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Beet-Heaver

Mayor Willard Fraser of Billings tosses a sugar beet into a pile at the Great Western Sugar Co. factory in Billings Monday morning as the annual harvest began. Beet dumps opened Monday morning and the factory opens Tuesday. The mayor was on hand to receive 300 pounds of sugar to pay off a bet made with the mayor of Klamath Falls, Ore.—Gazette photo by Bill Tutokey.

Ahhhh, How Sweet It Is

By J. C. Malone
Gazette Staff Writer

The job of turning half a million tons of sugar beets into sugar got started Monday with a political twist.

Billings Mayor Willard E. Fraser helped wrap 300 pounds of sugar for shipment to Klamath Falls, Ore., as the result of the bet with the mayor of that city.

THE BET was over the outcome of an American Legion baseball tournament game last summer between the Billings Royals and the Klamath Falls Legion club.

Fraser told the Oregon mayor that if the Royals lost he would send him two tons of sugar beets for two tons of roses if the Royals won.

The Billings mayor had heard that the southwestern Oregon city was the center of a rose-growing region.

Klamath Falls mayor Robert E. Veatch accepted the bet but said that instead of roses he would promise to send potatoes if he lost. His area was strong on spuds, not flowers, he informed Fraser.

The Billings Royals lost the game. Mayor Fraser at first cast about for donations of sugar beets.

But Great Western Sugar Co. in Billings came through with an offer of 300 pounds of sugar, representing the production of two tons of beets.

AS THE BILLINGS Mayor scooped sugar into a 25 pound sack held by Ed Bayne manager of the Billings Royals, Monday, Great Western's manager and superintendent beamed and said this fall they'll process the second or third record year's harvest of beets for this area.

"We start slicing at 8 a.m. Tuesday," manager Ralph Hettinger said.

He explained that before it is through the plant will have produced the equivalent of 1,670,000 100-pound bags of sugar.

This will be boiled down from roughly half a million tons of beets.

THE YELLOWISH ROOT vegetables which some might take for turnips were beginning to pile up on the plant's grounds. Inside, machinery was being readied.

"We're the only Great Western plant with ample labor," Superintendent Francis Woods says. The Billings plant takes on about 650 persons to help process the annual beet harvest, collected at 37 beet receiving stations covering a large portion of the state.

At about 2:25 p.m. sacks of sugar bound for Oregon were loaded aboard a plane to start the trip to Klamath Falls.

Mayor Veatch has told Mayor Fraser he's looking forward to the sugar and has prepared a token gift in return.

A LITERARY if not political rival to the Billings mayor, Veatch writes Fraser:

"It is distressing to hear that anyone should be forced to eat frozen and/or powdered potatoes — especially the Mayor of a great city! I cannot stand by while a Mayor is being subjected to such indignities. Therefore I shall forthwith forward — no strings attached — a generous supply of the finest potato this side of heaven — the incomparable Klamath Netted Gem."