

117 Canal St.,
Placerville Cal.,
Jan. 16 1955.

Dear Geo:

Re. your I Supervision Circular of 12/1/55:

As it is snowing like Hell, and Lila & I are getting snappy so as to not say too much, I am going to try and make a stab at your request.

Do not use any of it if you think it does not fit, as many of those mentioned are still living, and their Folks and relatives also. I assure you that what I record is no reflection on them in any way, but someone might construe it that way.

It seems to me now that what appealed to the men who went in the Forest Service at the start, was it gave them an opportunity to become someone respected, and admired for the things they could accomplish the Hard Way, for surely at that stage of the Game it was all Hard, thus the Service appealed to men's strength, both mentally and physically, not to their Weaknesses.

My term of Service of course does not include too much of the start, which was even more gugged than during my tenure, which covers from 1909 to 1950, a period of some 41 years, out of the 50 which is the Birthday of this Region, however the time was all spent in this Region.

My first recollection of ever hearing of the Forest Reserves was about 1904, when my Father attended a meeting in Jackson Amador Co. Calif., which was brought about by a Federal Forest Officer asking the Stockmen to meet with him and discuss the rules regarding the use of grazing lands within the Forest Reserves.

When Dad returned home, he told Mother and us kids, of the meeting where a Federal Officer Dressed in Green, spent two days with them on this subject. I cannot remember any details other than my admiration of such a Person, and his being distinguished by a peculiar uniform, so that all would know him wherever he might be.

To me it was an "Awe". How could a kid ever reach such a Height? One must remember that at this stage of our Citizens development, a high respect was given to those that represented the Laws, from the lowly Constable and the Justice of the Peace on up the ladder of Fame. We truly thought they knew something, perhaps we were happier by not questioning their every action. (Blessed are the Un-educated)

This seed of desire must have lain dormant in my soul for some time, as I continued to go to school, punch cows and dig clay until, 1909, when Mother saw a news item in a paper, asking that men interested in Forest Work make application to the Forest Supervisor at Nevada City California. I went after it. The equipment you were required to furnish was, horse, saddle, bed, clothes and rifle, and if you had a pack horse O.K., but on the job I was assigned this latter item was not a necessity.

With the above prelude I have extracted instances from my diaries to 6/30/50, which I still have complete for each day worked, excepting for about 19 months during World War I, when I was in the Army, where such were not allowed. I am inserting names intentionally so that some record will be made ~~made~~ of those who had a part in the organization and may have long been forgotten.

Edwin F. Smith.

MY FIRST TRAINING SCHOOL

I met Ranger Copren at Squaw Valley Ranger Station July 17 1909, and was directed to meet another Guard named Manchester at Truckee Cal., and we were to then spud in at Schaffer Camp south of Truckee, working out from there, which was done. After a week or so we were told to come to Truckee, and meet the Forest Supervisor Mr. Richard L.P. Bigelow, we did so.

Mr. Bigelow talked to us and told us what we were supposed to do as Fire Guards and I was assigned to the Duffey Wood Camp seven miles East of Floriston.

As Manchester and I had been coming in from the Schaffer Mill camp to Truckee about ever two or three nights, where we had teamed up with a famous Scaler named Fred Dooley, and as I recall we did the town.

Truckee at that time was the Summer Blow off stop, and the Winter Haven for lumber Jacks, who had ideas of what kind of fun they paid their money for. So Front Street had 27 Bars each with a restruant connected, and Back Street had 17 Parlor Houses with Dance Hall connected thereto.

Having had no experience with this kind of life, being raised on a ranch far removed from any town, and never having drank anything stronger than cows milk, my eyes sure Bugged Out.

First I wondered why the mirrors behind the Bars had grateings across them made of one quarter iron. I soon found out, when a Lumber Jack who was peeved about something, picked up a 4 ft. stick of stove wood and heaved it at the Bar Tender. This Boy was Good at his trade as he ducked down behind the Bar in time and the wood just hit the barred mirror and fell to the floor. No harm done. I recall they just kicked the Jack out the back door, toward Back Street, till he cooled off. His exit was rather rough as he resisted strongly, but out he went.

I saw this boy a night or two afterwards, and he was in the same joint, as happy as a clam with only one black eye and a two inch cut on the side of his face.

Fred Dooley had a Forest Service Marking Axe, with a long handle that he carried with him on our night trips about the town, and I finally got my courage up enough to ask him, why he did not leave it in his room he said " kid when you are issued one of these axes, you must Never let it out of your possession". Fred sur^eabided by his instructions, even though it was a little awkward to handle while danceing with one of the Gals.

Richard Bigelow was with us the night of the day we met him in Truckee, and he no doubt sized up the situtation, which might have developed into a Public Relations or a Personnel problem, so banished me to the Duffy wood camp, Dooley to Hobart Mills, and Manchester to the Bear Trap Camp near Brockway. He called me to one side the next morning and said " Son in this set up I want you to know that I will do the drinking and handle the Girlie Night Life for this Forest and I think it best as you are just starting out, to remember this point and stay away from such". I considered this an order.

Being too young I forgot the Supervisors instructions, at this Training School; ~~and~~ about two days later I arrived at Floreston and met Jim Duffey who was the contractor that got out the wood for the Floreston Pulp and Paper Co., at the Duffey Camp and flumed it to Floreston for the paper mill.

Jim was a little Irishman with one foot off at the ankle, who owned about 200 head of pack mules, used to pack the wood to the flumes and could and did drink all the Beer offered him.

Jim was very glad to meet the new Fire Guard, who would relieve him of the Fire Patrol end of his wood camp. To show his joy he had me go down into the cellar of the Company Store, and join him in a quart of beer, before we started up the trail with the pack train.

Forgetting my orders, and wanting to show him I was a man, grown up, I drank it. I know I made it to my horse and got on one way or another, but the seven mile trip to camp was not clear, and I had to make another trip over the trail two weeks later to find out its exact location.

My first training period was completed and I had arrived on my first Job for the Forest Service, at \$75.00 per. month and you stood all your own expenses and feed your livestock. I loved it.

Harvey Abbey's Heroic Stand

When one mentions Section Corners and the location of such, I associate these things with one man, "Harvey Abbey".

Harvey, was to my mind, and still is the outstanding conservationist of all time. I well remember when he was told to clear out a strip about 20 Ft. wide, around a meadow that was to be used for a horse pasture, near the Forest Supervisors headquarters at Mineral on the Lassen National Forest, in 1912, he set about to clear a small trail instead just wide enough to squeeze the wire along. The Forest Supervisor L.A.H. Kling with the then District Forester, who happened to be there at the time, went down to look over the job, and gave Abbey a bad time because the clearing was not as wide as ordered. To demonstrate what was wanted they took axes and slashed the clearing to a 20 ft. width.

Abbey said O.K that is the way it will be but "You sur^e are ~~are~~ both Hellewa Foresters, preach conservation, then destroy good trees for a Damned Horse Pasture. It made no difference to Abbey, how high up they might be, he corrected them when they needed it, according to his standards.

Harveys hobby was locating Section Corners, and the only restless nights he ever had, was when daylight did not come early enough for him to get out and try and locate one that had eluded him at dark the night before. In the records of parts of the Plumas and Lassen Forests, where it states corner found by Harvey Abbey, it was so found, and exactly where and when he states.

Harvey was not a belligerent man, or one to start a row, and appeared among strangers as a retiring or somewhat shy individual, but three times, twice while in the Forest Service and once after his retirement he rose to occasions, where courage of the highest degree was necessary and Boy Did He Have It.

I sometimes smile, when I see in our publications, where some Forest Officer is given a Meritorious Promotion, for figuring how to do something in a new or better way, or for just being a Good Joe for a long period of time.

Harvey never received or believed that he should be so honored, for doing the things that were required of the job, when and wherever he met them, and by such actions helped the Forest Service to get its name and reputation. These kind of things deeply impressed me, and made ~~me and others~~ others and myself, strive in so far as we could to make it go when the chips were down.

Harvey is still living and his diaries would show when the following incident occurred. To my recollection it was on the Shingletown road to Viola on the Lassen Forest.

During the summer of 1911 or 1912 a fire occurred that Harvey was sent to put out. He took his saddle and pack horse with him and on his arrival found that the fire had burned up to the road for some distance, so he started his fire trail from the road.

It must be remembered that in those days the only people that helped put a fire out, was some neighbor that knew you and felt sorry for you personally, or one whose improvements might be endangered, so the job was generally yours to work out, especially if the other nearby Forest Officers were busy elsewhere.

Harvey was Alone, he worked on the fire as long as he could stand it and then knocked off, made himself a meal from his packs, slept a bit and went at it again.

The stage-driver made his daily trips, with his horse drawn stage and saw Harvey once or twice, so he knew he was at work on the fire.

Only Harvey's diary would show how long this procedure went on, but one afternoon he went cross eyed and blind from over exertion. At this time he was a mile or more from the road, and still alone. So he had but one method to get back to the road for help, and he did so by crawling on his hands and knees and feeling the cleared fire trail that he had built, which guided him back to the dusty road, his point of beginning.

Here the stage driver picked him up and took him to town for medical attention. He, out of sympathy had someone care for Harvey's stock and finish corraling the fire. Harvey came back in a day or so on the stage, picked up his outfit, checked the fire and went on his way.