CHAPTER THREE

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MY FOREST SERVICE YEARS

AN INTRODUCTION

Although I may have alluded to a few of my experiences with the U.S. Forest Service in earlier chapters, I feel the total of such experiences is sufficient in number and interest to make them worthy of their own chapter. After all, they do represent some eight summers of my life and, I might add, some of my happiest summers. I did love the mountains and the work I was associated with therein. If I had been given a choice with my own son regarding such work, I would have signed him up without a bit of hesitation. Responsibility and a strong work ethic were certainly outgrowths of those experiences. Also, there was really less temptation, in a moral sense, than one would find in any city or small town, even in those days. The people I found myself involved with were generally of good morals and demonstrated honesty and integrity. Their example for a young man was positive in virtually all respects. Looking back, I realize that I was indeed fortunate to have had such experiences as a foundation on which to build. They were in rather stark contrast to those experiences I had in Boise, at home or in school. They taught me the value of physical labor and respect for those who work with their hands for a living. Every young man should be so lucky, as I learned in later years.

If you think that's bad, however, you should have seen the original, hand drawn map, which I scanned in.

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

I have wondered just how to approach the many experiences that occurred over eight summers. I could arrange them chronologically but I'm not sure my memory would serve me well enough for that. After a good deal of cogitating (thinking that is) I decided to draw a map of the area involved and designate significant features involved in those experiences thereon. Now, I'm no cartographer, a fact you are bound to agree with when you see my handiwork. If you think it's bad, however, you should have seen the original, hand drawn map, which I scanned in. After finishing it and explaining my predicament to Tom Jr., he suggested I learn how to use the computer drawing tools provided with Microsoft Word. I decided that was the way to go considering the number of illustrations I had in mind throughout the book. I began by practicing with a different drawing, which now resides in this literary work as figure 3-42. I must have spent three weeks trying to upgrade my expertise as well as determine the best way to assemble such a drawing with that particular figure being the fruit of that practice. Well, I had some fun as well as some frustrating experiences but I did get to the point where I decided my computer drawn products were at least as good (or maybe bad, depending on your viewpoint) as my hand drawn ones and they occupied less disc space. The real frustration of this exercise was the limits of the program. Little did I know it couldn't accept all that I tried to place within its confines, i.e. trees and bushes, etc. I ended up removing most of my artwork, which is probably well, it being my loss and your gain. However, there is a definite possibility future illustrations of my computer art will improve in appearance. Let's hope so for your sake as well as for my benefit.

A MAP OF EXPERIENCES

Anyhow, if you can find it within yourself to overlook the aesthetic qualities of the map, you might agree such a vehicle provides a reasonable guide for my efforts and a means for the reader to develop a better perspective for the events that follow. The map of Figure 3-1 follows on page 76. Don't gasp at the many identifying names listed. As I said, they have a purpose. I have color coded a few things to make them more obvious to

the reader. You will find the legend at the bottom of the map. As you examine it (the legend) you may notice the engineering logic coming out again or is that, heaven forbid; an artistic trait?

No comment will be necessary from my readers or even wise for that matter. You see, I will be observing from beyond the veil the few of my posterity who make an effort to read this history and may well call down lightening or similar natural forces if such remarks become too derogatory. I expect to have some time on my hands and will certainly have kind thoughts for those who so engage themselves without belittling my limited talents. Hey, I might even put in a good word or two for those who not only complete it but also do it with tenderness and compassion, even if feigned. There I go wandering off again on another tangent. That's probably a result of the Bear Valley fever I contacted and suffered through those many years while on the trail.

The trails, roads and streams are obviously not all-inclusive and essentially represent those,

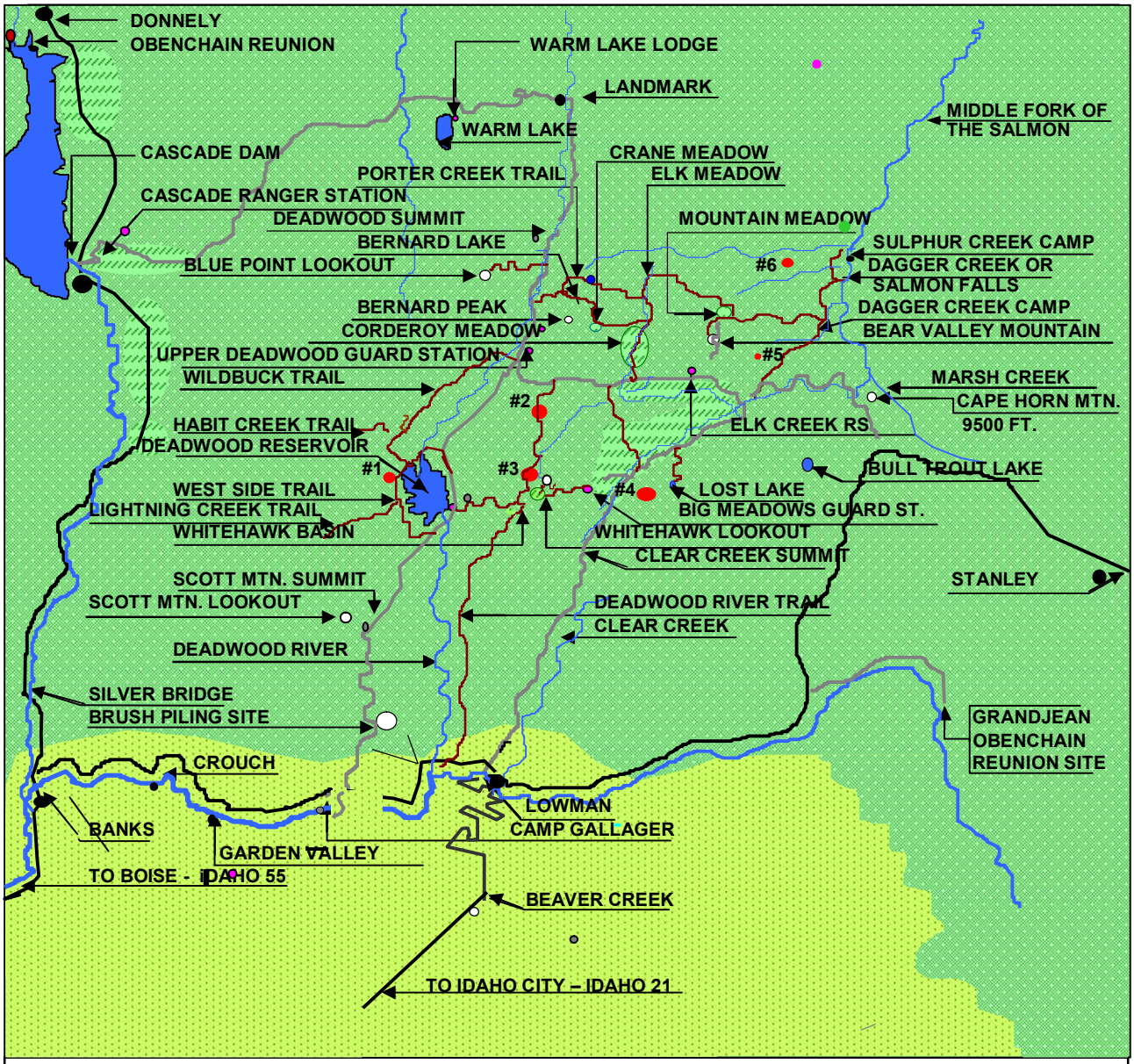

Figure 3-1 Simplified map of the area I frequented during my years in the U. S. Forest Service.
LEGEND: Arid, less densely forested area Wetter, more densely forested area
Paved Highways Dirt or Gravel Roads Lakes and Streams Meadows
Mountain Peaks Towns & Settlements Camps & Cabins Forest Fires

which I will mention in my forest service stories. The fires indicated by number are the more major ones I was involved with and/or, one which had an associated story. I even included a couple of reunion sites situated on the fringes, which may improve the overall perspective for those who have only visited the area on such occasions.

PILING BRUSH

Those memorable experiences began at the age of fifteen when I got my first job with the U.S.F.S. That was only possible because of WW II, which had taken most of the available labor force out of circulation. I heard of the job opportunity from other kids in high school and signed up with them. The work involved piling brush in areas where timber had been previously cut. The “brush” consisted of the tops of Ponderosa or Yellow pines and major limbs as well as broken or other unusable pieces left by the logging companies. The brush was to be burned in the wetter months of winter to minimize fire danger. We stayed in an old CCC camp called Camp Gallager, which is shown in figure 3-1 in the lower left corner.

SMOKY THE BEAR

Loggers stayed in the camp also and we shared the mess hall and the showers. I mention the latter because of an experience I had one evening. I walked in to shower and just as I stepped in one, out from another came a logger who was covered with hair from head to toe, I do believe. I don't know that I have ever seen such a hairy critter before or since in my life. He could have passed for the imaginary "Big Foot" or maybe "Smoky the Bear", had the latter been characterized by then. I, on the other hand, was about as hairless as a teenager could be. I resented my inability to shave as well as my skinny build, both of which seemed so unmanly. However, both time and experience have vindicated my condition at least in my mind. The skinny build has helped keep the pounds off in later years and, after living in New Orleans, Mississippi, Texas, etc. and working outside in hot weather, I have learned that hairy exteriors aren't to be envied. I survived such conditions a little easier with somewhat less body odor than did my friends who were less advanced in the evolutionary process (just joking, my hairy friends). My logger is depicted in figure 3-2.

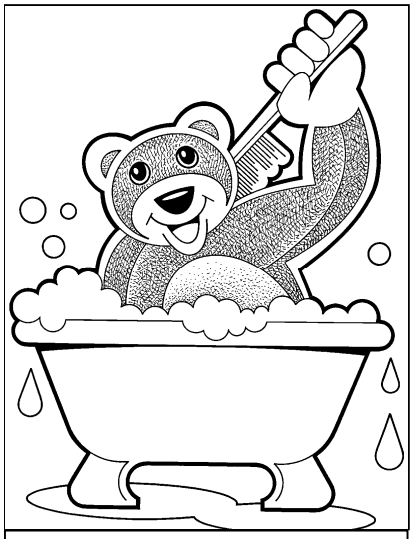

Figure 3-2 My logging friend, Smoky the bear, showering.

THE ART OF PILING BRUSH

I learned how to swing an ax quite well that summer as well as how to sharpen one and properly care for it. This proved to be good experience for the future smoke-chasing job I was able to land after reaching the ripe old age of 16. In my youthful mind, such was a step upward.

Piling brush was a rather strenuous job. It required cutting the limbs from the tops that had been left, chopping up the tops themselves and putting all of this in a pile small enough for a controlled burn. Needless to say, we needed sharp axes and the know how to swing them if we were to be efficient. We carried whetstones and files and learned to put an edge on our ax with which we could shave our arms. In fact, that was the test for a properly sharpened ax.

Swinging the ax properly and delivering the blow to the proper place was equally important. If you couldn't do that, you quickly earned the nickname "beaver" because your finished product looked more like a beaver had been at work than a real woodsman. A good clean and efficient ax cut required one to properly judge the width of the cut needed, so as to just reach the tip of the "V" as the far side of the limb or trunk was approached, as well as to deliver the blows at precisely the exact spot selected. As the ax hit, the ax man would give a quick twist of the wrist so as to force the chip, just cut clear of the cut and free the ax for another blow. Such blows were alternated to either side of the cut and if delivered well with a sharp ax, the chips flew while a nice smooth wall was produced on each side of the "V". The signature of a good ax man was a clean, smooth walled cut and it was rather surprising how fast such a man could cut through a rather large log. At that time in my life, it was important to become skilled with an axe. It not only made my work more pleasant but also provided me with a degree of respect from those I worked with.

CAMP GALLAGER

Now, let’s utilize my work of art. Camp Gallager, the base for my first summer’s work, is shown on

the map near the lower left corner. The sights of our daily work were up the Scott Mountain road shown just to the right of Camp Gallager while Garden Valley R. S. is just to the left. There was a small store a couple of miles from camp towards Garden Valley. On weekends we would walk down to it for a soda or ice cream but mainly to pass the time of day. It was rather dry and hot in the Garden Valley area that first summer.

On workdays we would leave the camp about seven A.M. with a packed lunch and were trucked to the site about 25 miles away up Pine creek towards Scott Mountain Lookout. The back of the truck was covered and had wooden benches along the sides. It was slow going, taking about an hour each way. The road was far from smooth and we bounced around like cattle in a stock trailer. Upon arrival, we bailed out and went right to work within a radius of a couple hundred yards of the truck. An hour or so after our arrival the morning chill would be gone and we would strip to our waists. I had to be careful at first so as not to burn but within a week I worked all day without a shirt. We worked until five before starting back and took only an occasional break in addition to an hour for lunch.

The work did a great deal for me in terms of building up my chest and arms. If they look puny now, just consider what they were. We often had contests to see who could make the cleaner cut or get through a given size log with fewer blows. Such work and competition helped me develop into a rather good ax man, if I do say so, a skill I would use for seven more summers. At 5:00 PM, the foreman would call us in to the truck and we would head back for Gallager, repeating the same bouncing and lurching we had gone through on the way up to the site. The ride itself would keep anyone with a tendency for being overweight on the lean side. Any fat would be shaken loose and scattered within the confines of the covered bed of the truck. We would arrive back in camp about six, eat a healthy meal, shower and then play horseshoes until dark. After that came storytelling, reading or anything else to pass the time. We really weren't that particular, our tastes for the esthetic having yet to develop.

Weekends we were off and would walk to the store mentioned earlier, swim, play more horseshoes or simply lie around and read anything available. The swimming took place in the South Fork of the Payette River, which flowed in a moderate canyon just about a quarter of a mile from camp. I can remember being a little concerned about our swimming hole because the river was deep and swift there but the better swimmers seemed to negotiate any part of it without trouble. I was a little more conservative because I was only an average swimmer. Even so, I gained ability and confidence while there. By summer's end, I too was venturing out into the middle of the deeper and swifter parts of the stream. I guess such a life wouldn't be considered very exciting by today's standard but I enjoyed the outside work, and the pay was better than you could get in most places in town.

THE DANGER OF A SHARP AX

About mid-summer, while piling brush, I received a first-hand lesson in safety. Being pretty confident with an ax and even somewhat competent, I would proceed to walk along the trunk of the treetop swinging the ax and clipping off the smaller branches. As might be expected by an older and wiser person, the ax soon took a glancing blow from a limb, deflected and struck my foot. The boot was cut cleanly through and my foot received a rather nasty cut just above the big toe. I was sent into Boise to the VA hospital to receive treatment. It took about three weeks for the foot to heal and for me to return to work, a week of which I spent in the VA hospital. I made good use of the time, however, and learned to play cribbage with various vets confined to the hospital. As I mentioned in chapter two, such experience proved useful in later years as dad and I played that same game many an evening when he was in town. Upon my return to Camp Gallager, I had developed a new respect for a sharp ax and became somewhat more careful with my swing and my stance from then on. Yes sir, I usually took time to plant my feet in a safe place and I didn't swing until I was good and ready. There was no more lopping of limbs as I walked along a tree trunk or any other type of casual ax swinging. Admittedly, I wasn't too bright but, in this case, I had learned my lesson well, even for a city boy. The cut hadn't bothered me too much but the loss of pay did. My cheapskate nature was already beginning to develop.

PILING BRUSH TO SMOKE CHASING

The idea of camping out and working back in the primitive area of Idaho really appealed to me. The next spring I got wind of a smoke-chasing job in Bear Valley at the Elk Creek Ranger Station which was located on the head waters of the middle fork of the Salmon River. You will find it in the right center of my cartographic masterpiece. I applied for the job and was accepted. Needless to say I

was elated, being only 16. Just think, I would be working in the Idaho primitive area.

The job offered me a chance to work trail (clean out downed trees from winter storms, clear overhead limbs for horseback riders, build bridges and generally shape up the trail for summer use). That meant camping out and working with saddle horses as well as pack animals. What more could a young man of my age ask for? We would also hang telephone line, do general maintenance like painting buildings, building fences, etc. and even fight fires when they occurred. There was a lot more variety in this job than just piling brush. There were a variety of locales to work in as well and I would be moving amongst them as I performed the various jobs assigned to me. As a bonus, it would pay more money and the ranger district was situated on the edge of the Idaho primitive area, a beautiful region, indeed.

REPORTING FOR WORK

About the last week of May I had to report to Cascade, Idaho to a forest ranger named Joe Ladle. He turned out to be tall, slim and well-built but on the quiet side. I learned rather quickly that he gave assignments in a methodical manner and expected a person to carry them out. He seemed at home in the saddle and undoubtedly loved the life he lived. He was a John Wayne look alike, eventually becoming my role model and a man I wanted to emulate. I made the trip to Cascade on the bus by myself and reported as directed. The Bear Valley road hadn't been opened as yet and I worked a week in a warehouse in Cascade while waiting for the snow to melt and/or the road crews to plow the Deadwood summit.

He seemed at home in the saddle and, without doubt, loved the life he lived. He reminded me of John Wayne and eventually became a role model for me as well as a man I wanted to emulate.

INTRODUCING AL PANTRY

Almost immediately I found I would be working under the direction of a man who would be my high school physics teacher the next fall. Actually, he didn't know that but I did, having picked physics as an elective. Needless to say I wanted to remain on the good side of him. His name was Al Pantry. He was obviously intelligent but was also kind of on the feminine side. He walked in somewhat of a feminine way and was the butt of frequent jokes at school and in Bear Valley. He was also an assistant coach in football, though I doubt he ever played himself. What a contrast to Joe Ladle. Even so, he was a good guy to work with and he taught me a good deal, not to mention the kindness he and his wife showed to both Harlan and I from time to time. In many cases, she cooked for us or simply invited us for a meal.

Al wasn't one to give his subordinate the dirty jobs and pitched right in with dishes, gathering firewood, packing the mules, etc. I learned to like him as well as his wife who came up later in the summer. She was really nice to us and often invited us to dinner, I suppose, because of our close association with Al.

The first year in Bear valley Al accompanied me on much of the trail work and maybe all of it. It's not clear in my mind just when Harlan Goodwin showed up. He was a year younger than me and we worked together either 3 or 4 summers filling the need for smoke chasers at Elk Creek. He hailed from Meridian, Idaho, a little town 10 miles west of Boise. Though we had nothing in common during the winter months, we became good friends through our summer experiences.

It might well have been the second year I was in Bear Valley that Harlan arrived. At that point Al stayed back at the ranger station attending to other duties while Harlan and I did the trail work. That was good for him and for the two of us, as well, because, quite frankly, I wasn't too comfortable camping out with one of my school-teachers or even spending the day with him. You might say, it cramped my style, that is, if I had any to be cramped. Actually, it just forced me to act more like an adult.

OPENING ROADS AND TELEPHONE LINES TO BEAR VALLEY

That first year I was taken directly into Bear Valley by pickup. I remember that year well because of a big mud hole in the road near the Deadwood summit and I do mean big. As we approached the summit, I was introduced to the physics of a frost heave, which had produced said mud hole. The road crossed an arm of Tyndall Meadow, which received drainage from the slopes of surrounding hills. Being improperly drained, the water in the meadow had seeped through the subsoil, bypassing the culvert beneath the road, and was frozen during the winter months. Near the center of the meadow arm the road was in shambles. As the ice had expanded, the roadbed heaved upward and was broken up allowing the frozen mud of the subsurface to be mixed with it. The spring thaw then turned the whole road into a mud hole. A forest service bulldozer, situated there for

road repair, was required to pull our pickup through. We had arrived there in late afternoon and I was really taken by the beauty of the meadow and surrounding hills. A 1999 picture of the same area (figure 3-3) shows little change except the roadbed is improved.

My first work assignment after arriving in the valley was to help Al open the roads, i.e. remove trees downed by the winter storms, and establish telephone communications with Cascade as well as the outside world. The first part was easy because I was already reasonably proficient with an ax, which was used in the major part of our work. Occasionally, however, we came across a big tree whose removal was more difficult.

In such cases, a cross cut saw was required which, was another matter. Besides learning the technique required for one's self, he also has to learn to work in harmony with the other sawyer.

Figure 3-3 Tyndall Meadows, which lies just north of the Deadwood Summit on Johnson Creek a few miles south of Landmark, Idaho.

That's not quite as easy as it sounds since that person may also be in some stage of learning. Until two people really become a team, efforts are often in opposition. That is, both parties may try to pull at the same time or the second one may begin his pull too quickly. A real novice in such an effort will often push the saw, after completing his pull, to help his partner. Of course, that's a real no-no in that such action will tend to buckle the saw and increase friction. Even so, it's a tendency that requires a little concentration to overcome. Real teamwork between two sawyers becomes essential when cutting a good-sized log of say 2 to 3 feet in diameter. Without it, an average job can become difficult and time consuming. With it, a rather hefty job is completed in a relatively short time.

Establishing phone communication in the spring was almost as high a priority as was the road opening. In fact degrees of each were interleaved, as I remember. After opening the road to Elk Creek Ranger Station, we might repair the line from Landmark to Upper Deadwood first and then on to Elk Creek. Next the road would be cleared to Lower Deadwood and the line repaired, etc. until all roads and communications were in service. Big Meadows G. S. and the various lookouts came last because they were either unmanned or manned after fire season began. You might want to refer to the map again to better understand the geography involved. That first year was definitely a year of learning for me.

A TELEPHONE REPAIR EDUCATION

My telephone repair role required me to gain an understanding of repair techniques as well as climbing techniques. The concepts were fairly easy but putting them to use took practice. However, in a few days I was comfortable climbing with tree spurs, attaching insulators to poles and trees and hanging the line to the same while allowing the proper slack to minimize line breakage and insulator failure. Splices were a little more complicated because rerouting might be required which meant adding or cutting line to maintain proper slack. The work might not sound very difficult to understand or carry out but you must remember I was sweet sixteen, well maybe just sixteen, and the whole thing was new to me. Primarily, the work required experience and only a moderate amount of intelligence. Although some of my acquaintances may dispute it, I was given that level of intelligence and after about a week, I suppose, I began to use it and even gained the experience necessary to go about my work with little or no instruction from Al. I thoroughly enjoyed what I was doing and had no difficulty putting my whole self into it. There may have been times when I would have been better off to refrain from such enthusiasm but then again, who knows. Yep, summer in the mountains was my cup of tea and I reveled in the work I got to do.

MY FIRST TASTE OF TRAIL WORK

My first taste of trail work with horses and pack animals came after the roads and telephone lines were taken care of. I can remember my first experience of retrieving horses from the pasture. That job might sound easy but not to a sixteen year old without any experience in that activity. In such cases I think the horses read our minds better than we can theirs. I was instructed to take some oats in a feedbag along with the necessary

halters and go out and find them. Fortunately, Al took mercy on me because, I believe, he understood my dilemma. Either that or he was playing with me and knew he would have to go along to help anyway. After all, there were three saddle horses and two pack mules to collect.

Well, we headed out into the pasture, which was not only big but also had a good deal of timber in it. I suppose it took about fifteen to twenty minutes to locate the horses. Wow, the magic a feedbag with oats has in retrieving horses. Sure enough they quickly came over to us and stuck their noses in the bags, eating furiously. My problem then became one of trying to get the halters on before those ornery critters ate all the oats. Remember, I wasn't exactly comfortable with a horse at that age. I barely knew which end the feed went in and which end the leavings came out. Soon, however, we had halters on all five and away we went back to the cabin with me acting like I knew what I was doing.

THE PORTER CREEK TRAIL

Al and I were taking an extra horse because a friend of the Ladles was to accompany us so he could fish a little at Bernard Lake. I soon found myself helping to pack a couple of mules and saddle my own horse. I was warned to cinch them up tight because they would suck in extra air and let it out later to loosen the cinch. You see they, like us, are interested more in their own comfort and aren't too concerned about the stability of the saddle. Even with such an effort, it's wise to tighten the cinches before actually packing a mule or climbing on a horse. If not, you may find the rider or pack under the animal's belly just a few miles down the road.

Soon we were ready to head out on Porter Creek trail just north of the Upper Deadwood Guard Station, which led past Bernard Peak to Corduroy Meadows (See the map of figure 3-1). We hadn't gotten too far down the road before we remembered the cabin hadn't been locked and I was elected to return and accomplish the task. That sounded great because I had visions of myself as a real western cowboy, galloping a little to catch up after completing my assignment. What a chance to establish my image as a real "He-man". Yep, I was on my way to becoming just like Joe Ladle, my idol, other than my dad, that is. He was a man to be admired.

EAGLE SIDE STEPS THE ISSUE

Then, along came another of life's more embarrassing moments, an event previously classified top secret. With the job done, I climbed on old Eagle, my trusty steed, kicked him in the sides and was off in a gallop. I had been warned that Eagle, though gentle, also had a tendency to shy at inanimate objects at times. To make matters worse I had been given an old cavalry saddle, you know, the kind without a saddle horn and no padding at all. My bony behind filled the seat leaving nothing to hang on to but the reins. Those saddles, I'm confident, were left over from the Civil War because I had often dreamed of being in the cavalry and swooping down on an unfortunate infantryman or maybe an Indian with our legs flapping in the breeze and our feet pounding the horse's ribs. Those were the days when men were men whose bony behinds were immune to pain being covered with elephant hide or maybe rhino leather, as nature's protective covering.

Figure 3-4 A photo illustrating a scene of horses grazing in a meadow similar to Upper Deadwood.

Well, you might have guessed it, just as I had the others in sight, Eagle saw something and shied. I now clearly understand the definition of that word. It means to stop instantly and jump sideways from the offending object. Newton's 2nd law, I believe, applies here. That is, bodies in motion tend to remain in motion and, I might add, in the same direction. Sure enough, over his head I went, making a complete somersault in the air, and landed on my behind in the road. Eagle, being a kind and gentle horse, simply walked up, stuck his nose on my neck and nuzzled me as though to say, "What in the world are you doing down there?" Well, it hurt my butt but I'll guarantee my pride smarted much more. Not that I really fancied myself a horseman but I didn't want to be

considered a complete idiot either. After all, I was trying to emulate Joe Ladle. The others came back, asked if I was hurt, and then let out a roar when I answered in the negative. Needless to say, I had little to say and clung on to old Eagle for dear life the rest of the morning as we headed up the Porter Creek trail towards Lake Bernard.

The trail to the lake was steep going. Overhead limbs would sometimes catch a rider in the face if he wasn't too attentive and so-called pack bumpers could bruise a person's knees as well. The latter were trees that had grown too close to the trail and needed to be removed. They were not only a danger to the rider's knees but could also hang up a pack and/or damage some of its contents. Right then, however, they were being ignored because we were to work a more important trail and of course spend a day fishing the lake. What an introduction to the art of packing in the backcountry I had that day.

We got to our destination about five, set up camp and prepared dinner. I guess I was some help there, particularly when it came to washing the dishes. I had gained that dubious skill over the 6 previous years at home. Even so, it didn't bother me because I was in the great outdoors doing what any 16 year old would love to do. I was going to sleep under the stars while listening to the sounds of the forest and was already enjoying the mixed aroma of various evergreens, smoke from the fire and, of course, fresh horse manure. What a life for a growing and imaginative 16 year old. I was king of the hill and loved every minute.

Well, it hurt my butt but I'll guarantee you my pride smarted much more. Not that I fancied myself a horseman but I didn't want to be considered a complete idiot either.

CHRISTMAS IN JUNE

It had rained some that day and things were kind of wet. We hadn't taken a tent along because of the extra bedroll and other more important things like extra food, a need created by our guest. We made mattresses with pine boughs and the saddle blankets, placed our sleeping bags on them and then covered the whole thing with a canvass tarp. I slept like a log but as I stirred the next morning, what to my wondering eyes should appear? Not Santa Claus or his reindeer, but more than just the crest of the new fallen snow. In fact, there was about six inches on top of my tarp. Oh, I was warm and dry for the moment but I knew what the next half hour would bring when the wakeup call would sound. What a challenge dressing would be keeping snow from getting in my pants or boots. Actually, I kind of enjoyed that particular challenge. Though the cold stuff was whiter than Eagle, my assigned horse, at least I could understand the problems involved and I went about my chores with gusto. We had a good breakfast and let the camp dry out while we fished at the lake a few hundred yards away. The rest of the trip was uneventful and I came back a veteran with a lot more understanding of old Eagle but not compassion for him or any four-legged beast.

THE VIRTUES OF HOBBLES

Each night we hobbled the horses while letting them graze and then tied up the ringleader at bedtime. The latter was necessary because they all knew the country, including where the good feed was. Their only compulsion was to seek out the same wherever it may be. I learned early the necessity of their control with an important mechanism called hobbles. Placing hobbles on and taking them off were additional experiences this 16 year old was somewhat wary of but, it was part of the learning curve. After I struggled the first few times, however, it wasn't really too bad. I got quite comfortable with that particular chore as soon as I found out they wouldn't kick or bite or whatever I expected. In fact, later in my experiences, after chasing horses several miles the morning after, I might say I thoroughly enjoyed it. It only took that experience of retrieving such un-thoughtful beasts to reverse any compassion I might have had for them. From then on, I felt little sympathy for my four legged friends, at least in terms of their finding the best feed in the country.

IT'S ROUNDUP TIME IN TEXAS

As I indicated earlier, I'm at a little bit of a loss to say just where and when my good buddy, Harlan Goodwin, came into the picture. It may have been later that first year or my second year in Bear Valley. I kind of think it was the second year or 1945. In either case, we spent some three summers together and became good friends. He wasn't quite as committed to forest service work as I, however, and he quit coming up after the summer of 1947. He needed more social activity, which had little had little for me.

He and I, or Ken in later years, beginning in early June, would round up about 30 head of horses and mules at the Cascade Ranger Station under the direction of a government packer. I'm not sure how much those old cowboys knew but they were

tough as leather and, I believe, could ride night and day without getting sore or even tired. Of course, the roundup was great. We played like cowboys galloping around the pasture bringing all the strays into the designated staging area.

REALISM SETS IN

The first couple of miles down the road weren't bad either but then reality set in. You see, the packer led the band of 30 horses while Harlan and I brought up the rear. As the day wore on that last term, brought up the rear, began to have a more exquisite meaning. Our job, you see, was to be sure none of the horses strayed. When and if they did, we brought them back in. After a couple of miles, though, it seemed all the stock accepted the inevitable and followed along without trouble. Likewise, so did we but it didn't take long to figure out that the dad burned GP (government packer) was going to do nothing but keep his horse in a trot all day. That was a pace the horses and he could sustain forever, it would seem. Unfortunately, if you aren't used to riding, such a pace jars your guts out and makes you saddle sore in a hurry. So Harlan and I would alternate our horses between a walk and a gallop, each of which was infinitely more comfortable than a trot. Even though impractical, that change of pace went on for a while until we realized our leader wasn't about to change his horse's gait and we might as well learn to adapt.

When getting off our horses we quickly learned why cowboys develop bowed legs.

Finally, we just gritted out teeth and settled our horses into that inevitable trot and kept them there for the duration. After a while the behind becomes numbed and the jostled kidneys resemble those of a cadaver while the mind simply refuses to communicate with the tortured areas of the human torso. After 27 miles in a trot we arrived in a somewhat beleaguered state at our first stop, Warm Lake, where we dropped off eight head of horses. You might refer to the map of figure 3-1 near the upper center to see Warm Lake's location. Gee whiz, you got to use it. After all, that's why I labored so hard over it, don't ya know? We got about half an hour rest there before we heard our vaunted leader yell those now dreaded words, "Climb aboard, you yunguns. Let's be on our way afore the night comes on". Night is what our battered behinds yearned for.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF A BATTERED BEHIND

When getting off our horses we quickly learned why cowboys develop bowed legs. First they are beaten into shape by the incessant pounding and second, your thighs and calves are so sore you automatically spread your legs to prevent them from rubbing. You see, your brain has now begun to communicate with the injured area (to see if it's still there) and as the pain registers the natural reflex is to spread ones legs as far as possible. Of course, when you climb back on a half hour later, the behind quickly sends all the pain messages it can muster before the brain can shut down its receivers again, thus intensifying that which you thought had been relieved. From this explanation, you can see the behind has a measure of intelligence and, in fact, such reasoning explains the old saying wherein one is accused of having his brains in his behind or his behind for a brain, however you want to word that particular adage. It's an old cowboy description of one who has been in the saddle too long and has consequently, become part of the American dialect ever since pioneer times.

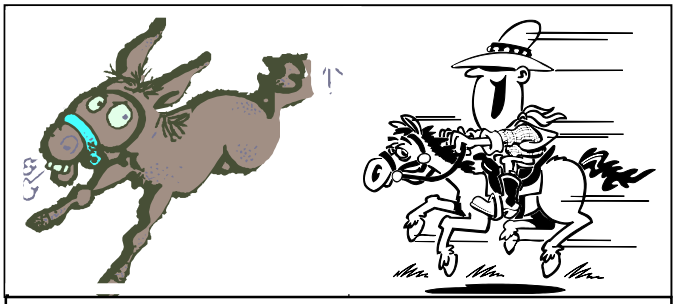

Figure 3-5 Grandpa in the June horse round-up.

A NIGHT'S REST AT LANDMARK

Well, before the day ended, we arrived at Landmark, which was another 9 miles away. Our only saving grace on this leg of the trip was, the first half of it was up hill going over Warm Lake summit. The GP walked his horse there, having compassion for it while registering nothing but disdain for our poor beleaguered behinds. Also, upon our arrival at Landmark, the GP rather quickly reminded each of us that taking care of the horses came first. After they were comfortable, we could relax and go to supper at the ranger station. I ate standing up and swore I would never sit down again. I have never been so sore in my life and by the end of that day, thoroughly appreciated the term "saddle sore".

PIONEER CABINS

I now understand why western cabins were so modestly furnished. Chairs were only needed for

the women and children. Men folk always stood up after a hard day's ride, it being the only comfortable position for them. That night as I undressed, I began to examine the sorest points. Would you believe, I found the hide gone in several places, namely the inside of my calves (an area about 1" by 2") from the constant rubbing and also various places on the behind where Levi Straus had used rivets to secure pockets and other stress points in the jeans they produce. I had been branded as surely as a young calf in the spring roundup. No wonder the cowhands didn't even flinch when they applied the hot branding iron to a calf or a yearling as they rounded them up each spring. Hey kids, they had been branded themselves, even though in a somewhat different manner. They thought of it simply as a part of life on the range for both calves and cowboys. Both would learn to adapt to the inevitable in due time.

MOVING ON TO DEADWOOD

The next morning we had to move the horses another 15 miles to Upper Deadwood Guard Station. By eight A.M. we had the horses saddled and were ready to go. Boy, were we in luck. The GP wasn't going with us. However, our fleeting vision of relative ease was short lived and we soon found the reality of herding a few head of horses hadn't changed. Needless to say, after the previous day's ride, the initial experience of climbing on to a horse that time of morning was something like applying a red-hot branding iron to the buns and inside of one's calves and thighs. The first mile or so down the road towards Deadwood was no less painful but we hung on knowing that the brain would soon shut down all

Figure 3-7 Deadwood Summit in early June each year as we arrived with the horses.

communication lines as a matter of survival. Incessant complaints from the behind can swamp all reasoning ability of the most stable mentality, causing one to make totally unrealistic decisions. As the communication began to shut down, our apparent degree of comfort increased. Soon the buns were nicely numb again and we completed the ride to Deadwood without incident.

MOUNTAIN SCENERY

What a beautiful trip that was. I mentioned Tyndall Meadows a little earlier, which was full of wild flowers in the spring. The view of Tyndall Meadows and the Johnson Creek drainage soon gave way to the rugged scenery of the Deadwood as we crossed over the divide. The road wound through additional meadows full of

Figure 3-6 My impression of myself and Harlan en route to Upper Deadwood G. S.

flowers as well within the mountain peaks on either side as we approached the Upper Deadwood Guard Station. An idea of the associated scenery is depicted in figure 3-6.

We had encountered many snowdrifts to work through as we neared summit before dropping over into the headwaters of the Deadwood River. Some were in the vicinity of ten feet deep and it might be another week before they would bring in a bulldozer to clean out the road. I have included a picture from later years, taken a week or so later in the summer (figure 3-7). The snow wasn't quite so deep at the time but it gives you an idea of the country with its associated snow drifts. Just imagine them as 8 to 10 feet deep and you'll get an idea of the first ride's encounter in early June.

The distance from the summit to the Upper Deadwood Guard Station, our next stop, was another 5 or 6 miles but the worst was now over. At that particular point, time in the saddle as well as the beauty of our surroundings and the solitude we experienced acted as pain-killers and made the remaining ride rewarding, to say the least. That evening, the horses were put out to pasture and we took the weekend to recuperate. Such was our typical introduction most every year to the summer's work with the good old U.S. Forest

Service. It was an education far different from that which we received during the school year but in many ways more profitable.

THE REWARDS OF SMOKE CHASING

After such an introduction to summer in the forest, you may wonder why I always looked forward to that part of the year and the opportunity to go back to the forest service to work. Well, it suited my personality in that I worked with a small rather close-knit group of people and much of the time was on my own. I worked hard physically and didn't have to face groups of people. In other words, I was in my favorite habitat but most certainly not in the one, which would force me to progress and grow and overcome my natural shyness and rather insecure nature. Those years were good years, however, in that they provided activities, which have strengthened my limited confidence in many ways. I will elaborate on such activities later. I learned to love the forest, its beauty, peace and solitude as well as the many different animals we were to come across.

UPPER DEADWOOD ACTIVITIES

Let me continue with experiences associated with Upper Deadwood Guard Station. As I intimated back on page 76, when I described my map of the Elk Creek Ranger Station District and surrounding areas, I will concentrate on one area at a time rather than trying to arrange those eight years in chronological order. My aging brain is barely capable of remembering such events let alone arranging them chronologically. Anyway, my approach will divide this chapter into five or six geographical parts covering stories scattered over the eight years. Since Upper Deadwood Guard Station was our point of entry each year into the district, that seems as good a place to start as any. Though the logic of that statement may be somewhat wanting, it's the best I can do.

Typically, we would spend the first week or two getting to the Upper Deadwood Guard Station, repairing pasture fences therein from winter damage, working nearby trails and finally repairing telephone lines once the summit was open to traffic. The pasture fence had to come first or we spent too much time hunting horses. One could usually predict where they would go if a way out was found but valuable time was still lost. Usually such repair would take a day and then we would finish out the first week on a nearby trail or some such thing. By the following Monday the road would usually be open and we could begin our telephone repair work from the Deadwood Summit to the Upper Deadwood Guard Station. That telephone line had to be repaired from the summit to the station first to provide the necessary communication to civilization. That's where I was introduced to climbing gear and line repair.

In my first year, you may remember how I had been surprised to find out my high school physics

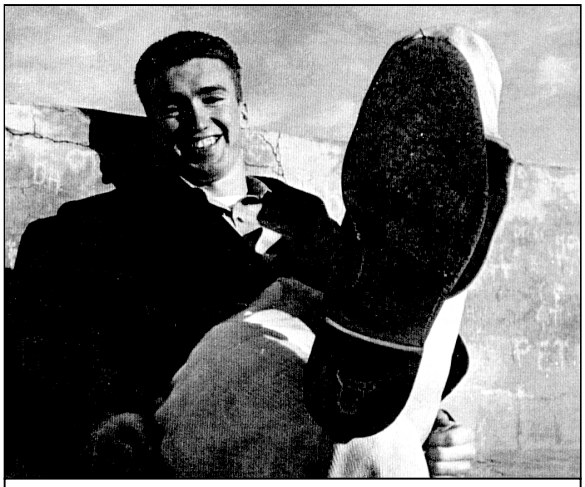

Figure 3-8 Big foot was my name and skiing was my game, at least in the spring.

teacher, Al Pantry, was to be my boss for the summer. He had been working there several summers before, was acquainted with the job and provided the necessary adult supervision. I adapted to the job rather quickly as did Harlan the second year and we were soon climbing, replacing insulators, splicing line and everything else necessary to repair the line. Everything, that is, except driving the pickup. Al reserved that job for himself. Not only was it the safe thing to do but also the job he had earned through age and seniority. After all, kids our age needed to learn the more basic rudiments of the job. He didn't have his family there as yet and we all batched at the guard station. I had already learned to cook breakfast and a few simple things at home. Harlan wasn't quite the culinary artist I was but Al managed to turn us both into acceptable cooks, providing one wasn't too picky.

THE BLESSING OF HAVING BIG FEET

I believe it might have been the second spring I was in Deadwood when I put my big feet (size 14) to use. We were near the top of the Deadwood summit repairing telephone line. I had been given the job of walking the line to examine it closely for any damage not visible from the road. I was well up on the mountainside and had just completed a small repair. The snow was probably 5 or 6 feet

deep in the open but would be melted almost away near the trees. From my location the line took a turn and went down the hill and across the road, so I was about to return to the truck.

Harlan yelled to me, "Hey Obenchain, why don't you use those big feet and ski down?" Well, to his and my surprise, I did just that. The snow was fairly firm but you would sink in if you remained stationary. I got up on this big bank of snow and headed down hill moving, I guess, fast enough to keep from sinking in. It took about three runs on various snow areas to get to the road but I

Figure 3-9 Russ, the lower Deadwood guard with a fawn found near the summit.

negotiated all with only one minor fall. Needless to say, I had the last laugh. The photo shown in figure 3-8 was taken later by Ken Karcher and

Figure 3-10 A lone telephone pole in Bear Valley much like the one I burned that day.

illustrates the reality of that primary virtue of mine, as well as the origin of that old adage one hears at times, i.e. "two feet make a yard".

THE LOWER DEADWOOD GUARD

Sometimes we worked with the man who had been assigned to the Lower Deadwood Guard Station. He was usually single but somewhat older and more experienced than Harlan or I. One such individual was a fellow by the name of Russ (??? something or other, I can't recall his last name). He was supervising the telephone repair one year near the Deadwood Summit when we came across a fawn. He caught and held it while Ken took his picture, which I have included as figure 3-9. Joe Ladle got all over him for that particular act. Apparently, the doe won't have anything to do with its offspring if she smells the scent of humans on it. Consequently the poor little thing is left to starve. Of course Ken and I had no idea of that and apparently neither did Russ. He acted as surprised as we did and certainly was apologetic. We did, however, clearly understand the principle involved after Joe read us the riot act. I can assure you, Ken and I never did anything of that nature again and I seriously doubt Russ did either. We were well instructed.

SOME TELEPHONE DETAILS

This is probably as good a place as any to describe the telephone repair activities in a little more detail. As I said earlier, it could be done much more efficiently by pickup truck. Equipment was easily transported and many more miles could be covered in a given day. The lines always followed within a hundred yards of the roads unless a lookout was involved. There hiking might be necessary. One person usually walked the line if it was out of sight of the road to be sure it was up, that insulators were securely in place and no branches were touching or even close to the line. All would detract from the phone quality, which wasn't all that good anyway. There was only one line for all phones serviced and sometimes it was a real party line. No secrets were shared over the phone. That is, unless you wanted publicity. All that required was the details in a personal call.

The phones were of the wall variety with magnetos to crank when contacting another station. Each station had a given code to identify its ring such as two short and one long ring. Not only did everyone know when you received a call but they were alerted by the rings which were heard at each phone. Fortunately, only a limited number of people were involved and in general they weren't too nosy.

Well, back to telephone maintenance. As one walked the road, he would repair minor problems within his ability to do so but should he encounter a tree across the line or a broken line, the second person would get involved. The problem would be analyzed and the info shouted to the truck. The driver would then bring the necessary tools and

help with the work. Re-hanging the line was necessary much of the time. The lineman might chop through a small tree, move it clear and then hang any insulators, which had been pulled down. Consequently he carried climbing spurs, which were usually the long tree variety. Most of the line was hung in trees but as the line crossed meadows, telephone poles had to be set. Poles seldom came down but winter storms could wreak havoc on trees. Lines occasionally had to be rerouted which normally involved splicing in additional line. Where a good deal of work was involved the driver would get his gear and join in.

Climbing the average tree was relatively easy. They were green and simply placing your spur on the tree and raising yourself up would set the spur securely. Steps up the tree were taken in 6 to 12 inch increments. Knees were always kept away from the tree to help the spur grab. If one inadvertently brought his knees in next to the trunk, the spurs would kick out and down you would go to next limb or until you were able to set the spurs again. This was more likely to occur while working to replace an insulator because a person might not concentrate sufficiently on his knee position. It also was more likely on a dead tree or a telephone pole because the spurs wouldn't set near as deep. Generally we stayed away from dead trees but poles were quite common and attention to the spurs was imperative while working at the top. The poles were only used in clear areas, which might be an open hillside or a meadow. See figure 3-10.

BURNING A POLE

Burning one pole usually provided the necessary motivation to pay attention when setting your spurs. The top was maybe thirty feet in the air and the ground was usually soft (being in a meadow) with few rocks to bruise you. Even so, such an experience was exciting, to say the least, and normally improved your performance to a level sufficient to prevent reoccurrence. I think I burned a couple in seven years. Such an experience went something like this. You approached the pole with climbing gear on including gloves. The climber would carefully proceed up the pole taking care to set each spur securely before pulling the previous one. This required a definite stomping action because of the dry wood. Once to the top, a person would check both spurs, resetting as necessary, and fasten his safety belt around the pole. Then you would lean back with knees away from the pole and once again check your security. If all seemed well, the climber began his repair work. Once, while in such a situation, I was busy trying to remove a broken insulator and without warning, my spurs kicked out. Swoosh, like a rock, I dropped to the ground. The action is so fast you have no time to consider resetting your spurs. That becomes an afterthought. Fortunately, the belt holds you next to the pole, your gloves and clothes protect you from splinters and the ground is relatively soft. Even so the heart rate must double and you find yourself, instantaneously, viewing the pole from the other end. What an experience. As you approach the top the second time, let me assure you concentration is redoubled. Yes siree, one trip down the pole at the speed of light is sufficient for one day, even for a fellow as young as I was.

Figure 3-11 Ken and I ready to roll in his driveway, prior to heading for Bear Valley.

YELLOW PINES

I probably found climbing a large tree, such as a mature yellow pine, the most difficult. There is no way to hold on with your hands and even though your spurs sink in easily, they have to go clear through the thick bark to provide a reliable bite. A tree spur with a longer shank is available for such work but we didn't have them. Uncle Sam didn't feel we had the need. Each step must be well tested before taking one with the other foot. The belt must encircle the tree from the moment you leave the ground. This means an extension for the belt is needed which, in our case, was provided by a rope. One has to flick the encircled belt up the opposite side of the trunk and then, after taking a couple of steps, repeat the process. It's mighty slow going and I, at least, experienced a very insecure feeling because there is nothing you can grab on to with your hands. The belt and your spurs are all that stands between you and the ground. Fortunately, Uncle was right in terms of our need for this kind of work. It was infrequent but when it did occur, we had the wrong equipment and little experience. I've seen movies

of the loggers in Washington State racing up such trees and wondered how they could do it. I guess the proper gear plus lots of experience is the answer to acquiring such skill.

Well, that pretty well covers the essentials of repairing telephone line. It lasted for about a week or two each spring. We had to clear line from the Deadwood Summit to Lower Deadwood Guard Station, about 18 miles as I remember and on over to Big Meadows Guard Station via Elk Creek Ranger Station for another 35 or 40 miles.

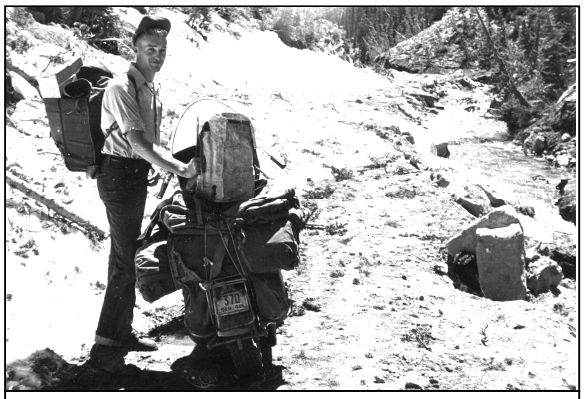

Figure 3-12 Ken & I returning to Deadwood over the summit with grub and clothes.

Other than that, there were 3 lines to different lookouts, i.e. White Hawk Mountain, Bear Valley Mountain and Blue Point Peak. An individual from the Landmark Ranger Station manned the latter

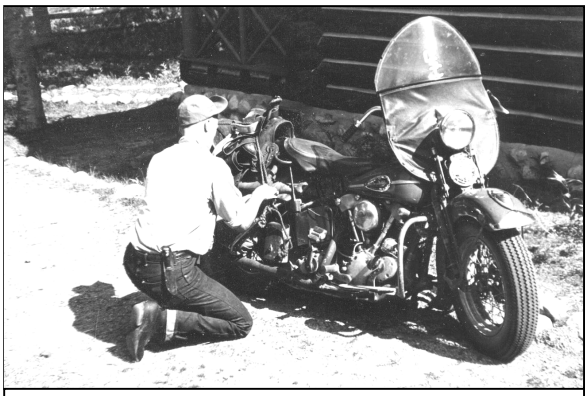

Figure 3-13 Preparing for a mechanized roundup of lost horses at Upper Deadwood.

lookout because the trail used for supplying it on a regular basis came in from their side of the ridge on a somewhat gentler approach.

Unfortunately for us, the telephone line to the Blue Point lookout ran from the Deadwood River straight up the mountain to the lookout alongside the Switchback Trail or maybe I should say near that trail. It was about a 7-mile hike straight up with several rugged ravines and ridges to traverse. We had to follow the line and clear it going up so the phone could be checked from the top. That meant being off the trail much of the way and fighting brush as well as rocks to keep a clear view of the line. We could return on the trail, which was the easy part. It was an all day affair that required us to lug equipment and lunches to get the job done. The view was incredible from that particular lookout but one certainly earned any pleasure he received. Actually, I didn't mind the job because I was young, energetic, enjoyed hiking and really didn't know any better. However, it was definitely the greatest challenge in the telephone repair department for individuals in our district. It was a job we were always glad to finish.

OTHER SPRING JOBS

Other early spring jobs were clearing the various roads from downed timber. The job was often done in conjunction with the telephone lines. After these two were completed we usually began trail work, which would continue right up to fire season or about the second week in July. Trail assignments were planned by the ranger, whom I mentioned was a tall slim rugged man by the name of Joe Ladle in the case of Bear Valley. He was quiet but purposeful. He and his wife stayed at the Elk Creek Ranger Station in their own log house. It was good sized and very nice with indoor plumbing included. There was a District Guard stationed there as well, Al Pantry in the early years with his wife and later Bob Olson and his wife. They had a smaller but serviceable cabin with; you guessed it, an outdoor john. I suppose it was rather hard for the women but they seemed cheerful enough and apparently enjoyed the summers there. In the first year, Al accompanied us on trail assignments but after that it was either Harlan Goodwin and I or Ken Karcher and I. Harlan gave up after a few years, as did Al Pantry and his wife. My brother, Dan, worked there one year after getting out of the U. S. Navy. That would have been 1946. We would typically go out for five days at a time and spend the weekends either at the ranger station or maybe one of the guard stations. Such weekends were ours to use as we pleased but generally with no place to go because we had no transportation. Consequently, we did the best we could with the available resources, which meant swimming, playing horseshoes, fishing, reading or maybe shooting the breeze. The never-ending excitement was more than Harlan could stand which, prompted him to find employment nearer to town with its accompanying social activities. I, on the other

hand was right at home in such a secluded environment. I had little need for the bright lights of the city and readily adapted.

MOTORIZED CAVALRY

Ken bought a motorcycle in later years, which we used to travel back and forth to Bear Valley. He left it at the ranger station while we worked trail or were otherwise away. Figure 3-11 is a photo of us getting ready to head for Bear Valley. Notice we were clean-shaven and otherwise socially acceptable while we were in town. You might also note the rolled up jeans. That was the style. We always bought them long enough to roll up a couple of notches. If our weekend found us there, at the ranger station that is, we might go into Boise and return Sunday night. Usually Ken would try to bring the motorcycle in the weekend after we brought the horses in. It gave us more options on weekends and prior to fire season we could circulate pretty much as we pleased. After that, of course, we had to be near a telephone or some means of contact.

One year we brought it in prior to the opening of the roads and had a little struggle getting over Deadwood Summit. You can see by the picture (Figure 3-12) that, even without snow, the road wasn't exactly a high-speed thoroughfare. In this particular case we had walked from Upper Deadwood Guard Station back to the summit where we were picked up and taken to Cascade. There, we bought groceries, picked up various personal things and headed back in after a weekend in Cascade. That particular year the cycle became quite useful immediately after our return. The pasture fence we thought we had secured was down again and the horses were out, so we discovered on Monday morning. We had to find them to start a trail job that day. We had a few ideas about where they might be but all required walking until resourceful Ken said, "why not enlist the mechanized cavalry (figure 3-13)? We did just that and found them a couple miles away in some lush meadows. The oats brought them to us and we saddled up old Hi Pockets, the ringleader, and I led the rest back to camp. Now you've got to admit our approach to that particular roundup was innovative at least and, let me assure you, was also much easier on the feet. It provides a basis for that old adage we hear from time to time, i.e. "necessity is the mother of invention" and when it came to minimizing work our inventiveness bloomed.

I remember getting a few words of instruction from Joe, such as, "Be careful of that stuff, it'll burn your hide if you get it on you".

BUILDING A RAIL FENCE

Harlan and I learned the lost art of building a rail fence one year under the tutelage of one, John Taylor, an unusual character whom I will introduce to you a little later. I mention this particular experience here because it occurred at Upper Deadwood Guard Station, my present geographical area of storytelling.

A rail fence is strictly for looks and will hardly keep anything in or out. It is made of peeled logs, notched and nailed together in a suitable manner. After completion the peeled logs are sealed with some sort of shellac or stain to preserve them and add a little luster to the project. Old John was an expert at this type of work. During fire season, Joe ladle had a never-ending list of projects to complete which always kept us busy in the absence of a fire to fight. Thus we ended up at the Upper Deadwood Guard Station one summer on this project.

Most of the raw material needed for the fence stood close by the guard station in the form of lodge pole pines. We would use larger ones or the base of a tree, up to 6 inches in diameter, to serve as posts, while smaller diameter sections, maybe 2 to 3 inches would become the rails. Posts were cut about 6 feet long, soaked in creosote on the bottom portion for a couple of days, dried for a similar amount of time and then planted in holes 2 feet deep and about 10 feet apart. They were notched, prior to creosote treatment, maybe 6 inches and 24 inches from what would become their tops. Once the posts were well seated, the rails were nailed in place with large spikes, which wasn't really a technique of our forefathers. I suppose they used wooden pegs.

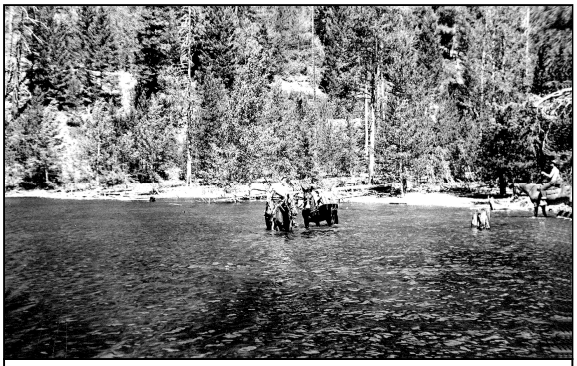

Figure 3-14 Surely the Wild Buck Trail is somewhere in this snow melt lake.

To prepare the posts and rails, it was necessary to fall a number of lodge pole pine, remove all limbs, cut the same into appropriate lengths and peel them. Being rather small trees, we could fall them nearby, cut them up as needed and carry the logs to the guard station for peeling. The latter job was simpler than you might expect. One could cut through the bark with a knife or sharp ax blade length wise along the trunk and then simply pull the bark off in strips. A few areas might prove stubborn but in general the work proceeded quickly and without incident.

The worst part of the whole job was soaking the posts in creosote. That is nasty stuff. The concentrate was diluted with some sort of thinner, maybe diesel or linseed oil, and placed in 50-gallon drums, which were used to soak the posts. We used protective clothing, rubberized aprons and gloves, particularly when removing the posts to dry. Even so, if a little splashed on your skin it produced a nasty burn. I enjoyed the work, even digging postholes, all that is, except dipping those fence posts in creosote. I remember getting a few words of instruction from Joe, such as, "Be careful of that stuff, it'll burn your hide off if you get it on you."

That provided us with two nights on the edge of the reservoir, which not only saved the work of moving but also was one of our nicer camping spots.

Today we probably would have had to take a two-week course to satisfy OSHA and maybe even pass a written exam as well. Then, of course, you would still have to use whatever sense God gave you. The days of common sense seem to be on the decline and big brother regulates everything we do so as to prevent the need to use our brain. One day we'll have to check the regulations to answer the question?

MORE UPPER DEADWOOD TRAIL WORK

Trails were worked in a logical sequence beginning at Upper Deadwood such that the livestock was used most efficiently. That is, travel to and from trailheads was minimized and most of the working time was actually spent clearing trail. For example, we would usually leave Upper Deadwood just south of the station on a trail called "Wildbuck". It led west across the Deadwood River and then south to join with the West Side Trail which, naturally, went around the west side of the Deadwood Reservoir (refer to the map).

FORDING THE DEADWOOD AT FLOOD STAGE

One spring the run off was particularly heavy and the river was running unusually high. As we approached the river, we found the trail bridge partially submerged by the swiftly flowing water. After checking it out, we decided it was unsafe to cross. It appeared it might break up with any additional strain. We decided to ford the river above the bridge, swimming our horses and each leading a packed mule. Since the banks were steep in most places, we chose an exit point just above the bridge and then entered the river upstream about 50 yards. The plan worked well and we were able to move completely across the river before reaching the bridge and made our exit on target. Had we missed it and moved on down to the bridge, we would have been in a real mess because there was no way out of the river. As it turned out we were only good and wet and somewhat excited with our adventure.

SNOW MELT GETS IN THE WAY

From there the trail ran up over a saddle before dropping down towards the West Side Trail. The saddle had a pretty good depression in it which was full of snow melt. We weren't sure just how deep the water was and proceeded out into it. It wasn't long until we were swimming the horses once again. The distance was too great, we thought, for a fully packed mule and a horse carrying a couple hundred pounds. So, back we went and detoured around the snow melt lake via the hill side. That turned out to be rather laborious because of the steep hillside and a good deal of downed timber. The picture I included is shown in figure 3-14 and is of that unsuccessful attempt at fording the lake. In it, I'm leading the charge on a buckskin horse called, quite naturally,

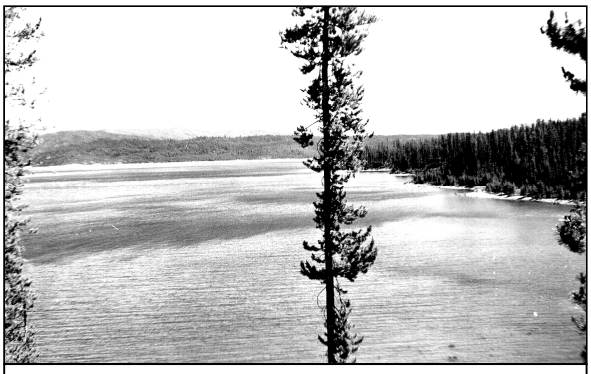

Figure 3-15 Beautiful Deadwood Reservoir as you approach it from the north on the West Side Trail.

"Old Buck" and am leading a mule by the name of Louis. Ken Karcher is just coming into the picture on the right on a sorrel named "Hi Pockets". He is

leading an old white mule named "Nig" who was camera shy that particular moment. I'll show you some close ups of Nig and Buck a little later. The pool of snowmelt was our last real hurdle that day and it was all downhill figuratively speaking.

After finding a way around it, we connected with the "Habit Creek Trail" which ran between the "West Side Trail" and the top of the ridge, which overlooked the reservoir. We usually worked that particular trail the next day after arriving at our West Side Trail camp. That allowed us with two nights on the edge of the reservoir which not only saved the work of moving but also provided one of our nicer camping spots. There was good feed for the horses, a primary consideration, and we could fish on a nice inlet nearby. Success in that venture gave us additional food as well as a change in menus, which we certainly considered an important advantage in our life on the trail. Ken's friend, Bob Schilleruff, was with us on this trip. I'll have more to say about him a little later.

WEST SIDE TRAIL AND CAMP

As we approached the West Side Trail from the Wildbuck Trail, we snapped a picture of the reservoir included as Figure 3-15. Needless to say, it's much more beautiful than a black and white picture can portray but we did the best we could. I believe the picture gives a pretty good idea of the peace and serenity a person could find even just a few miles from the nearest road. We moved on down to the West Side Trail and made camp by a little meadow with good feed for the horses and a rather nice camp site shown in Figure 3-16. It was used on a yearly basis and seemed to fit the needs of both man and beast. You can see our camp was crude at best. We did carry a small tent in case of rain but seldom used it. It was more trouble than it was worth.

Those were the days when I could sleep anywhere and often did. Typically I would dig a little depression for my butt and place a saddle blanket just above that to cushion the small of my back. The sleeping bag came next with a tarp over it. Once I climbed in and got properly positioned, all was well and I slept like a log. This was a good campsite. You see, the horses had little tendency to wander when the feed was good but if there was better feed anywhere near by or even in that general area, it became "Katy bar the door", because they were on their way the very first chance they might get. It was little different than the actions we might take as members of humanity when a better restaurant is nearby.

CAMPING RITUALS

After unpacking, we always hobbled the horses and turned them into an area where we could see them. We also hung a bell on the ringleader, usually "Hi Pocketts", so we could monitor them by sound should they get out of site. When we retired for the night, usually about 10:00, we would

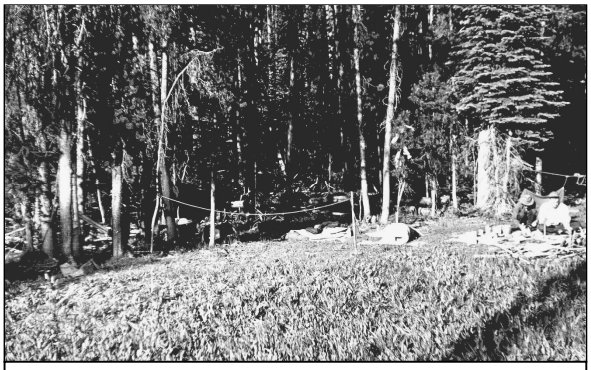

Figure 3-16 Our regular campsite on the West Side Trail at the north end of the lake.

tie up one or two of them and the others would remain nearby. About 4:00 AM, I would wake up, crawl out of my sack in just my shorts, (my pajamas you know) and untie those we had secured after putting the hobbles on them once again. Then, I would climb back in bed for another hour and a half before getting up for breakfast and the day's work. Such was a day on the trail with the Deadwood kids, up at 5:30, moving out about 8:00, work trail until 4:30 or 5:00 and then make camp for the night. By the time we ate, did dishes and swapped stories it was

Figure 3-17 A typical West Side Trail scene illustrating the Bark Beetle's handiwork.

bedtime, a schedule we repeated essentially every day. It's not that we particularly enjoyed the routine but that's the way life on the trail was. It fell right in with swatting mosquitoes, dodging horse flies, cooking over a campfire and numerous other activities that today's modern kids would never put up with.

PHOTO ORIGINS

That's Ken on the left and me on the right fixing our evening meal in figure 3-16. You might be wondering who is taking these pictures if both Ken and I are in them. Well, it wasn't one of the horses even though they were pretty smart. On this particular trip we had a friend of ours with us named Bob Schilleruff. He was into photography and did the honors for us. I didn't think too much about his contribution at the time but I now realize these pictures are invaluable for this project of mine. They not only illustrate some memorable

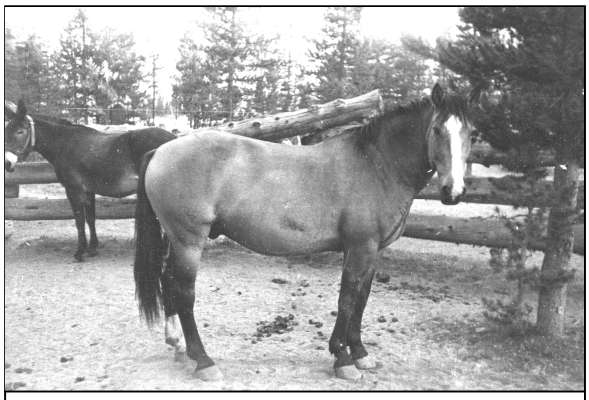

Figure 3-18 Old Buck, Joe Ladle's steed of choice, in the corral at the Elk Creek R. S.

occasions but also jar this old bean of mine into activity and bring back experiences I might otherwise not have recalled.

WEST SIDE TRAIL

The last picture taken this particular week on the trail was a photo of the West Side Trail, itself. (see

Figure 3-19 Old Nig, a steady and faithful pack mule fulfilling his assigned task on the West Side Trail in Deadwood country.

figure 3-17). It was taken to illustrate typical areas of downed timber and the reason why our trail work was needed. As you might guess, the Deadwood area received that name because of timber blight, which killed many of the trees. Actually, it was a so-called bark beetle, which swept through much of Idaho. They lay their eggs in the bark of a live tree and when the little critters hatch, the larvae kill the tree before maturing to beetles and moving on. Lethia and I visited this same area the summer of 1995 or some 45 years after this picture and I was surprised by the lack of dead standing trees. Apparently the beetles have moved out or have been controlled in some manner and the dead trees had long since fallen. In any case the woods seem green and beautiful now, much more so than what I remember when working there.

We made this particular trail trip each year in essentially the same manner and as I mentioned earlier, always camped at this same spot for a couple of nights. There was sure to be plenty of work in terms of downed timber along the Westside trail. After all, it was located in Deadwood River country, which most certainly lived up to its name. The winds of winter made sure of that.

NATURAL ROUGHAGE

One year, Ken and I had made camp here by the lake after a particularly hard day. We were ravenous that night, which, I guess, wasn't all that unusual. Man, could I eat. Lunch typically consisted of four full sized sandwiches, an apple or orange and a half package of cookies each. In spite of that, I was skinny as a rail carrying about 175 pounds on a 6' 3" frame. Of course, we burned a lot of energy with the ax swinging, hiking and camping life style, which we led.

DINNER AT THE RITZ

In the year I'm referring to above, Ken and I had just finished cooking our meal. To be fair, or maybe just safe, we always split the food prior to eating and stacked our plates high. I suppose neither of us trusted the other as far as taking only their fair share for seconds. There wasn't any extra food except maybe bread. Even then we had to be careful because it had to last all week. Anyhow both of us had retired to a tree as a backrest to eat when Ken realized he had left his coffee over by the fire. He laid his plate down, walked over and picked up his cup and as he returned managed to kick a little biodegradable seasoning into his plate. As he examined the results of his carelessness, he realized that such seasoning was old dried horse manure. I don't believe it was the flavor that bothered him so

much as it was the crunchy texture of the seasoning that had been added. In any case, he yelled, "Obenchain, look what I did. Are you going to share with me?" My reaction was immediate and practical, though somewhat selfish. After all, I was having trouble maintaining my weight with my present rate of intake. I said, "Look Ken, you got your fair share. You can cook more or clean that plate up but I only got my fair share." One thing about Ken, he was more practical than picky. He took a few minutes to pick out the visible remains of that seasoning or at least that, which would require chewing and began eating with gusto once again. Yes sir, Ken was practical. He figured the time he saved was worth any risk he took of an intestinal problem.

COMMON CAMPSITE HAZARDS

Such biodegradable material is quite common within any regular campsite. You see, by the time one unpacks and repacks a few animals in

I don't believe it was the flavor that bothered him so much as it was the crunchy texture of the seasoning that had been added.

making and breaking camp the inevitable does happen and cleanup under those conditions means kicking the unwanted material out of the way, not sweeping and mopping. Where it lands nobody cares as long as it's not apt to be walked in, sat on, or slept on. Of course the next camper is, quite naturally, on his own in trying to avoid the offending material. To help you understand the probability of such events I have included pictures of Buck, the saddle horse mentioned earlier, and of "Old Nig", our faithful pack mule in figures 3-18 and 3-19 respectively. I believe you can appreciate that a little time would be required to pack or unpack him even for an experience trail hand. Packs were usually assembled, that is wrapped in tarps and secured with ropes, before bringing the animals in but it took a little time to hoist the packs into place and throw the required diamond hitch. Old Nig and his cohorts were faithful beasts of burden but you can bet they weren't exactly housebroken. If nature called, they answered regardless of location. Like all such beasts, their only thought was for their own comfort with utter disregard for that of mankind.

MONSOON IN JUNE

Another time as we settled in for a second night at that particular camp the rain began to move in. We were able to get supper out of the way and the tent up before it came down with any intensity. We spent that evening in the tent reading by flashlight and swapping stories before finally dropping off to sleep. When morning came the rain was still coming down at a steady rate. I went through the usual ordeal and let the horses loose a couple of hours before we got up.

When we did make that move, things were a bit miserable but at least I was already indoctrinated. Ken had a little more trouble gathering the necessary courage. We managed to get a fire going, made coffee with our usual hotcakes and eggs and quickly ate breakfast. Obviously there was no point in lingering. After packing up a wet camp, we headed out for a half-day's work on the West Side Trail. After lunch we would turn back north to the Upper Deadwood Guard Station where we planned to spend the weekend. Things aren't too bad under those conditions when you are working and moving sufficiently to stay warm. It was the middle of June and the temperature on such a rainy day was probably 35 to 40 degrees. We worked south along the reservoir until noon, ate a quick lunch and then set out for Upper Deadwood, which was about 12 miles away via the shortest path, i.e. a few miles of trail and the rest the road. We knew it would be a long slow trek but we really didn't know just what 12 miles in a saddle at 35 degrees could do to the joints of a human torso. However, we were soon to be taught that particular lesson.

THE TWELVE MILE TREK

When leading a pack string you walk the horses, of course, rather than moving at a quicker trot. Consequently the time to our destination was 4 to 4 ½ hours and the rain continued at the same steady pace. We didn't have slickers because rain wasn't a normal problem. Needless to say, our Levi jackets and jeans were soaked long before we arrived at the guard station and we had lost all feeling in our extremities. We were glued to our saddles like an attachment, never moving or hardly even saying a word to one another. Boy, did we enjoy that ride.

RIGOR MORTIS OR WHAT

I still remember climbing down off my horse so stiff and cold I could hardly move. Falling off my horse might be a more appropriate description. I fumbled for my keys and realized my fingers would hardly respond to my mental commands. I don't know whether you have experienced such cold or not. It's not intense or bitter, so to speak, but penetrating. It seems to enter your very joints making them immobile or at least difficult to move.

After stumbling around like zombies for a few minutes, we began unpacking the animals and hauling our bedding and supplies into the cabin. A few minutes of such activity began to loosen us up. Soon, though still cold, our ability to manipulate things seemed to return to normal. We fed the horses and mules their expected portion of oats and turned them out to pasture before going in to prepare our own supper. I don't believe, at least up to that time, I have ever enjoyed a warm fire and supper any more than I did that night. I looked forward to a pleasant weekend of simply eating, reading, sleeping and listening to the rain pounding the tin roof of the cabin. It was a lullaby for this tired hombre.

A RAINY WEEKEND

The rain continued all weekend and we spent both Saturday and Sunday eating, reading, sleeping and listening to the rain patter on the tin roof. If you haven't experienced a night sleeping in those conditions, you may wonder about the last remark. We slept in the loft about one to six feet away from the roof proper, depending upon the orientation you chose for your sleeping bag. Even down below in the kitchen area the sound of the rain was distinct. Coupled with a warm fire, it's a comforting sound, I suppose, because you can visualize the conditions outside and are safely tucked away inside. Whatever the explanation, the sound lulls one to sleep like a sleeping pill.

If there were any negatives involved that weekend, they had to be associated with getting our water from a little creek just outside the door of the cabin or maybe running for the outhouse occasionally. Even those experiences had their therapeutic effect, however, in that they reminded us of our Friday afternoon ride and made the warmth and comfort of the cabin just a little nicer. What a life! I wouldn't mind reliving the latter part of that experience, in the cabin that is, but I'll leave the ride and working in the rain for others who are still too young and inexperienced enough to appreciate the amenities that come with a secure log cabin. I'm speaking primarily of the roof, wood stove and dry floor. They may not be much but they beat those available on the trail.

ON TO LOWER DEADWOOD

Fortunately, the rain quit late Sunday and things began to dry out. We were pleased, knowing that on Monday we would head back to where we left off, complete the West Side Trail and move on in to Lower Deadwood Guard Station. Being located on the reservoir, this particular station was a favorite of mine. It was a beautiful area and we could do a little boating and swimming. Of course, the boat was only a rowboat but in those days my envy wasn't even piqued by outboards, let alone beautiful cabin cruisers so common today. If they were around, they weren't in Idaho, let alone on the Deadwood. The thought of such things never even entered our back woods minds. All we saw was the serenity of a beautiful lake surrounded by mountains reaching for the sky and temperatures topping out in the eighties.

Figure 3-20 The reservoir as seen from the front porch of the Lower Deadwood Guard Station.

A TRAIL STOP

On this particular stop, however, we only spent the night and our time was taken up with the usual unpacking, fixing chow, cleaning up, relaxing a little and hitting the sack. We always slept well because of our very active days but the guard stations provided real beds and even a sleeping bag seemed unusually comfortable.

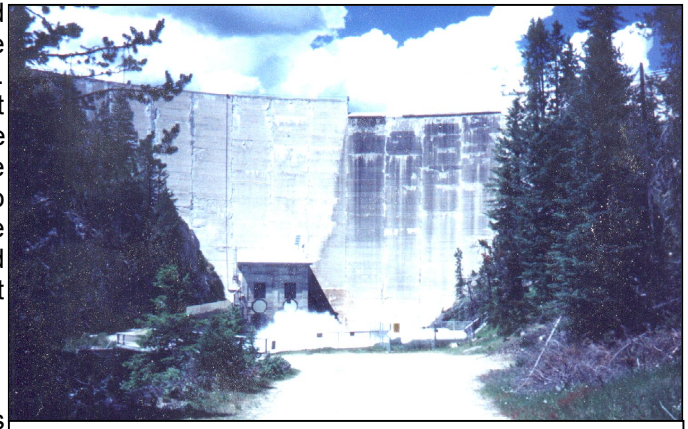

Figure 3-21 The Deadwood Dam in the summer of 1999, as seen from the bridge down-stream.

Besides, they had cooking facilities as well. I included the only picture I had of the immediate area (figure 3-20) with the exception of a 1999 photo, figure 3-21, of the dam. The former was taken looking out from the cabin. The dam lies just to the left of the direction we are looking in 3-20, maybe a half-mile away. On weekends, we would often walk over to it and across to enjoy the view, get a little exercise and kill a little time. Unfortunately, one couldn't take a vehicle or even a horse across the dam and the route via the road was an extra three quarters of a mile or so. Thus, the dam provided a short cut only for the foot weary traveler coming from the Scott Mountain road or someplace along the West Side Trail.

When trail work was involved, we would be off the next day (or maybe Monday when a weekend was involved) to Whitehawk Basin, a beautiful little meadow located just below Whitehawk Lookout. If interested, check the map of figure 3-1. The basin is due east of the guard station. However, before I leave Lower Deadwood Guard Station with my narrative, let me relate a few of my experiences, which occurred in that general area. We spent at least some time there each and every year working telephone line as well as various trail and even cleaned a few campgrounds in the area.

LOWER DEADWOOD MEMORIES

As you can see from the map just referred to, the dam was just a little to the south of the station. I included the photo of the dam to provide the reader with a little better perspective of the area. There was a barn and corral just to the west of the cabin for the horses but no pasture. Staying there any length of time required feeding and watering them twice daily. As a result, horses and pack animals were kept there only as necessary. During fire season a permanent guard was stationed there with one horse for transportation into the backcountry. The ranger would also use the horse to check the grazing activity in that general area. Such grazing was strictly for sheep because of the rugged nature of the land around there. Likewise, the guard stationed there would use the horse as required in his duties. As smoke chasers and general flunkies, we might stay there a night or two to open the Scott Mountain road, work telephone line, maybe even make repairs on the cabin and associated buildings or just as a trail stop before departing for White Hawk Basin. It was conveniently located and compared to our tent, a place to be appreciated for even just a night. Such comforts were few and far between.

DEADWOOD RIVER TRAIL SNOW DRIFTS

One summer, about 1948 I believe, Ken and I were asked to bring the horses into the Lower Deadwood Guard Station from Garden Valley because of the deep snow in the Landmark - Upper Deadwood area. Joe Ladle, the ranger, had flown over the area and thought the best way in was the Deadwood River Trail to Whitehawk Basin and then to the guard station. We took two saddle horses and two pack-animals loaded with groceries and camping gear. After making it up the trail to the point where it swung east to the basin (see the map of figure 3-1 as well as figure 3-22) we ran into some really deep snow. The horses couldn't stay on top of it and were really laboring while getting mired down in deeper drifts. After struggling on for a mile or so under such conditions, we decided to turn back. I knew the country ahead well and felt the snow would get deeper and the struggle more difficult for several miles. We might not even make it through to the station. It was my decision to move forward or return to Garden Valley, right or wrong. After a little discussion with Ken, I decided to turn back.

Figure 3-22 The terrain as one looks north from the Deadwood River Trail swinging east to White Hawk Basin.

When we arrived back at the ranger station in Garden Valley that night, Joe wasn't too pleased

with it (my decision that is). He was convinced we could have made it to the Deadwood station. He was primarily upset because of the extra distance to be traveled via the road over Scott Mountain. The horses were not yet shod and he was worried that one or more would come up lame before arriving at Lower Deadwood where that activity was to take place. He may have been right but the country was steep, rugged and the deep snow made it necessary to leave the trail frequently to move forward. I felt it was dangerous for the animals and us and made the decision, right or wrong. I was about 20 years old at the time, had four years experience with forest service stock, and was quite concerned about my apparent mistake. I didn't want to be the source of Joe's disappointment.

As it turned out, I'm not sure that it was a mistake after all, considering the little information I had and what followed. The next morning we set out with the same two saddle horses and pack mules loaded, as before, with groceries and our personal gear. We made it to the Lower Deadwood G. S. without incident where the horses were shod in a timely manner. Maybe I should clarify that statement and say we made it to the guard station that night tired and with the sore, tender behinds of schoolboys who had just spent two days in the saddle.

Luckily for us, Bob Olson, Joe's assistant, had driven as far as possible up the Scott Mountain road (which had been partially plowed) and hiked in over a smaller summit between Scott Creek and Nine Mile Creek to the guard station with enough grub to last him a couple of days. After we fed and watered the horses, we struggled in to the guard station where Bob had prepared supper for us, having grabbed the necessary supplies from our packs. I suppose all in all we might have covered fifty-five miles or so in those two days but, I might add, not at a trot. Once again, we found ourselves thankful for a comfortable bed, not to mention having a considerate and able cook on the premises.

HIKING THE SCOTT MOUNTAIN ROAD

We completed our week's work and decided to hike out for groceries. From the guard station it was several miles (probably 7) to the top of the Nine Mile summit and Bob's truck was a couple miles down the other side. We got some backpacks and set out Saturday morning. It was easy going until we got to the snow and then we slowed down quite a little. Even so, we made it to the truck at a decent time and on into Garden Valley before dark. We bought groceries and on Sunday headed back. Leaving Bob's pickup, we all took full packs and headed back up over that summit. What had been a rather easy hike out of Deadwood became a considerably tougher return carrying the heavy knapsack. The forest service didn't provide regular back packing equipment and a knapsack of 40 pounds or so can make the old backache after a while because it hangs so low. Anyhow we got back with sufficient food to last until the road was opened. We kept ourselves busy around the station doing general maintenance. Believe me, that wasn't too difficult to do in the spring of the year. There's everything from snow and wind damage to that of porcupines to deal with.

A PANCAKE PARABLE

Another experience at Lower Deadwood involved Harlan Goodwin, Al Pantry, his wife and me. We had quite a little work to do in the area and Al decided it would be best to stay there a few days rather than make the trip to and from Elk Creek Ranger Station each day. Al's wife came along to cook for him and as usual we were also lucky recipients. She was a good cook and didn't seem to mind cooking for us as well. The year had to be in 1946 because Dan was working in the valley as well but he usually worked separately from Harlan and me.

A VICTORY OVER DAN

Dan had a good appetite but certainly no better than mine. It seems he had eaten breakfast with the Pantrys a week earlier and had eaten 24 pancakes about six inches in diameter. Mrs. Pantry exclaimed over that and Al began to challenge me to beat him. I accepted and Mrs. Pantry began to haul the food over to me. Besides coffee, I managed two eggs, a couple pieces of sausage and twenty-six pancakes before I backed away from the table. Harlan didn't even try to compete. He was smarter than me but then he didn't have an older sibling to beat either. You see, I couldn't beat Dan in hardly anything, if for no other reason than his psychological dominance of me. Here was my opportunity and I made the best of it. I was the undisputed champion but I also paid dearly for it as described in the following experience.

VARIOUS WAYS OF PAYMENTS

We had to go to work at eight on the telephone line between the Lower and Upper Deadwood stations. Al had no mercy on me. I had to take my turn walking the line and climbing the poles

and trees. My gut was killing me all morning but he wouldn't let up and I wouldn't let on I was hurting. I think he knew it because he would snicker from time to time as I struggled up a tree or hobbled back to the truck. Was I glad or was I glad when lunchtime came. Not to eat, you understand, but to lie down and relax for a while. I found a shade tree while Al and Harlan turned their attention to eating. That's probably one of the few times I haven't wanted my share of anything in the vicinity which is edible. By early afternoon the stuffed feeling had disappeared and I was able to function in a somewhat more normal manner. By the time we had finished work for the day my appetite had returned and my fear of never being hungry again disappeared.

SUNBURRRRNNN

We spent the weekend there, which should have been a treat. It was clear and quite warm for that country, probably in the eighties. After breakfast on Saturday (about three pancakes, eggs, sausages and coffee), Harlan and I decided to row across the lake to an island we had seen near the other side. I suppose it was a mile or so away. We had thin T-shirts on with jeans over our swimming suits. We packed a lunch (remember only three pancakes) and headed out.

After arriving on the island we explored it and went swimming. As the day wore on, I realized I was getting burned and put on my T-shirt. It was too little too late. I hadn't had a chance to build a tan as yet and we had nothing else to cover me with. Harlan was a lot darker than me and wasn't feeling any effects. By the time we made it back to the station I had the appearance of a boiled lobster. Mrs. Pantry gave me some ointment or lotion, which Harlan applied to my back and although it helped, the burn was too severe for it to have any great healing effect.

That night I couldn't even lie on my back and I became somewhat delirious, I think, having wild dreams and talking to myself, so they all said. In the next few days I was miserable and shed my skin like a rattler. Sunday was particularly painful for me but by Monday I could wear a regular T-shirt if I was careful in the way I put it on. Needless to say, I was very careful and I also covered it with a regular work shirt to prevent further exposure. Thus, I was able to go about my required duties, though somewhat gingerly.

Well, the 26 pancakes and the severe burn were both painful lessons but I must have learned something because I haven't repeated either since. Why it took such lessons to impress me, I may never know, but impress me they did. Indeed, I had learned the real difference between responsibilities and consequences with these particular experiences falling into the latter category.

Figure 3-23 Looking south from White Hawk Lookout towards the basin and Deadwood Reservoir.

OFF TO WHITE HAWK BASIN

In a typical year, we would make an overnight stop at Lower Deadwood after completing the West Side Trail. Depending upon the timing, we might spend the weekend or just the night. From there it was usually off to Whitehawk Basin just a few miles to the east (if interested, refer to

Figure 3-24 Looking out on White Hawk Basin from our campsite, scene of the infamous "Fire Dance".

the map, figure 3-1). To illustrate just how it was nestled in the mountains between the reservoir and White hawk Lookout, I have added a 1999 vintage photo figure 3-23. Note the road now appearing in the picture just below the basin. It didn't exist in 1950 and the only basin access was via various trails. It was one of our favorite camping sites with all the necessities.

THE BASIN CAMP

We typically spent a couple of nights there or maybe more if the work in the area demanded it. We might spend a day clearing the trail between the basin and Whitehawk Lookout after arriving there from the Deadwood Reservoir. Though only 3 miles in length, the lookout trail was steep and took the better part of the day to complete. After finishing that job, we often would work a day out on the Deadwood River Trail and return to the basin for another night. That would give us three nights in the basin, which suited us fine. There were no good camping spots, at least with decent feed for the animals, along the Deadwood River trail. Whitehawk Basin, on the other hand, was a beautiful little meadow with a nice little creek by the name of Whitehawk Creek, naturally, running through it. We could fish there and were inevitably successful in catching a nice mess for dinner. That was no small feat considering our appetites and the size of the fish. Of course, the beauty of the area including the peace and quiet, influenced our decision as to the order of trail work and hence where to camp. We stayed there as often and as long as logic would allow. There was no trouble with the horses wandering off. They knew the country's pickings were sparse and that no better feed was anywhere nearby.

I have included a picture looking out on the basin taken from our campsite (figure 3-24), which really doesn't do the area justice. Color would be much better but alas, such was only in its infancy in those days of yore (of your grandpa's youth that is.) The last comment is for you younguns who think grandpa crossed the plains with the covered wagons. Tain't so, they weren't even covered most of the time.

WHITEHAWK BASIN MEMORIES

I have several neat memories of my experiences in and around this beautiful little basin. Besides our regular trail work, they include an episode with Old John Taylor, a character right out of the old west. He was a colorful storyteller whose memories were probably more imaginary than real. Some would be R-rated and certainly wouldn't be worthy of repeating here. Others were probably no worse than PG and with a little revision I should be able to upgrade them to G.

Now would seem the appropriate time to launch into the ones of the latter group, which I remember along with my own individual experiences. They vary from his description of various experiences he had on the trails around there to my own mule riding and building corduroy bridges as well as catching my jeans on fire somewhere in between. However, let me begin with a little introductory information about our trail work. It might help the reader to better understand and even appreciate some of our antics as we went about our day. Unless you've been there and experienced a few typical days on the trail, it's hard to picture why a couple of seemingly sane young men would carry on so. Are they slow of wit, just plain stupid, have they lost their marbles because of stress or do they possibly have some other strange malady? Surely they aren't the equivalent of the smoes of Lil Abner fame. Then again, maybe they are. After all, I had been bequeathed that name.

A good bonfire was essential to our comfort while working trail. It not only provided warmth for the soul on a chilly morning or evening but it also provided the essential heat to cook our grub and boil our coffee.

MEALS ON THE TRAIL

A good bonfire was essential to our comfort while working trail. It not only provided warmth for the soul on a chilly morning or evening but it also provided the essential heat to cook our grub and boil our coffee. In those years, coffee was essential to a good day. It warmed the body and even the hands as one held it or washed down the food we so often struggled with. Actually breakfast was almost always good, it being composed of hotcakes, eggs, bacon or ham if we were lucky and hadn't been out too long, as well as the mighty cup or two of coffee. Dinner, on the other hand, required more imagination and choice of food that neither of us usually had. Fried potatoes were as much a staple for dinner as hotcakes were for breakfast. They were easy to prepare, kept well on the trail and provided the energy necessary for an active young man. With the potatoes we might have corn or green beans or some other vegetable and some kind of canned meat or ham if we had any. Bread

and jam or maybe some cookies would provide the dessert. On a good day we might even have fresh meat, like fish or a few so-called fool hens. On a bad day, the only dessert was a low calorie jam sandwich, which was easily prepared by simply jamming two pieces of bread together. Of course, real jam made it taste better.

THE FIRE DANCE

One summer we had come into the basin from the north or from Elk Creek. I'm not sure just why we came in that way but it obviously had to do with working the trails in an orderly manner, which considered such things as the remaining snow-pack, where the horses were on a given week end and, which trails were most critically in need of being cleared before fire season. Our trail schedule was set by Joe, of course.

Even with my feeble intellect, I soon determined that wouldn't work and realized I had to get out of those pants.

Anyhow, we camped at the very campsite shown in the photo of figure 3-24. We always carried stick matches in the pockets of our Levi jeans as well as a box in the packs. The two pack mules, Louis and Nig, carried all the camping supplies while the two horses were for our benefit when we were able to ride. I had relieved Old Nig of his pack including the tent, sleeping bags and other essentials we could wrap in a canvas tarp. Louis carried most of the food, which was placed in boxes that hung from the sawhorse like packsaddle.

On the first day out, which this was, the boxes were always heavy being full of canned goods. Consequently, I had the habit of placing them on my upper leg and sliding them down to the ground to minimize the work involved and save my back. I wasn't lazy but neither was I quite as foolish as the fool hens I just spoke of. That evening as I slid the first box down, the friction somehow lit the matches in my pocket. I guess the pocket had slid over in front of my leg. As I realized what had happened, my first reaction was to reach in and pull out the matches. Even with my feeble intellect, I soon determined that wouldn't work and realized I had to get out of those pants. We wore our Levis tight, not hanging around our fannies like so many kids do today. They don't come off too easy, particularly when one is wearing boots. Don't you laugh now but just try to visualize my predicament and consider what you might do under similar circumstances. With the fire burning my leg, I pulled my pants down, sat on the ground and jerked off my boots and barely got out of my Levis before they burst into flame. I quickly extinguished the fire and examined the blister on my leg as Ken rolled on the ground in laughter. He said he had never seen a guy take his pants off so fast while covering so much ground in what might be described as the dance of a witch doctor or voodoo priest. He thought my technique easily rivaled anything in the movies, hence the name, **"FIRE DANCE"** seemed appropriate for this little subsection.

FOOL HENS, A GIFT FROM ABOVE

The fool hens were members of the grouse family and, like their names imply, are really very foolish. They won't run or fly when you approach them and are easy to kill, in fact made to order for a starving prospector or hungry trail hand. They were protected in Idaho by a law designed to keep such lost prospectors from starving. Though the law didn't have us in mind, we felt vindicated because of our being out in the boonies, hungry and in dire need of some sort of sustenance other than potatoes and bread. I often killed them with a shovel or a good-sized rock. In later years we carried a 22 caliber rifle and would shoot their heads off so as not to ruin any meat. Remember, we were on the verge of starvation and had a serious need for protein.

The latter technique was viable even for a poor shot like me, in that you had as many chances as necessary. One could get within a couple of yards of them even after a shot and sooner or later success was bound to come. The mother hen often had a covey of chicks, which were big enough to eat as well. Thus, if the gods smiled on us, we might manage to acquire a whole covey of 7 or 8 birds. They made a fine supper after being skinned and fried in a little flour. Fresh meat was hard to come by and we learned to make the best of a given situation.

Whereas, you might think our actions were cruel, we felt the covey had, indeed, contributed to the good of society. That is, they had provided both comfort and solace for two worthy young men who were engaged in the protection of the environment (doing their part to prevent forest fires that is) and providing access to the back country for hikers, fishermen, hunters and anyone else remotely interested in outdoor activities. You must admit that such is an admirable vocation. Though protected by law for the starving prospector, we felt justified

because of our limited meat supply. Isn't it easy for one to justify his or her actions?

F*#@$&! JOHN TAYLOR

One summer Ken and I worked with an old gentleman (and I use the term gentleman loosely) named John Taylor. We had some interesting experiences with him in the Whitehawk Basin area, which I will include here but first let me introduce you to this rather

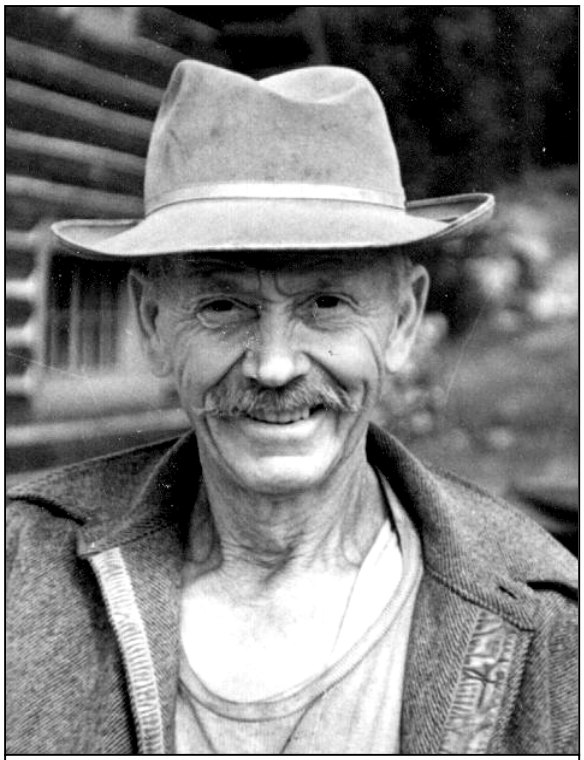

Figure 3-25 John Taylor, a crusty old coot from a by gone era of the old wild west.

unusual old fellow. John was 67 the year I worked with him. He was sent to Bear Valley to oversee some trail repair with which he had a good deal of experience. I guess you could call him an expert in such work and I must admit, he did have some rather practical solutions to various trail problems. Let me begin by explaining the adjective preceding his given name in the title of this particular section.

NATURE'S JET PROPULSION

I'll do that by relating a story of another experience I had following a saddle horse. Harlan and I were chasing some run away horses led by Hi Pocketts one time, a horse you'll hear more of and found our-selves climbing a hill out of Boundary Creek. We had one saddle horse and were sharing riding time. As luck would have it, I was walking when we started up the hill, which was pretty steep.

Being somewhat lazy, my engineering mind told me there had to be an easier way. Almost immediately I realized there was a one horsepower vehicle in front of me. Why not, I thought, hitch a ride and conserve my energy? So, I grabbed a hold of the horse's tail to let him pull me along up the hill. That worked great in principle but, as you may know, horses have a tendency to expel gas when exerting them-selves. Old Smoky was no exception. He was like a jet plane with the after burner turned on, lurching forward with each blast. To my dismay, I was directly in line with his exhaust fumes and couldn't figure how to get away from them without letting go. It was a case of either holding your breath and then grab his tail or let go and move forward under your own power. With my eyes burning as well as being somewhat choked up over the situation, I eventually chose the latter. In my day, such activity on the part of animal or human was crudely referred to as F*#?@$!, which rhymes with starting. With that data you should be able to decipher his name.

JOHN'S ENDEARING CHARACTERISTICS

Old John was much like the horse whether exerting himself or not, hence the adjective attached to his name. His social graces were minimal at best and he didn't even bother to excuse himself. He had other endearing characteristics, however, and I actually enjoyed working with him. He was always in a good mood, it seemed, which it seems to me, is an accomplishment in itself for a 67-year old man. Although he worked hard, he also saw the humorous side of most situations and kept us constantly snickering or laughing out loud. He was also a good trail cook and did more than his share around the camp in that category, probably because he didn't trust our cooking. We usually got the firewood and if a tent was necessary, pitched the same, which became our job. We also tended the horses because, quite frankly, he didn't want to mess with them. He made no bones about his dislike of them thar ornery four legged beasts. No siree, they were only good for packing the food and camp gear.

THAT 44 COLT

John carried a 44-caliber pistol, which was more for looks than action. We used to tease him about being able to hit anything with it. He would talk a lot about using it but never did

shoot it around us until one day on the Sulphur Creek Trail a Camp Robber (a bird, that is) started harassing us by stealing bread or anything else it could grab. At first he ignored the bird but after it persisted in its actions, he let out a few expletives, grabbed his gun, loaded it and headed for the tree where the bird landed.

He took careful aim, using both hands to support the gun, and let go. I thought for a minute the army had arrived and supported us with a 105 mm Howitzer. There was a tremendous explosion, followed by rushing wind and a vibrating landscape. Trees leaned in the wind as echoes ricocheted back and forth off the surrounding hills. Lo and behold, to my surprise the Camp Robber, which had been sitting on a limb about 20 feet in the air, fell over and dropped to the ground. I ran over, picked it up and quickly realized there wasn't a mark on it. A 44-caliber bullet should have blown it to smithereens but I couldn't find any evidence he had even come close to it, so I yelled back, "John, you scared the poor thing to death". We never were really able to determine what killed

Anyhow, the flooring was nailed to the logs or girders side by side with large spikes. Because the rounded side is up, the bridge had a corduroy appearance, thus the name.

the poor thing, a splinter from the branch, the shock wave preceding the bullet or something else such as sheer terror. Anyhow, John was vindicated. He could, indeed, shoot his 44 with some degree of accuracy even if it took two hands and five minutes to draw a bead. You can be sure; from that day on John toted the gun with a new feeling of pride and ownership.

CORDUROY BRIDGES

John, Harlan and I spent a couple of weeks in Whitehawk Basin as our home base while working on the Deadwood River Trail. Most of the work was within a few miles of the basin or closer and consisted of building so-called corduroy bridges as well as making other trail improvements. We would walk out to the site each day with our lunch and return in the evening to the camp.

Harlan and I provided most of the labor while John provided the expertise. We would fall green timber up to about one foot in diameter but more commonly in the eight to ten inch range, clean off the limbs, chop it in roughly five foot lengths and then split them in half. These provided the flooring for the bridge. We would also use a couple of trees, chopped to the necessary length, as girders to span the trouble spot. Usually such spots were boggy due to

Figure 3-26 Old John's 44 Colt, a riding on his hip just like a true western gunslinger.

springs on the high side of the trail and would get rather messy from traffic but sometimes the bridge would span an actual small stream. Anyhow, the flooring pieces were nailed to the logs or girders side by side with large spikes. Because the rounded side is up, the bridge had a corduroy appearance, thus the name. (Consider my artistic creation rendered in the drawing of figure 3-28). Sometimes a certain amount of shoveling was required to smooth out the terrain, build an approach to the bridge or tailor a bank to a curved span. We might spend several days on a given bridge depending upon its length and the ready availability of materials.

Figure 3-27 Old John Taylor about to shoot a varmint, so hold on tight and plug yo ears.

The work near the basin took a couple of weeks, as I remember, during which time we were treated to many a story by old John. I may insert those fit to be heard from time to time but will spare you the more crude ones, which often became one of his topics for the evening.

MULE TRAIN

The first weekend in the basin we made a trip over the hill (Whitehawk Lookout) to Big Meadows Guard Station for supplies. On that particular trail project we only had one saddle horse because we were spending so much time working each project with little traveling. Harlan and I made the trip while John stayed back at camp in the basin. Having only one saddle horse, we decided to ride one mule and use the second, Nig, to do the packing. I was to ride Louis on the way back because Harlan had to suffer that indignity on the way there. We only had a packsaddle for Louis, which was theoretically slightly better than no saddle at all. A regular packsaddle is made with padded leather and has two steel rungs protruding on top about a foot a-part to which the packs are tied. A skinny man's behind will just fit between those rungs making a rather comfortable seat if, that is, one remains stationary. The position works pretty well in the walking mode. Beware, however, of the trot and its associated bounce.

As we got back to the meadow on the return trip, Harlan started his horse and Nig, whom he was leading, in a trot back towards camp. Louis, of course, didn't want to be left behind and took off after them. All I had was a halter rope for Louis and I couldn't rein her in. Soon I was bouncing up and down on the saddle and believe you me; I didn't always miss the rungs when I landed. That's tough enough on a bony behind but it's even worse on the more tender parts of your anatomy. I was yelling, "Whoa Louis, whoa Louis" but to no avail. Soon I grabbed a rung in each hand and held on for dear life. I didn't

A man's behind will just fit between those rungs, if he's skinny, which works pretty good in a walking mode. Beware, however, of the trot and its associated bounce.

even worry about the halter rope anymore because my major concern was for my more tender parts. Now, if I could only guide my bouncing posterior, I was quite sure all would be well and no crippling blows would be delivered to those parts I spoke of.

Fortunately the ride across the meadow was short and I arrived at camp somewhat beaten up but still able to walk. That day I had learned the basic differences in design between the riding saddle and the packsaddle. That old cavalry saddle I spoke of earlier was shear comfort compared to the latter when it came to a trot. You better believe me; even bareback riding is to be preferred to a packsaddle with its imminent threat of eunichasia. That's akin to euthanasia, you know, because the consequences leave little for mankind to live for. It's hardly painless to the body and most surely will leave permanent psychological scars.

THE DEADWOOD RIVER TRAIL

With the corduroy bridges finished in this particular area, we then set out to clear the Deadwood River Trail with instructions to

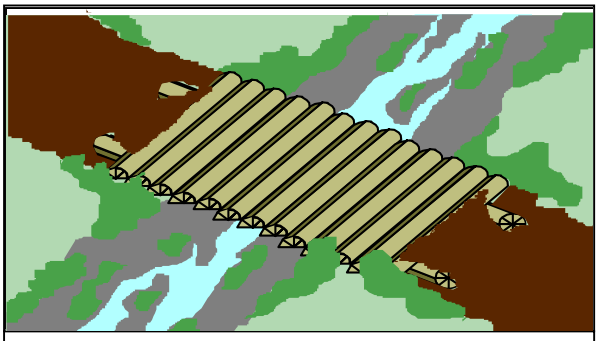

Figure 3-28 A drawing illustrating the typical corduroy bridge applied in trail work.

improve various areas that had been given kind of a lick and a promise in years past. John wouldn't ride at all or even have anything to do with the horses as I have indicated. I don't know whether he had had a bad experience in his earlier years or just didn't like horses. In any case, they were completely in our charge. We hobbled, packed, rounded-up, etc. those ornery critters both morning and evening.

We had worked a day out on the trail earlier from the basin and could normally finish it in another day. The picture included in the photo of figure 3-29 was taken along the trail in later years by Ken Karcher. The scene is at a point on the trail just as it turned south along the Deadwood River. Actually, from this vantage point we are looking down into Whitehawk Creek as it drains into the Deadwood, which is several miles from the basin. We are just getting into the steeper countryside. Considering the improvements in mind, such as eliminating detours around the butt ends of some big Ponderosa or Yellow pine that had fallen across the trail in earlier years, we knew it would take longer to complete our work this particular year. We would work as far as we could that day and then move on down to the Deadwood River Campground, which lay at the intersection of the

trail with the gravel road, which led up the South Fork of the Payette to Lowman.

We would then work back until all had been completed. This was necessary because of the extreme ruggedness of the country. The trail ran along the ridge above the Deadwood River along the canyon edge. This was a deep gorge of maybe a thousand feet, with walls of 45 to 60 degrees. There wasn't a flat place anywhere once the trail turned south along the river. Even prior to that there was no feed to speak of until one reached the campground and that wasn't anything to brag about. The lack of feed left a lot to be desired when compared to Whitehawk Basin. We had to be careful the horses didn't leave us high and dry once we settled down in the later camp. If given an opportunity, they would head back to the Garden of Eden, which was still fresh in their one-track minds. A walk back to the basin to retrieve those less than committed oat burners along with a repeat down the river to get the packs would have cost us two to three days not to speak of the sweat, tears and embarrassment of being outsmarted by a dumb animal. It's bad enough to come up short when an intellectual of sorts is your competition but to have one of these fertilizer mills best you, ugh, that truly is a horse of a different color.

PROVING OUR METTLE AS SAWYERS

That first day after leaving Whitehawk Basin we began moving south along the river when we came across our first challenge of a significant degree. It was a big Yellow pine across the trail with a short detour having been made up the hill around the butt end. The detour was negotiable but we knew the tree had to come out to fit Joe Ladle's requirements.

John decided to go on ahead and do any ax work he came across while leaving Harlan and I to take out the tree. The task was no small job because the tree's diameter was about four feet and it lay with the weight on the roots and a couple of big branches on the low side of the trail. If one isn't experienced in this kind of work, they might think the task was to simply cut through the tree in a couple of spots and roll out the section that spanned the trail. That would be work enough but unfortunately it isn't that simple. As a cut is made, the weight of the tree will cause the open cut to close as the saw moves deeper into the tree placing it (the saw) in a bind. Consequently, the cut has to be held open with steel wedges as sawing progresses by pounding them into the upper edge of the cut with a sledgehammer.

The task was no small job. The tree's diameter was about four feet and it lay with the weight on the roots and a couple of big branches on the low side of the trail.

THREE MISTAKES

We had several wedges and a couple of small sledgehammers along because such problems were anticipated. They were stored in a closed gunnysack which Harlan had tied across the back of his saddle for convenience and which action we would live to regret that day, our first mistake. The trail was very narrow and we still had two pack animals. Harlan had been riding Hi Pocketts and clipping overhead limbs that might brush a rider while leading the mules and I had been walking with the crosscut saw over my shoulder. This was the situation when we came across the big yellow pine with its butt end five feet or so above the trail and its 4 foot trunk solidly blocking the same.

Figure 3-29 Looking down on the junction of White Hawk Creek with the Deadwood River from a vantage point on the Deadwood River Trail.

Harlan decided to move Hi Pocketts past the tree to make more room to work and left the mules standing in the trail with the lead rope dragging. Like-wise he simply dropped the reins for Hi Pocketts to the ground once around the log because there was no convenient tree to tie him to. That was our second mistake which was hardly excusable since Hi Pocketts wasn't exactly known for his loyalty to man. His loyalty extended as far as required to obtain goodies like oats or some treat we might buy him with. He was more interested in filling his belly and he knew, as well as we, that greener pastures of pine grass lay a few miles down the trail. In fact

almost anything was better in his demented mind than the brush and rocks around him.

Actually, he stood rather faithfully during the work, which took well over an hour. The first cut was the toughest with wedges needing to be set and adjusted from time to time to keep the saw free. Soon the top end of the tree parted company with the stump leaving just it and a small section across the trail. We couldn't budge the stump, so Harlan picked up the wedges and sledge to return them to the sack lashed to the saddle of Hi Pocketts. We would now be forced to make a second cut to clear the trail. The last cut would be made rather easily, without the need for wedges of course, in about 15 or 20 minutes and we could be on our way to camp if there were no unusual circumstances.

Hi Pocketts' must have had split vision, it would seem, which enabled him to keep one eye on the trail and the other on Harlan.

HI POCKETTS GOES BESERK

With the job done, Harlan picked up the clippers used for overhead limbs and headed for old Hi Pocketts to climb aboard. Hi Pocketts, who had moved down the trail a little while grazing during the job; turned his head as he approached. He (Hi Pocketts) decided he liked his freedom and moved quickly on ahead of Harlan. Because of the steepness of the hillside, Harlan was unable to head him off and could only follow along the trail behind him. Hi Pockets must have had split vision, it would seem, which enabled him to keep one eye on the trail and the other on Harlan. As the latter moved faster to catch him, Hi Pocketts would pick up a little speed to stay ahead. He held his head to one side so as to keep the reins from dragging under his feet and could move rather fast. After a short run, Harlan decided it was useless to try to catch him. He uttered a few expletives while picking up a nice rock, which he threw, smacking old Hi Pocketts a good one on the butt. His resulting whinny was the equivalent of a referee's signal, "you're out", for Harlan. You see, that was Harlan's third mistake and Hi Pocketts held the trump card.

"I knowed the brush saved me but I couldn't hardly get loose from the stuff and had to crawl back up, 30 yards or so, to the trail".

With a snort and maybe a F*#?@$! or two, he was off in a gallop down the trail. As he disappeared around the first bend, I picked up the lead rope to the two mules and remarked to Harlan, "There's no need to worry because we are bound to find him somewhere down the trail filling his ornery belly while playing 'gotcha' with his tail and the ever present horse flies". That proved to be one of my more prophetic statements in life, which are few and far between, though its fulfillment occurred at a point somewhat further along the trail than I had really anticipated.

OLD JOHN'S LIFE SAVING DIVE

In the mean time old John had walked on ahead a couple of miles cleaning out small logs and branches. He later told us he was walking along, whistling a merry tune and minding his own business when he became aware of an approaching stampede. He turned to see Hi Pocketts bearing down on him in full gallop and began waving his arms to, hopefully, stop him. It was to no avail, however, and he had to leap out of his way at the last second to keep from getting run over. Yes siree, old Hi Pocketts was putting the pony express to shame. Old John flung himself in the only safe direction, i.e. the easy route down the hill. Apparently he rolled quite a ways because of the steep hillside before coming to a stop in a brush thicket. He remarked, "I knowed the brush saved me but I couldn't hardly get loose from the stuff and had to crawl back up, 30 yards or so, to the trail. Tweren't safe to try to walk considering the hillside and the bouncing and scraping I'd been through. Wasn't sure I'd make it anyhow". Although bruised, shaken and a little battered, old John was no worse for the wear but that experience certainly didn't improve the endearment he had for Hi Pocketts or other such four-legged beasts in general. Nope, such animals simply didn't impress John. They were just a pain in the behind though admittedly a pesky necessity for trail work. After all, they did keep us from carrying grub and bedding.

HI POCKETTS REINS IN

We were almost to the campground before coming across Hi Pocketts grazing along side of the trail. John had left him and gone on down to the campground to relax and rest his bruised body and ego, I believe. We examined the sack tied to the saddle and found one end loose and the tie around the top gone. We theorized one end came loose from the saddle before the sack came open allowing the wedges and hammer to bounce up and down. Can't you just see that sack beating him across the butt like a cowboy

with a whip in flight from marauding Indians? No wonder he came down on him in a storm like the lead bull of a stampede and almost ran poor John into the canyon. He was simply getting away from his tormentors. Of course, we never saw hide or hair of the sledges or wedges along the trail. I suspect they were launched like rockets and landed somewhere near the river at the bottom of the gorge. What a day that had been. We made camp at the end of the trail near the junction of the Deadwood and Payette rivers. We completed the trail behind us the following day with a little more care and guarding of Hi Pocketts, our nemesis.

It took another day to return to Whitehawk Basin and climb over the hill to Big Meadows where we spent the weekend. Well, so goes the saga of my experiences with John Taylor. We did spend a little additional time with him building rail fences at Upper Deadwood which I remarked about earlier, chasing a little smoke and improving some trail back towards Boundary Creek north of Bear Valley but I believe I have run out of significant experiences as far as John is concerned.

OLD JOHN WAS A STORY TELLER

Old John had stories I couldn't even begin to recall. Most were funny and provided a good laugh partly because of their nature and partly because they were ridiculous and of very questionable veracity. We would tease him and tell him they were a bunch of baloney but he would stick by them and never admit being wrong. For example, every big log we came to which had been previously cut out of the trail, he would insist he and old Pete or Jack or someone else had cut it out in 1919 or some such date and what a tough job it was. To hear him, he was involved in building all the bridges on every trail we ever traversed. Bears and mountain lions must have been prevalent in those times because he included some in most every story. They stole his victuals, tore up his camp, scared the horses and most everything else one could imagine. They added seasoning to an otherwise every day event. He was a character and loved to describe his escapades, be they real or imaginary. I must admit I enjoyed most of them and they did help pass the time around the campfire after supper. One could always count on John to come up with something interesting or at least entertaining.

As I stuck my head back in the tent, I realized that he had probably been lying in the corner by the top of my sleeping bag.

OTHER DEADWOOD TRAIL EXPERIENCES

We made the trip from White Hawk Basin along the Deadwood River Trail every year because it was a well-used and important trail in the backcountry. Only one trip was with John while the others were with Ken or Harlan. A few other experiences, which occurred in other years seem worthy of note, at least to me.

RATTLER, RATTLER

One year Harlan and I made that trip as part of a ten-day trail foray. We ended up in the Deadwood River Campground on Friday night and spent the weekend there. The campground was situated at the junction of the Deadwood River and the south fork of the Payette River in a rather hot and somewhat dusty area. We weren't allowed to work on weekends and so had to bide our time there. Now that locale is not exactly noted as an exciting place for nightlife. The closest thing to a moving picture is a chip monk running for his hole, or maybe a spooked deer headed for cover. Similarly, the strongest drink available was our coffee after it had sat in the pot for an hour or so. Nope, the deadwood River campground was hardly a place for one to get into trouble or so I thought until my experience of the next day.

On Saturday morning we fished along the Deadwood for a while and then came back to camp around noon. After a little lunch, I decided to take a nap and went into the tent and flopped on my sack, sleeping bag, that is. No sooner had I settled down for a short summer's snooze, when I heard Harlan yell excitedly, "Rattler, Obenchain, help me get this rattler". Of course, I jumped up and was out there in a flash but Harlan had already finished him off. He had him hanging from a forked stick with his head dragging the ground. He was about 3 or 4 feet long and had a nice set of rattles.

I asked Harlan where he had spotted him and pointing at the tent, he answered;"He came out from under the right corner of the tent just after you went in". As I stuck my head back in the tent, I realized that he had probably been lying in the corner by the top of my sleeping bag. Without knowing it, I had apparently flopped on the bag with my head right next to him and he, rather than argue, had made a hasty exit. Thank goodness he wasn't the argumentative

type because I wasn't interested in conversation either. I had heard before that rattlers often sought the shade offered by any object such as a tent in the heat of the day. Believe you me; I became a little more careful after that, shaking my sleeping bag, checking the tent floor, etc.

THE LOWMAN STORE

Our Sunday activity that weekend was a trip to Lowman about 4 miles up the South Fork of the Payette. We had one saddle horse and two mules, so we took turns on old Louis, one of the mules. With no saddle for the mule, the one riding her looked a little like Lil Abner with big old work boots flopping at her sides as we trotted along the road. We had an ice cream and a cold drink at the country store in Lowman while we sat in the shade. After that we explored the riverbanks on either side before heading back. Needless to say, we were killing time but what else was there to do in such an exciting place? After returning to camp and checking for rattlers, we took a little swim or should I say bath in the Deadwood to cool off before calling it a day.

THE WARM SPRINGS CREEK TRAIL

Monday called for our return trip to Bear Valley. We headed back up the river on the Deadwood River Trail, taking turns riding and walking, while eventually arriving in White Hawk Basin that evening where we spent the night. Usually, we would fish there and catch a few trout for dinner. They were small but easy to catch and as I mentioned earlier, we never came back to camp empty handed. Fish for dinner was a sure thing when we camped there.

The next day found us working the Warm Springs Creek Trail northwest of the basin, which eventually brought us out on the road between Deadwood and Bear Valley at Deer Creek. From that point it was about 11 or 12 miles up the road to the ranger station and the meager comforts our little home provided us. This home, a tent secured to a frame and wooden floor, looked out on the meadow and associated buildings of the complex, portrayed in the photo of figure 3-37.

This particular trail provided a vantage point from which one could see the beauty of the Whitehawk Basin country to the southeast. I included a photo taken by Ken in later years as we left Whitehawk Basin. Take a gander at figure 3-30 and see if you can imagine the beauty of this photo if it were taken in color. As I have said previously, black and white photos simply don't do justice to the beauty we were often treated to but I suppose, I should be thankful for them anyway. I would have little with which to illustrate my story without these pictures, thanks primarily to Ken Karcher. At the time he was snapping the scenes, I was probably acting half bored because I saw little point in such activities, having little interest in photography. I saw no purpose in capturing those images we were treated to on a daily basis, never dreaming I would write about the associated experiences.

Ken also managed to capture a nice picture of a tree struck by lightning as shown in figure 3-31. This particular tree was near the burn of a big fire just west of Whitehawk Lookout, which I'll describe in more detail later. However, this strike had no bearing on that particular fire and, it would appear, no other fire as well. You can see that the lightning struck near the top of the tree and raked it all the way to the ground but there is no evidence of fire on it or the surrounding trees. It was either in a wet period of the year or old Mother Nature was in a friendly mood to or for the environment.

Figure 3-30 The White Hawk Basin country as seen from a ridge on the Warm Springs Creek Trail to the north.

Well, it's time to move on to a story of the unusual dexterity displayed by Louis, a stubborn but faithful old pack mule. She was approaching twenty, as were most members of the stock furnished by the United States Forest Service.

That had its advantages, i.e. being rather calm and well behaved, but also its shortcomings in that they knew the country as well as we did, including their favorite spots for grazing and relaxation. Such interest caused us a good deal of consternation and pain at times, as I have previously explained.

OLD LOUIS AND THE FLY

A couple years later Ken and I were working the same trail form White Hawk Basin to Deer Creek and came across a rather massive windfall of good size trees, mostly spruce, across the trail. Being in a thickly wooded draw, there was no good way around the mess and thus no choice for us except to cut our way through it. We knew we had a long job on our hands and tied up Hi Pocketts, the ringleader. Remember, he likes to head for greener pastures when unattended. After dropping the lead rope for the mules we set about our work. It was rather a warm day and we both frequented the water bag hanging on the pack of old Louis while taking five to cool off and catch our wind.

After working a couple of hours, I stepped over to Louis to take off the water bag. The horse flies were buzzing around and generally making life miserable for both man and beast. As I unhooked the bag, I felt Louis's rear hoof graze my chest. Not being too attentive, I uttered a couple of rather endearing words to her, hung the bag back up and went back to work. After about another forty-five minutes, I repeated the exercise and, would you believe it, here came Louis's hoof again. This time it drew a little blood and my chastisement of her was somewhat more vigorous. I stepped back in the process and as I watched, the hoof came up again and then again. As it turned out, she wasn't trying to catch me as I had surmised but was picking horse flies off her ear with her rear hoof. Not only was she fast, she was also accurate, just ticking the ear and sending the fly scooting. I had heard that mules were surefooted animals on the trail but had never applied it in the sense of dispatching horseflies. You better believe I developed a new respect for Louis and her skills with that back hoof that day.

She wasn't trying to catch me as I had surmised but was picking horse flies off her ear with her rear hoof.

FROM LOWMAN TO BIG MEADOWS

One year on our trek down the Deadwood Trail, Ken and I had been instructed to return via Lowman and Clear Creek summit to Big Meadows. From there we would work the Bearskin Creek Trail to the Elk Creek Ranger Station where we were to end up the following weekend. It was a faster route and put us in position for other trails Joe wanted worked before fire season. He was the man with the summer's master plan.

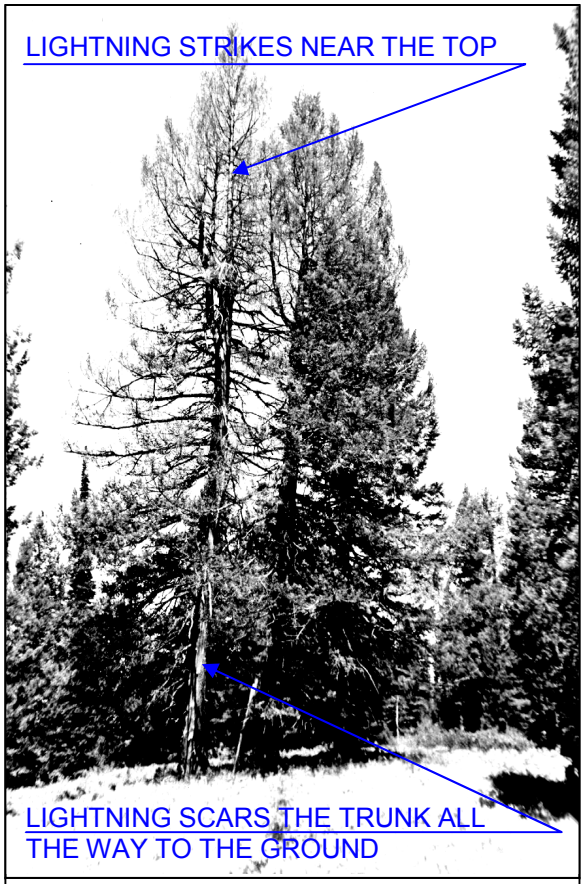

Figure 3-31 Lightning scarred tree located on a ridge of the Warm Springs Creek Trail.

On Monday morning we left the campground at the end of Deadwood River and headed for Lowman where we hung a left and proceeded up Clear Creek to the summit. The whole trip from the campground to Big Meadows was in the vicinity of 25 miles and makes a good eight-hour day with pack animals. See figure 3-1 on page 76 to get a better mental perspective of the day's outing. You will find Lowman in the lower center of the map with Big Meadows due north of it and the Bearskin Creek Trail just to the northeast of the Big Meadows station, that is, if you like to examine maps.

There's no trotting to worry about in this mode of travel. Such would be too tough on the mules, the groceries and general pack stability but most surely the lack has nothing to do with rider comfort or stamina. The latter simply was never a consideration. As we got nearer the headwaters of Clear Creek, the trees thinned out because of an old burn many years before. The summit is steep and the road includes many switchbacks as it twists its way over the hill. The view is something to behold as you near the top and look back towards Lowman (figure 3-32). All in all, the ride was as pleasant as one would expect covering that many miles. At the top of the summit we left the old burn and entered the pleasant green offered by the trees and meadows of Bear Valley. Knowing the trip was almost over added to our comfort and helped quiet our complaining stomachs, which always seemed to be on daylight saving time. Though somewhat broken in for the year, our behinds were a little stiff and tender as we approached Big Meadows. It didn't take long to unpack, give the animals a little shot of oats as a treat for their day's work and turn them out to pasture. We then hobbled in to the cabin, not in horse's hobbles silly but with a measured step from stiff joints. Next, we prepared supper and set about relaxing for the evening while letting our weary bone and behinds rest.

It was peaceful and quiet except for a few creature sounds including squirrels and once in a while a coyote.

I liked to walk out along the edge of the meadow in the late evening and early mornings to watch the shadows come and go as evening approached or the sun rose for the day. It was peaceful and quiet except for a few creature sounds including squirrels and once in a while a coyote. As darkness crept across the meadow, I would return to the cabin, light a lantern if Ken hadn't beaten me to it, and read a little before calling it a day.

We were up and about by 5:30, making breakfast, doing dishes and getting the horses and mules packed up to be on our way by 8:00. After traveling up the road a couple of miles, we grabbed a left on Bearskin trail, which led to Elk Creek Ranger Station and traversed a low hill in the process. It, the trail, was relatively open, as usual, and after a short day we arrived at our little old tent on the ranger station premises.

BIG MEADOWS GUARD STATION

Big Meadows Guard Station was never permanently manned in the time I worked in Bear Valley. It apparently was built for fire suppression when manpower was less mobile and more available. Many such stations were apparently built and manned to allow early response to calls from the many lookouts located throughout the national forests. By the time I went to work for the Forest Service in the early 40's, a considerable number of lookouts had been dropped from the active list and likewise many guard stations. They were replaced by air surveillance and smoke jumping units, which, coupled with the active lookouts, filled the resulting gap in fire control.

In 1947 I applied for a job as a smoke jumper but was turned down because of my height, a skinny 6' 3" frame. It would be too hard to clear the door of the old Ford Tri-motor they used, so I was told. I was looking for better income and the excitement I felt would be associated with the job. Consequently, with the rejection, I stayed with the smoke chasing job and was somewhat envious of the jumpers with their higher pay and good food. I was quite aware of the latter because we replaced them at times on a fire they brought under control. The government packer, assigned to pack out their equipment, always left the food and we were the beneficiaries. Even so, I felt they were treated like prima donnas with high pay and only half the work we had in our job. I guess that was more envy than fact but it seemed they were treated with kid gloves.

Figure 3-32 The Clear Creek Drainage as seen from the summit separating it from Bear Valley.

I'm not sure why I got on that tangent but it seemed to fit in here.

At any rate, we used Big Meadows as a base each year to work telephone line, clear roads, work some trails and do general maintenance on

the station as well as at Whitehawk Lookout. The latter was manned each year during fire season but we visited it before the season, making necessary repairs and being sure the telephone communications were in order. There was a road up to the lookout, which wound back and forth with the telephone line crossing it several times. We usually worked the line coming down and then returned to verify phone operation. That was easier with the available road than working the line from the bottom up. It was about a day's job to open the road and repair the line after an average year of damage from heavy snows and associated windfall.

WHITEHAWK LOOKOUT

The water source for the lookout was a spring about half a mile down from the top. It was really great water, clean, clear and cold. Whoever manned the lookout during fire season had to get their daily ration of water early in the morning, about sunup, so they could be on watch during heat of the day. Having both husband and wife to man the lookout helped alleviate that particular problem. More often than not, the watch was composed of such a team with one person always available for surveillance and to report as necessary.

I stayed there a couple of different times prior to fire season and enjoyed it a great deal. The view was really beautiful, particularly during sunrise or sunset, though maybe not so much so as from Blue Point, which was located to the

Figure 3-34 A view to the east towards Big Meadows from White Hawk Lookout in 1999.

northwest. The country surrounding the latter peak was somewhat more rugged and particularly so near the lookout. One could almost look straight down from it to the surrounding peaks and valleys.

Morning comes early when you are on the highest point in the area. There are no trees around to shield you from the sun and thus, an

Figure 3-33 White Hawk Lookout in July 1999 with Lethia keeping watch from the deck.

alarm to wake one isn't necessary. You can see, it would seem, forever in all four directions, since the lookout is all glass windows with no obstructions. Figure 3-33 is a photo of the lookout taken in 1999 while Lethia and I were visiting the area. Admiring the view, while eating a leisurely breakfast, is pleasant to say the least. I included figures 3-34 and 3-35 to give you an idea of the scenic beauty involved. Even so, it would be kind of boring on a 24-hour basis, I suppose. With two people there, however, one can read or do chores while the other is on watch but someone had to be attentive all the time. Thus, the husband - wife team is ideal.

Fires must be recognized early and a crew dispatched promptly to minimize fire size and damage. When a smoke was spotted, the person on watch would take a bearing with the spotting scope from the lookout and with the help of a map and his local knowledge would estimate the distance and location relative to known landmarks. This would help guide the smoke chaser, i.e. my buddies and I, to the fire, as accurately as possible. Assuming the fire was visible from a second lookout, a cross reading would also be taken to pinpoint the location. A plane might also be sent out to precisely locate the fire but such wasn't always possible or practical depending on the weather. Of course, if the fire continued to burn, one had little trouble locating it. However, if there wasn't

much smoke or maybe some associated clouds and fog disguising it, then finding it could be difficult if directions weren't too good. Such a life; i.e. that of the person manning the lookout; isn't really a bird's nest on the ground but rather a demanding, though not physically strenuous job. I wouldn't like it for a summer job, unless of course, I was married and had my spouse along. She should be able to keep me from talking to myself and provide more palatable meals.

THE WHITEHAWK BASIN TRAIL

The spring for the lookout, about half a mile from the top, was the jumping off point for White hawk Basin if one was to come in from Big Meadows. There was a short (about three miles) but steep trail down to it, the basin. My first exposure to the basin was on my first stay at Big Meadows, which happened to include a weekend. That Saturday, Al and I hiked from the spring down the trail to the basin to fish. He really loved the place and I soon understood why. We each caught our limit (20 apiece in those days) and hauled them back to the cabin where his wife cooked them. What a feast.

A slip of the sawyer or the man holding the block could easily have resulted in a missing finger or hand.

The trip out of the basin was tough, as I remember, partly because of the fish but mostly because of a long day and steep trail. Of course, a lot of elevation is gained in those three miles and the fish, though small, didn't help a bit. As usual, Al's wife prepared a delicious though simple dinner of fish, cornbread, fried potatoes, a vegetable and a little dessert complete with tantalizing odors. I figured I had earned the feed by the time I collected that evening and thoroughly enjoyed every bite. As I remember, I even helped her with the dishes that evening in an expression of appreciation, which wasn't altogether normal for me unless, of course, she asked for a little help.

Figure 3-35 A view to the south from the lookout deck. Note: Deadwood Reservoir is in the background.

CUTTING FIREWOOD

In 1945 we spent a week or so at Big Meadows cutting firewood. I remember the year because that's where I was when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That same year and just prior to the advent of the Atomic age, there was a big fire to the south of us in the Boise National Forest near Garden Valley. Smoke settled in Bear Valley like a fog making it difficult to see very far and the smell was noticeable while we worked. We had a big gasoline powered saw mounted on the back of a truck to work with. We set it up near a lot of dead timber as our source of wood. We then used mules to skid the logs into piles after cutting the trees down. The trees were lodge pole pines and weren't all that heavy on the average. Two men, usually Harlan and I, would lift them into place on the feeder at the rear of the truck and Al would operate the saw. One of us would push the log up another foot after each cut while the other would handle the block just cut. It didn't take long at all to cut up a 20 or 30-foot log. These days, OSHA would outlaw such equipment. There was no guard on the saw blade, which was about 3 feet in diameter. A slip of the sawyer or the man holding the block could easily have resulted in a missing finger or hand. Fortunately there were no injuries of any kind with that operation while I was there. Safety was simply a matter of common sense in those days. Some of the wood was hauled to the Deadwood stations but we repeated the exercise at the Elk Creek Ranger Station later that summer for good measure.

The only other lengthy stay that occurred at Big Meadows, to my recollection, was the time we painted all the buildings and made a few other general repairs such as building a new outhouse. Such a building project is no small chore; let me assure you, because of the necessary basement. It required maybe a seven or eight foot pit about 6 feet square. The top half is relatively easy after getting through any roots. However, the deeper you get the tougher it is too toss the dirt out of

the hole with a shovel. Keep in mind this activity I speak of was in the days prior to backhoes and such. Your upward motion with the shovel has to be fast enough and strong enough to place the dirt in orbit before it slides off the shovel and into your face or hair. Why do you think I went to a crew cut every summer? Now, I don't remember the exact year this took place but it was after the wood cutting job and I usually referred to it as "the year of the pits" meaning both the job we had been forced to engage in, as well as to the degree of pleasure I derived from said activity.

PLAYING WITH THE ELK ON WHITEHAWK

One stay at Big Meadows, Ken had his motorcycle along. I'm not sure what the occasion was but we made use of it in our free time. One evening we went up to the lookout, about five miles, and enjoyed the scenery. On the way back we spotted about five or six head of elk in the road ahead. Ken hit the throttle and as we approached them he cut it back. His flared exhaust worked like a charm, emitting a series of sounds comparable to a rifle. To our surprise and delight, the elk stuck to the road in full flight with the motorcycle on their tails. Ken kept right after them and as we would get close to them he would cut back the throttle again providing the sound of a dozen hunters, all-firing at once. The elk seemed to go a little faster after each burst from the tail pipe but stayed in the road for about a half-mile. As we approached a switch back in the road, they decided that such play had gone on long enough and left the road to continue on around the hill. We settled back and cruised on down the mountain continuing to fire volley after volley from the cycle's exhaust with resultant echoes from the surrounding hills. What excitement, I thought, though today we would surely have been cited for animal cruelty. The memory of that particular incident is still vivid in my mind. I can hear the backfire of the cycle and see those elk take a little leap in synchronism with it. Is that a warped sense of humor or just youthful fun? I don't really know.

He grabbed a tree limb sticking out and as he lifted himself up felt those horns graze his behind as she sailed past.

THE GARDEN VALLEY CATTLE ASSOCIATION

Within a mile or so of the Big Meadows Guard Station was a cabin occupied by cattlemen working for the Gem Valley Cattle Association. A similar cabin was located about a mile from the Elk Creek Ranger Station and housed the cowhands for the Garden Valley Cattle association. See figure 3-36 which is a 1999

Figure 3-36 The home of the Garden valley Cattle Association in Bear Valley.

photo of the latter. We would sometimes exchange visits when working nearby and were accompanied by Al or Joe,. The cattlemen were older (maybe 40 to 50) and I had little in common with them. I did, however, kind of like to listen to them spin yarns of both real and imaginary origin. They were tough as leather and spoke with a vocabulary, which had been born of years in the saddle chasing those little doggies along the trail as well as in and out of the timber. That vocabulary, coupled with rather unusual stories the cattleman with the Garden Valley Association was prone to tell, used to keep me in stitches most of the visit. Had it not been for that, I wouldn't have enjoyed them near as much. In fact, I might have stayed home with some sort of excuse.

One such story I remember involved the superintendent who I suspect was born in the saddle. He wasn't just bow legged but had skin as tough as cowhide and language akin to their droppings. Exciting moments of his tale were accented with expletives and a high pitched voice. Here's one of his stories I remember.

A GRAZING EXPERIENCE

It seems he, the superintendant, was out looking over the herd one day and noticed a young calf that seemed to have a problem. He got off his horse, walked over to the calf and knelt down to examine his leg. About that time, he heard a bellow in back of him and as he turned, he realized mama didn't like him messing with her calf. She was coming at him and all he could do was turn and run. She didn't give up and he started looking for a tree to climb. He spotted one a few yards ahead and put his last ounce of energy into his churning feet. As he neared it, he glanced out of the corner of his eye and realized she was about to catch him with head down and horns a glistening in the sun. He said he grabbed a tree limb sticking out and, as he lifted himself up, felt those horns graze his behind as she sailed on past. Now that may be somewhat exaggerated but he swore it was true and I couldn't challenge it.

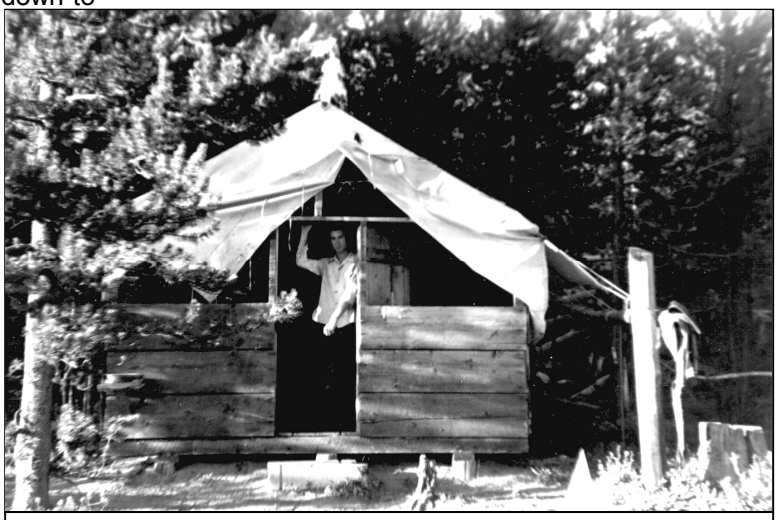

Figure 3-37 "Yours Truly" in the doorway of our humble home located behind the Elk Creek Ranger Station.

Well, as if that wasn't embarrassing enough, i.e. an experienced cowhand treed by a cow, she then stood there for what seemed an eternity before letting him come down. Fortunately it was late afternoon and as the sun began to set she took her calf and moseyed on to better feed. He slipped down, grabbed his horse, which stood faithfully by and decided his day was done. Feeling a little chagrined, to say the least; he rode back to the cabin musing about that ornery cow and the scare she had given him. After finishing his story, he turned to me and said, "Son, pay attention to what I jist said. Don't you worry none about them ornery lookin bulls, young feller. They jist like to beller and act kinda mean. It's them cows ya gotta be keerful of. They looks peaceful enuff, but they's like women folk when it comes to their chillin. Theys born them and kept the wolves away while the yunguns is a growin up. Theys protected them through thick and thin. Ya know, ya jist don't wanta mess with a mad mama!"

ELK CREEK RANGER STATION

Elk Creek Ranger Station was our home base throughout the summer. Our stays at other locations, be it Big Meadows or the Deadwood, were always simply for convenience in completing work in the immediate area. Such work could be accomplished early in the summer in most cases. By the time fire season arrived, about the second week of July, we stayed at Elk Creek doing various kinds of maintenance work. Thus, our somewhat questionable luxury accommodations for the summer consisted of an 8'x10' tent on a wooden platform as shown in the photo of figure 3-37 while the ranger station appears in figure 3-38.

Figure 3-38 The Elk Creek Ranger Station, essentially our headquarters for the entire summer fire season.

If we left for a project nearby, we stayed in radio or telephone contact. I remember doing some late trail work with Harlan north of the ranger station in about 1945 or so. If the work hadn't

been important, it would have been left for the next year but Joe decided to send us out with a radio and instructions to call in twice daily, i.e. right after making camp each evening and right before breaking camp in the morning. This we did and were able to complete the designated work without incident. Additionally, we had to camp on a ridge or high area where radio reception would be the best if we expected to communicate. Of course, that wasn't always convenient in terms of water and feed but we could compensate for that.

For those of later generations, radios weren't as simple or reliable as they are today and there certainly weren't any relay towers all over the place as there is today. I doubt that satellites were even thought of, let alone a reality and the few radio towers around were only at the larger base stations. Our radio was simply HF, not UHF or even VHF, let alone the various bands available today. The equipment was rather bulky and added to the load of our already burdened mules. Our antenna was a long wire, maybe 50 feet long, strung between two trees on a ridge. Communication quality seemed to be affected by the weather, sunspots and most everything else in the vicinity except maybe horse flies. Usually, I got through after a few tries and was able to verify our position with Joe, determine his needs and schedule another day. At first I struggled a little because Joe didn't answer as fast as I thought he ought to. As a result, I began repeating the call regimen several times prior to saying "over".

After one such call, Joe said, "Tom, you don't have to issue the call letters for ten minutes. I can hear you and we can complete all the business in five if you'll give me a chance to answer." I was somewhat taken back but I took that counsel to heart and settled for a single repeat before giving him a chance to come in. Why hadn't I thought of that? The whole experience was rather interesting to me, having had no similar opportunity in the few short years of my working career with the good old USFS.

TRAIL ADVENTURES NEAR THE ELK CREEK RANGER STATION

Right across the road from the ranger station or to your back as you view the photo of 3-38; lay a big pasture and a holding corral. Figure 3-18, a picture of old Buck with Louis was taken there. Most of the horses were shod at this location in between lapses in trail work. There were trails in all directions from the ranger station but our work from here lay mostly to the north because our eastern district boundary, the middle fork of the Salmon River, was only a few miles away as you can see from figure 3-1. The trails to the south and to the west were usually completed earlier as we worked our way towards Elk Creek Ranger Station, our permanent location.

One annual trail we looked forward to was called the Sulphur Creek Trail which led to that creek from the junction of Bear Valley Creek and Elk Creek about two miles east of the station. It was along this trail that John Taylor vindicated himself as a marksman with his 44. You may remember the story from page 100. The trail crossed Bear Valley Creek and stayed on the west side of the middle fork of the Salmon River as it wound among hills and meadows leading back, eventually, to Boundary and then Sulphur Creek just north of Dagger Falls shown on the map of figure 3-1. We seldom saw another person along this trail, only wild life of various kinds. We had one favorite camping spot near a beaver pond about half way, i.e. good feed and good camp site and also another, a lesser favorite in a sense, on Sulphur Creek. We almost always managed to see and/or hear a few beaver at the first campsite slapping the water with their tales as they swam around the pond. We could also count on a mess of trout each evening from those ponds. The trees in the area, as well as the brush, displayed the

Figure 3-39 A fire started by lightning as seen from Poker Creek Meadow just to the east on the Sulphur Creek Trail.

beavers' handiwork as they built their dams and huts. I have several stories to tell of my exploits along this particular right of way. You see, our heading for Sulphur Creek was an annual pilgrimage. I'll title each as I go along and once again display my unusual talent for such undertakings. As you witness these unusual titles and the stories therein, you are sure to concede they were born of pure inspiration. On the other hand, you might phrase that more like pure desperation. However, in either case, there was no associated perspiration.

A FIRE IN A FIR TOO FAR

Ken and I, one Monday morning in June, left the station at Elk Creek with an assignment to clear the trail to Sulphur Creek. A rainstorm was threatening as we headed down the road. We crossed Bear Valley Creek and were working our way across Poker Creek meadow just below

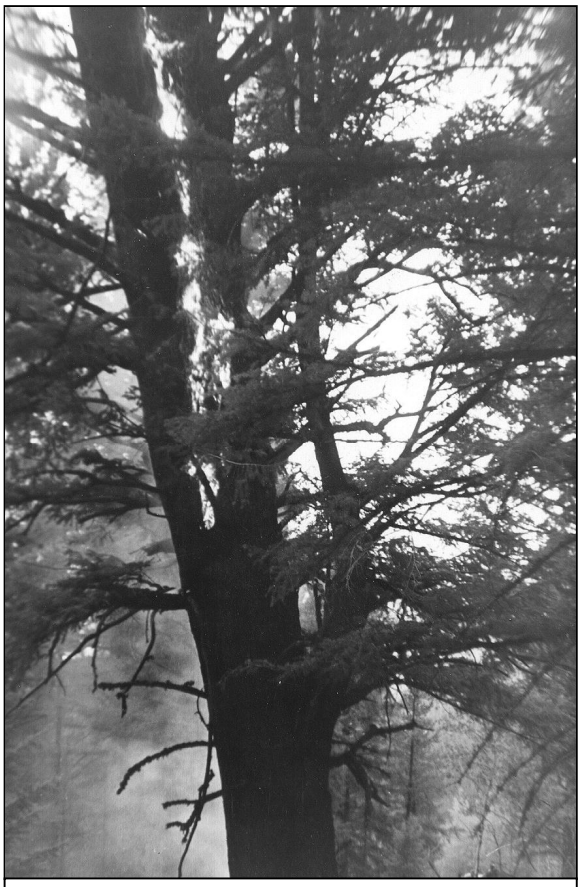

Figure 3-40 A close up of the fire as we arrived at the base of the tree.

the Bear Valley Mountain Lookout when the rain hit. There was a good deal of thunder and lightning associated with it but we rationalized, if lightening hit, it would be on the higher hills around us and not in the meadow. Thus we took to the cover of a good-sized tree nearby to wait out the rain. As we watched, the lightening seemed to be raking the nearby hills and directly, a real hot bolt caught a big fir tree up the hillside from the meadow we were in. It began to smoke rather profusely and we wavered between investigating it and ignoring it.

We watched it for a while not wanting to be detoured from our assignment, but the smoke persisted. In fact, it seemed to grow a little larger with time and after a while we realized we would have to take care of the fire before moving on. It could smolder for days and then break out afresh with warm weather and become a major fire.

It took about a half hour to make our way across the meadow and up the hillside to the tree. The photo of figure 3-39 shows the tree just after it was hit while a close up in figure 3-40 portrays the serious nature of the fire. I think you can tell the tree is a large one, which also proved to be a very large problem for us. If we could only get up in the tree where the fire was (about 30 feet off the ground), we felt sure we could easily put it out. We looked around for help, something to lean against the trunk, maybe a smaller dead tree or something else we could climb like a ladder but to no avail. It wasn't long until we accepted the inevitable, that is, our worst fears had come to pass; we would have to fall that big mama to get to the fire. Experience, even at our tender age, told us this job would be no small or easy task. It would take the best part of a day just to lay it on the ground and then an hour or so to clean things up. After that, we would have to stay with it through the night.

THE WORK BEGINS

We had a cross cut saw with us as always for trail work and so, with gusto, we began the effort which did prove to be an all day job. First a nice notch or undercut was made, so as to encourage that mammoth of mama nature to fall in the desired direction. Then, the real work would begin or that of sawing through the five and a half foot trunk. Ken and I were pretty well matched with a cross cut and neither had to struggle particularly. Such a cut goes rather rapidly at first because the saw (6 1/2ft.in length) can be drawn maybe four feet with each stroke. As you near the center, the pull is limited to a foot or less and it takes a plethora of such mini-strokes to deepen the cut even an inch or two. Progress seems to stand still. Of course, we

had no choice but to continue our cut, realizing that eventually it would speed up.

HELP ARRIVES

As luck would have it, Bob Olson arrived with a Pulaski and shovel a little later. A lookout had spotted the fire and Bob was dispatched to handle it all by his lonesome. We had a good laugh when he arrived and saw the problem; realizing he never would have been able to handle it with the equipment he had brought along. In fact, the tree probably would have burned down or fallen over from old age before he could have cut it down with his only cutting device, a Pulaski.

For the uninitiated, a Pulaski is a tool like an ax but instead of a blade on both sides of the head, one has an ax blade while the other a grubbing-hoe to dig trenches. Bob turned out to be a lot of help in that we spelled each other in regular turns and were able to keep the saw moving throughout the morning and afternoon. We had to cut at least two thirds of the way through before gravity reached up with its long sinewy arms and gave the necessary pull to bring it down to our level. What a relief that was.

I suppose we were about another hour cleaning out the fire from the crotch it had started in and being sure all coals were out. Bob said he would stay with it for a while and we could go about our business. Though the fire had decreased somewhat in severity by the time the tree fell, I doubt that it would have ever died without our aid. Had no one attended it, I suspect it would have smoldered a while and then broken out in real flames on some nice warm day. After finishing we moved on to our campsite on Dagger Creek because it was getting late and we were bone tired. Tomorrow would be another day we would work back on the trail to Poker Meadow and catch up with our assigned trail chores. Much of it was meadow requiring little work other than walking and swatting horse flies.

BLUE BUNCH MOUNTAIN

Figure 3-41 is a 1999 photo of Blue Bunch Mountain, which was on the northeast side of Poker Meadows. The grazing rights were leased out to sheep men in those days and one would often come across a sheep camp near its base. Old Buck, whom you met earlier in figure 3-18, knew this country by heart. Joe Ladle once described his efforts to find a U.S.F.S. watering trough for stock on the mountain. Not really knowing where it was, he simply rode Buck over to the general vicinity near its base and let him take the lead. Apparently, previous rangers had also visited the trough when in the vicinity and he took Joe right to it. I included this photo primarily because I always thought Blue Bunch Mountain was beautiful as it lies serenely above the meadow. How about you?

Figure 3-41 Blue Bunch Mountain as it now appears from the road paralleling the old Sulphur Creek Trail.

R RATED HORSE WRANGLING

Don't laugh at my grammar; this sub-title has meaning, which you'll more fully appreciate after reading about it. This particular incident may have taken place that same year or maybe a year in either direction. It resulted from those ornery critters', horses and mules that is, total lack of respect for us humanoids. Consequently, when working trail, one has to be ever aware of the tricks and devious schemes such beasts of burden use to locate some paradisiacal pasture beyond the reach of those who want to put them to work. Yes, they are looking for that "Garden of Eden" where the grass is lush, the hoss flies have flown and a faint breeze gently caresses their ornery hides.

Yes, they are looking for that "Garden of Eden" where the grass is lush, the hoss flies have flown and a faint breeze gently caresses their ornery hides.

At this point in my trail career I had little sympathy for them because their interests were

inevitably counter to mine. More than once I had suffered the embarrassment of reporting to Joe that I had spent a day chasing them down. That was bad enough but the accompanying effort meant hiking 5 or more miles to find them and then returning to camp to load up and continue on with our assignment. The reader will better understand some rather questionable actions on my part, which follow, when they consider my determination to prevent any such reoccurrence. The actions I speak of occurred early the next morning and resulted from an instinct for self-preservation. I may not be too bright but I do learn from experience and as you know, experience is the best teacher.

We had moved to the half-way point on our journey back to Sulphur Creek. Our campsite was located on Dagger Creek or, maybe I should say, a branch of it near some beaver ponds. It is shown in green in figure 3-1 near the upper right. The site was excellent in that there was a nice stream nearby, a roughly constructed table made from the surrounding timber, a fire pit, a pole strung between two trees to hang things on and, of course, good feed for the horses. What else did we need?

The temperatures were typical for June being 28 or 29 degrees as I slipped out of my sleeping bag with a shiver and ran over to Hi Pocketts to release him, clad only in my pajamas (a pair of jockey shorts that is).

A PEACEFUL EVENING

Ken and I, having traveled across meadows all that day, lush with grass and horse flies, were now somewhat bitten up and longed for a quiet, cool evening. As we unpacked, I hobbled the livestock and went about the evening duties, letting them graze in the upper meadow as illustrated in figure 3-42. That way I was able to stay between them and the trail back to Elk Creek Ranger Station. There was little chance they would cut through the woods to the lower meadow and if so, I had time to head them off.

The ringleader, Hi Pocketts, wore a bell, which gave a continual tinkle as they grazed contentedly up through the meadow. The cadence of that bell would give us a good idea of their whereabouts as well as what they were up to. Ken and I finished supper and sat around the campfire swapping stories and drinking coffee. After a hard day's work, caffeine had no effect on our ability to sleep. Nothing else did either, as a matter of fact, except maybe the fear of chasing those ornery cayuses the next day. We fixed that, of course, with a rope around Hi Pocketts' neck which, in the past, I had been sorely tempted to use for something other than securing him to a tree.

About 10:00, we wandered out with a few oats and a halter for Hi Pocketts. He came right to me, being addicted to oats, and was easily caught. Of course, the others followed him back to camp and grazed in the vicinity as we tied him up for the night. They would stay close by and were of no concern. If only Hi Pocketts were of a similar mind, all would have been well. I took his hobbles off and hit the sack.

MORNING BREAKS

The night was uneventful and as I awoke about 4:30 the sun was just beginning to color the sky in the east and wouldn't be near camp for another three hours or so. The meadows still glistened in the light of the fleeing moon with their coat of frost. The temperatures were typical for June being 28 or 29 degrees as I slipped out of the sleeping bag with a shiver and ran over to Hi Pocketts. I was clad only in my pajamas (a pair of jockey shorts, that is) when I released him. With the temperature as an incentive, I quickly hobbled him and then took off his halter so he could feed with the others until we finished breakfast. He would also feed along the trail so I wasn't worried, though he might have been. That morning ritual never took long and I suspect I was a little faster that particular morning. Soon I was back in the sack, snug as a bug in a rug.

I dozed off listening to the peaceful cadence of the bell, as the horses grazed not expecting to get up again until 6:00. That would give us the necessary time to fix breakfast, break camp and be on the trail by eight. It would be a full day in working our way back to Sulphur Creek. That camp is shown in figure 3-1, as well, just north of the Dagger Creek site.

PANIC SETS IN

About an hour later I came to with the realization that the bell cadence had changed. Yes, that ornery sucker, Hi Pocketts, was on the run. I sat up trying to determine just where he was and where he was heading. Soon I realized he was cutting through the woods from the upper meadow to the lower meadow as illustrated in the diagram of figure 3-42. The ornery devil was trying to outflank me. I knew he and the others would cut back to the trail after reaching the

lower meadow and head for good feed and a day of vacation. Ultimately they would end up at Elk Creek Station and I would have to retrieve them once again from my boss, Joe Ladle.

I'm not sure which caused the greater panic, walking back some 7 or 8 miles or facing Joe again. Like a bolt of lightning, I was out of that bag and running down the trail to head them off. I didn't even wake Ken who was snoring a few feet away. As I cleared the woods between the two necks of meadow I saw them coming on the run. Of course, the hobbles slowed them somewhat, which gave me a little help and the needed edge. They could manipulate their hobbles surprisingly well but, at that age, I could manipulate my feet surprisingly well, particularly

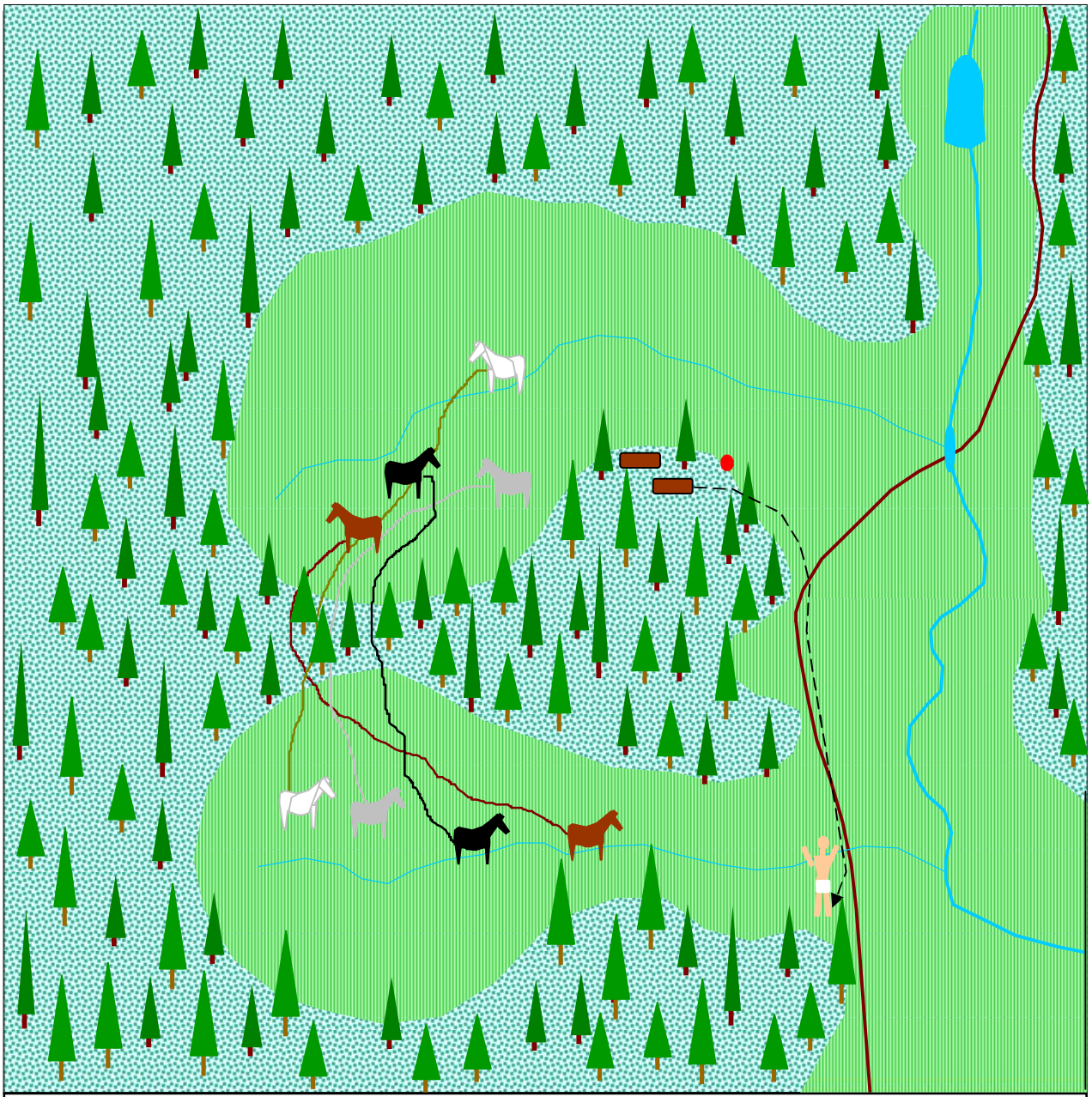

Figure 3-42 Our Dagger Creek campsite and the surrounding territory related to the so-called "Shorts Story" and my rather incredulous R rated horse wrangling with an accompanying legend.

LEGEND: Forested Areas **Meadows** **Ponds & Streams**
Trails **Fires** **Sleeping Bags**

when challenged or scared. This situation seemed to include both.

I positioned myself between the trail and the woods on the south side of the lower meadow and then began to wave my arms while yelling at them in a somewhat unfriendly manner, and in terms which would have made my mother wince. Realizing I didn't have a halter for Hi Pocketts with me I made my gestures as threatening as possible. If that sucker tried to bull doze me, I knew I was in a heap of trouble, even though he was hobbled.

Well, Hi Pocketts seemed to know he had been outsmarted as well as out maneuvered and started shuffling along the trail towards camp. I didn't trust him and brought up the rear still yelling, waving my arms and uttering a few well-deserved and endearing terms. Now, there was nothing to do but herd them back to camp and hope they wouldn't try an end run to get by me. Fortunately, they decided to cooperate and I soon had all four ambling along at a pretty good pace heading back along the trail towards camp.

FROST ON THE PUMPKIN

The sun was just beginning to strike parts of the meadow with the glistening frost giving a silvery sheen to the meadow. It was then that I began to realize I was a bit chilly, with only a pair of shorts on, trudging bare foot through the frosty grass, which stood six to twelve inches high. I hadn't had time to grab even a shirt, let alone a pair of boots. Of course, I was shivering like a polar bear suffering from mange as I rounded the corner with the horses into camp.

What in the world are you doing rounding up the horses in a costume like that? I'm not sure just what my retort was, but I doubt it was particularly civil.

Ken sat up and began to laugh. Here I was trudging through knee-deep frost covered grass-clad only in R rated attire, yelling some R rated words at Hi Pocketts, he being the ring leader. He said, "What in the world are you doing rounding up the horses in a costume like that"? I'm not sure just what my retort was, but I doubt it was particularly civil. I didn't think the situation was very funny and Hi Pocketts' antics had jolted me into the reality of needing to take care of my own interests. My only real consolation was that his ornery plan hadn't worked because I had out snookered him. Yes sir, I may not have been too bright but I had more horse sense than that good for nothing cayuse did. Anyhow, I quickly grabbed a halter, put it on Hi Pocketts in a less than friendly way and tied him up before jumping back in the sack to try to warm my toesies up a little. He could go without

Figure 3-43 Looking to the north from Boundary Creek ridge towards the junction of Sulphur Creek with the middle fork of the

breakfast as far as I was concerned. I'd fix my own a little later and let him stand there and watch me eat it. I'd relish every minute of it. He could go hungry and make do with nibbling along the trail. Even then he would get no tasty morsels like the top of a flowering weed whose name I can't recall. You know the kind with the large purple flowers and thorny leaves. I knew he thought of them like oats to which he was addicted. I would make the choices of his fare that day. Yes sir, he was in big trouble

MOVING ON TO SULPHUR CREEK

I have some trouble determining the chronological order of various events and in some cases difficulty remembering whether Ken and I or Harlan and I were involved. All the pictures I display were definitely taken by Ken or by his school buddy, Bob Schilleruff, but the various incidents occurring along the trail might have involved either Ken or Harlan. I guess that's O K though, because the reader will never know and I doubt that Ken or Harlan care. Of the seven years I spent in Bear Valley, I believe Harlan spent three years with me and Ken probably spent four. I mention that only because the next couple of stories fall in that particular category. Gee whiz, I'm lucky to remember the stories let alone the cast of characters and, by the way, I'm not making them up either. I suspect, compared to normal folk,

we were indeed "characters" regardless of who was my partner in crime. In either case we had a good time and enjoyed the work.

Before I get to the stories, which took place at the Sulphur Creek camp, let me take a little time to describe the trail leading back to Sulphur Creek. Considering fires, working trails and even chasing livestock, this trail was one I became intimately familiar with. As you will see later, I could even travel it (with a good horse) in the dead of night without a moon.

As a person leaves the Dagger Creek camp and heads towards Sulphur Creek, the trail winds up the side of a ridge separating Dagger Creek and Boundary Creek. There are some beautiful little springs along the trail and the water was really cold and refreshing. We carried canteens and drank a lot of water, filling up at every chance. The hiking and intermittent ax and/or saw work kept us sweating like pigs even though the temperature seldom broke 80. Once you gain the top of the ridge, the trail follows along it clear to the middle fork of the Salmon. The last couple of miles before the Salmon, the ridge drops steeply down into the canyon and constitutes a pretty good hurdle coming out. Just before the ridge drops off, you can see clear up to the junction of Sulphur Creek with the Salmon River. The atmosphere gets noticeably hotter and drier down in the canyon. I have included a picture (figure 3-43) taken by Ken in later years from the ridge just before descent. I believe you can detect that the timber isn't as thick as in earlier photos of Bear Valley.

As you get within a half mile of the river, or so, the trail forks with one branch going to the river and Dagger Creek Falls and the other heading north to Sulphur Creek. Of course, that's all changed now. The closest road at that time was in Bear Valley about 14 miles by trail. Now a road is built clear in to Dagger Falls. Anyhow, the distance from the trail fork to Sulphur Creek was about 2 miles by trail up and over a low ridge separating Boundary and Sulphur Creek. It was usually rather trouble free as far as trail work was concerned and once down the ridge, the day's work was about over. Only feeding our hungry bellies and taking a warm bath were left. We looked forward to the latter because of our yearly ritual in that natural hot spring.

NATURE'S BATH HOUSE

I suppose it was Harlan and I who made the trip back to Sulphur Creek the year of this particular story. We had made the usual stop at the Dagger Creek camp (about half way) and had worked our way on to Sulphur Creek the next day. The new cabin, which I describe as being located there and shown in figure 3-44, had not been started at this particular time. An old, ramshackle pioneer cabin with an adjacent bathhouse connected to it by a covered walkway occupied that particular space. When we arrived late in the day we would get supper out of the way while the horses grazed. We might also walk down by the Middle fork of the Salmon, which was only 50 yards away and fish a little or simply enjoy the scenery. About dark, we would grab a towel and soap and head for

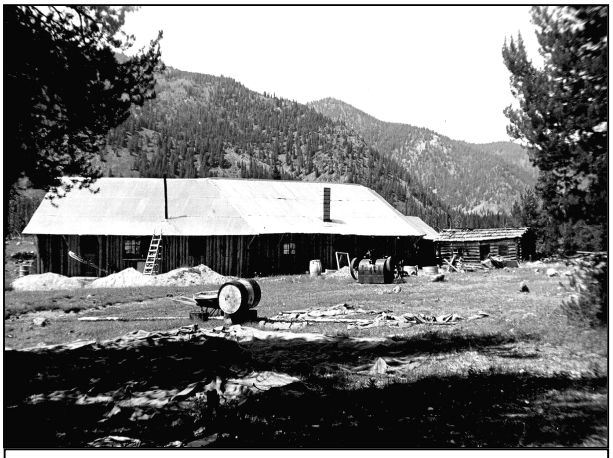

Figure 3-44 A new cabin replaced the old one with its bathhouse, which cost us our annual bathing privileges we had looked forward to.

the bathhouse for our only hot bath of the summer unless, of course, we managed to get to town. The bathhouse had a natural hot spring, which filled a pool 6 feet in diameter and maybe 3 feet or so deep. There were a few big rocks placed in the bottom of the pool to sit on and when doing so, the water would just reach my chin. I'm not sure of the water's temperature but it took time to get used to. We would place one foot in, then two. Next we would slide down into the pool in a standing position and finally manage to sit down on one of the rocks. After soaking for a half hour or so, we would get out, dry off and run and jump in the sack. Man, we slept like babies and struggled to get up come morning. We sure looked forward to this trip each summer or at least I did, because of this unusual bathhouse with its promising bath.

TEACHING A HORSE COOPERATION

One summer, prior to the new cabin being built, we arrived on site and found a packer with his

pack string camping there. We took our usual bath and retired to camp on the other side of the clearing quite a ways from him. About 6:00 AM, I was awakened to shuffling of hooves and his associated talk with various members of his string. I watched for a while as the packer finished up shoeing one horse and then started on a big old bay. Well, that bay wasn't one to cooperate and he started bucking, kicking and carrying on so the guy couldn't get anything done. Now the packer was just a little fellow maybe 5 foot tall and of slender build but he wasn't intimidated. He put up with it for a couple of minutes and then uttered a couple of unprintable expletives. He grabbed a rope, through a couple of loops around the bay's hind legs and in seconds had him on the ground flat on his back and hogtied. He then calmly prepared each back hoof and nailed on the shoes before letting him up. Back on his feet, the bay stood quietly apparently realizing he had met his match while that old cowhand took a break, lit a cigarette and then went about finishing with the front hooves.

It still amazes me how easily he took care of the situation by using that bay horse's own strength to throw his self. I mention this because of an incident we had at Elk Creek a year earlier while shoeing a mare of a similar nature. Joe Ladle wasn't completely without the knowledge of handling such ornery animals but, under his direction, it took three of us to throw her and complete a very similar operation. Boy that cowboy knew his business about shoeing horses and the means of controlling an uncooperative horse. Anyone half that good could have competed in the Olympics. He was a sure bet for a gold medal. I believe he could have done the same with a hippo, a rhinoceros or even a giraffe but he would have had to use a stepladder on the latter or should I say ladder? Then again, I might say he would have to use a step latter on the ladder. Now, I'm confused. Boy, did that cowboy make it look easy.

DAGGER CREEK FALLS

We often referred to these falls as salmon falls because we always saw salmon running them at the time of year we camped in the vicinity. Although various people fished there, we never did because work was our first order of business. If we had been lucky or good enough to land one, we couldn't eat it in one sitting and had no way of keeping the meat fresh. Every year we stopped there and watched as the salmon would vault into the air and try to negotiate their way upstream to spawn. The photo of figure 3-45 shows the falls and an

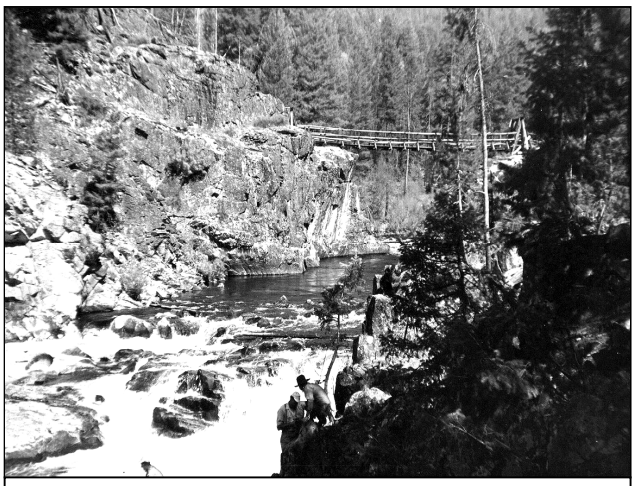

Figure 3-45 Dagger Creek Falls and the stock bridge on the middle fork of the Salmon (1950).

associated stock bridge just above which connected to a trail on the east side of the river. No salmon are visible in the picture but I'll guarantee you they were jumping that day. Bad shutter timing I guess. They couldn't make the whole distance in one leap and would usually land half way up on this side of the river and a

Figure 3-46 Middle Fork of the Salmon looking upstream from the stock bridge in 1950.

few minutes later make the second jump. With the falls cleared they were on their way to Bear Valley or maybe Marsh Creek, both of which were their spawning grounds. Actually, they often took multiple tries to make it, because we would see them fall back quite frequently. Of course, we were their cheering section but I doubt that they cared or even appreciated our supporting effort. By the time they got to Bear

Valley they were plumb tuckered out, not to mention the 50% weight loss.

Figure 3-46 is another photo of the middle fork taken from the stock bridge looking upstream. As you can see, there were no immediate obstacles, at least, between the salmon and their objective when they cleared the falls. This is the same stream that is so popular with river rafters. Several in our family have taken the trip down the middle fork by raft but not me. I believe they put in at Bear Valley Creek if I understood Larry Keithly correctly. That's a trip I'm sure I would enjoy.

DAGGER CREEK FALLS REVISITED

In July of 1999, Lethia and I decided to take the road back to the falls to see what we could see. I was looking for old memories and she was just interested in pretty scenery. It's only 10 miles by road to the falls whereas the distance was more like 14 by the old trail. As we wound our way back I was able to identify a few old landmarks along the way. Unfortunately, the road didn't come close to our Dagger Creek camp, not that it held fond memories or anything like that, but it would have been fun to see where the frost had nibbled on my toes that clear and frosty morning in late June.

We made no stops on the way in to the falls and consequently, were about 15 minutes getting there instead of all day as with pack animals. I was disappointed to come across the remains of a big fire near the falls. In fact we drove through several miles of old burn, which began as we approached Dagger Creek (downstream from our old camp) and continued on to the falls. However, right down by the river it was green and nice. In fact, from the gorge I couldn't tell there was an old burn in the vicinity. Anyhow, we ate lunch there and decided to move on to the Deadwood Reservoir to camp. That experience was a bummer and we ended up coming back to Dagger Falls that evening to camp. The two trips gave me plenty of opportunity to stop and revisit my memories of 50 years ago. We stayed two nights, loafing and relaxing during the intervening day. I snapped several pictures with a disposable camera, which turned out pretty good and included one of them here as figure 3-47 for comparison to the black and whites taken about 1950. Any criticism of the modern photos, other than content, must be aimed at the camera since it was completely automatic. Unfortunately, it couldn't eliminate the blue haze, which is obvious in the photo.

OUR 1999 CAMP

A new stock bridge had been built upstream from the original site and a fish ladder had been added bypassing the falls. The nice campground we stayed in was also new and we found our stay very pleasant. In fact bugs were at a minimum as well and I didn't even put up the screen shelter over our table as we often had to do. The following day was really nice. Lethia sat around and read while I poked around the area. I crossed the river on the new bridge, found the old bridge abutments or anchors, snapped some memory renewing pictures and generally had a good time. The evening was just as pleasant and we sat around after supper simply talking, watching the chipmunks and adsorbing the beauty of nature. The following morning we packed up and returned to Boise over Scott Mountain. In fact, we went up to the lookout on that peak which was quite an experience I'll recount later. Had I known what the road was like, I probably wouldn't have made the trip, which was a little nerve racking.

Figure 3-47 The new stock bridge crossing the Middle Fork of the Salmon River in 1999.

There was a small fire burning on the east side of the Middle Fork high on the mountainside, which produced a bluish haze in the canyon. You can recognize it in the photo, of figure 3-47 with a little examination. Lethia spotted it going into the falls and it was still burning when we came out. Being in the wilderness area, the forest service these days, just lets it burn itself out, as Old Mother Nature's way of controlling the dead timber. In this case there was no need

to worry because the hillside contained only scattered timber. It definitely wasn't going anywhere or be of any significance anyway.

Well, I suppose any incidents of interest on the Sulphur Creek Trail have been covered and quite probably some of no interest, too. We did have an interesting experience getting to and fighting a fire on the Boundary Creek - Sulphur Creek ridge but I'll reserve that for a special section regarding bigger forest fires.

SITE OF A HI POCKETTS' ESCAPADE

Similarly, this is the area where Smoky utilized his jet propulsion capability. I referred to the incident in describing John Taylor's nickname, you'll remember. At the time I figured him to be the probable leader of the band and tied him up during the night. However, Hi Pocketts was the real culprit and ran off leading the two pack animals with him. Harlan and I took old Smoky and chased them down near our Dagger Creek camp grazing contentedly. It didn't take long to round them up with a few oats, get the hobbles off and head back for camp. We returned to Sulphur Creek, spent the night, packed up camp and took off for Elk Creek a day late. We were in a somewhat ornery mood, knowing we would have to work twice as hard to catch up or explain the situation to Joe. Neither of these alternatives was particularly exciting as you might expect from previous stories. I hope, by now, the reader has a little compassion for grandpa rather than Hi Pocketts when considering his exploits with his motley gang. A patch over his eye would be a proper ID for the old pirate.

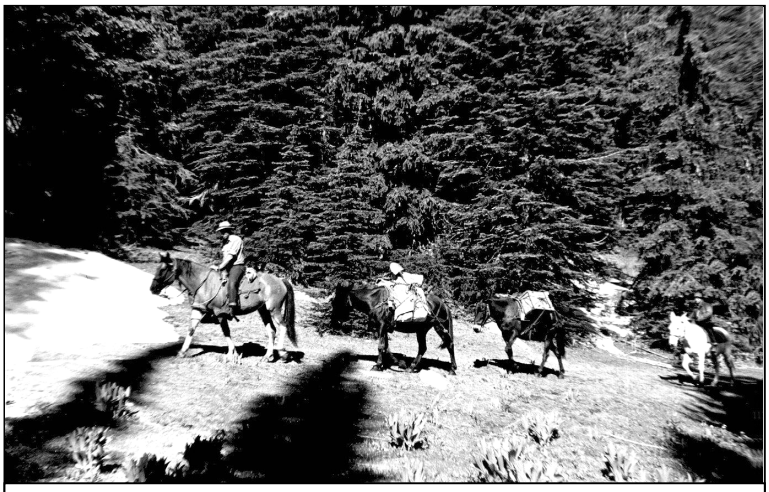

Figure 3-48 "Yours Truly" riding Patches and leading a pack string along the East Fork Trail north of Elk Creek Ranger Station with Bob Schilleruff riding Nig in the rear.

THE EAST FORK TRAIL

A couple of trail trips I particularly enjoyed were up the north fork of Elk Creek to Elk Meadows and then east to Mountain Meadows along what we termed the East Fork Trail. It followed the ridge between the east fork of Elk Creek and Sulphur Creek for some distance. In June the meadows were always beautiful even if they were full of mosquitoes. Wild flowers were everywhere and as you emerged from the woods into a meadow or maybe dropped down into one from a nearby ridge, the blaze of colors would impress even the least artistic of people. Every color of the rainbow was present, I believe, interspersed with the green of the meadow. It wasn't unusual to see elk grazing in the meadows and we were about the only people around at that particular time of year. It gave me a feeling of peace and comfort and could almost fool me into believing this beautiful landscape was all mine. Adam must have felt much the same way in the Garden of Eden. I loved being there and admit that I felt a peace and appreciation for God that I hadn't experienced anywhere else; including most of the churches we attended. I remember dad making a similar remark and I must say, my experience was certainly in harmony with his.

Every color of the rainbow was present, I believe, interspersed with the green of the meadow. …. It gave me a feeling of peace and comfort and could almost fool one into believing this beautiful landscape was all his.

Another similar trip was west from Corduroy Meadows along the Porter Creek Trail and then swinging back to Elk Meadows on what we termed the West Fork Trail. See the map of figure 3-1 if you care to orient yourself. The connection on today's map between the Porter Creek Trail and the West Fork is missing but I remember clearing such a trail, which wound along the ridge between the east fork of the Deadwood and the west fork of Elk Creek more than once. It dropped down on to the east fork of the Deadwood for some distance, I know, because I have a picture of myself with nothing but my imagination on. I was taking a bath in

the East Fork after a dusty day on the trail when Ken snapped the photo.

A TRIP WITH BOB SCHILLERUFF

That's enough of my musing. Let me describe another trip along the east fork trail this time with Ken and a friend from Oregon State College, Bob Schilleruff. He stayed with us a couple of weeks and took many of the pictures I have copies of. Ken took more in later years along the trail, which supply the rest.

This particular week we left the Elk Creek Ranger Station early one Monday morning and headed west on the road towards upper Deadwood G. S. The trail through Corduroy Meadows to Elk Meadows headed north just a couple of miles away. We hung a left on the Porter Creek Trail swinging past Crane Meadows and up past Bernard Peak. I suppose we camped the first night somewhere in the Crane Meadow vicinity though I don't remember.

In the next couple of days we worked our way from the Porter Creek Trail along the ridge to the West Fork of Elk Creek and back to Elk Meadows (See figure 3-1 if interested). From there we swung north to the East Fork Trail and then hung a right towards Mountain Meadows. That's a beautiful little meadow on the north side of Bear Valley Mountain, a peak we would have to climb over to return to Elk Creek Ranger Station. The climb out of Mountain Meadows was rather steep and slow going. I suppose it took a couple of hours to reach the road leading to the lookout but once on top it was all downhill along that road to the ranger station. The nicest thing about reaching that point each trip was the fact that a long week was now over and we looked forward to some well deserved rest and relaxation, including a cool bath in the creek.

BEES IN MY BONNET

At one point along the East Fork, we came upon a medium sized fir tree across the trail, which was still green. It looked as though it had been weighted down by snow and/or wind. I decided to cut the top off which would clear the trail. I hadn't much more than started with an ax before a swarm of bees came after me. Obviously I had disturbed their hive. Being stripped to the waist, I quickly put on my shirt while getting out of their way and then began to look for the nest. There it was about 15' away, which would have been maybe half way up the fir I was chopping on. It was no small wonder they were disturbed. I decided rather than trying to remove the nest, I would finish my job on the top of the tree in short spurts so as to keep away from those ornery critters. Ken and Bob kept themselves and the stock clear while I would run in, hit the tree a couple of wallops and get out before the swarm arrived. When things settled down I would repeat the process until finally the top fell off. Needless to say, I was happy to drag it out of the way and leave those bees the pleasure of doing whatever is necessary to be busy as a bee and thus preserve their hive.

ON THE TRAIL

We had three mules and two saddle horses along for the trip. I rode Patches, a little strawberry roan, while Ken rode Hi Pocketts. Bob was left with a mule for which we provided a saddle, using Old Nig as the mount. He never got excited and was just what the doctor ordered as far as Bob was concerned. He wasn't concerned about appearance but only wanted some transportation on a reliable mount. Old Nig fit that description to a "T". I think this may well have been Bob's first experience with horses or mules or so it seemed to me. Figure 3-48 illustrates a typical trail configuration for our beasts of burden. I'm leading the charge with Bob bringing up the rear. Ken was off to the side taking the picture. This would have taken place in the latter part of June in 1949 and, as you can see, there was still plenty of snow

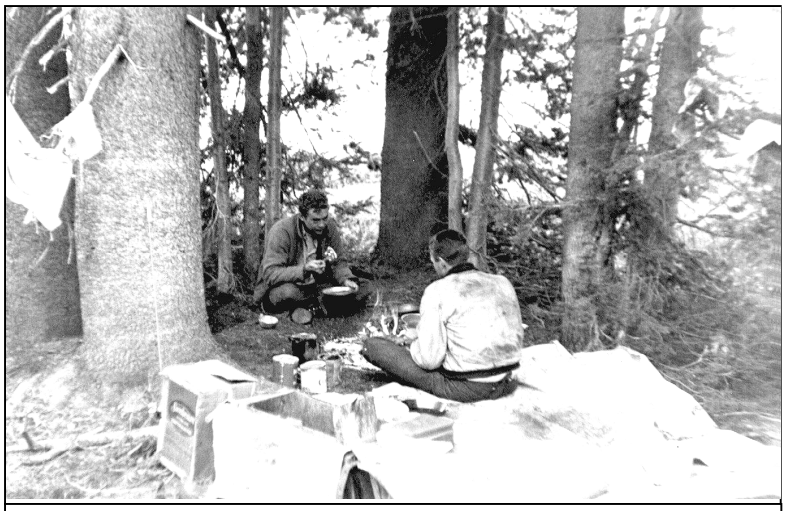

Figure 3-49 Ken and I enjoying a leisurely breakfast in our camp along the East Fork Trail of Elk Creek.

around. The temperature was probably in the 70's during the day but dropped to a comfortable 28 or 29 degrees at night. That made it easy to retire for a good night's sleep but somewhat harder to get up and get about the day's work. Of course, Ken and I were a little better adapted than was Bob who lived in Portland, I believe.

NATURE'S CHARMIN

You might note the rather broad leaf plants in the foreground of figure 3-48. That would be skunk cabbage in layman's terms and was very useful to the wandering prospector. You see, toilet tissue wasn't easily purchased in the wilds but you could rely on nature's substitute being somewhere around. You guessed it. That substitute is the leaves of "skunk cabbage, Mother Nature's gift to those in need". The leaf was rather durable, had a fuzzy underside and a shiny top with no apparent toxic effects. Although not on par with the many varieties in today's super markets, it was free and certainly beat going without. That's just another example of our genius for improvising with the products "Mother Nature" provides. Obviously, such action was frequently necessary when working trail in Bear Valley, which was some 50 miles from the nearest town, that being Cascade.

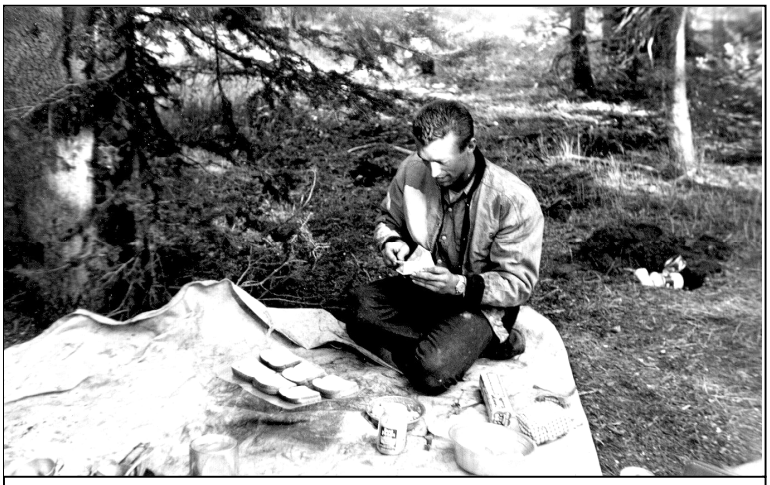

Figure 3-50 Yours Truly fixing lunch for the three of us prior to departure on the East Fork Trail of the Elk Creek.

You guessed it. Those leaves are "skunk cabbage, Mother Nature's gift to those in need".

A TYPICAL CAMP

The next two pictures were taken at a campsite along this same East Fork Trail. Figure 3-49 shows Ken and me stoking up for the day. You can tell the meal is breakfast if you look closely at that big chunk of pancake Ken is about to put in his mouth. The fire is burning brightly waiting for the dishwater, which will soon be needed. I don't suppose the facilities are quite like the Hilton but we were comfortable in our sheltered area. In the foreground is a grocery box, one of two that Louie packed for us (see figure 3-48). The tarps spread out on the ground, though a little soiled, kept food and dishes relatively clean at least by our standards, which may be questionable. The next picture, figure 3-50, illustrates a typical lunch preparation on the trail. That must be only part of it lying on the tarp because we always ate 3 to 4 sandwiches apiece as well as a few cookies and maybe an apple or an orange. In the background you can see our garbage pit, which had to be covered with dirt before we left.

ELK BY THE SCORE

After leaving camp that day we moved on to Mountain Meadows, our last stop before going over the mountain to home base. As we approached the meadow, we heard some rather strange noises, the origin of which we weren't sure about. Maybe it was a couple of coyotes but that didn't seem quite right. Just in case, Ken pulled out his 22-caliber rifle from the pack as we dropped down into the open. At first we saw nothing but then a cow elk stood up. Soon, few others appeared and then some calves. We rode out into the meadow towards them and soon elk were standing up all over the place. Maybe half were cows and half calves. There were no bulls around. The trail led right by the herd and as we progressed towards the other side of the meadow, we began to count. I don't know exactly how accurate we were but each of us counted between 120 and 130 cows and calves. The calves were making the strange sounds we heard and the whole bunch ran along as a group like a herd of cattle until we finally passed by them and headed up the trail towards Bear Valley Mountain. Although we frequently saw a few elk during our trail trips, I had never seen so many together at one time. The bulls, however, were noticeably absent biding their time in the woods until rutting season. After crossing the meadow, we headed over Bear Valley Mountain intersecting the road from the ranger station to that lookout. The rest of the trip was uneventful as we plodded down the hill

to Elk Creek and ended up at the tent we called home on schedule for the weekend.

CRANE MEADOWS / PORTER CREEK TRAIL

During my time in Bear Valley we worked the Porter Creek Trail and surrounding areas almost every year. One year we spent a little more than a week in Crane Meadows rerouting the trail around the meadow. Harlan and I had that particular job. We camped on the west side of the meadow in what I perceived to be an old sheepherder's camp. Besides various poles placed around for saddles and other items, there was a crude table and fire pit. There was also a tent area, which we didn't use.

Joe Ladle came out to camp the first day to show us what he wanted done. Basically, the trail through the meadow was almost unusable due to water and mud. The corduroy bridges covering the worst places were pretty well rotted out and needed replacement. There were also additional areas, which needed to be bridged. Rather than replace and/or add to them, he opted to reroute the trail around the meadow. That required a good deal of work including felling trees, blazing the trail and a little spadework to smooth certain areas out. This we did in about a week. We were up and at it by 8:00 AM every morning and worked until 5:00 or 6:00 each evening. We were camped at the foot of Bernard peak quite near Bernard Lake. We tried fishing the lake one evening with only moderate success. However, the beauty of the area was breathtaking, making the number of fish irrelevant. The lake sits in an old pocket below the peak formed by a glacier eons ago. In geologic terms, the pocket was termed a cirque, the point of origin of a glacier.

One morning a sheepherder dropped by on his way to Elk Creek and talked to us. It seems he had a herd of sheep up near the top of the ridge for the summer. He was trying to move them to a little different area when the leader actually ran over a cliff with a bunch more following him before the herder could get them stopped. He was really concerned because he now had to notify the owner. That's the first time I realized sheep were actually that dumb and would follow their leader blindly. It reminds me of a joke I heard somewhere in about that same era of time which goes something like this. "Why did the ram run over the cliff?" Answer: "He didn't see the ewe turn." You should laugh because that's one of my better jokes, so be warned! Others you may have to endure may be somewhat less intelligent, especially if they are original with grandpa. After all, what can you expect from an 80-year old brain, which has been decimated by too many aromatic octanes? Always keep this in mind as you consider the contents herein.

Figure 3-51 Ken and me, along the East Fork Trail, demonstrating the proper use of the crosscut saw.

HAVING ONE'S BELL RUNG

On another trip along the Porter Creek Trail I was walking and carrying an ax while Harlan was riding and clearing overhead limbs that might brush a rider. We were in an area of mostly lodge-pole pines, which were fairly tall but seldom got more than a foot in diameter. We came across one, maybe six inches through, which was neatly blocking the trail. Unfortunately, the top had lodged in the crotch of another pine and the fallen one made about a 45-degree angle with the ground as it crossed the trail. Being as small as it was, I decided to move the butt end across the trail rather than trying to chop or saw the thing. Harlan warned me to watch the top end in case it slipped out of the crotch and the whole thing come crashing down. This I did as I picked up the butt and moved it a couple feet at a time. All at once it slipped out of the crotch and I dropped the butt and sprang away from it a few feet. When the top hit the ground, however, the whole tree was like a spring and jumped into the air several feet.

Even though I was anticipating the event, I didn't move fast enough or far enough and the butt gave me a glancing blow across the head. I went down like I was shot, out cold for about 30 seconds according to Harlan. Other than a bump on the head, I was no worse for the wear and after a few minutes we continued on our way. I suppose you might argue that some damage had been done as reflected in my various antics in life but that's only your opinion. Though my bell had been rung, I was ready for another round. I must admit, however, that I approached such situations a little more cautiously after that. During the visit of Bob Schilleruff in the summer of 1949 we worked this same trail. Bob managed to take a shot of Ken and I demonstrating our prowess with the crosscut saw as seen in figure 3-51.

SPOOK

Ken and I had worked through that same area one year and had finally reached the road south of Corduroy Meadows. Because I was leading the pack animals, he decided to ride on in to Elk Creek ahead of me. That was O K with me because it was only another couple of miles. At that time we had Old Louis and a younger mule whose name escapes me. We only had him one summer. He was spooky and we had to be constantly on guard in case something scared him. We weren't sure just what he might do. Other than that He was a perfectly good pack animal. Well, I'm not sure what got into Ken after he left me. He put his horse up and then got on his motorcycle, which you may remember had a flared tail pipe. That flared tail pipe enhanced the back firing making it sound more like a cannon or at least a large caliber rifle. As I recount somewhere, he had that done in Boise for that very purpose.

Figure 3-52 Yours Truly fitting shoes on a rather picky and impatient customer who has little sense of style.

For some odd reason he decided to come and meet me, I suppose to ride back with us. As he came within sight of the pack string on the road, he cut back on the throttle and the action began. That young mule that I'll refer to as Spook, heard the backfire and began bucking and running as though he had a bee under his saddle. I couldn't hold him back and had to cut his lead rope loose from Louis. He took off across the meadow bucking like a number 1 rodeo bronco and the pack soon came loose. Luckily he was carrying the tent, bedrolls and other such supplies. None were really breakable and they survived his little display. With the saddle under his belly and a few items dragging the ground, he finally slowed down and I was able to catch him and calm him a little.

Ken shut the cycle down and helped me repack him. He was a little sheepish regarding his decision to come meet me. Though perfectly innocent, he should have anticipated the results having spent the week with the Spook and witnessed some of his reactions to other surprises. After assuring me he would keep things quiet, he went on ahead to the station while I followed leading Louis and the Spook back to the barn. There I gave a sigh of relief as I unpacked Spook and put him out to pasture. Now he could buck all he wanted.

WAITING FOR THE FIRE CALL

Usually after the first week of July our time was spent near a station where we could be reached to answer a fire call. Mostly we did maintenance work around Elk Creek but occasionally we might go to Big Meadows or the Deadwood stations as I indicated earlier. We did whatever was required which ran from painting to building fences or cutting firewood. In early June we would shoe the horses but that had to be completed before trail work could be started and wasn't part of the normal summer ritual. I mention the latter because of a picture I need to include which illustrates my talents as a shoe salesman. In the picture displayed in figure 3-52 you see Ken, old Nig saddled up for Bob, Patches to my left and me hard at work on Hi Pocketts, Ken's scheduled mount.

Now I don't fancy myself as a farrier or any kind of an expert when it comes to shoeing horses but I did learn the essentials providing the horse would cooperate. Horses in the employ of the USFS were not only old and gentle, by and large, but had a no never mind attitude when it came to getting new shoes each spring. They were patient and usually cooperated fully. Front hoofs were easy because the horse had better balance and didn't rest his weight on you. Back hooves took more care to keep the animal from jerking his hoof or simply shifting his weight and moving in the process. Either could cause a slip of the hoof from the farrier's hand.

In preparing the hoof, we cut off the ragged peaks or protrusions with a knife, clean out the center of the hoof freeing it of rocks, twigs, manure, etc. and then file the surface, on which the shoe is to be mounted, flat with a rasp. After

It was then quickly bent over so that if the hoof were jerked from your hand, it wouldn't take a chunk of flesh with it.

picking the right size shoe, the farrier places it on the prepared surface and nails it to the hoof. As he pounds in each nail, such that it comes out the side of the hoof about half way up, he quickly bends the nail over so that if the hoof is jerked from your hand, it wouldn't take a chunk of flesh with it. After getting all the nails tightly in place the protruding end of each nail is clipped off with a pair of cutters, something like wire cutters but with cutting edges perpendicular to the handles. With that completed, the folded ends of the protruding nails are hammered down flush with the hoof so the nail won't work loose too easily. After all, you don't want to repeat the job any more than you have to. It would appear in the picture I was pulling a nail, which didn't seat properly or for some other such reason. Though not expert, our work must have been acceptable in that we seldom had to replace a shoe once the initial work was done.

You might notice the cavalry saddles, a standard issue for the USFS. Anyone wanting a decent saddle had to bring his own. The Lower Deadwood guard often did that, having horses of his own at his regular place of residence.

SALMON STORIES

On weekends we would usually spend part of the day down at Bear Valley Creek swimming or just taking our weekly bath. In general the water was shallow, from six inches to a foot but it wound like a snake through the meadow and would get 4 to 5 feet deep in the bends and even over our heads in some cases. This was

Figure 3-53 Bob Olson with his prize salmon of 43" and weighing 25 lbs.

salmon spawning country and they would be hiding in all the deeper holes. When we approached the bank, I suppose they sensed our presence and would lay motionless, heads

Figure 3-54 Bob Olson & his wife on a sunny day at Elk Creek Ranger Station.

under the bank, waiting for us to move on. Generally they were right but not always because we were looking for some fun.

A SALMON TALE (TAIL)

One day Harlan and I decided to see if we could catch a salmon with our hands. After all they were plumb worn out by the trip up the Salmon River and after spawning were simply waiting to die. Our plan was simple. What else would you expect from a couple of simpletons? One of us could stand on the bank spotting one or more fish and the other would enter the water nearby. It was hard for the person in the water to see the fish, so the spotter would guide the fisher to his prey. The latter would walk slowly up to the salmon in maybe 4' of water and straddle him. They wouldn't move unless we made a sudden move. When well in place we would slowly move both hands down towards the salmon's tail and then grab it. It was hard to get a solid hold on one but if one of us did, what a whiplashing we would get. Salmon, waiting to die, suddenly seemed to come to life and we never were quite able to hang on to the suckers. When the whipping motion began, what a time we had and what fun it was to try. From those experiences, I gained an idea of their strength at falls by Dagger Creek. Anything that strong near death must have tremendous energy in their prime.

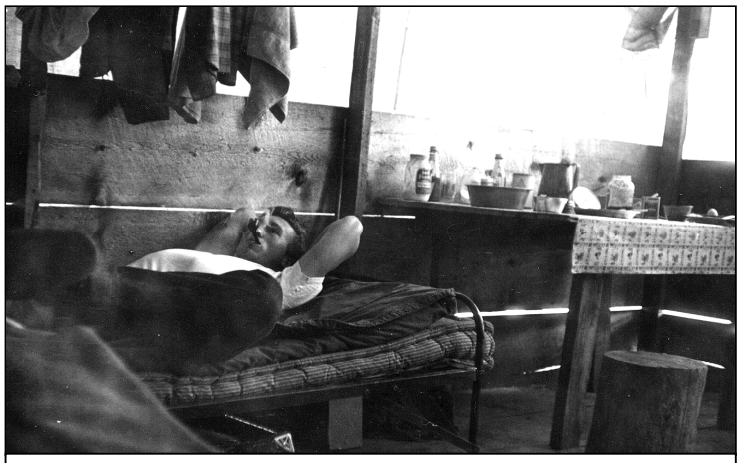

Figure 3-55 Yours Truly relaxing in the plush Bear Valley motel provided by the good old U.S.F.S.

SPEARING SALMON

One day we were crossing Bear Valley Creek just a little south of its junction with Elk Creek. There was a trail leading there from the ranger station. At that point there was a little footbridge across the creek made from a log and it left little room for the salmon to get underneath. We tried our luck there as well, grabbing them by the tail as they struggled to get by the log. Again there was no success. Just south of the bridge, however, was a long riffle of at least a hundred yards. As they made their way up stream their backs were out of the water. Even so they made surprisingly good time. Harlan remarked, "Let's spear a couple and take them to eat".

We didn't have anything really adequate for spears, so we cut a couple of small trees and sharpened the ends after cleaning off the limbs. We left on our boots but rolled up our pant legs so as to stay as dry as possible. The boots were necessary because the bottom of the creek was rocky and we needed foot protection. Harlan went to the top of the riffle and I stayed at the bottom waiting.

As one passed me, I tried to spear him but the wood was too soft and the tip wouldn't penetrate. I chased him half way and Harlan took over. He had no luck as well but did turn him back towards me. We kept after him and finally he stopped lifeless alongside the stream. We had beaten him to death. Well, we got another the same way and decided that was enough. What a time we had yelling and chasing them up and down the stream. It took a full hour to catch two and we were plumb tuckered out when the last one keeled over.

To make a long story a little shorter, after cleaning them we took them back to our tent with the full intention of eating them. You see, meat was a rarity in Bear Valley except for canned Spam or maybe a little bacon. There we filleted them and fried some for supper. Would you believe, they tasted terrible? I'm not sure whether we bruised them too much as we beat them to death or whether they were in too bad a shape from spawning when we managed to get them. In any case, we tossed them out and that was the end of our salmon fishing expeditions.

A SALMON'S WEIGHT CONTROL SYSTEM

Just to give you a feeling for the size of fish we were dealing with, I included a picture of a salmon caught by Bob Olson (figure 3-53), just a ways downstream from where we had fished. Some fish, huh, 25 pounds and 43 inches long. Figure 3-54 pictures Bob and his wife in a relaxed state by their old pickup while in figure 3-55 I am thinking about what I just ate and trying to shake its effect through my manly pipe.

I have been told the same fish would weigh 45 to 50 pounds if you caught it near the mouth of the Columbia. What a weight loss regimen.

Just swim up the Columbia to the Salmon River and on up to the spawning grounds in Bear Valley clearing falls, rapids and dams along the way and you are guaranteed to lose half your weight. There must be a way to market such a program among those engaged in building beautiful bodies. We might call it **"Fishaerobics, Nature's Way of Guaranteed Weight Loss".** Our motto would naturally be "*Full speed ahead, we're heading home; high in the Rockies, no more to roam. Swim the rapids, clear the falls, 'tis more effective than walking malls. Of course as salmon, so must we, refrain from food on our swimming spree*". Such a marketing effort would probably be as successful as some of my other brainy ideas.

A CAKE, LET'S BAKE A CAKE

Being rather normal young men (questionable), we woke up one Saturday with a hankering for a nice cake complete with frosting. Not having ever tried such a project before, we opted to read the directions rather than seek counsel from one of the wives living at the station. We mixed the batter and baked the same according to the directions on the box. The result was two beautiful layers of chocolate cake.

"Full speed ahead, we're heading home; high in the Rockies, no more to roam. Swim the rapids, clear the falls, 'tis more effective than walking malls. Of course as salmon, so must we, refrain from food on our swimming spree".

Pleased with our success up to that point, we decided to frost it. After all, it would be much tastier. In those days, frosting in a can didn't exist, so we simply used our ingenuity and proceeded to mix up some powdered sugar with a little canned milk. We whipped it into a nice smooth frosting and agreed it appeared to be about the right consistency. I took on the chore of putting the frosting on the two layers. I didn't bother to frost the top of the bottom layer but simply stacked the layers one on top the other and began my project. At first, things seemed to be going fine but as I got to the edges of the cake, a fissure suddenly occurred right through the side of our masterpiece. An earthquake had transformed it into a mirth-cake. I tried to reassemble it and hold the pieces together with the frosting but to no avail. The more frosting I put on the more fissures that appeared. Finally I gave up but Ken took a picture of the thing as seen in figure 3-56. The only consolation was the taste. Man it was good and we managed to eat the whole thing that evening. Of course, in those days almost anything edible tasted good to both Ken and me. I don't believe we even tried to slice it as such effort would be a waste of time. Looks and proper etiquette were hardly important. Only filling our bellies was of any real value.

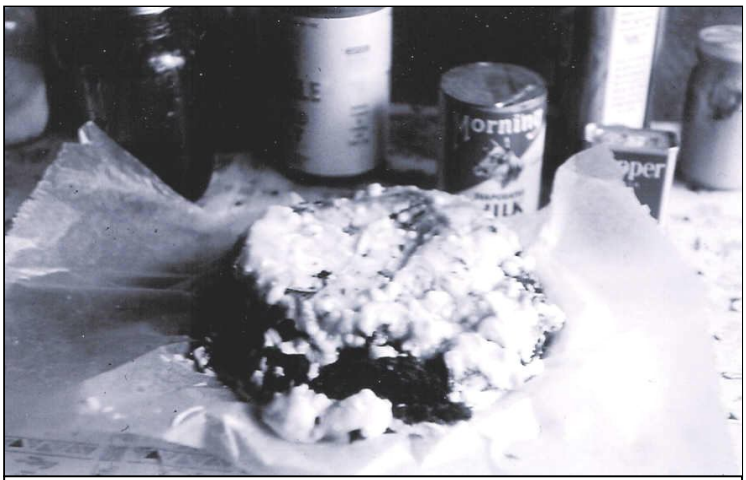

Figure 3-56 A cake beyond compare or is that beyond repair. The cake was too light & the frosting too heavy.

SMOKE CHASING AND BUSY WORK

There was always plenty of maintenance work to do as we waited around for a fire call. Most of it wasn't too bad and consisted primarily of just good hard labor like building fences, painting buildings, cutting wood and even digging a pit for an occasional out house.

THE FIRE CALL

Of course we looked forward to a fire call mostly because it gave an air of excitement to the day. We would have to consult a map, see how far we could drive and then figure out the best hiking route into it. Virtually every blaze was a result of lightening and was consequently situated near the top of some ridge or peak. It wasn't unusual to hike 4 or 5 miles from our drop off to the fire. As soon as we ascertained the route we would grab a fire pack (prepared ahead of time) along with a jacket, canteen, shovel and Pulaski and head out to our drop off point.

A fire pack normally had 2 days rations in it, which would get you through a typical fire

originated by lightening. The food consisted of so called C-rations although K rations were also available. I hated the latter but sometimes took one along anyway. Remember, I was 17 or so and ate like a horse. There's no way a day's rations would do me for 24 hours, particularly if I was working hard and/or hiking. They were more like a meal and I had to decide how many days' rations I was willing to pack. The C-rations were heavy consisting of various canned foods. I could have all I wanted but I also had to pack them to the fire location.

Decisions, decisions, should I grunt and groan up the mountain with 4 or 5 days worth of rations or take two and basically go hungry? I usually compromised and took 3 with maybe a K-ration thrown in. I became quite selective about what I ate first beginning with the good stuff and leaving such things as Spam and k-rations until last. On a short trip, 2 days, I might eat only the better stuff. If the fire drug out to 3 or more days, I ate everything, including almost, the packaging. I learned that if you fry spam on a shovel, it wasn't too bad and I figured out other ways of making certain items more palatable. The rule was to stay 24 hours after the last observable smoke, which came about from too many blazes reoccurring after they were supposedly out. These last hours were by far the most miserable because of food shortage, cold nights and boredom. Even though we looked forward to chasing a smoke, so to speak, we were ready to leave when those 24 hours were up. Yes sir, when the fire was out the fun was over. There was no longer a way to warm the Spam or ones hide. It took all of 3 minutes to survey the typical fire for signs of smoke and the view, though often beautiful became old hat.

WAITING TIME

The preceding paragraph provides a brief description of our purpose in spending the summer at Elk Creek ranger station. Unfortunately, most of our time was spent just waiting for that purpose to occur. When not chasing smoke, we prepared equipment and supplies for that event and engaged in various types of maintenance work around the station or where we could easily be reached. In off duty hours we would play horseshoes, read or maybe swim, as I described earlier in Bear Valley Creek. Sometimes we would play hearts in the evenings with the Olsens or maybe just sit around and chew the fat. I have included a picture of Bob and his wife as well as one of myself relaxing in our humble abode. See figures 3-54 and 3-55.

The latter photo, demonstrates the immaculate care we took of our little home as well as the rather extravagant furnishings we were blessed with. You will, of course, note the pipe with real smoke drifting off into the air. That picture was taken in about 1949, probably, and demonstrates my Joe college image. Actually, I smoked little and never developed a taste for it. In fact, I rather despised it. Consequently, after graduation from college my need for keeping up such an image seemed to disappear and I never had a need to smoke again.

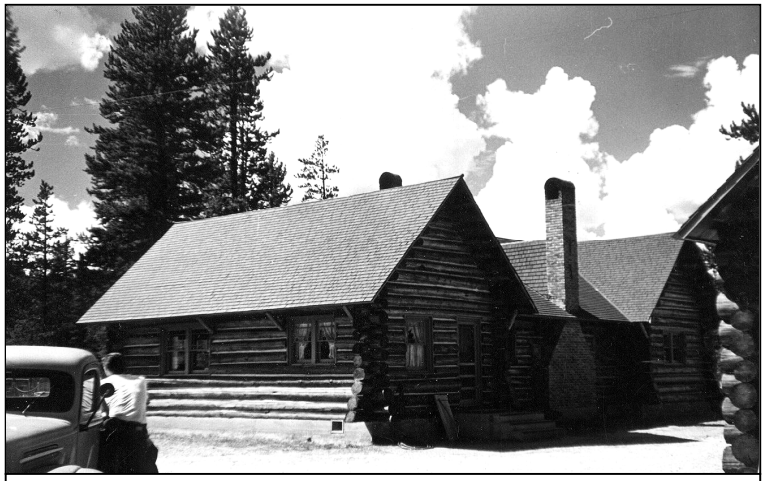

Figure 3-57 My backside by Bob's pickup sitting by the garage on the backside of the Elk Creek Ranger Station.

CUTTING FIREWOOD.

I already talked about cutting firewood at the Big Meadows Guard Station. That occurred once there but at least 2 or 3 times at Elk Creek. Obviously much more wood was consumed at the ranger station than at any other location. Usually we would search the neighboring ridges and forested areas for standing dead timber. During that time it was rather plentiful because the bark beetle had been through Bear Valley as well as Deadwood. We might spend several days cutting down such timber, knocking off the necessary limbs and snaking it in with a mule. If we spotted sound timber on the ground we would also use it but often it was in the process of rotting. Once we had developed a stack of logs maybe 6 feet high by 8 or 10 feet wide we

shut down that operation and began cutting up the trees, which were typically 30 to 40 feet long. Most would be less than a foot in diameter and such logs could be handled reasonably well by two men.

Cutting the firewood was a three-man job as I explained earlier. Two people, the actual sawyer and another would manhandle the log and another would hold the block being cut off. As it came loose, he would toss it in a pile a little ways away to keep it clear of the operation. The spinning blade made short work of a cut and the moving of the log and piling of the blocks moved along at a rather rapid pace, in fact at a pace the crew decided on. We worked hard, were stripped to the waist and usually sweating rather profusely. We consumed gallons of water but hardly ever had to visit the john. All excess simply came out through the pores. We discussed safety as related to the spinning saw but one misstep could have resulted in a serious accident. No safe guards, such as OSHA requires were in place. Eight hours of such work made a good day and contributed to a ravenous appetite. Such was great exercise for a young man. Figure 3-57 is a shot taken from the rear of the station. To the right is the edge of a garage and to the left Bob's pickup with yours truly leaning against the bed, talking, I suppose, to the Olsens.

BUILDING FENCE

Building a fence was another operation that was long on labor and required little skill other than using an ax and a saw properly. We did such work to some degree at Upper Deadwood, Big Meadows and Elk Creek. They might be pole or so called rail fences or the old pioneer type requiring no posts. I described the rail fence earlier where we carried out such an operation at Upper Deadwood. Here, I'll just concentrate on the old pioneer variety, which was more useful and durable as opposed to being decorative. There was also more heavy work involved.

ART WORK

I have included a little artwork to help you appreciate these latter fences. See figure 3-58. Maybe I shouldn't describe it as artwork. That stretches the imagination a little too much. So let's just say an engineering illustration. Such terminology signifies no particular beauty or quality but does insinuate essential characteristics are illustrated. Unfortunately, it's not really much of an engineering illustration after all because, you see, my little diagram doesn't show the necessary notches between logs. I guess you'll just have to imagine the bottom one has been notched at the point of contact between the logs to provide a cradle and thus help secure or stabilize the top one. You can probably imagine a prettier one than I can draw. If not, your imagination is worse than my art, a rather shameful situation.

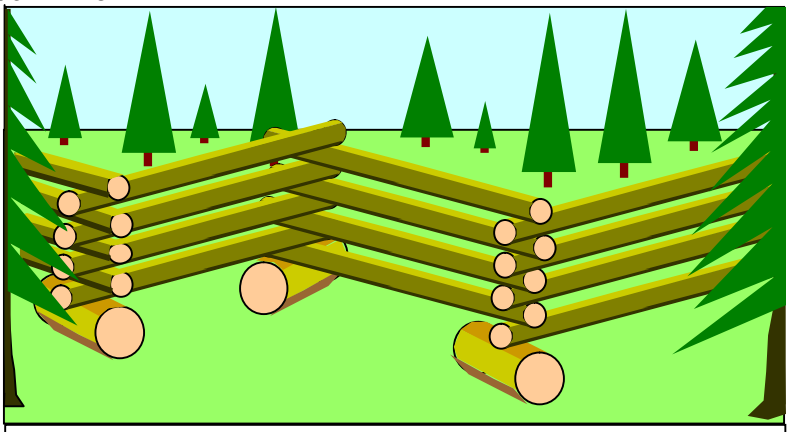

Figure 3-58 An engineering illustration of an old pioneer fence with logs as rails and blocks as bases or dead men.

MATERIALS AND DESIGN

We used green timber for the fences because it would last longer before rot set in; thus lengthening the time before the job had to be redone. As you can see from the illustration, the base of the fence consisted of short pieces of rather large logs, probably two feet or so in length. These were staggered on either side of an imaginary line representing the fence line. Logs cut to length crisscrossed the line resting on the base blocks or so called dead-men. The crisscross configuration provided the necessary stability and the blocks held the logs up off the ground minimizing their rate of deterioration through the inevitable rot that would set in. The distance of the dead-men or base logs from the imaginary fence line set the interior angle between succeeding fence sections. Obviously sufficient width of the overall fence configuration was necessary for proper stability but, the smaller the interior angle between fence sections, the less effective length they provided parallel to the imaginary fence line. For example, an interior angle of 90 degrees would

provide 70% of the fence sections length to the total fence length whereas an angle of 120 degrees would yield 87% and still provide sufficient stability.

BUILDING THE FENCE

A typical log was cut from the trunk of a tree six inches to a foot in diameter. The logs were cut in approximately 15' lengths, an established section length. Bigger trees might provide two or even three rails but many of the lodge-pole pines around the station were only tall enough to give us one. We would spend several days falling suitable trees and cleaning off the limbs. With a goodly supply ready we would snake them into position with our trusty mule, old Louis. Then we would usually start assembling the fence. Naturally the bigger logs were used as the bottom rail (less lifting & better stability) with the smaller diameter ones placed on top. The base block or the log upon which a new rail was to be laid was notched to hold the log in place. No wire, rope or nails were used. Only the notch and the weight of the log kept each piece in place, providing the necessary stability to withstand animals and weather.

Occasionally the smaller logs would get knocked off by a rambunctious horse and would have to be replaced but, in general, the fence required very little maintenance and lasted for several years. Building such a fence was hot and even dusty work including the skidding of logs, falling trees, lifting each timber into place, etc. but I must admit I enjoyed it and never thought of complaining. It was a good job for a young man in his teens. We replaced a lot of that type of fence in the years I worked in Bear Valley but none of it twice. I feel sure the life of such a fence in that country would be 15 years or so, at least when built of green timber.

Figure 3-59 Bear Valley Mountain Lookout living quarters just north of Elk Creek Ranger Station.

PAINTING THE FACILITIES

Joe Ladle liked nice looking stations and especially his ranger station. We did some painting there every year, I believe, and at the guard stations about every three years. All the buildings were of logs and a mixture of linseed oil and shellac was use to preserve them. I think it was about a 20:1 ratio of oil to shellac. Anyway, it went on easy and really made the logs shine. Window frames were painted white and, of course, the work was somewhat tedious. We also painted the roofs a rather bright green, would you believe. That work could be a little risky if you didn't take the proper precautions. You can imagine that the wet paint was slick as goose grease and if an unwary worker stepped in an area already painted; his feet were apt to go out from under him.

To prevent ourselves from sliding off the roof, a definite possibility, we each wore a safety belt attached to a rope, which in turn was tied securely over the roof on the other side. There was just enough slack in the rope to allow us to reach the lower edge of the roof but not enough to let us slide over the edge. We used a brush kind of like a small push broom and dipped it in a five-gallon bucket perched near the crest. More than once I had a wild ride, as I stepped in wet paint. Out my feet would go from under me. I would land on my tail and down the roof I would go like a roller coaster, coming to an abrupt stop right at the edge of the roof. What a thrill. Even though I knew the rope was in place and was short enough to stop my slide, I would prepare to land on my feet, like a cat I guess. Well, that wasn't really a bad job but it was, probably, one of my least favorite ones. Only the creosote work was less endearing to my youthful heart in those days.

ODDS AND ENDS

We would spend some time cleaning local campgrounds and maybe putting in a new outhouse. The latter could be quite a job because we did it with shovels and the hole had to be about six to eight feet deep as I explained in our Big Meadows tasks. Near the bottom it was difficult to manipulate the shovel and it seemed half the dirt fell back in. Such a job took a couple of days if the digging was easy and my memory serves me correctly. That wasn't too bad, however, because such work was B.O. (before occupancy) with no hint of the fragrance,

which would later abound. Later such little back woods cabins became known as comfort stations, which solace they did, indeed, provide for those in need. Even today, that's a politically correct and practical nomenclature.

BEAR VALLEY MOUNTAIN LOOKOUT

One summer we did a bunch of work at Bear Valley Mountain, a lookout about five miles due north of us. It was never manned while I was there but the road was opened each summer and necessary repairs were made. I'm including several pictures of the view from the tower to provide a better idea of the countryside making up the territory we worked trail in, as well as chased smoke and a myriad of other things. The lookout was established in the days of the CCC or Civilian Conservation Corp. They built the lookout, the road to it and most of the other lookouts as well. Of the many lookouts built, only a few continued to be manned. Bear Valley Mountain was strategically located but too low to be effective without a tower. The fire tower stood above the timber giving a 360^{o} view. A cabin nearby provided the necessary living quarters for the lookout. Figure 3-59 shows the cabin and 3-60 the tower. Of course an individual had to be in the tower from sunup to sundown when the station was manned. If a couple manned such a lookout, I suspect one or the other would have spent the daylight hours in the tower while the other relaxed.

Because the tower provided a view of so much of the territory we worked in, we snapped pictures from it in all four directions. I'll briefly review them to give the reader a little perspective of trail trips. Consider figure 3-61 first. It was taken looking south or back towards the ranger station from the lookout. Elk Creek drainage would be through the meadow in the picture while Bear Valley Creek would lie just over the first group of hills beyond the meadow. The confluence of the two streams lies just to the left of the picture and the resultant creek is still called Bear valley Creek. It merges with the Marsh Creek, a rather large stream flowing in from the east, just a little further downstream. The two form the middle fork of the Salmon, marking the eastern edge of our district as well as that of the Boise National Forest.

Figure 3-62 was snapped looking east towards the middle fork. In the lower left part of the photo would be the location of fire #5 which I described on page 113 or there about. The middle fork should be between the two ridges beyond the meadow and our Dagger Creek camp to the left center. Figure 3-63 looks towards the north edge of the Elk Creek District

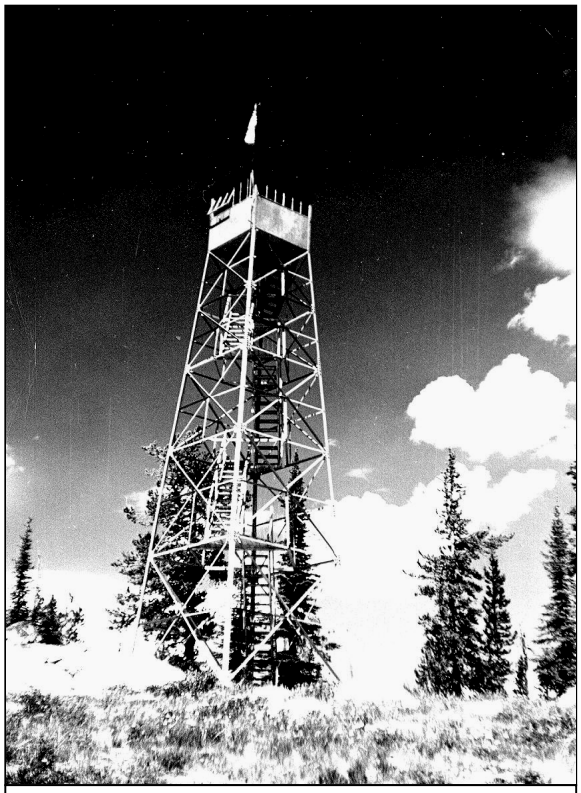

Figure 3-60 Fire Tower for Bear Valley Mountain Lookout north of Elk Creek.

and encompasses many of the experiences I related earlier. Photos of our camp and pack string moving along the trail in figures 3-49 through 3-51 would be somewhere out there but your guess is as good as mine as to just where.

Mountain Meadows with the elk herd can't be seen but is nestled somewhere to the north. That could be a glimpse of it to the left center of the photo. Finally; looking to the west we see in figure 3-64 a shot of Elk Meadows and probably Crane Meadows. The latter would be the relatively small meadow to the middle left of the picture.

Maybe the overriding features of all these photos are the abundance of trees and meadows. A great many of our trails would drop down a ridge into some beautiful little or big meadow, which as mentioned earlier, were covered with wild flowers in June. The beauty is hard to describe and the peace and solitude was payment I could get in no other way. Admittedly there were plenty of mosquitoes and horse flies. However, I learned to take them in stride and

only thought of them as an inconvenience. In fact we sometimes had contests that went something like this. Each of us would wait until a flock of mosquitoes would land on the pant leg of our Levis and then see how many we could kill in one blow. I don't remember the record but it was in the vicinity of 15 to 20. Talk about turning a sow's ear into a silk purse. If ever I accomplished such a feat, it was in those meadows as we tried to make our plight among the mosquitoes more livable. They were like Japanese Zeros attacking with no regard for their limited life span.

FIRES AND ASSOCIATED STORIES

I don't suppose my Bear Valley escapades would ever be complete without my experiences

Figure 3-61 A view from the Bear Valley Mountain lookout tower looking south towards Elk Creek and the ranger station.

related to fighting various forest fires over the seven years I spent there. The major ones are indicated in figure 3-1, page 76, and are

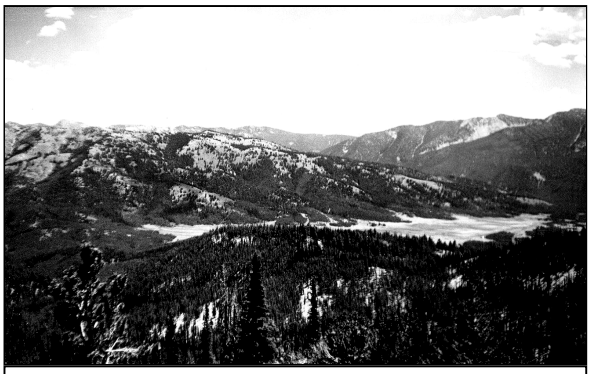

Figure 3-62 A view from the Bear Valley Mountain fire tower looking east towards Poker Meadows & the Salmon middle fork.

numbered in their order of occurrence. Number five was a small fire but because of its unusual nature and time of occurrence I placed it on the map. The experience was related earlier, you'll remember, in conjunction with trail work out of Elk Creek. I'll begin with number one and maybe toss in a few other experiences as they occur to me, which are unrelated to the fires I have designated in figure 3-1.

DEADWOOD RESERVOIR FIRE OF 1944

World war two was in full swing at this time and I had just turned sixteen. The year in general wasn't a difficult fire year but about the first of August or so a fire originated well up on the ridge to the west of the reservoir due to a lightning strike. See figure 3-1. It was the first significant fire I had been on. Harlan and I along with Al Pantry were the first ones to it but others weren't far behind. It spread rather rapidly at

Figure 3-63 A view from the Bear Valley Mountain lookout tower looking north to Mountain Meadows & Sulfur Creek.

first but with the arrival of more men we soon brought it under control with nothing more than shovels and Pulaskis. The fire was probably

Figure 3-64 A view from the Bear Valley Mountain lookout tower looking west towards Crane and Elk Meadows.

less than 100 acres in size but was kind of awe inspiring to me because it provided my first opportunity to be involved with more than just a

small lightening blaze. We worked hard the first day digging trenches around the complete perimeter of the fire while controlling hot spots to minimize crowning and its attendant problems.

For those unfamiliar with that aspect of a fire, an uncontrolled hot spot near a thick tree or trees such as a Douglas fir will allow the fire to sweep up to their tops like a Roman candle. Of course that kills the tree but more importantly sparks are showered high into the air through the updraft of the fire. A wind or even a rather light breeze can then carry said sparks some distance with the possibility of spot fires starting up any distance away, maybe up to a mile or more depending on the wind velocity.

This didn't prove to be a problem on this particular fire and within a few days it was well controlled. We then spent about three days, as I remember, mopping up, which simply means extinguishing every bit of fire one can find, using only shovels and Pulaskis. That means cooling the blazes with dirt, chopping the live coals out of a fallen tree or stump and mixing them with dirt so as to extinguish them, etc. Dead trees or snags, so to speak, may be burning well up into the tree. In such cases they must come down to insure all fire is put out. The basic principle is to scatter fire or coals and mix them with dirt so the heat is too low to sustain itself. A lot of work is obviously involved in such a process.

During control and mop up procedures and after a sufficient number of men had arrived we worked 12 hour shifts around the clock. Meals were served 4 times a day and one could stop for a snack or cup of coffee anytime. This part I enjoyed because the meals were good, though simple, and more importantly, free.

Keep in mind, Harlan and I were batching and had little imagination as to what a good meal consisted of, or if we did, how to bring it about. At the station we ordered supplies weekly, which were brought in via a U.S.F.S. truck and for which we had to pay. Being tight, unimaginative and without refrigeration, our meals were basic to say the least. There were no frills. Breakfast was typically eggs and hotcakes with a little bacon thrown in from time to time. Lunch was always sandwiches of some sort and an apple or maybe an orange with a few cookies for dessert while supper was usually composed of fried potatoes, a vegetable and maybe some spam. On a lucky day we might have some fish or even a few fool hens, as I indicated earlier.

So fire camp was like the Hilton for us. There was plenty of meat for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Of course, we drank gallons of coffee and mine was always black with no sugar. I suppose I started that when I was about twelve watching my father who drank his coffee that way. Mom used cream and sugar so the manly way was bitter and black. I continued with that habit until I joined the LDS Church some 18 years later. What a difficult habit to overcome.

Interestingly enough, I particularly remember the unrestricted availability of strawberry preserves at that camp. You may remember we only got home made jam at home or just a taste of store bought preserves before they were gone, if such showed up on the table. I piled strawberry preserves on my toast, my pancakes and on any other bit of food my culinary imagination decided should be sweet. What a treat.

I piled strawberry preserves on my toast, my pancakes and on anything else my culinary imagination derived.

Virtually all the personnel, other than those of us from the Elk Creek Ranger Station, came from the military. This group was composed primarily of the men who had been wounded and were still recovering to some degree, while a few were conscientious objectors who wouldn't serve in the military due to religious beliefs. I held the walking wounded, so to speak, in awe. After all they had been in some of the big battles, of World War 2 while serving their country and were now here because of those wounds they had suffered.

The objectors were another story. I had little tolerance for them and didn't accept their refusal to serve because of religious belief. I simply didn't understand such a concept and felt it was more of an excuse. Life has since taught me more in that regard and I can even admire such a stand in the face of unpopularity. My faith includes a responsibility to serve the country in which I reside, however, if called upon but I can now better understand what those people may have been feeling back in the early forties.

The two cooks we had for fire camp were from those recovering from their campaign service. They didn't talk about battles or really about service experience but rather about their childhood years. I'm not sure how much was true because both were cards and tried to outdo one another. One was from Arkansas and the

other from Mississippi and spoke with a pronounced southern drawl. They may have even enhanced the same to make their Laurel and Hardy images more endearing. With a meal cooked they had little to do other than serve while we ate and consequently went on stage with story after story while we sat around listening. The humor was almost as good as were the strawberry preserves and that's saying a lot considering my taste for the latter. This was hard to beat, good food, a man's work and Laurel and Hardy shows to entertain us.

I remember virtually none of those stories and will only retell one, which somehow remains glued in my gray matter. It's your responsibility to mentally add the southern accent, facial expressions and other such things that made them successful as a team. I'll call them, what else, Laurel and Hardy. Well, Laurel has been describing just how bad things were in Mississippi during the depression and related several family stories.

Those guys hadn't drained that boiler all week but simply added coffee and water.

Not to be out done, Hardy says; *"You didn't have it so bad. You should have lived in Arkansas. Why my folks had 13 chillins and we were dirt poor. We'd only got grits and gravy for breakfast and a few greens with maybe some rice or potatoes for dinner. All we got for lunch was left over Johnnycake, if there was any. Things got so bad that daddy started paying us a quarter to go to bed without supper. That didn't seem like too bad a deal until we climbed out of bed the next morning and found out he had decided to charge us twenty five cents for breakfast to help pay the bills."*

Of course, a roar followed due, primarily I suppose, to the associated accent and gestures. Such was typical and their continuing banter did much to alleviate the boredom of off duty hours. These same two guys kept coffee and snacks available 24 hours a day. The coffee urn was simply a big tub about 3' high, 4' long and 18" wide. It was always full to the brim and one had to simply use a dipper hung nearby to fill his cup. At least one of them was awake around the clock and kept good care of our needs. Besides guzzling water while working, I drank mucho coffee. As I got back into camp from the fire line, my first act was, usually, to fill my coffee cup before sitting down to relax. The supply was endless and quite good for the boiled variety of coffee. I did notice the bitter taste getting a little stronger as the fire wore on but paid it little heed. Late in the week I came in about midnight and dipped in for my usual coffee. To my surprise, the dipper hit bottom and as I drained its contents into my cup a goodly supply of dregs followed. Those guys hadn't drained that boiler all week but simply added coffee and water. I couldn't believe no one had complained as yet.

One night we heard a little racket towards morning and found a black bear had rifled our camp while we slept.

Well, the fire was taken care of, the troops moved out and Harlan and I were left to tend it until 24 hours after the last smoke. We did that knowing the good food and entertainment was over. Keeping warm with no fire and no sleeping bag through a typical Bear Valley night was no small chore. We managed to survive, however, and the next day speed hiked out to the road where we were picked up. I say speed hiked because we half walked and half ran with the tools we had and minimal packs down to the West Side Trail and then to the north end of the reservoir. I believe we must have averaged about 5 to 6 miles an hour. Of course, it was mostly downhill or level but we did work up a sweat.

THE DEER CREEK FIRE

The year of 1945 was, as they say, a very good year, for fires, that is. I say good year because that meant overtime and free grub both of which enhanced my savings for the following school year. A good U.S.F.S. employee could never even hope for fires and preserve the proper image. On the outside I never exclaimed about the fires being just the thing for me but secretly, I always welcomed them. After a big fire we might even get left over grub from the fire camp in addition to the overtime and free board and room. No, I never set one but the idea did occur to me from time to time.

The Deer Creek fire, #2 on the map, occurred on the south fork of that stream or south of the road between Bear Valley and Upper Deadwood Guard Station as designated in figure 3-1. I believe it was started by fishermen and had grown to quite a big fire before anyone got to it. Its final size was in the vicinity of 300 acres. Keep in mind that's horizontal acres or map acres. Actual ground area, considering relief, was somewhat bigger. I didn't understand their

method of establishing acreage until a year or so later and was sure they underestimated some fires that I had been on.

The fire camp was located near the road to Bear Valley at a location called Deer Flat, it being the only level area of any size and also being quite close to the actual fire. Again we worked 12-hour shifts, which suited me to a T. They trucked us back and forth to the actual fire sight because a rather crude road ran from Deer Creek to the Deadwood River and, as luck would have it, went right by the fire. We took packed lunches to and from the fire lines each day. Because of accessibility, heavy equipment could be readily brought in and soon a couple of bulldozers were building fire lines. We mainly circled the perimeter engaging hot spots and as they were controlled moved farther towards the center working on the worst ones. It was hot work as you might expect and included a good deal of chopping and stirring dirt with fire and coals. We also cut down any burning snags so we could get to them. After our shift we would be trucked to the camp to eat, sleep and relax. The fire camp was on Deer Creek proper and in the month of August nighttime temperatures run around 28 or 29. They had trucked in plenty of sleeping bags from which we could take our pick. As we examined them, none were more than about 5' long or maybe less. After any fire, such equipment is washed and these obviously weren't pre-shrunk. Well, to make a long story short, we about froze at night. We finally hooked two bags each end to end and at least covered ourselves. I don't remember just how long it took to control and mop up the fire but soon everyone left but Harlan, the Deadwood guard and me.

I suppose it was a bobcat but it might have been a cougar or mountain lion.

We patrolled the fire daily looking for smoke and each time we found one to put out, it meant yet another 24 hours. It wasn't all-bad, however, because we ate really well. They left plenty of food including a variety of meat, mostly canned. We had moved camp up on the ridge to be next to our work and minimize time lost to travel. I suspect the temperature was a good 10 degrees warmer at night on the ridge as opposed to the creek. One night we heard a little racket towards morning and found a black bear had rifled our camp while we slept. From then on foods that would attract them were hung by rope from a tree limb and that seemed to cure that problem. All in all I suppose we spent a week trying to extinguish the last smoke. With that done, we were able to return to Elk Creek and even keep much of the leftover food, which virtually did away with new food orders for the year. We learned that summer that there is more than one way to save money for school tuition and supplies.

THE WHITEHAWK MOUNTAIN FIRE

Fire number 3 occurred in 1946 and was another one probably set by man. The ranger, Joe Ladle, surmised it was the sheepherders in the vicinity but nothing was ever proven as far as I know. Conditions were such that the fire spread rapidly and though sited almost immediately by the lookout on Whitehawk Mountain, it was running wild before Al Pantry, Harlan and myself got there. We circled the fire to estimate its size and see the most probable areas of trouble. It was dark soon after we returned to our starting point and though we engaged the fire at selected points, it was running wild and our efforts seemed useless. Quite a few other men showed up and for some time we did engage a few hot spots to salve our consciences, I suppose. Because of the way the fire had spread, I remember being very fearful of being caught in a thickly wooded draw as the fire swept by. That had been particularly true when Al and I circled the fire. I doubt that I could have done it myself. I was amazed at the fury of the fire.

Other parties of men were being mobilized and about 2 AM Joe asked me to return to Whitehawk Lookout to guide a group in the next morning. The night was dark except for the fire. There was no moon out. In fact as we sat around and conversed several of us saw a set of green eyes watching us from a tree next to the clearing. I suppose it was a bobcat but it might have been a cougar or mountain lion. With those eyes indelibly imprinted on my mind, I set out for the lookout crossing several thickly wooded ravines though trying to stay in clearings as much as possible. The distance was about two to three miles but there was no trail and it was dark. To say I wasn't nervous would be a gross misrepresentation of the facts. I whistled to keep my spirits up, all the time anxiously surveying the surrounding trees for green eyes. As dawn broke I was relieved to say the least and the sun had yet to cross the horizon when I arrived at the lookout.

After a quick breakfast, I was told to lead a group of Indians back to the fire by a man I

surmised as being over Joe Ladle. He wanted them taken to the lower edge of the fire where I had been the afternoon before. Well, we set out. Here I was, just having turned 18 with little or no sense about leading a group of men. I was in good shape and could out hike a lot of people and thus I set a fast pace. He hadn't said anything about keeping everyone together and soon we were strung out through the woods. I guess he had been bringing up the rear because directly he caught up with me and proceeded to explain the principles involved with leading a group of men through the woods. His comments weren't exactly complementary as he pointed out that it wasn't necessary for me to prove my stamina on the trail to those Indians.

That day the fire raged on. They brought in heavy equipment and soon were building fire lines with it. I believe we went through another day and night with winds whipping the fire onward. Fire camp was established on a ridge essentially on one side of the fire. As we left the fire line the next day at the end of our shift, the fire had basically encircled the camp. Even so it was safe because the ridge was somewhat open. After dinner we hit the sack trying to get some rest. Our sleeping bags were near the radio they had set up and we could also pretty well survey much of the burning area. Trees were crowning out all over the hillsides and the whole valley towards Whitehawk Basin was lit up. It was a fourth of July spectacular. Even though tired we could hardly sleep because of the rampaging fire. I still remember lying there

Figure 3-66 Big Meadows fire #2 moments after the lightning strike as seen from #1.

and hearing the forestry superintendent on the radio saying we'll need at least 300 more men tomorrow.

I'm not sure how long I lasted before falling asleep but I soon became aware that it was raining. Before long it was coming down hard and by breakfast we were soaked. The incoming storm had fanned the fire to a-frenzy and then just as quickly watered it down such that the discussion after breakfast was which men to release first rather than where to place the incoming 300 he had called for. Needless to say they never arrived and by the following day all the camp was to be disassembled and hauled out. Only Harlan and I were left with two saddle horses and sufficient food and equipment in addition to instructions to ride the perimeter of the fire for the next couple of weeks looking for smokes. This we did going in different directions around the fire and meeting about half way for lunch. I got to know that country well and by the

Figure 3-65 Big Meadows fire #1 with smoke from fire #2 in the background.

time the last smoke came around we had crisscrossed it in every direction. I had made some good money but was glad to get back to the ranger station and a change of pace.

Dan came up the summer he got out of the navy, 1946, I believe, to work but didn't return during additional summers. He needed people to mingle with and more exciting things to do. That was a poor fire year as was 1948 but in 1949, the second year of Ken Karcher's tour, we had some more real excitement.

BIG MEADOWS FIRES

Notice, the title of this little segment is plural and that's because a second fire occurred just a ways from the first one that year (1949) and completely engulfed the first just about the time we were hunting for the last smoke. Together, they constitute fire # 4 in figure 3-1.

FIRE # 1

Ken and I had been dispatched to Big Meadows fire #1 along with a few other people. It was soon under control and we were left to patrol it, as usual, to the last smoke. We had made our

camp in a draw almost in the middle of the first burn. The little area we chose had been spared and had a few green trees and grass alongside a little creek. From there we could move in any direction to check for smoke. I suppose we had been patrolling it for a couple of days when some scattered thunderstorms occurred. Though not severe, the storms were a signal of approaching trouble. I have included a photo in figure 3-65 to illustrate the nature of the first fire. Smoke from the second fire is visible in the background but you can disregard that for now. Our camp was surrounded by burned out forest in this area of fire # 1, which was roughly 25 acres I would guess.

Right after lunch we heard a loud clap of thunder and realized lightening had probably struck somewhere nearby. We moved up on the ridge to get a better view and to determine if any damage had been done, which resulted in the photo of figure 3-66. We started down towards

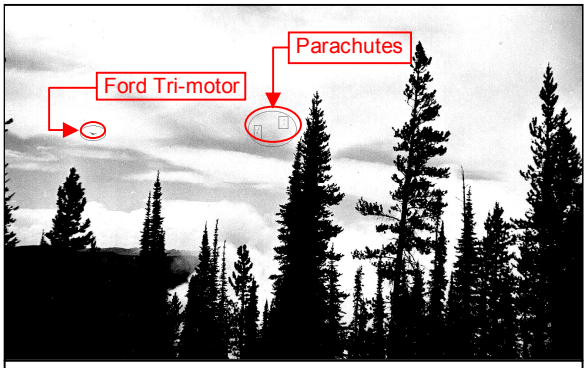

Figure 3-67 Smoke jumpers being dropped in that day near the Big Meadows fire #2.

the fire, which was spreading rapidly and in just minutes it looked like the fire in figure 3-69. We realized we could do little or nothing about the fire because of its rapid spread and decided to wait until help arrived. After taking a few more pictures, including that of a plane dropping smoke jumpers (see figure 3-67, two parachutes are identified by rectangles within the red oval but they are seen more clearly when the photo is enlarged as displayed in figure 3-68), we went back to our camp to see how it was faring.

Even though surrounded by the #1 burn, there was sufficient unburned growth to make its safety questionable. Consequently, we decided to move it and spent the next hour doing so to a safer point on the open ridge from which we had taken pictures. By the time we completed the change of camp-sites, several trees around our old camp were burning. Even so, that camp probably would have been safe. However, the old adage, "Better safe than sorry", seemed to apply here. We had seen the fury of that fire as

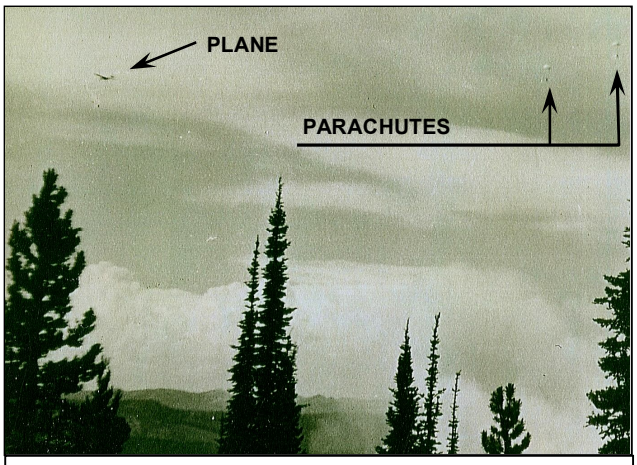

Figure 3-68 Photo of figure 3-67 blown up to improve plane & parachute visibility.

it quickly crowned and moved like a freight train across the hillside below us. Such a fire is a beautiful but awesome sight. It can cause one to develop a new respect for old Mother Nature. As the old saying goes, "don't mess with Mother Nature". She makes mankind's efforts look kind of puny at times. Forest fires, a Tsunami, earthquakes, etc. in recent years have dwarfed this particular fire in loss to mankind.

HELP ARRIVES

Within a few hours the Elk Creek guard had arrived with some men and by evening the ranger was there and other bodies of men were coming in as well with heavy equipment. The fire was only a couple of miles from the meadows known as Big Meadows and by the next afternoon they had a crude road cut

Figure 3-69 The Big Meadows fire just a few minutes after we first observed it.

through the timber and up the hill to the fire. Our camp was dissolved, not burned, and we moved down to a major fire camp established on the

edge of Big Meadows. Again we worked 12-hour shifts and were trucked to and from that fire along the road they cut with a bulldozer. To provide a better idea of how fast the fire spread; refer to my figure 3-70, taken from Whitehawk Lookout on the west side of the Big Meadows. This photo was taken late in the afternoon of the first day as the fire was exploding.

We worked the fire line with other men as a crew part of the next day but soon they had Ken and I move out ahead of the fire to look for spot fires

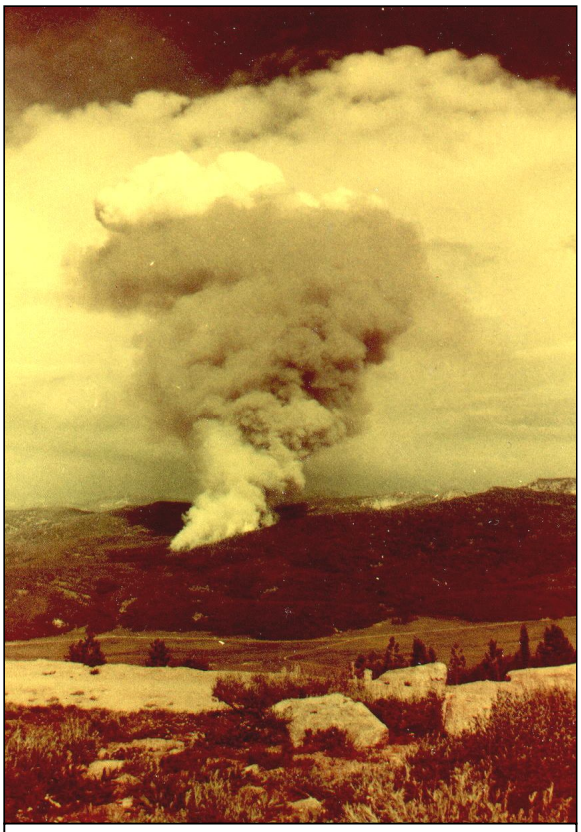

Figure 3-70 Big Meadows fire #2 as seen that day from Whitehawk Lookout.

which would be outside the trenches being dug by the bulldozers. We, of course, split up to cover more territory and would meet to eat lunch or return to camp in the evening. Obviously, if such fires were allowed to spring up, they could spread in like manner to the original fire and undo all the effort to control it. Spot fires start from a spark blown by the wind from a tree or trees crowning out in the main blaze. Initially they are nothing more than a smoldering spot in dry grass or an old rotten log. They may take a couple of days to really get going and they might flare up almost immediately depending upon conditions. We would prefer to find them while still the size of a silver dollar. Ken and I moved through the thicker brush and trees a half mile to a mile ahead of the fire watching carefully but mostly just sniffing the air. Even with the fire nearby, it amazed me how easily a guy could pick out the presence of a smoldering spot with his nostrils. Once detected, I have searched for 10 or 15 minutes before finally finding such a smoldering spot in a rotten log or some other susceptible environment. The wisp of smoke is much harder to catch a glimpse of than is the odor of smoldering wood or needles. We learned to watch for rotten logs and beds of pine needles and then carefully search them to improve our efficiency.

That night I wasn't sure whether we should get off and trust our own agility or rely on the horses that weren't all that sure footed.

Well, nothing unusual occurred as far as I remember the rest of the time we spent on the fire. We once again helped mop up and then patrolled for any remaining smoke for some time. As usual we ate well and kind of hated to see the fire wind down. Of course, such work does start to get boring after a while and so we really didn't mind returning to our luxurious home in the tent, which I've spoken of earlier. Naturally, we had to continue our batching there but under somewhat better conditions. After all, we now had considerable loot in the form of a variety of foods to add breadth and flavor our limited menu. It included items we wouldn't think of spending our hard earned money on. We particularly liked the canned meats, ham and bacon, which were somewhat rare in our daily menu. Of course, we picked up eggs, pancake flour and other camp foods including more strawberry jam that I spoke of earlier.

THE BOUNDARY CREEK FIRE

This fire occurred in the summer of 1950 or the last year I worked for the forest service. The fire itself wasn't unusual and was only moderate in size but the effort we went to in getting to it is worth a little story. It is listed as fire # 6 in figure 3-1. It was started by lightning in early August and smoke jumpers were dispatched because of its distance from any available smoke chasing resources and get it under control quickly. It was in our district, of course, and was some 12 miles away by trail. That meant at least 4 to 5 hours for us to get there. Smoke jumpers were always replaced with other

personnel as soon as possible so they could be available for other remote blazes. I'm not sure just when the fire started or when the jumpers were dispatched but Joe Ladle sent Ken and I to replace them about the middle of the afternoon on this particular day. Because we would be there for several days mopping up and waiting for the last smoke, we took two saddle horses and a pack mule, old Louis. I suppose it was about five in the evening when we left with the necessary equipment and food. The fire was supposedly located on the ridge between Dagger Creek and Boundary Creek but in actuality was one ridge over between Sulphur Creek and Boundary Creek (see Figure 3-1). Joe told us we couldn't miss it because the trail went right by it but his information was wrong.

With a loaded pack mule we could make about 3 miles per hour. Off we went at a steady pace arriving near our Dagger Creek camp about dark. There was no moon and so we simply let the horses have their head, so to speak, and they followed along the trail. As we traveled down the ridge between Boundary and Dagger Creeks, a trail we knew well, we looked closely for signs of the fire including flames and the smell of smoke. None were apparent as we approached the junction going to the falls.

Bang, she hit the tree, came to a stop and just lay there puffing like she was ready to die.

Being so very dark and not being sure just what direction to search, we decided to sleep until dawn. Besides, we were pooped. We took the trail down to the falls to find a suitable flat area to bed down in. You may remember, I described that trail earlier as being steep, narrow and full of rocks. As we had negotiated it in times past, the horses frequently stumbled a little, always regaining their footing but leaving the rider with a feeling of insecurity to say the least. That night I wasn't sure whether we should get off and trust our own agility or rely on the horses that weren't all that sure footed. We chose the latter deciding the horses could see a little better than we in the dark of night. After a little stumbling around as usual we finally arrived at the river, with our hearts in our throats. After unpacking the mule, we bedded down about 3 AM and slept until about seven.

Moving back up on the ridge with the new day we searched the surrounding country trying to spot smoke with no success. It was now decision time. After talking it over we decided to move on to Sulphur Creek, a distance of maybe a mile and a half and look for signs of fire along the way. We arrived at Sulphur Creek without spotting anything and finding some fishermen there we asked if they were aware of a fire nearby. They were and pointed to the ridge in back of us. They told us it seemed a lot worse yesterday. We could now see a little smoky haze where the fire was apparently located but nothing very distinctive and decided to make a beeline for it. It seemed we could climb the north face of the ridge and be there in an hour. Off we went, reaching the ridge in less than a half hour and began winding our way up.

Progress was pretty good at first but then the hillside became steeper and much more-brushy. We wound back and forth in a switchback fashion through small clearings trying to make it as easy as possible on the horses and old Louis. I suppose we were about half way up when Louis rebelled. I now understand where the term "stubborn as a mule came from". Louis wasn't going any farther up that ridge. Without warning, she reared back, jerking the lead rope from my hand and tumbled head over heels down the mountain. She would have gone to the bottom if she hadn't hit a big yellow pine about fifty feet down. She struck the tree with a bang, came to a stop and just lay there puffing like she was ready to die. I was sure she had broken a leg or something worse.

Anyway, we carefully took off her pack, which included a cross cut saw, our bedrolls and food for several days. She wasn't a happy camper.

Figure 3-71 The Bear Valley Ranger Station complex in 1998 as seen from the southwest.

As we eased her to her feet, she continued puffing, snorting and generally carrying on for a

few minutes and then quieted down. We gingerly walked her around without a pack and fortunately, she showed no signs of anything being broken. After a little rest, I decided to pack her up again, go back down to the bottom and try again on the south side of the ridge which would typically be more open, though not necessarily of gentler slope. Once on the trail it only took a few minutes to cross over to the south side of the ridge. From there we began to negotiate our way up, knowing it should be less brushy, have fewer trees and hopefully be of gentler slope. We did so and all our wishes came true. Louis held up, the ridge was open and gentler and we headed towards the fire once again. All went well this time and we finally arrived on sight about 12 hours late.

The pack string was already there to haul out the jumper's equipment when we arrived. They quickly got things together, gave us a quick rundown on the fire and headed out. We set up camp and worked the remaining daylight hours mopping up the fire. We stayed about 4 days after arrival before getting the required 24 hours without a sign of smoke. The time there was infinitely easier than was our effort to get there. In fact, it was almost peaceful. There was some good feed nearby as well as a spring and other comforts of a good camp.

With the fire pronounced out we headed back for Elk Creek on the fifth day arriving that evening. Apparently there had been some conversation between Joe and the smoke jumping supervisor. They wondered why we were so late, as did Joe when he learned of our arrival time. He asked, "Why were you so late when you had to ride right by it on the trail"? I explained the mix up and what we went through and he seemed satisfied. Even so, I sometimes wonder if he really believed my story, which, of course, didn't include the episode of Louis's trip head over heels down the mountain side. Since Louis now appeared OK, I saw no need to apprise him of that situation and risk the chance of further devaluing my already questionable stock.

Figure 3-73 A rail fence around the old Elk Creek Ranger Station pasture similar to those we built.

Figure 3-72 The Elk Creek Ranger Station from the southeast on the Bear Valley Mtn. Road.

SOME ODDS AND ENDS REGARDING FIRES

Having covered all the major fire stories, I will close with a few special stories regarding small everyday lightning sparked fires. I'm sure you can appreciate that some small fires could possibly be hidden in the clouds and fog associated with a rainstorm. At times we would be hiking up a ridge watching for the fire when we would observe what appeared to be smoke some distance ahead. We might move along towards the apparent smoke when it would disappear, being only a small cloud of fog embracing a group of trees. This wasn't uncommon when a storm was accompanied by both lightning and rain with its associated fog or low lying clouds. We eventually learned to differentiate between small clouds of fog rising out of a bunch of trees and real smoke but such can be confusing.

I soon learned that eating a limited amount of food, making it as appetizing as possible and staying warm during the last 24 hours of a small fire can be a challenge for a teenager chasing smoke. We ate the best choices first, while frying our Spam late on shovels when coals were still available, that is. We also mixed and matched foods to arrive at a combination we considered suitable. At best such food was only tolerable even when compared to our own cooking back at Elk Creek. Staying warm didn't

become a problem until the last 24 hours. I have made a bed of dirt on top of hot coals to fend off the chill but such is not available unless one cheats a little during that last few hours. Harlan did that one time and woke up with his jacket on fire. He hadn't used enough dirt for padding and insulation. I have also had to run from a hot spot I was working on because of the hot foot. Standing in coals as you mix them with dirt isn't bad in good fire boots but if you stay too long the heat builds up and you learn to leave in a hurry. Such treatment of your boots results in expanded soles as the rubber or whatever the sole is made of softens and flattens from your weight. However, all that is part of the job.

One year, 1945 I believe, Harlan, John Taylor and I were all sent to Garden Valley to help out after a thunderstorm. A series of small blazes had been started around the district. We three were to take care of all that lay within a radius of probably 5 miles. We were trucked to an appropriate spot with directions in hand and left on our own. I remember the countryside being brushy and steep, as well as forested in my drop off area.

We split up and headed out with an agreement to meet back at the central or pickup point in 48 hours. I hiked about 3 miles to my assignment, found a little fire and soon had it controlled. It didn't take long to mop up the burned area and soon I only had the usual 24-hour wait after the last smoke to accomplish. Fortunately, there were lots of huckleberries nearby and I proceeded to eat the same. The bushes were loaded with berries and all were big, sweet and ripened to a "T". Man, did I finally satisfy my desire for fresh fruit. I noticed a good deal of bear sign but didn't see any of the critters around. None showed up during the night either, maybe because they didn't like the available company. Had they shown up, they wouldn't have gotten any argument out of me. They could have their berries. Anyway, the time passed quickly and soon I was back at our rendezvous point waiting on my two friends. Harlan and John showed up soon after me, as did our transportation and we headed to the ranger station and home.

I was somewhat amused at John because of his fear of bears. He had seen the sign, as had Harlan and I, and couldn't even sleep while waiting for our departure time. Maybe we were too dumb or inexperienced to realize the potential danger but whatever the case, we slept like logs. Though none of us had actually seen bears, John was really up-tight about their presence in the area as evidenced by the sign. I was surprised because of his age, experience in the mountains, etc. Probably, we were simply too young to know better, being only 17 at that point, but I never did have an experience with such critters that scared me. Except for an occasional rifling of our camp food, they stayed out of our way and, I suspect, left berry patches as they heard our approach. Of course I never ran into a mother and her cubs, a situation, which is dangerous, so I'm told. Such is another case of a mad mama, not unlike that of the cow

Figure 3-74 Bear Valley Creek just above its confluence with Elk Creek. Note the grazing cattle.

Figure 3-75 The remains Upper Deadwood Guard Station in 1998, verified by location remnants.

and cowman related earlier in my Garden Valley Cattle association story.

MORE BEAR VALLEY PHOTOS

I had considered this chapter done until Ken Karcher sent me some photos he had recently taken in the Bear Valley area. I appreciate his thoughtfulness and decided they might be worth including along with a few editorial remarks. They are better photos of the area being in color and better quality but several changes have taken place, as well.

Figure 3-70 is the 1998 version of the Elk Creek Ranger Station now known as the Elk Creek Forest Camp. Many new buildings have been added but at least some of the old ones remain. To the right side of the photo behind the sign and trees you can make out the old ranger's home complete with a green roof. I know about that particular roof because I painted it more than once and had a couple of exciting slides right to its edge where the safety rope grabbed hold in the nick of time. The gate to the facility has been moved to the west from those days in the late forties when I worked there. It now appears as shown in the photo of figure 3-71. I would guess the change was made to minimize traffic around the ranger's residence.

Figure 3-76 Old Deadwood Mine entrance, now owned by the Deadwood Outfitters providing pack trips.

Compare this photo to that of 3-38 on page 112. Straight back in the center of the picture behind the pickup and next to the hill side would have been the location of our beloved tent where we had many exciting moments cooking dinner, playing cards and shooting mice with a 22, etc. I guess I didn't include the latter story in my escapades at the ranger station, so I'll insert it in a moment. It will give you some appreciation for the innovative nature of your grandpa as well as an understanding that even he had his breaking point when it came to sleep. As if you hadn't already experienced that in the past. Keep in mind that neither of us were vicious by nature.

THE TWO MOUSEKATEERS

Ken and I had a good deal of trouble with field mice that visited our abode to share our food from time to time, like every night. You might suspect we weren't the best housekeepers and so there were plenty of crumbs around to nibble on. That was OK but they chose to eat at night and we would wake up to this racket that sounded like a stone saw cutting concrete.

Neither of us could sleep and we had no traps so we decided to shoot them with our twenty-two's. Keep in mind they aren't a very big target but then again, their size matched the innovative capacity of our rather small minds. Being in the middle of the night, the little suckers were relatively easy to spot. We simply followed the sound with our flashlights. One of us would shine the light and the other would lie on the floor, take careful aim and wham. If we missed, we didn't have to wait too long for another chance. Of course, a successful shot left quite a mess, which we had to clean up. That wasn't too desirable in and of its self but the ranger quizzing us the next morning about our shooting in the middle of the night prompted us to look for a more practical approach. As you might surmise, our explanation of our midnight foray wasn't too believable or satisfactory.

MIDNIGHT SWIMMING PARTIES

Considering these negatives we hatched another plan. Why not drown those little devils? After all, all is fair in love and war and our situation definitely involved the latter. So, the next night we filled a dishpan half full of water, placed a piece of cheese on a wood chip and let it float in the water. We built a little ramp up to the edge to provide access to the floating bait, kind of like Dr. Kevorkian, and went to bed. We didn't wait too long until we heard a splash with a few glub, glub, glubs and then, all went silent. We got up to examine the results and sure enough we had a waterlogged mouse on our hands. Well, we loaded it up a couple more times with similar success before word

apparently got out among them of the two mighty morbid and somewhat murderous Mousekateers. We must have scared them off, got them all or at least convinced them to eat with better manners because they quit bothering us that summer. It was a temporary victory, however, in that they showed up in force again in following years. We never really solved the problem, in spite of our ingenuity.

BACK TO THE PHOTOS

The next shot in figure 3-72 is from east of the station. It shows the area from a little different perspective and also illustrates the old pioneer log fence I spoke of and tried to draw earlier. Once again the old ranger's home shows up in the right center of the photo while to its right or the extreme right of the picture is the cabin occupied by the Elk Creek fire guard and his family. That's where both Al Pantry and Bob Olsen, whom I spoke of earlier, lived. The building to the left of the ranger's home would be the old supply house for fire rations and tools. The building shows up somewhat more clearly in the earlier photo illustrated in figure 3-71, with the pickup next to it.

The next picture of the Elk Creek area, as shown in figure 3-73, shows the old pasture area across the road from the station. Apparently there are now several buildings there and a completely different fence. The pasture fence was of the old pioneer type while that in front of the ranger station proper was of the rail type now showing up around the pasture area. Somebody went to a lot of work to reverse the two. Besides that, I feel quite sure they didn't do the quality work Ken and yours truly did. The rails of ours were smoothly butted end to end and placed in notches to secure them more reliably. It seems one just can't get good help any more, can they? Then again, it might be that Ken and I had too much time on our hands. Could our boredom produce quality? Hardly, but it does provide the time necessary to accomplish a job correctly, doesn't it?

Finally, I have included a 1999 photo of Bear Valley Creek and the surrounding meadow after it is joined by Elk Creek. This area, shown in figure 3-74, is just east of the Elk Creek Ranger Station. If you look closely, you can see cattle grazing contentedly on the far side of the creek. Such was typical of my days working anywhere in that peaceful and serene valley.

THE DEADWOOD AREA

The last group of pictures comes from the Deadwood area. They picture a couple of landmarks I referred to in my story but mostly they give a 1998 photo in color of one of the areas I spent so much time in and learned to love so much. Figure 3-75 contains the remains of Upper Deadwood Guard Station as it appears in the summer of 1998, roughly 50 years after the stories I related. Compare it to figure 3-13 wherein you can see the cabin for the guard station in the background. I don't suppose this picture provides much other than giving the reader an idea of the natural beauty of the area.

Add to that, however, the photos, shown in figures 3-76 and 3-77, of the Deadwood Mine as it appears today and you can see the area was,

Figure 3-77 Tailings from the old Deadwood Mine with the surrounding country for a backdrop. Believe me, that country is more rugged than it looks from here.

picturesque to say the least. The mine was roughly a half-mile up the road from the guard station towards the Deadwood summit. It was open the first couple of years I worked there, i.e. 1944 and 1945, but closed down after the war. I believe they mined lead and silver, which apparently ran out about then, or maybe the price for such minerals fell, making the mine unprofitable. As you can see from figure 3-77, the mining was extensive in that the tailings they left were of considerable size. When open, the mine had a store combined with a post office and several homes for those who were employed there to live in. Their homes were terraced on the mountainside, as I remember, along two or three streets but one could hardly visualize them from either of the photos. We

used to walk the half-mile or so to the store on various occasions to relieve the boredom of a Saturday afternoon or to pamper our sweet tooth, which frequently seemed in dire need, even on a regular basis.

Just north of this particular area and across the river, was the jumping off place for the trail to Blue Point Lookout which I spoke of. The telephone line from the lookout hooked into the Deadwood line about the same place but didn't follow the trail, as mentioned. Reiterating some earlier remarks, working the line was very difficult, in that the country was steep and somewhat brushy, making it difficult to walk the line. However, the reward for one's effort was the view from the top. One could see for miles on a clear day and the scenery was breath taking. To the south was a rocky ridge and basin around, which the trail from Landmark weaved its way. To the north, were the Deadwood River drainage and the meadows bordering Bear Valley. We were treated to much of the same beauty on the way down after finishing the job and verifying communications.

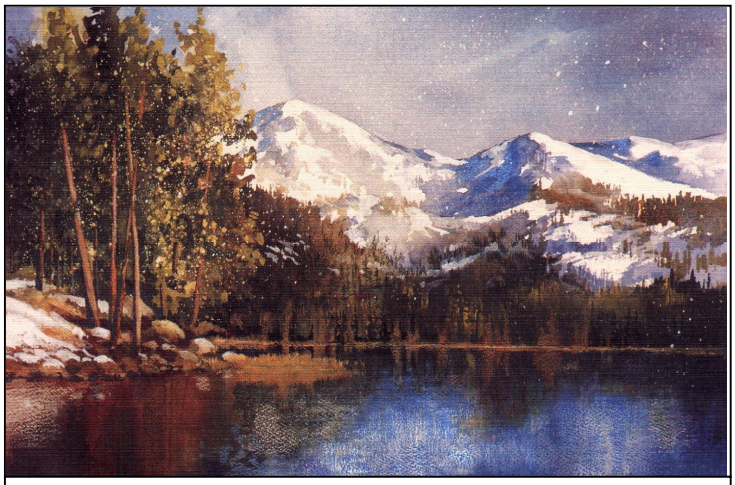

Figure 3-78 An artist's rendition of Warm Lake, which appears to have been painted in the early spring.

MEMORABLE LANDMARKS

Early in the chapter I mentioned our trips to and from Boise on Ken's motorcycle. At this point I will elaborate a little and include some artists' renditions of a couple of landmarks we frequently passed by but thought little of at the time. We had two routes which we used with about the same frequency, i.e. via Big Meadows, Clear Creek summit, Lowman and Idaho City or else over the rocky Deadwood summit, via Landmark, Warm Lake, Cascade and down the Payette River. The trips were about equal in length or at least in time with a good deal in the way of winding dirt roads and then pavement as we approached Boise. Both were interesting and enjoyable and we alternated as much for the sake of variety as for any other reason. I suppose, considering everything, I preferred the route through Cascade because the roads were a little better, the scenery a little more beautiful and the ride a little cooler. It so happens that both of my pictorial landmarks were on that particular route.

THE CASCADE ROUTE

Let me begin with the Cascade route, which took us from Bear Valley via the Deadwood and Warm Lake summits to Cascade. There we found pavement (highway 55) on in to Boise. We could leave after work on Friday night from Bear Valley and arrive in Boise somewhere around 8:00 or 8:30 depending on our departure and how hard we pushed to finish the trip. Needless to say it was rather slow going until we reached Cascade because the roads were not only dusty but also wound all around the country side making it next to impossible to sustain any speed even on a motorcycle. We didn't waste a lot of time, however, because we usually had something going for Friday night, particularly after I met Esther. You might review figure 3-1 to visualize our route via Warm Lake and Cascade. We memorized virtually every curve on that route as well as boulders and chuckholes along the way. Then came a day when I wondered whether I really had memorized them all.

HOPPING A RIDE

In those days the road was often rocky going over the summits and Ken would have to pick a path around the biggest rocks while watching for oncoming vehicles, which there wasn't many of, by the way. When climbing a summit under such conditions we might be barely moving at times. In fact, walking would have been about as fast but a little more tiring. I remember one such case going over Warm Lake summit towards Landmark when I lost my balance and had to jump off the cycle to keep my head from bouncing on the protruding rocks. I managed to get the right foot on the ground but my left boot got hung up on something, I guess the foot support. Anyway, the cycle was barely moving

with me hopping along behind with one foot on the ground and the other hooked to the side of the cycle. Of course, my rather excited yell got Ken's attention and he quickly brought the cycle to a stop. I still think of what the consequences might have been had he hit the throttle to take advantage of a nice smooth stretch ahead, as he often did. Instead of being known as "Smoe Foot Obenchain" my moniker might have been changed to something more like Slow Foot or maybe even "No Foot Obenchain".

WARMING UP AT WARM LAKE

We stopped at Warm Lake occasionally but, in most cases on the way back because of the extra time we had by leaving Boise shortly after noon on the following Sunday. We might buy a soda pop and wander down by the lake to simply sit and talk while enjoying the calm beauty it always seemed to portray. I included an artist's rendition of Warm Lake (as seen in a little different season) to give my posterity an idea of the countryside and peaceful nature of that area (figure 3-78). In those days, it was seldom crowded and was always peaceful. Now, of course, the road is black topped and the tourists swarm like flies.

The trip from Warm Lake to Cascade was pretty but not as beautiful as was the area north of the lake, which included the summit going into Landmark. The latter was quite rugged and provided a beautiful view as one drops down to Warm Lake.

As I remember, the primary type of tree in Warm Lake area was the Ponderosa Pine or Yellow Pine, as I knew it, quite a contrast from the lodge-pole pines of the Bear Valley - Deadwood areas. They tend to grow in the warm and drier areas of the forest, which seems to correlate with lower elevations as well as with somewhat less dense undergrowth.

CASCADE TO BOISE

In traveling from Cascade to Banks the highway first passed through both Long and Round Valley, which were really large meadows with numerous ranches dotting their landscape. As the highway left Round Valley, it dropped down on to the North Fork of the Payette River, which wound its way toward Banks. I really enjoyed that ride. Even on a hot day the canyon was mostly shaded and cool. The road, though paved, still had many curves and it provided quite a thrill as we negotiated its snake like path. Just after entering the canyon, the highway crosses the river on an old but beautiful bridge known as Rainbow Bridge. It has always been attractive to me and I looked forward to seeing it each trip. The bridge was a landmark, which marked the top end of the canyon and as such either welcomed us to the Cascade area or bade us goodbye on our trips from Bear Valley. I included an artist's painting of it as the chapter's final figure 3-79. However, you can be sure the snow seen in the picture wasn't there during the summers we traversed the area. Wouldn't that have been fun on a motorcycle slipping and sliding on the ice around those curves?

Figure 3-79 Historical Rainbow Bridge on the N. F. of the Payette River just north of Cougar Mountain lodge.

THE LOWMAN ROUTE

Earlier, I described some of the country we passed through as we made the trip from Lowman up the Clear Creek to the Big Meadows area. At times we would take this route to Boise or on our return. It too was a pretty trip and probably somewhat shorter than through Cascade but the time required was about the same. The road, at that time, was only paved from Boise to Idaho City and though very good from there to Lowman it was still unpaved with many curves and considerable traffic. Thus, the dust was nasty and the trip wasn't quite what one would call high speed, at least until we made it to the blacktop but then, we really cruised from there on in to Boise. I really enjoyed the ride on the Clear Creek canyon pavement. We would lean into the curves with plenty of room to see what was coming and, best of all, no dust.

DERAILED

The countryside between Idaho City and Lowman was beautiful during those days and particularly so as one dropped down from the summit on to the south fork of the Payette river. Today, of course, the fire that swept that country sometime after I left has temporarily ruined that particular view.

One Sunday Ken and I were returning to Bear Valley via this route and were negotiating the curves, which welcomed us to the Lowman area. As we came around one switch back, there was a car directly in our path coming towards us. The driver couldn't get over quick enough to let us by and Ken had to leave the road. We weren't going too fast and luckily no damage was done. However, our adversary in the other car didn't even bother to stop, which made both us rather mad.

We pushed the cycle back on to the road, checked it out rather quickly and away we went after that car. We caught the guy about a mile or so up the road and pulled him over. He was a man in his forties I suppose and seemed quite nervous as two motorcycle rats brought him to a stop. I suspect he would have been a little more nervous had the event occurred on our way out of the valley. We would have had a week's growth of beard and no bath or other signs of sanitation. Not only would he have beheld our grimy exterior with his eyes but also with his nose. You might say he would have been in a smelly situation. It so happened he had his family with him and he had simply made a mistake in swinging wide around that particular curve. We read him the riot act but his submissive nature kind of defused us. With our feelings mollified we turned the cycle around and headed back to work still muttering about his stupidity, as though we had never done the equivalent in our various adventures.

ON TO ELK CREEK

Of course, from Lowman on in to the Elk Creek Ranger Station the road was a typical one way back country road with frequent passing areas but also having its share of rocks and chuck holes which had to be negotiated. I guess, this added to the excitement and beauty of the trip and kept us from getting bored. After a brief stop at Lowman, we were headed up Clear Creek towards Big Meadows and our little mountain home. Clear Creek summit was always fun on the motorcycle because of its steepness and many switch backs. Along with the rocks and chuck holes, the curves made for slow going but soon we would top the summit and the countryside became somewhat gentler. From there on in to the ranger station the road was a little less rocky, the landscape relatively flat and the curves much more gentle. We picked up speed and within an hour we would be back home in our commodious tent with its many accessories. It had a gasoline lantern, wood stove, table with chairs cupboard, and even two genuine army cots. Yes, it was a comfortable domain with a capital C.

REMINISCING

I look back on my experiences in Bear Valley and the associated round trips to and from Boise with fond memories. Those years were truly an adventure and building period of my life. Though they did little for my natural shyness, I believe they helped me develop a measure of independence and courage that I might never have gained in town. I also developed many so-called blue-collar skills and a strong work ethic, all of which were beneficial to me later in life. In addition, the modest pay was sufficient to help me fund each college year including a few duds to express my maturing view of life.

I suppose such experiences may not be "what the doctor ordered" for everyone but for me they were important to my growing up. They certainly broadened my understanding of the world around me in addition to the aforementioned benefits listed. In so doing, they also helped provide a basis for my decision regarding my life's work. That is, I knew I wanted to be involved in a discipline that would allow me to work out of doors, at least in the early years of my career. In coupling this understanding with my interest in the technical aspects of life, i.e. science and engineering, I eventually settled on geophysics as a career. If you are really committed to completing this questionable autobiography, you will better understand just what the fruition of my efforts eventually achieved as well as a measure of the satisfaction they brought to me in my life. Though I am quite aware of many personal mistakes in life, I see them as part of a pattern of growth and a balancing factor, which tempered my few successes