



**Heroes. Heritage. Renewal.**

*Exerpts from the collection  
"When the Mountains Roared"*

*Stories of the 1910 Fires*

#### **STORIES OF FIREFIGHTING CREWS**

##### Pulaski's Crew – Placer Creek

“Mr. Pulaski, who is about forty years of age, is a man of most excellent judgment, conservative, thoroughly acquainted with the Region, having prospected throughout the burned area during the last 25 years, and is considered by the old timers in the region as one of the best and safest men that could have been placed in charge of a crew of men in the hills. Mr. Pulaski was in charge of about 150 men distributed over a divide between Big Creek and the Coeur d'Alene River and Big Creek of the St. Joe River. When the danger conditions became imminent he rounded up about 40 of his men who were in the danger zone and cut off from safety on the west side of the fire where the other men were located and started with them down the mountain toward Wallace, a distance of ten miles. When he got about half way, however, he found that he was cut off by new fires. At the sight of this, his men became panic stricken, but he assured them that he would still get them to a place of safety. Being thoroughly familiar with the region he knew of two prospect tunnels nearby, the shorter being about 50 feet in length and the longer about one hundred feet in length. Not being certain as to whether or not he could reach the largest and safest, by putting a wet gunny sack over his head, he penetrated the dense smoke to where he could see the largest tunnel, and finding it was safe he rushed back to his men and hurried them to the tunnel, getting them there just in time to get him inside before the fire reached them. The portion of his crew with him consisted of 42 men and two horses. He got all of his men and horse inside the tunnel, with exception of one man who had fallen a few hundred feet behind and was caught by the fire before he could reach the tunnel.

“The intense heat caused by the forest fire outside of the tunnel caused the cold air of the tunnel to rush out and the smoke and hot air to rush in. The timbers supporting the tunnel caught fire and Pulaski stood as near to the mouth of the tunnel as he could, and from a little stream that flowed from the bottom of the tunnel dipped water with his hat to dash upon the burning timbers, until he was badly burned and fell unconscious. Prior to becoming unconscious himself, he had commanded all his men to lie on their faces for protection. All of the men were evidently unconscious for a portion of the time. One of the men, however, having sustained less injury than the others, recovered to the extent that he was able to crawl out of the tunnel, and the fires by this time had subsided sufficiently for him to drag himself into Wallace and notify the Forest Office. This was about 3:00 in the morning. A crew was immediately sent to the tunnel and all of the men and horses were removed. Although nearly all of the 42 men were still in a helpless condition after being taken to the hospital in Wallace, they rapidly recovered their strength, with the exception of five who had smothered before they were reached. The two horses, although still living, were in such bad condition that they were immediately shot. The man who failed to get into the tunnel was burned beyond recognition. Had not Pulaski known the location of this tunnel, every one of the 42 men in his crew would have perished.”

*Excerpt from the collection of "When The Mountains Roared", (page 14-16) USDA Forest Service*

