The job had been underway for some time when I arrived early in July, after a fast move from the Clearwater, and a day in Missoula where Fred Thieme, R-1 Regional Engineer, briefed me on the events previously narrated and current status of construction.

Initial progress had been slowed by wet weather and numerous unavoidable delays in getting equipment on the job, camp constructed, and hiring and organizing the crews, most of whom were recruited locally. Emory Hauswirth, an experienced and capable construction foreman, had been ill for several weeks and had asked to be relieved of overall responsibility. Roger Nelson, later to become Regional Engineer in R-3, was in charge of the location work being done concurrent with construction. Fred was concerned by mounting costs and the relatively slow rate of progress which was of equal concern to Anaconda.

Anaconda had requested that grading of the section of road from Dean to the mill site on Little Rocky Creak, a distance of 5.1 miles, be completed as a first priority objective. Until this was done, material for construction of the mill and facilities could not be delivered to the site and initiation of their construction program was therefore entirely dependent upon progress made in constructing the road.

George Duncan, who was then in charge of equipment for the Region, came into Fred's office as I was about to leave. George was widely known throughout the Service and will be remembered for his leadership in establishing the first central repair shops in many Regions and for developing maintenance and equipment management procedures for Service-wide use. He gave me some additional information and assurance of his help and support whenever needed. I needed it many times in the days ahead and George and his outfit never failed to come through during the entire time of construction of both the Benbow and Mouat jobs.

Anaconda had their project office in Columbus. Fred Gethke, project manager; Martin Messner, production superintendent; and Fred Hill, construction superintendent, were the three men with whom we were most closely associated. All were old Anaconda hands, friendly, cooperative, and always understanding and helpful when the going got rough. It was interesting to learn later that both Gethke and Messner got out of Poland one jump ahead of the Nazi invasion. "Marty" once told me, "We just left our cars parked in front of the office and walked away down the street." Just like that!
The first three miles of the road from Dean involved relatively easy construction through rolling grassland and excavation was mostly done with cats and scrapers. The route then followed along moderate to steep slopes where solid rock and large imbedded boulders were the predominant material. The last half mile was through an area of huge surface boulders that required blasting.

Two things were soon evident. The little Cletrac 55 dozers were too small to handle the volume and type of materials involved. More dozers, in the D-8 class, were needed if any greatly improved progress was to be attained. Only two D-8's were then on the job and these were needed to operate the scrapers, leaving the Cletracs to handle most of the dozer work. Equally important was the need for a competent foreman to handle the drilling and blasting, particularly on the road above the mill site where over a mile of location was through a continuous section of limestone cliffs. Several so called "good rock men" had come and gone when it was evident that their ability was more in "tamping lifters" in the bars at Absarokee than in real know how on the job.

The situation was getting desperate when someone remarked that Francis Pixley, then an alternate Ranger on the Clearwater, had been a drilling foreman on several large highway jobs along the Clearwater river. One telephone call and two days later Francis arrived on the job. Concern over this phase of the work was soon over. He "went to town!" I'll always remember the morning he took charge of the rock crew. Most were local men and many wore cowboy boots. Francis had observed them on the job the previous afternoon. That morning he introduced himself and said, "You may all be good cowhands, but from what I saw yesterday, you're a hell of a long ways from being jackhammer operators. Just leave your spurs at home and I'll teach you to be one--or else." He did just that.

The road to the mill site was opened for truck hauling early in August and Anaconda started construction immediately. In the meantime, George had sent another D-8 and with the delivery of two new ones from the factory (how he managed that I never knew) about August 15, progress got into high gear. Wind, rain, mud, breakdowns, and a heavy wet snow in early September caused frustrating slowdowns, but the job kept moving. The road to the mill site was completed and surfaced, right-of-way fencing was in the final stages, a treated timber bridge had been built over Little Rocky Creek, and construction on the section from the mill site to the mine was well underway by September 15.

This section was built to a 16-foot subgrade width. Unstable soil conditions, wholly unexpected, were encountered for a distance of
about 2 miles above the mill site and required the placement of from 8 to 12 inches of base course before application of a 4-inch surface course of crushed rock. This was the section of road that nearly stopped us cold when heavy rains and wet snow fell.

Fred, who frequently visited the job and prodded us along, arrived one day about the time we were fighting the battle of the mud. With him were Ted Norcross, then Chief of the Division of Engineering, WO; Howard Jones, who later succeeded Fred in R-1; and Jim Byrne, now Director, Division of Engineering, WO. The rain was still falling and the mud in places would bog a snipe. Ted wanted to get a bird's eye view of as much of the job as he could in a short time. We drove a short distance and then, before getting stuck, climbed on a ripper (perfectly safe practice?) and rode behind a D-8 to a good observation point at the beginning of the limestone reefs.

Jackhammers were chattering above us, dozers roaring nearby, rocks crashing downhill; and, in the valley below, trucks were hauling gravel, mill, transmission line, tramway, telephone line, and other construction crews were working all over the place. Ted said not a word for about 10 minutes. Then, turning to Fred he said, "In all of my 25 years in the Forest Service, I have never seen anything like this."

Shortly after his visit, the only serious accident to any of our people during the entire construction of both the Benbow and Mouat roads occurred. George Ramlow, with many years of experience as a logging operator and heavy construction foreman, slipped and fell behind a dozer just as the operator put it in reverse gear. In the darkness, it was a miracle that the operator saw what had happened so suddenly and was able to get the big machine stopped before running over him. George sustained severe injuries, was in a Billings hospital for months, but a year later was back on another job showing little effects from the accident that literally came within inches of being instantly fatal.

The road was opened to the mine early in October and completed in November when most of the crews were released. Surfacing of about 5 miles of the road then was not considered necessary and had not been planned for. Heavy truck traffic continuing throughout the summer of 1942 made the need more apparent and surfacing was placed on this section in the fall of 1942 after completion of the Mouat project.

Under terms of the cooperative agreement with Anaconda, the Forest Service also handled the snow removal and maintenance of the road from Dean to the mine. Clarence Sipes, an old pro in the rock
crushing game, all around equipment operator, and "can do" individual on nearly any type of construction job, was in charge of this phase of the work during the winter of 1941-1942, along with Throop McCracken, one of the best all around blade operators that ever climbed into a grader cab.

After much additional work was done at the mill site for Anaconda, camp dismantled, repair and storage of equipment arranged for, and numerous other final chores completed, I left for a winter detail in the Regional Office. The first flash of the attack on Pearl Harbor came over our car radio as my family and I drove into Missoula.
TYPICAL GRADING SECTIONS USED ON MOUAT CHROME ROAD

PORTION FROM DEAN TO MILLSITE

REGULAR SECTION

SECTION ON FLAT GROUND
Where Additional Height of Grade is Required

PORTION FROM MILLSITE TO MINE

REGULAR SECTION

TURNOUT SECTION
Rock drilling at Station 455 on Section II.

Underground water veins encountered at Station 553 on Section II.
Looking back from Station 464-Section II-before construction of the road.

Same as above picture after completion of the road.