse, if sheep were turned into a weed infected area, they would consume a certain amount of the plant and the seeds were carried to new areas each time the animals were moved. Within a few years after using our control measures, research came up with an answer to the noxious weed. They had discovered a beetle in Australia that thrived on Klamath Weed but was not a pest in itself. The beetle was shipped in to the county by the thousands. The Weed was devoured and was no longer a threat. It was not wiped out and still can be seen along many rural county roads. The plant's blossom is quite pretty and golden in color. Another plant pest during that period as called the Silver Star Thistle. It was being brought into the county in loads of hay destined for Humboldt county ranches. I remember my boss stopping an inbound load of hay from Kings County. He found the load to be infected with the Thistle and ordered the load to be returned to Kings County.

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