UMATILLA NATIONAL FOREST (from Harold C. Chriswell Memoirs, 1933-1971)

"How in Hell did you get here?", asked Assistant Supervisor Jim Iler, "Every road into Pendleton is closed". This was my welcome to the Umatilla when at 8:00 A.M. Monday morning I reported to the Heppner Assistant Ranger job.

I had left Winthrop and driven through a blinding snow storm to Leavenworth where I visited with Bernie and Harriet Payne overnight. Bernie was assistant ranger on the Leavenworth District. Digging my car out of the snow the next morning I drove through snow all day. It was dark as I started over the old Cold Springs Cut-off into Pendleton. The car would just barely make it through some of the snow drifts. I kept track of the ranch house lights that were visible through the falling snow because I thought I might get stalled in one of the drifts. I wasn't really worried as I had complete cross country ski equipment with me. It was a great relief when I finally drove up against a big pile of snow in front of the Pendleton Hotel at about midnight. I thought that this was just normal winter weather in Eastern Oregon.

That Monday morning the roads radiating out of Pendleton were really closed. The highway to Milton-Freewater wasn't opened for four or five days. I watched the dozers breaking out the grey cement-like snow, colored by dust from the wheat fields.

The assistant ranger position at Heppner was seasonal. November through March I was to work in the S.O. at Pendleton. Supervisor Johnny Irwin retired two weeks after I arrived. Duncan Moir took his place. A new green assistant ranger was the least important person in that office. I was assigned jobs that no one else wanted to perform. Wasn't I soon to disappear into the vast Heppner country which was the domain of Ranger Fred Wehmeyer?

'Fred Wehmeyer!' That name brings back a flood of memories. Fred was slightly tubby but he had a handsome and mobile face that reflected every mood. It was quite round, topped with wavy brown hair, very heavy eye brows and a wide mouth. When that mouth curled up, those eyes sparkled and the bushy brows went up and down, it resulted in the warmest, comic grin I had ever seen.

There wasn't a person in Heppner country who didn't like Fred. Here was another old time ranger who lived his public relations. We who worked for him would do anything for him. As on the Chelan forest, all the rangers were of the "old time" vintage. Greatly varied in talents, roughhewn in personality, they were men we would tell tall tales about around our camp fires. They were the greatest and most interesting men it has been my privilege to know.

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packing mining equipment and supplies around Dead Horse Point and over Hart's Pass to the gold mines of Slate Creek. Fred lied about his age and when he was 14 joined the Navy. He became a Spanish-American War Veteren when mustered out of the fleet. Passing the ranger exam he received appointment on the Chelan Forest. He was the distrtict ranger on several of the Forest's districts.

When Fred was at Chelan he became expert at handling the many grass fires that burned up onto the forest. One dry summer a fire broke out on the east side of Lake Chelan. Fred called the S.O. over the F.S. line and asked for 200 men. The next morning 30 men reported at Chelan as the fire crowned up the mountain. By evening it became evident that P.T. considered the 30 men to be enough to man the fire. Fred went back to town, marched into the theater, shut down the show and drafted every able-bodied man to fight that fire. It wasn't long before he was transferred to the small Touchet District on the Umatilla forest. One of the drafted men was an unhappy local politician who had complained to the Regional Forester. A few years later Supervisor Irwin affected a promotion and transfer for Fred to the Heppner District.

Many of the rangers east of the Cascades had been raised in the stock country. Some were real cowboy types. West of the mountains, rangers were more oriented twords timber. There was much discussion about the "Eastside Ranger" or the "Westside Ranger." Some of us younger people with different training backgrounds felt there should be no difference in the management job. Not so the old timers. One day a discussion with Fred on this subject became quite heated. He finally stopped me cold.

"At a ranger training session at Wind River we were all having a look-see at some of those young pole-sized Douglas-fir stands in the area. Experts from the Experiment Station talked at great length about natural pruning, soils, growth and site quality. Regional Office people brought out yield tables. Finally, a bow-legged ranger from Eastern Oregon, who had been admiring the young trees, pushed back his Texas-style Stetson, rocked back on his high heels and in a loud voice exclaimed, 'My God, look at all them corral poles!"

My training by Fred Wehmeyer consisted of, "We've got 720,000 acres of protective area covering about every tree from Ukiah to Fossil. (The State had not yet taken over protection of private lands surrounding the district.) This is too big an area for one man. You take the east half and I'll handle the western end. Later on we'll trade." Fred was of the old school that you learned by going

out and doing the work. He felt this weeded the boys from the men. It was successful with me. I never worked so hard or had so much fun doing it. "You get all the fun of being a District Ranger without the responsibility," Fred used to mutter.

Because I was just starting out on the new job and being newly married, I was poor as a Church Mouse. We lived from check to check. It wasn't long before I realized that I was expected to furnish a saddle and bridle for a great deal of horseback work. Fred told me his neighbor had died and his widow had a good saddle to sell. I contacted her and was shown a fine Hamley 'form-fitter' saddle, a saddle blanket, rawhide braided reins, silver mounted bit, lass rope and a hackamore. I knew I couldn't afford the outfit and timidly asked, "How much?" She didn't know the value of the saddle and finally asked, "Is $35.00 too much?" Mistaking my surprised look to mean that was too much she said, "You can have the whole outfit for $40.00." I immediately floated a loan and bought my outfit. That comfortable saddle would be used for thousands of miles of riding over the years until I retired.

Oh yeh, there was one other training directive, "This ol' horse's name is Nuts. He's been in the Forest Service family so long he probably knows the resources better than we do. Watch him because he'll try hard to fool you goin' out but he'll go Hell-bent when you turn him towards the barn. Give him his head in the approximate direction you want to go and he'll take you any place on the district."

I was to locate most of the sheep camps on the district that way. I could hang all manner of maintenance tools that dangled and jangled, on the saddle. I would stand up in the saddle to replace a low hung split insulator, dropping cutoff No.9 telephone wire about his ears. He wouldn't move a muscle. Upon meeting a bear, the other horses would try to take off at a run but not old Nuts. He would just calmly stand and watch the bear until he finally ambled away.

Fred was an atrocious driver. Like some older people in those times, driving a team of horses would have been easy but driving a car safely just wasn't understood. When I rode with him I was always scared. Finally I persuaded him to let me drive and he seemed to enjoy it.

One time Fred received a brand new Plymouth panel as an official car. After a couple of weeks we noticed that he was driving his personal car out on the district. About a week later he drove the panel up to the office. He was as proud

as punch as he pointed out the fenders and the entire side of the panel to us. We were appalled! The new car couldn't have looked worse. It seems that Fred had run off the Heppner grade coming in from the Tupper G.S. one evening. He had gotten a rancher to pull him back on the road with a truck. Fred had then spent a week of evenings and two Sundays pounding out the dents with a peen hammer. When we timidly asked him why he hadn't taken it to a garage, he glowered at us and said, "Cause, I didn't want any of those S.O.B.'s in the S.O. to know about it"

In the early spring Fred couldn't wait to see what affect the winter snows had on the district. He would drive up a road as far as he could. Mostly, the snow would stop him. Sometimes it was the mud. Except for a couple of roads, including the Heppner-Spray Hiway, there wasn't a graveled road on the district. When a snow bank melted, it took a couple of days for the frost to leave the ground. For a very short period of time the soil would not support a vehicle. Every year, without fail, Fred would drive onto one of these innocent appearing places and sink down on all four axles.

"Now you know those Chevy pickups. A bunch of engineers worked for years to design 'em so the bed was almost on the ground when you got stuck. So, you lie down in the mud, in your clean uniform, and slowly worm your way under that low box. You work and struggle to get your shovel in beside the wheel. You rassel and you huff and puff. Finally you work the shovel back out and there is a little bitty piece of mud on it. You take a stick and scrape off the shovel, then you take a stick and scrape off the stick."

Fortunately for our peace of mind the ground wasn't long in this muddy condition. As summer advanced the ruts got deeper in the fine dust. Fred always remarked, "The difference between mud and dust in the Heppner country is about five minutes."

We used to take tick shots each spring. Fred always had a reaction to them. One day he was nursing a red, swollen upper arm. He swung around in his revolving chair, "Those damn ticks climb out on the tips of the bitter brush and they all clap hands (he clapped his hands) in glee when they see me coming. If one of 'em dares to bite me now he'll curl up his toes and die of the spotted fever." Again, that silly grin.

In the spring wild horses on the district would follow the snow line up from the John Day River breaks. They played havoc with the forage resource. The premature grazing and the trampling of the soft ground resulted in severe

damage to the range. When working on spring maintenance we would often surprise a bunch of them. They were beautiful wild things to watch as they ran with their long manes and tails flying. We couldn't resist chasing them. They were weak from the long winter and our grain fed horses would eventually catch up with them. The guards talked a lot about catching a colt by his ears and some of them had acquired a horse this way. Well, I never could get close to a colt. If I could have grabbed his ears without falling off my horse, I wouldn't have known what in the World to do with him.

One day Fred was cussing forms (one of his pet peeves). He fumed and muttered over some paper work. He kept referring to 'the good old days' and how good they were. Suddenly he swung his chair around and glared at me. "What in Hell am I talking about! The good old days! I'll tell you what the good old days were really like. You started up the trail in the morning, dragging the pack stock behind you. About 3:30 in the afternoon you start looking for a good camp site with water and horse feed. Finally locating a good place you unpack the stock. Peeling off the saddles you bell and hobble the horses. You lay out your camp gear and start a fire. You drop everything and bring the horses back to camp. When dinner is cooking you again bring the horses back to camp. Finally, bone tired, you crawl into your bedroll. You just get to sleep when the bells stop ringing. Nothing will awaken you quicker. You pull on your boots and chase horsed for a couple of hours. When daylight comes you chase the horses again. Hobbles didn't slow those nags much. Feeding them a handful of grain, you cook breakfast. After currying and brushing the horses you saddle-up. By the time you break camp and throw squaw-hitches on the packs, the sun is pretty high in the sky."

"You continue on your trip and at 3:30 start looking for a good camp. This sequence is repeated day after day. A few times a season the dang horses will start down the trail for home. You chase them for miles and finally catch them by dark. With no food or rest you ride them back bareback all night. That's what the good old days were really like! Thank God they're long gone!" Fred silently gazed out the window as he relived his early days on the Chelan Forest.
Fred's diaries were something else. He had all of them stored in a box under a steel cot in the office alcove. Each day was faithfully recorded, "8:00 a.m. started work. 5:00 p.m. quit -- 8 hrs." Such entries didn't endear him to the supervisor or the administrative assistant, neither did his stock answer, "Hell, if I put down everything I did -- I wouldn't have time to do it!" Fred actually worked from dawn to dusk and most of his Sundays, as he had always done.

Looking back on those days, we were beginning to see a big change in attitudes and policy in the service. The old-time rangers were retiring and many of us were getting restive under the despotism practiced by some of the supervisors. I am sure Fred had to wrangle a long time with Johnny Irwin to get approval for my week's leave in June to get married. Even Carl Ewing questioned it when he came to the Umatilla. Who ever heard of a week's annual leave during the fire season? Fire season was decreed to be from June 1 to September 30. It mattered not that June was the wettest month in the Heppner country. Everything there dated from the disastrous flood of June, 1921.

Iris was the Grand Coulee Princess in the Wenatchee Apple Blossom Festival. She was busy with her last month in school and the continuing duties as Princess. She graduated, traveled to Winthrop and met me. The next day we went to Okanogan to get our marriage license. Her mother had ordered flowers there and we went to pick them up the next day that was our wedding day -- June 14, 1937. They didn't know how to make corsages so I made them for them. We were late getting over the Loop-Loop to Winthrop and were about 20 minutes late to our wedding in the old Winthrop Church. On the last day of our honeymoon we headed up the Columbia River Highway towards Heppner. We had enough gas to get home from Arlington and spent our last 15 cents on one doughnut and 2 cups of coffee.

I had rented an apartment in Heppner and we finally arrived in our new home just before Guard School. I proudly introduced Fred to Iris and he brightly said, "We certainly need you in the forest service to help us solve a serious problem."

Iris answered, "What is that, Mr. Wehmeyer?"

He replied, "Why, reproduction in the virgin forest." Iris' face turned beet red as she looked at Fred's wide grin for the first time.

Many of the old time ranger's wives were as much a part of the forest service as their husbands. On horse trips they would camp-tend, cook and take care of the stock. Some were excellent packers. Although there were no pack trips in the Heppner country, Iris would accompany me whenever the work and circumstances would allow. After guard school much of my work was follow-up training of guards and lookouts. There was a lot of S&G and C&H Allotments to inspect. There were also the 'other duties as assigned'. When spending a day with a guard, Iris would visit with his family. The guards became our best friends.

This is IRIS - 1936

We would often get home from the field after a week's trip, on Friday night. Iris would shop Saturday morning while I worked at the office. After a work planning session with the ranger on Sunday we would load everything in the car and head out again to make camp at Bull Prairie, Tupper, Ellis or Long Prairie. It was a busy and eventful life.

There was a trail shelter and a fenced pasture at Long Prairie. Near the shelter was a fine spring. We camped there and turned the rented horse out in the pasture. He was a good riding horse but at first defied all of my efforts to catch him in the mornings. Finally Iris took the halter and just walked up to him and puts it on. We learned later that he had been ridden the previous winter by a schoolgirl.

From Long Prairie I could spend a week inspecting several sheep allotments and training a few guards. A young couple manned Wheeler Point Lookout and we visited them whenever we were in the area. One day, after riding over a sheep allotment, I returned to camp early and found Iris had gone. The car was gone so I assumed she was visiting her friend at Wheeler Pt. To surprise her I prepared dinner. Much later, I called the lookout but no one answered. In those days a lookout didn't leave his post at any time without permission from the dispatcher or ranger. I was just about to call Heppner when the lookout drove up in his car.

"Our wives left the lookout in your car after lunch for a short ride. About two hours ago they walked back to the lookout and reported that your car was stuck in the mud down on Wineland Meadow. I got permission to leave and went down to get it out. In the process my car also became stuck. After finally getting my car out of the mud I came here for your help."

When we arrived at the meadow there was the car out on the lush green meadow, down on all four axles. Iris excitedly explained, "We saw a little lake on the map and decided to go swimming. We came to this pretty meadow where the road ended. I could see the road leaving on the other side so started to drive across." I patiently explained, "No one would even dream of crossing that wet meadow in the summer. It never dries out until late in September."

We pried the axles up with a pole, stuffed bark, rotten wood and other material under the wheels, until the car was out of the mud. Then we paved the short distance back to solid ground with more bark. Then we rigged a Spanish Windlass. A long one inch rope (carried for this purpose) was tied to the car and

the other end to a nearby pine tree. About 30 feet behind the car I dug a hole and jabbed a sturdy post into it. Putting one end of a long pole against this post, we wrapped or looped the rope around the end. Pushing this pole around the post resulted in the operation of a primitive capstan. Iris backed the car as I wound up the rope. We hadn't heard of the handyman jack yet and used the Spanish Windless many times. Each of those times I was never sure when Iris would back the car over me as it roared out of the mud.

Late that fall we walked into Wineland Lake, the only lake on the Heppner District. It was small and covered with lily pads. It was a much better place for water dogs and frogs than for swimmers.

Duncan Moir, from the Colville had replaced John Irwin, who retired as Supervisor. He was in Pendleton only a couple of months. Ralph Crawford replaced Moir but he didn't stay long either. Carl Ewing, from the Malheur was the fourth supervisor we had that year. In the meantime, Jim Iler kept the wheels turning.

In the fall of 1937 I attended a Ranger Training School for a month at the new Wind River training facility. Hank Harrison was in the group of trainees. Our trails had crossed again.

After the school I received notice to report to the S.O. in Pendleton where I would meet Bernie Payne and accompany him to Baker. There we were to join Fred Matz and several men from the Whitman Forest and organize a cruising party to map and cruise an area for land exchange. We drove all the way around from Baker to Long Creek and stayed a night in the old hotel there. Before dinner we washed up in tin wash basins. There was a bath tub in a shipping crate on the hotel porch. We were told that this would be the first tub to be installed in Long Creek but that they would have to wait until spring to install it.

We left Long Creek and drove to our camp location. I think the truck and smaller rigs got stuck 3 or 4 times on that muddy road. I don't remember a trip anyone made to Long Creek that he didn't report getting stuck in the deep mud at least once. We set up our camp and the equipment we had made it quite comfortable. The mud was everywhere as we worked into December. We wore rubber boots to go from our tents to the cook tent. If it froze we wouldn't need them but then it would warm up and snow and there would be mud everywhere again.

Bernie and I teamed up as one of the 2-man parties. I ran compass, paced and mapped while Bernie tallied the trees. We had each done so much of this over the years that we were quite efficient. I could run compass and map as fast as I could pace the distance in that gentle pine country. No matter how fast I could go, Bernie would keep right with me with his cruising. I never did wait on him. It was real fun work

We hated snags because of the hazard in spreading fire far and wide if a forest fire occurred. We took it upon ourselves to burn every snag we came to. We would set them afire at the base of a deep check in the trunk. On our return strip we would go over 10 chains and check any snag that wasn't smoking up enough and chunk up the fire to ensure the snag burning down. We burned a lot of snags that fall.

We would run our required strips for the day and be back in camp by 3:00 or 3:30 p.m. This was O.K. for a while but pretty soon we began to get into trouble. Fred Matz questioned our accuracy with so much speed and maintained it was impossible to be accurate and still travel so fast. He finally went with us for a check cruise. He agreed my pacing and mapping was O.K. When he worked up the tally sheets, Bernie was off 1/2 of one percent in volume. Fred should have known this would be the result because we had called Bernie "Old 1/2 of one percent" for years.

Finishing our days work so early we would go to the cook tent and the cook would heat a mixture of canned milk to which we would add a shot of whiskey. It was a good tasting hot toddy with nutmeg sprinkled on top. We shared equally with the cook for his effort. Much later, as the daylight was fading, the other crews would come dragging in, tired and muddy. There was Bernie and I with the cook singing some dirty ditty and living it up warm and dry. I think the Whitman boys began to hate us rather thoroughly. To make matters worse Bernie was winning all their spare change at the nightly poker sessions. Fred finally changed things by having Bernie and I run more strip than the others.

After we had been working in that camp for several days the weather cleared and we kept getting glimpses out through the trees of a very familiar looking hill across the North Fk. of the John Day River. Finally I realized it was Madison Butte on the Heppner ranger district. I had certainly gone 'round robin' getting to Long Cr. from Heppner.

We were all thankful when the job finished a day or two before Christmas. I think we all parted friends but will never know about some of the Whitman fellows.

My second year at Heppner I was assigned a government pickup. To my knowledge it was the first time anyone on the forest, below the grade of District Ranger had a forest service car to use. It was an old Ford but its high wheels and knobby tires served me well.

That July we were again at Long Prairie. While making camp, the dispatcher called on the old iron mine phone, sending me to a nearby fire. Iris went to the fire with me. The fire was small but was starting to spread rapidly in all directions through the pine needles. I with a shovel and Iris with a McCloud Tool, we soon knocked down the fire. We had no water, having used what was in the canteen to fill the radiator. Iris drove the pickup back to camp, reported to the dispatcher and got food and water. Some spring cooled milk really hit the spot. It wasn't long before a couple of firemen arrived and we turned the fire over to them. Iris was to help fight several small fires that season.

Wheeler Pt. L.O. had been located on the base map by triangulation. It had never been tied into the G.L.O. Survey base. To prevent errors in fire locations it was neccessary to determine its exact location from the nearest section corner. Iris helped with this job. She packed stakes and acted as rear chainman. She made many trips to my one between transit set-ups as she held the blumb bob for backsights and forsights and in chaining the distance. She pounded stakes and performed other jobs. After completing the job she accused me of severe discrimination.

The Heppner office was one room located above the Heppner Bank. There was a little alcove with a cot for the dispatcher to use when fires kept him on the phone all night. Other private offices were down the hall. In one of them an elderly lady secretary worked. We all shared a common toilet. Somehow, Fred discovered that if he didn't flush the toilet it made this secretary furious. He always returned from his frequent trips down the hall with that big grin on his face.

Towards the end of the C.C.C. program they started to build a warehouse for the district. Fred would finally be able to move all that equipment out of his garage at home. We had a young girl working part time in the office. She was financed from some of the emergency funds we had in those days. Her work was as

Wheeler Point Lookout
1938

minimal as her pay. One day she just didn't show-up for work. We later learned that she had run off and married a little C.C.C. Boy from Brooklyn that had been working on the warehouse. Fred was pretty upset about it. Finally he swung around in his chair. "I guess she had nothin' and he had nothin,' so they decided to put their nothin's together and make something!" He grinned.

Fred had assistant rangers in constant succession but there were periods when the position was vacant. Henry Fries was an administrative guard at the Opal Guard Station and he filled the gaps. He performed much more work than a new assistant ranger, and it was, perhaps, a bitter pill to have a green person like me come along and take over. Upon meeting Henry I told him I was there temporarily for one purpose only and that was to learn the work on a ranger district. I asked him for all the help he could give me. From then on he never failed to do everything possible to help in my training.

An entry in the April work plan read, "Make feed lot counts of cattle in the Spray Area. Fries to assist -- 4 days." That looked good on paper, but how did you do it. Bright and early one morning I was riding in a pickup with Henry, headed for Spray over the Heppner - Spray Highway. The work plan was wrong. I assisted Henry. To count cattle you had to be mounted or the range cattle wouldn't go through the gate near a man afoot. Henry was aware that I barely knew which side of a horse to climb up on. I was approaching Spray with considerable trepidation. Henry noticed my nervousness. "When they hand you a horse just climb on like you know what you are doing. Not because the cattlemen are watching you but because the horse is. If he thinks you are scared of him he'll pile you for sure. The men would only laugh at you but the horse might kill you." That may have been good to know but it didn't help much at the time.

That week I learned what 'feed lot counts' really meant. You were expected to lend a hand in any activity going on at the ranches. I pitched manure, slopped pigs, chased cows, fed stock, helped brand calves and other interesting chores. Actually a small part of the time was used to count permitted cattle that would be turned out on the forest allotment when the range was ready. It would have been insignificant had we not found some strange brands on the cattle of one of our larger permittees. The man was trying to run cattle on the forest that he didn't have ownership of. The rancher was deep in debt and on cancellation of his permit he went broke.

How the heck was I to know that branding calves meant roping them a-horseback and throwing them in the barnyard mud. Ear marking them with a pocket knife

as the blood spurted from the tiny arteries. Using the same knife to castrate them (more blood) and then spitting tobacco juice in the wound to sterilize (?) it. Hearing the sizzle and smelling the burning hide as the large hot branding iron was applied. Finally taking the rope off and kicking the calf in the rump to remind him that he was still alive. We put in some long tough days. My hands were blistered. By sundown it became an effort for me to move. You know something? After drinking a half water glass of straight whiskey and eating a huge ranch dinner, complete with pies and cake, it all seemed very worthwhile. After a night in a feather bed the morning looked fine indeed.

I recall another feedlot count near Monument. The permittee was the Capon Bros. O. J. Johnson, our range staff man, got a big charge out of that name. "I've seen all kinds of names on our grazing permits. There was even a Coldpecker. That's the first Capon I've seen." The memorable thing about that count was that the cattlemen had to cut the fence and drive the cows back into the pasture. It was the only spring that I ever chased cattle off the national forest in order to count them back on. It was a good thing they were on part of an early opening allotment.

In June I asked Henry to show me the Tamarack C & H Allotment. He took me at my word. I hadn't realized the darn cow range was so big. We traveled about 25 miles that day to cow camps, salt grounds, important forage areas and water improvements. All the time Henry kept up a running commentary on everything. He gave personality sketches of all the permittees. The man was a walking encyclopedia All the time he effortlessly slouched in the saddle. I walked the last 5 miles back. It was several days before I could sit comfortably. Henry hadn't been trying to show off. He hadn't tried to wear me down. He had just simply and seriously showed me over the allotment. Wasn't that what I had asked him to do?

I well remember George, even though I can't remember his last name. He

was the lookout on Tamarack Mt. George and his wife were school teachers. They kept a cow and a calf at the lookout so their young son could have fresh milk. Arriving at the lookout late one night the wife and boy were there but George was out looking for the cow. He later told me he had spent over 300 hours chasing that cow, all at night.

He was an amateur wrestler and he delighted in showing me some of his favorite holds. He was such a good natured guy that I did not complain when he had me tied up in knots on the floor of the cabin. It was late in the season when I again visited Tamarack Mt. George had scabs all over his head, face and arms and probably on his body, too. He explained, 'The calf was getting so big I decided to give him an operation and grow a nice big steer. He was already so big it took me over two hours to throw him on the ground. I was too busy to notice I might be losing skin on those rocks. Anyway, (a sheepish grin) it was a good wrestling match.'

George taught school one winter in Ione, a small village near Heppner. He told me how he had almost gotten fired by the school board. "I had a couple of horses, good riding stock, but I had trouble finding pasture that I could afford on my salary. A nice little cemetery on a hill outside of town had been fenced in for about fifty years and was covered with a good stand of the original bunch grass. What a pasture! I had to turn the horses in after dark and get them out before daylight. One morning, as the days lengthened in the spring, I was a little late getting them out and someone saw me. The town had a big meeting with me. They didn't like the idea of horses tramping over the graves of their loved ones. After arguing for a couple of hours it was decided that if I needed horse pasture that bad, one of the ranchers would provide it for me free." Everyone loved big, bear-like George.

Bert Bleakman had been the guard at the Ditch Creek G.S. for many years. He and his wife Hattie became like second parents to Iris and me so we visited them whenever we could. He liked to relate the history along the old Ritter to Hardman Road. It had originally been part of one of the old military routes across Oregon. Parkers Mill had been on the road at the north forest boundary. It had been a sawmill town and a stage stop at one time. Now there was only a few bleached boards among the bull pines. Bert told us, "They used to have some real wing-ding Fourth of July celebrations there and we would always attend. One midnight a woman rode through town on a white horse, her hair hanging down her naked body. Just like Lady Godiva. Gosh dang it! I missed the whole show cause I had gone to bed early." Whenever he told this story Hattie never failed to remark, "Yes, and the old fool stayed up all the next night hoping she would ride again."

A few years earlier I had chased smoke on the old Lake Creek District of the Malheur Forest. We had the weeks of dry lightning storms the Malheur is famous for. On that flat country I had learned that when all else failed, start

climbing trees. Also if you smelled smoke, pocket your compass and follow your nose upwind. You learn in a hurry when you are sent out with 20 or 30 C.C.C.'s and you leave two men at each fire you chase down.

One Sunday night at Heppner we had a real hot lightning storm and I got to sharpen-up on those smokechasing skills. By morning we had 50 fires reported and hardly a drop of rain. I moved out on the district and hung up a mine phone on a pine tree that the grounded telephone line was on. After establishing a camp for 25 ERA men, I was dispatched to the fires. I left 2 men on a fire and then would go back and get a couple of more men and the location of another fire. This went on all week. Soon you walked to a fire by the seat of your pants. I finally ended up on the only Class B fire from that bust. It was away west on the private land near the Snowboard L.O. With three remaining men we stayed until that fire was out. By that time we were tired, dirty and out of grub.

We worked by the ethic of the old timers. Although things were starting to change, hard work and long hours had not. We just worked as hard as we could and never worried about pay, leave or any of those things. We wanted only to do the best possible job to the highest possible standard. We were fiercely proud to be a member of the best damned outfit in the United States Government. The expression was, "We hired out to be tough, didn't we?"

Arriving home Saturday night, dirty, hungry and barely awake, I slept the clock around, getting up to Sunday dinner. The work plan said I was to be at Tamarack L.O. for guard inspection on Monday morning. I threw my gear into the pickup and drove to Tamarack. I was just crawling into bed in the ground cabin when the dispatcher phoned and told me I was wanted right away in Heppner to leave for a big fire on another forest. Getting back to Heppner, I grabbed my outfit, said good-by to Iris and drove to Pendleton. At 3:00 a.m. I left with Jack Groom for the long drive to the Spud Hill Fire on the Cispus River of the Columbia National Forest.

This was a famous fire in the Cispus Burn that had been started by lightning. The old burn covered thousands of acres and was a sea of snags. Forest Service personnel from all over the region were dispatched for overhead. Supplies and equipment were ordered for large camps. Burnsiders (Portland) and Skidroaders (Seattle) were bussed to the fire. C.C.C. Camps were dispatched. There existed a great potential for a major conflagration. The weather was critical and the fuel moisture very low. Suddenly the weather changed during the first night. Some rain fell. Great numbers of men and mountains of supplies continued to roll into

the camps up the Cispus. Orders had been given and they couldn't be stopped. I hope that someday someone will write the story of this fire. The fire did make history of a doubtful kind. The following remarks were often heard:

The only fire with 100 pounds of bronze badges.
Who ordered a ton of black pepper?
I met everyone I ever knew in the Forest Service.
The men could join hands around the fire and p---- it out.

Little did I know then that someday I would be the district ranger of the Randle District where this famous fire occurred.

The last summer at Heppner we got a soaking rain early in September. It rained all Thursday night and all day Friday. Iris had been getting mighty homesick so coming in from the district Friday afternoon we decided it was a good chance to get back to Winthrop and visit her mother. No one was in the office. I couldn't find either Fred or the dispatcher. Finally leaving a note on Fred's desk telling him my plans and asking for annual leave for Saturday morning (Monday was Labor Day), we left Heppner in a hurry as we had a long way to go that night.

On Tuesday morning I entered the office with a cheerful 'Good morning.' Fred didn't even answer with his usual grunt. I thought his 'forest service ulcers' were acting up again. Sitting down at my desk I noticed a small brown envelope. Inside was one of those 1/2 letter sized memos. "You left your official post of duty without permission in the middle of fire season. Only the forest supervisor can approve such leave. You are A.W.O.L" /S/ Fred W. Wehmeyer, District Ranger.

I couldn't believe it. I asked Fred to turn around and waving the memo at him asked what in Hell it meant. He replied, "If Johnny Irwin were still supervisor he would bring personnel action against you." I pointed out the soaking condition of the forest and told him it was about the silliest ruling I had ever heard of. After a lot of discussion and hemming and hawing, I finally cooled down and Fred reached across and crumpled up the memo, saying, "Maybe things are finally changing for the better" There under those moving bushy eyebrows was that wonderful grin.

On March 1, 1939, I was promoted to District Forest Ranger, SP-7 at $2,300.00. I was to be in charge of the Meacham District of the Umatilla National Forest at LaGrande, OR. To be selected as a district ranger was a great honor! I was 27 years old.

At the same time I was detailed for a month to the 'Oregon Showboat'. This was a public relation training assignment. With Harold A. (Red) Thomas representing the Oregon State Forester we gave fire prevention programs to the schools of the Willamette Valley communities. We also presented educational programs to all the C.C.C. Camps in Western Oregon. The tour was excellent and gave me training that was to be invaluable in the years ahead. While on this tour Iris went home to Winthrop and we stored our household goods. Iris was pregnant and after we moved to LaGrande we had a baby boy in May.

The promotion and the Show Boat work were all due to the recommendations of Supervisor Carl Ewing. I was the first forester to become a district ranger on the Umatilla. It wasn't long before Jack Groom took Keith McCools' place at Dayton. I had replaced Gerald (Tuck) Tucker at LaGrande. He was taking Arzy Kenworthy's place at Asotin. Albert Baker was at Walla Walla, R. R. (Rube) Butler at Ukiah and Fred Weyhmeyer at Heppner. In the S.O. Jim Iler was Carl's assistant and O.J. Johnson was the grazing staff man. Curley Simpson was superintendent of construction and Art Hall soon arrived as our new administrative assistant. Ed Peltier was fire staff and later John Clouston followed by Charlie Rector as grazing staff. Timber management was handled by Lumberman Royal U. (Doc) Cambers.

There hadn't been a lot of money spent on district headquarters on the Umatilla. The buildings that had been built were mostly summer headquarters that the rangers moved to seasonally. The Heppner and Ukiah districts were in town and the rest were planned for the same move. The forest warehouse in Pendleton took care of most of the equipment.

The Meacham headquarters had just been made yearlong in La Grande and the old summer ranger station at Summit was converted into a guard station. The office was a small one room area upstairs in the LaGrande Post Office. The warehouse was a shack-like two car garage that we rented for pickup storage on one side and equipment piled on the other. Everything else was out at the Summit G.S. Here was a barn, horse pasture, an old style warehouse and the former ranger's residence. Close by was the old original building. It was a small log cabin in poor repair. A faded, hand stenciled wooden sign over the doorway proclaimed it the 'Summit R.S.'

Gerald Tucker came back during my first week at LaGrande to introduce me to 'key men' of the area and to go over the work plan for 1939. Tuck was greatly

probably "Summit"

The Original Meacham Ranger Station - 1939

Constructed 1907

Personnel of the Umatilla National Forest - Work Planning Meeting.
From the left is Carl Ewing, Supervisor; Fred Wehmeyer, DR Heppner; O.J Johnson, Grazing Staff; Curly Simpson, Super. of Constr ; Art Hall, Admin. Asst.; Tom Brown, Asst. Staff; Bill Beeman, JF; Doc Cambers, TM Staff; Arzy Kenworthy, DR Asotin; Jim Iler, Asst. Supervisor; Kieth McCool, DR Dayton; Albert Baker, DR Walla Walla; Gerald Tucker, DR La Grande; Bob Keller, Asst. Ranger, Walla Walla; Harold Chriswell, Asst. Ranger, Heppner; Rube Butler, DR Ukiah.
1937

admired by all the people in the Grande Ronde Valley. He was a fine ranger and I wondered how I would be able to fill his shoes.

The Umatilla Indians were his friends and called him 'Ranger Tuck'. He spent some time explaining the importance of the Indians to our public relations efforts. Their reservation bounded the district on the Southwest. I well remember Tuck's advice, "When you ride up to a Chief's camp don't call out or rattle the teepee flap as you will be ignored. Just sit quietly and wait. If you get nervous, take out your knife and whittle. After while an Indian will come out to greet you and invite you into the teepee."

Tuck told of one experience, "I had located the camp of a Chief who I wanted to talk to. I rode up to his handsome teepee and saw a good looking young squaw hanging out clothes to dry. Removing my hat I asked her if any of the men folks were around. She turned around a gazing steadily up at me, stated, 'I have only one man and he is my husband!"

There was just room in the office for a part time clerk during the field season. She was financed from some emergency youth funds. The rest of the time I had the office to myself. I arranged it with a typewriter on a flip-out desk pedestal, the files within reach on the right and the manuals, handbooks and atlases on my left. They all didn't take up much room in those days.

The local stockmen began to drift into the office that spring. They asked where the new ranger was. Amazement was plain on their faces when I informed them they were looking at him. For a time I considered growing a full beard and smoking cigars to try to appear older.

Work plans were all important in those days. If you didn't get a specific job done during spring maintenance there was no one left but the ranger to do it when fire season arrived. We carefully planned our work with 'Progressive Travel.' Supervisor Ewing liked to go over his ranger's diaries to see if they followed the plan. He would draw a line on a calendar showing when they left for the field and when they returned. If the ranger hadn't left headquarters on Mondays and returned Fridays, he was in trouble with the boss.

With the exception of road grading and project work everything was accomplished spring and fall by the fire guards. This work was planned so as to extend their employment as much as possible. These faithful people were being 'blanketed in' under the Civil Service. I was never to know any harder working

employees. They and their families became the Ranger's best friends. The crew on the district starting spring maintenance consisted of Eugene (Shorty) Oswald, Tip Top LO; Harold Hillary, Summit LOFD; and George Murchison, High Ridge LOF.

The Union Pacific R.R. ran through the middle of the district, traveling over the Blue Mountain Summit at Kamela and Meacham and down the west side around the great horseshoe bend of Meacham Creek to the Umatilla country. Shorty and Harold would load all the spring maintenance supplies on the train at LaGrande. They would then ride in comfort quickly to the Duncan Railroad Station on Meacham Creek. The same day at 4:00 a.m. George and I would leave his place near the Mt. Emily foothill and take the horses over the mountain, through the snow and down Meacham Creek. At the Duncan R.R. Station we would pack the equipment and ride 3 miles to the old Duncan R.S. on Camp Creek. As the snow receded, all trails and telephone lines were maintained, using saddle horses.

This was the first horse trip in the spring and was greatly enjoyed. George and I would ascend the steep foothill trail and finally reach the summit north of Mt. Emily. Here the snow was deeply packed. Sometimes the horses would break through and we would have some troubles. Later we would drop down into the Meacham Cr. country via the North Fork, through the bright flowers.

It was a beautiful time of the year in the Umatilla country. The sunflowers were blooming on the south slopes and the bunchgrass was greening. Early fritillaria and erythronium were everywhere. The air was warm and dry and the sky blue. One Saturday our wives all rode down to Duncan on the train. We rode double, back to Duncan R.S. The ride was hilarious as we balanced pies and goodies in our hands. They left on the Sunday afternoon train.

George was the horse wrangler. He was up every morning at 4:00 a.m. He would build a fire in the range before leaving to catch up the horses. Shorty would arise just in time to revive the fire and then start breakfast. Harold would remain in bed as long as he could but would be up to help with the horses when George returned. He would help to feed, curry and saddle the horses. This crew always got away on the trail between 6:30 and 7:00 a.m. Returning at dusk some very long, hard days would be worked.

The two or three weeks I spent at Duncan each year was like a spring vacation. The work plan called it 'Supervision of spring maintenance' but I worked as one

Spring Maintenance Crew at Duncan R.S.

From left, George Murchison, High Ridge L.O.; Harold Hilary, LOFD, Summit G.S.; Shorty Oswald, Tip Top L.O.
1940

The Old Duncan Ranger Station On Camp Creek
1940

of the crew. There also was a cattle and a couple of sheep permittees living on patented June 11th Claims on lower Meacham Cr. that I would visit.

In May the work would shift to the upper country where there were roads. Even here horses were used to log out the roads as there were always muddy places and snow drifts remaining along the backbone of the Blue Mountains. If time became critical a few sticks of dynamite in a drift would break it up and the warm weather would melt it out in a couple of days.

Guard Camp was held at the Tollgate R.S. on the Walla Walla District where there were buildings we could use that had been a C.C.C. camp. The fire positions were occupied following this. Harold Hillary was the Lookout Fireman Dispatcher at Summit. LOFD -- Boy! Was that a title. Harold and his wife lived in the old ranger's residence. He received $135.00 a month and had to furnish two horses and saddles. The lookout part of the title came from an old white fir tree about 300 feet from the house. It had a rickety ladder up to the top where there was a little platform and a firefinder mounted on the 6 inch diameter cutoff tree. The firefinder was a small one with a 1/4" scale base map. It was covered by a galvanized garbage can lid. We called them 'Ash Can Firefinders.'

The Umatilla had a lot of these firefinders on tree tops scattered around for emergency L.O's. When you climbed one you never knew when a ladder rung would come off in you hand, as they were just nailed to the uprights. We tied a lot of the rungs on with No. 9 telephone wire. If the wind blew when you were up one of those trees the resultant motion was frightening. If it blew too hard you would scurry down the ladders in a hurry.

It was a bitter day when I had to tell Harold that he was to be charged $10.00 a month rent on the house with no corresponding increase in pay. No forest guard had ever before been charged rent. George Murchison and his wife became our best friends. They manned the High Ridge LOF position during the fire season. He earned $110.00 per month and had to furnish two horses and saddles. When he went to a fire his wife was the lookout. We had to start charging $5.00 a month rent on the lookout houses. This was an unjustifiable cut in the meager 4 or 5 months annual pay to our guards. I never could figure out why these fine loyal people continued to work for us. Notice the F tacked onto the position title. Those were the fire positions that required horses.
George was the finest horseman I would ever know. His father, Dan Murchison, was one of the last of the so-called 'Oregon Buckeroos'. He had run horses on Mt. Emily before the Forest Reserves were created. He told us what the S.P.

High Ridge Lookout - 1940

meant in the name S.P. Prairie. He couldn't ride anymore because of age and having been busted-up on too many wild broncs. He had raised 13 children and most of them still had horses. Several rode in the rodeo circuit. George would have taken top money in the rodeos but choose not to. He had been the Association Rider on the Phillips Cr. C&H Allotment for several years. Each spring he would break a horse for some friend. As a result we would have a regular rodeo each morning George mounted up down at Duncan.

I remember a bay mare, named Geraldine, that used to buck all the way around the Duncan R.S. each morning. She would hop, twirl, rare-up and try to brush George off against the house. I wouldn't have anything to do with her. She was able to kick out in any direction like a mule could. George would just grin and work her over all day long. By the time he went up to High Ridge LO she was fairly well broken.

George was quite shy. The forest and his horses were his life. He avoided large groups of people and was very quiet around strangers. Not so, when we were riding some trail. Here he was at home and would happily chatter like a magpie. My first spring we were riding up the old foothill trail to cross over Mt. Emily on our way to Duncan. I was in the lead and George followed with the packstock. After a couple of hours of hard climbing I laid a leg across the horses neck to ease my unused muscles. I noticed that George had stopped talking. I asked him what was wrong. He said, "If one of us kids ever done that, the old man would cut our horse with his quirt and we would be sitting on the ground". I never forgot this good lesson in safety. From then on I would always ride a horse straight forward with weight equally distributed between seat and stirrups.

After I had left the district, George was drafted into the Army. He was placed in a mule outfit in Kansas or Missouri. He packed a string of mules in the Italian campaign of World War II. When returning with empty packs he tripped a land mine and was killed. The forest service placed a bronze plaque on Indian Rock in his memory. I so well remember George and me sitting our horses at this same spot as we looked far down at his little ranch on the floor of the Grande Ronde valley.

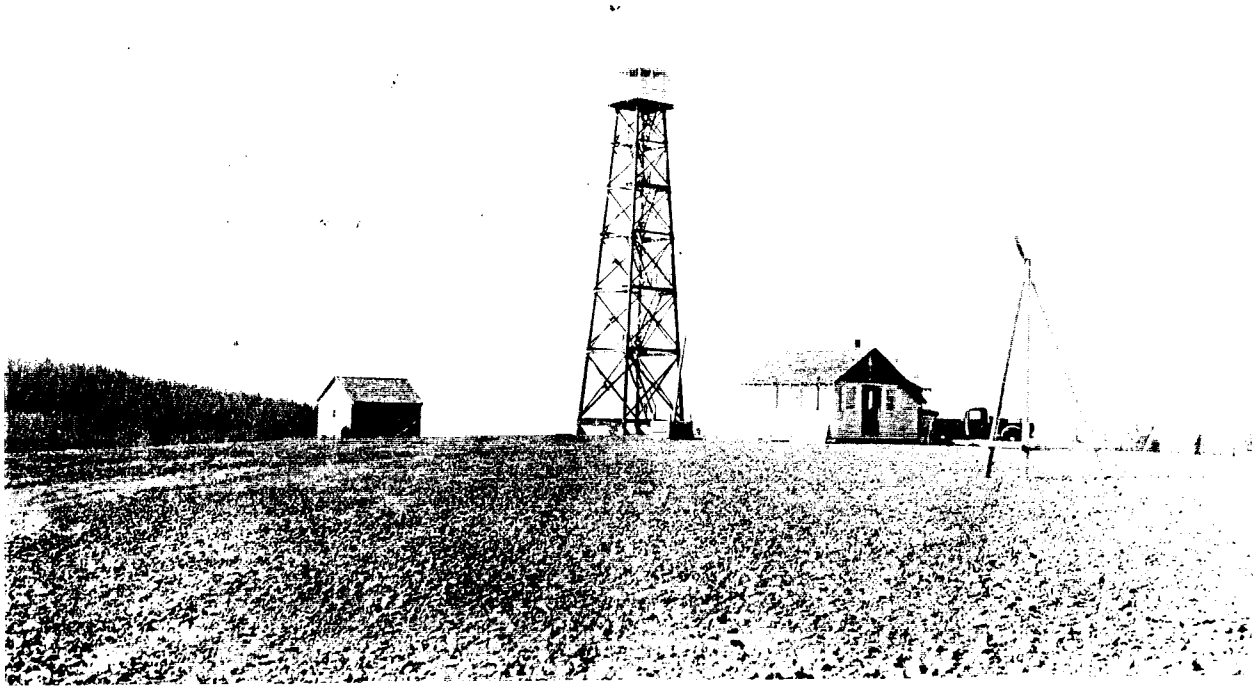
One winter I traveled to Duncan by train. The station master was a fine fellow and a good cooperator on fires. He helped us plant fish in Meacham Cr., as they were brought down on the railroad. His wife had gone out to Pendleton for a week of visiting and shopping so he invited me to stay at the Rail Road Station. This gave me a chance to make a feed lot count and contact our sheep permittees

living down-stream. When it was time to 'turn-in', he showed me into a large room with a four poster bed. There was a feather bed on it. I blew out the lamp, sank into the feathers and was soon sound asleep. Suddenly, the roar of a train awoke me! I sat bolt upright and stared at the headlight racing directly at me. The train roared louder and blasted its whistle. I didn't have the faintest idea where I was and was too scared to move. Suddenly the light went out and the train rushed by. I was still alive and realized that I had been looking directly up the union Pacific tracks through one of those narrow vertical windows that had been built into all the old R.R. Stations of that vintage.

There was a rancher named Cantrell that lived on 160 acres inside the forest up Fivepoints Creek. He didn't have any fence and his 35 cows trespassed on the forest. Carl Ewing instructed me to stop this tresspass. I visited Cantrell and told him he had to fence his property. He said he couldn't afford it and the cows were the only support for his family. I suggested he rent pasture somewhere else or I would have to take legal steps to remove his cattle from the Forest. Fortunately, he subsequently was able to do this. A couple of days after my visit with him I drove to Goodman Ridge L.O. on the north boundary of the ranger district. Locating a band of sheep, I met the herder. After shaking hands, he remarked, "So your the feller that told Cantrill to keep his damn cattle off the forest, huh?" I was always amazed how that old forest service grounded telephone line got the news spread so fast throughout the mountains.

Our biggest trouble with forest fires on the Meacham District was from the Union Pacific R.R. They were fine cooperators and usually had a fire out by the time we could get to it. The old coal burning locies were gone so most of the fires came from hot brake shoe particles. A speeder patrol followed each train down hill from Meacham. In the spring the roadmaster would take me over the line in his speeder and we would examine the firebreaks and check the suppression equipment. This was an exciting trip as we made our way amid the heavy traffic of a mainline railroad.

My first year we had about 30 reportable fires. In the fall we had a ranger meeting in Pendleton. My neighbor ranger at Ukiah, Rube Butler, asked me, "What in Hell are you trying to do? Make yourself a reputation?" Rube couldn't understand a ranger reporting every fire. "Why, I had a 30 acre fire this fall and just let 'er burn. No need to report it as it soon snowed, anyway."
Public relation was a major activity in LaGrande. There were many cooperative wildlife programs with the Oregon Game Department. Frequent press releases were written. The LaGrande Observer would use anything we gave them. I was



Goodman Ridge Lookout
1940

called upon to speak to many groups interested in the forest. Good relation was enjoyed with the Eastern Oregon Normal School. Trespass cattle were a constant problem along the forest boundary. The Umatilla Indians were very good neighbors to the West. They sent 2 men to our guard camp at Tollgate each year. They built a lookout tower west of Flat Lake to help protect their forest. During the huckleberry season they enjoyed what they called a picnic. Ranger Tuck had always been invited to this and they now included me.

The Umatilla people played an important part in the Pendleton Round Up and had proud Nez Perse traditions. Their teepees were large and beautifully decorated. At the picnic the young men were constantly racing their ponies as others bet on them. Older men played stick games. The women were cooking meat by the open fires. There was elk, bear, deer, porcupine, grouse and other meat I couldn't identify. When all the food was prepared, the meal was something to remember. The council would ask me to speak to the tribe. This was accomplished through an interpreter. I always wondered if he told the others the same things I spoke of.

You could ride down a fork of Meacham Creek and suddenly come upon an Indian camp with its colorful teepees. There would be lots of women and children drying berries and mushrooms. Horses would wander through camp. Tiny sweat houses would be set up down by the creek. If you rode that trail a week later, the only sign of a camp might be the barefoot horse tracks and the teepee poles stacked up against a white fir tree. We never knew exactly where these Indians were as they moved about the Umatilla Forest. We were sure Ed Peltier had lost his marbles when he directed us to issue campfire permits to these Indians. We ended up issuing a sort of season-long campfire permit.

Once a season a fine old chief would ride up to the Summit G.S. and tie his horse to the railing. He always arrived just before dinner time and Marion Hillary would ask him to eat with them. This occurred one time when I was there. He had an enormous appetite and ate until everything edible on the table was gone. He leaned back, lit his pipe, and told stories of the old days. He told us many names the Indians had for natural features in the Blue Mts. I still remember a couple of them. Each July the tribes would camp near Indian Rock. The squaws made perfume from flowers that grew there. They called it 'Perfume Rock'. The Indian name for Green Mt. was "Elk Whistle Mt." I remembered the elk bugleing as I had ridden around its flanks. Their names were certainly more musical and fit the country better than those we had placed on our maps.

Mt. Emily was the highest mountain in that area of the Blue Mtns. It formed the great rampart rising directly up to its summit from the floor of the Grande Ronde valley. The view from the top was spectacular. In order to give detection coverage back over the forest, one of those old steel towers had been erected. It was 100 feet tall and had one of those narrow, one foot wide, verticle steel ladders running straight up one side to the small cupola at the top. The lookout always had several pair of leather gloves up there. We would slide down a guy wire to descend the tower. It was fast and seemed safer than that skinny ladder.

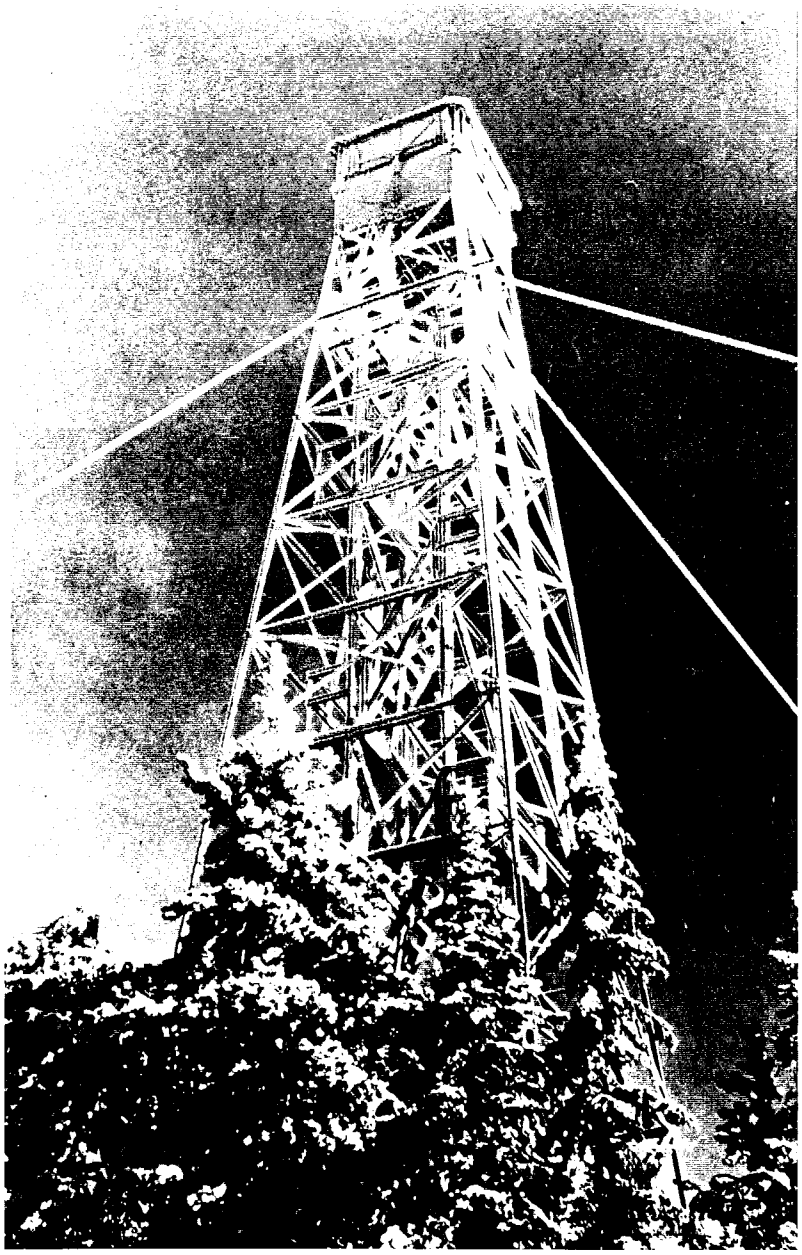
A lot of people visited Mt. Emily. The adventuresome ones climbed the tower. One time a woman climbed up and became so frightened that she froze to the ladder near the top. It took a couple of hours with the help of a telephone linesman's safety belt to get her back down to the ground. When Supervisor Ewing heard about this he sent Ed Peltier out to design and build a self-supporting stairway inside the legs of the tower.

We continued skiing but mostly for recreation at Anthony Lakes, Kamela and Tollgate. Anthony Lakes had a long rope tow and we saw Hank Harrison often. At Tollgate we skied about 1/2 mile away at the Lookinglass Ski Bowl. Here was a very short rope tow.

At Kamela a very long, straight swath had been cleared through the trees to the top of the ridge. The slope changed directions several times over the length of a mile. Little was known in those days about laying out ski runs. A long rope tow ran the length of the cleared area. One needed super strength to hang on to it for the full distance. We used home made tow irons. In spite of this low quality ski area, the Pendleton Ski Club and others were able to get a national ski race scheduled there.

Metal edges were being used for the first time. Laminated skis were also a new development. America's outstanding skiers were represented at that race. Any highschool skier of today could ski circles around some of those old champions. I often wonder if Assistant Supervisor Jim Iler thought that one of his important jobs was putting on his uniform and parking cars during that weekend of racing. I was his assistant. The next winter there was no snow at Kamela and the area was never used again.

Jim Iler asked me to meet him and a winter sports man from our W.O. at Spout Springs. We walked over the spring snow examining the area for its potential as



The old Mt. Emily Lookout Tower - 100 ft. high

Winter - 1939

a developed ski area. In later years it became the major ski area in the Blue Mtns. as the old Lookinglass area was abandoned.

I kept the ground cabin at Mt. Emily stocked and often skied up there on a weekend. The run back to the valley floor could be pretty exciting.

Forage for domestic stock was an important district resource. Much time was spent riding over the allotments on range inspection. The first year on the District I spent many days dragging a packhorse behind me and staying in sheep camps. This was just the tail-end of the horse ranger days. With long hours in the saddle it was a wonderful life for a first year ranger. The next year we got horse trailers. This saved a lot of time but took some of the romance out of the job. They were called '2-horse trailers', but worked much better for one horse. There was no protection for the horses head as he just leaned out over the upper slat on the front. There were no brakes on those first trailers.

I bought a four year old horse for $35.00. He wasn't the prettiest animal and his broad hips always made him look gant. After purchase I learned his name was Ranger. He was easy to catch and would almost run over me when I rattled a pan of oats at him. He was always ready and willing to walk out at a good fast walk and I didn't have to use spurs on him. He was big and stout and made a good 'Forest Service horse'. I might be very tired at the end of a long day's ride but Ranger wasn't. His only real fault was that he was rough going down hill. The big Hamley Form Fitter saddle I had bought back in Heppner helped as it had a narrow tree and high bucking rolls to hold you back on a downhill slant.

The first grazing survey of the district was being made as we moved towards a more scientific approach to range management. Cliff Windle was in charge of this crew. They started work in the lower elevation country while there was snow on the higher mountains. Cliff was greatly embarrassed one day when his men drove through a ford on the Grande Ronde River.

A few miles towards Starkey from the highway there was a low water ford across the river. The crew drove their pickup across this ford early in the morning. There was a lot of snow on the headwaters and the warm springtime temperature increased the melt, so that the rivers rose considerably during the day. Returning to the ford late in the afternoon they drove the pickup into the river. By then the deeper water came up to the floor boards and the motor stalled in midstream. The crew had to swim and wade ashore.

As elsewhere on the Umatilla there were heavily used sheep driveways traversing the entire district. Ranger Fred Wehmeyer called the forest the 'Umatilla National Driveway'. These driveways were used to move sheep from their winter and spring ranges onto the summer ranges of the National Forests. They were bound, not only to the allotments of the Meacham District but to the Northern Umatilla and the Wallowa country. We assigned guards to ride patrol and keep the bands moving on the driveways. There were counting corrals at strategic locations where we could count sheep for crossing permits or onto their allotments

A forest student who would be manning a lookout later on was assigned to count a few bands of sheep. The first band he tried to count was a twin band. It contained about 1,000 ewes and 2,000 lambs. The sheep weren't half counted when he became violently seasick. This was a new one to most of us. The old hard bitten sheep men would tell about this fellow for years to come. This wasn't his only embarrassment in the sheep country.

I believe every ranger station had at least one or more of the old Army McClelland saddles. Ours at Summit looked brand new, even though some of the leather straps were rotting. I had wondered why they had never been used. This forest student was to help us on trail maintenance. This was done with horses. Since he didn't have a saddle we used one of the McClellans on a horse for him. Later in the day we rode up to a sheep camp. An Irish camptender was there and immediately spotted that saddle. He walked around the horse a couple of times examining the McClelland. Finally he stopped, raised his eyes up to the forest student and asked, "An my boy, what do you 'ave there?" I don't remember anyone ever using one of those saddles again.

Ranger Albert Baker called from Tollgate one day and asked if I could count a couple of bands for him down on lower Meacham Creek. I agreed and loaded my horse in the trailer. I drove out on Horseshoe Ridge where the road ended at an occupied sheep camp on Private land. The herder and sheep were absent. I rode down a long, steep ridge to Meacham Cr. where the sheep to be counted were shaded-up in the heat of the day. Finally, late in the afternoon, I made the count of the two bands and started back up the ridge. When it became dark I realized that if I gave my horse his head he would step in the same tracks as when he had gone down the ridge. I never again had to worry about getting lost in the dark while riding Ranger.

At the sheep camp the sheep were bedded down for the night and the herder started cooking dinner for me on his little stove. The stove was typical of the ones used in the camps in those times. It was very small and made of light sheet metal and had a tiny oven. The stove was perched at a convenient level on four stakes driven into the ground. It was wired to tin cans that protected the tops of the stakes. That herder put five, thick lamb chops in the red hot oven. Cutting up some spuds he french fried them. Digging out a loaf of sourdough bread with butter and honey, he served me one of the finest meals I can remember eating anywhere. By the time I had finished eating, it was late and the herder convinced me to stay overnight with him.

The herder woke me up at day break with 'What the Hell is that?' Something was going bump-thump-bump, over and over again. When we got up to investigate the sound we found some lambs playing by jumping in and out of the horse trailer beside the tent. I returned to Summit and a worried dispatcher.

Another time when Harold Hilary was worried was when I was late returning from a trip to the Huckleberry Mt. S&G Allotment. Parking the pickup and horse trailer at the road's end, I had ridden across country to the occupied sheep camp. The sheep were halfway down the mountain and were slowly feeding back up to the top of the mountain. The band hadn't been counted as yet, so I rode over the allotment and returned to camp in the late afternoon. I located the herder by the sound of the sheep and told him I would like to count the band. He then used three dogs to hurry the sheep up the steep slope to a brush wing he had built for counting. He climbed a large stacked-up rock formation and called for me to join him. From the top we could look straight down on the side of the mountain. The herder pointed out a veteran dog lying down under a small bush. The herder whistled and ordered the dog to go way around the sheep. The startled dog looked straight up at the herder and then went to work. The herder chuckled as he explained that the old dog had gotten lazy and when out-of-sight would lie down and rest.

When we finished counting the sheep it was almost dark and the herder didn't have to ask me twice to stay for dinner. Again, I had a fine meal. I had often heard about the dirty, poor meals served in the sheep camps. I never did have a bad one. Riding back to the end of the road in the dark I was thankful to be on Ranger as I gave him his head. When I arrived at the pickup about midnight, Harold and his wife met me just to be sure that I was O.K.

Each year the political pressure was building against the grazing of sheep on the National Forests. This was too bad as the resource converted to lower prices for top lambs and wool. To combat this pressure the forest service decided to move the driveways off the roads. There was one fallacy in this decision. The sheep driveways were there first. They followed the ridge tops. When roads were built they also followed the ridges. Moving those driveways was a big job and cost a lot of money to swamp out brush and trees for the new driveways along the steep side slopes. It is the nature of sheep to work their way uphill. They would get back on the road no matter how hard the sheep men tried to hold them to the new driveways. Their dogs would soon tire as they chased the sheep down the side slopes. It was all a great waste of both time and money. We had no sooner completed the construction projects than the sheep began to be trucked to their summer range and the driveways were almost abandoned except for a few local bands.

The first fall I was at LaGrande, I rode on the Roundup for the Summerville C&H Association. I rented a fine cow horse from George Murchison and rode to the cow camp on Phillips Creek. At 4:30 the next morning we ate deer steaks, hash browns, eggs and hot cakes. When we mounted up I noticed that the men were all watching me. I thought they were all wondering if the new ranger could ride. Later on, I learned that the horse I was riding had enjoyed a reputation as a good bucker in a rodeo string. The permittees had all been hoping that I would get piled. It was a good Roundup with hard riding company. I never missed one.

The stockmen of the Grande Ronde valley and all our permittees were some of thefinest people I was ever to meet. They ran their ranches like small kingdoms and were hard-nosed business men. They were independent, free thinking Americans. Their hospitality was of the Old West and they were ready to help their neighbors at any time. They considered the forest service to be one of their neighbors. It would be years later that I would learn that the sheep permittee on Mt. Emily was the family of Carroll Brown's wife Rita and that the cattle permittee on Five Points were the parents of Ross William's wife, Margaret.

My last year at LaGrande, Hank Harrison became my neighbor ranger when he took Albert Baker's place at Walla Walla. Our trails had crossed again. Being a great skier, Hank cooked up a winter trip from Tollgate, up the backbone of the Blue Mountains and down through Mill Creek. A problem of overgrazing by elk had developed in Walla Walla's municipal watershed of Mill Creek. Hank wanted to examine the area when winter snow concentrated the elk herds. I was delighted when he asked if I would accompany him.

I can't remember a major ski trip or snow survey that was easy. This was no exception. Hank arranged for two Pendleton Ski Club members and myself to meet him at Tollgate. Leaving Tollgate we skied to the Spout Springs Lookout the first day. Here there was a tall tower, a ground house and a garage. A major storm moved into the Blue Mts. and we found ourselves in the middle of a blizzard. We had to stay there for a couple of nights. The wood supply was in the garage and we couldn't see it through the heavy snowfall even though only about 150 feet away. The weather cleared and we worked our way through the deep snow to Table Mtn. Lookout. Along the summit the snow had been blown into beautifully curled cornices. The lookout was one of the old R-6 Standard LO buildings with a cupola for the firefinder to be installed in. There were a couple of single steel cots. I remember sleeping with my partner, half on the cot and half on the window sill.

The next day we dropped down through Mill Creek. We had only a short distance of good skiing in the deep snow. During the storm the freezing level had risen and a heavy rain had occurred at the lower elevations. The skiing became very difficult and we finally ran out of snow. We ended up on the wrong side of the river, carrying our skis and stumbling on the frozen bare ground. We worked our way downstream and found a small log that we could coon across the swollen creek on. We only saw one bull elk and I don't think Hank learned a thing from him.

Pearl Harbor was attacked and we started to move into wartime working and living conditions. My draft board was in La Grande, Union County, Oregon. They gave me a deferred classification as I was married and had one youngster and another on the way. Being a district ranger in the forest service had more to do with this deferment than the family did.

The old Meacham District actually had a light work load - especially in the winter. By the end of my third season there, all the plans had been revised, all financed work caught up with and I had run out of meaningful management jobs other than the routine ones. I decided to tell this to the boss. Carl just gave me a long silent stare and said nothing. I was scared. I thought maybe he would fire me or ignore me. Well, Carl did neither. He recommended me to the position of District Forest Ranger, SP-8 at $2,600.00 and a transfer to Hoodsport on the Olympic National Forest.

This transfer was so fouled-up that it is worth describing. Carl had told me about it a couple of months before approval. His reason for doing this was so that I could take extra care in making an accurate October scheduled property inventory. At that time we listed everything; every shovel, axe, hoedag, hammer; everything! It is difficult now to imagine that we considered such a job an important management responsibility for a district ranger.

The move was finally approved in December and the usual activities took place. A big farewell party, press releases, invitations to dinner, Etc. January passed by, then February, and when March arrived we were still in LaGrande, it became quite embarrassing. The move was to be a three way transfer. I was to go to Hoodsport, Wally Anderson to Detroit and Glen Charlton from Detroit to LaGrande. Glen kept writing to me, asking that I tell the guy at Hoodsport to get going. Wally wouldn't answer me except for a nasty note that is best forgotten. Finally I wrote to Supervisor Carl Neal at Olympia and asked for an explanation. I also asked what household goods were furnished in the ranger's residence and if I needed to move my horse. His answer was enigmatic and didn't say much about the move. It also didn't answer my question about the residence or the horse.

What I didn't find out until I arrived at Hoodsport was that Wally objected to the transfer to Detroit and after all this time he finally resigned. At long last the move could be made. I decided to take my horse just in case I needed him. The driver of the moving van built a stall for him in the van and took good care of him. A forward ventilator gave him fresh air and the driver frequently stopped, exercised and watered him. When we arrived at the Hoodsport R.S. the Andersons hadn't moved out of the residence. Bewildered, we unloaded our household goods, partly in the warehouse, and then rented a one room cabin perched on piling over the waters of Hood Canal. The flood tide often brought chunks and logs in and they would bump under us all night long.

Finally Ross Williams, the P.A., loaded Wally's things in his trailer and started him and his family off for Wisconsin. By now we had a rental bill and no money to pay for it. This whole move was hard on the family. Our boy was 2 and 1/2 years old and Iris was pregnant. Oh well, such were some of the moving problems in those days.