

## Wally Huff Oral History Interview

This is oral history the interview number one December 30th 20/2020 by Gary N. Rahm for the National Museum of Forest Service History. The interviewee today is Wally Huff retired Fire and Fuels Specialist for the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. Wally had a career that started seasonally in 1958 and a permanent appointment in 1962. He retired in 1994

**Gary** - Good morning Wally.

**Wally**- Good Morning.

**Gary**- Are you ready to give us 30 plus years of your experiences in the forest service?

**Wally** - Well I'll sure try!

**Gary** - We've talked about how you can organize this so why don't you just start with your early history through college and how you got interested in the forest service

**Wally** -Sure! I was born in Spearfish, South Dakota in February 1939, 2 years and 10 months prior to Pearl Harbor so that puts this in perspective for you. I spent the first nine years of my life in Spearfish which was then probably a little farming community at the foothills of the Black Hills in South Dakota. My dad was a farmer/rancher and my mother was an elementary school teacher. It was a nice place to grow up through the third grade. In 1948, when I was 9 years old, my folks decided to make a move and my dad had discovered a new job opportunity in Idaho, in the north end of Idaho in the mining district around Kellogg. So in the fall of 1948 we packed up the family and we all moved to north Idaho which was a drastic change from the sleepy little community of Spearfish, South Dakota.

I spent the next 9 years growing up there through high school in Kellogg. I became really enthralled with the community and the area because I loved the mountains and the rivers and the wildlife which was totally different from South Dakota. I spent a lot of time roaming around the hills there. My dad bought me an old Model A Ford when I think I was probably in the 8th grade and I would take my 22 rifle, my dog and my fishing pole and I'd head up the Coeur D'Alene River. I'd be gone for all day long and my folks would have not a clue as to where I was. I just became a real outdoor kid and became very happy with that environment. As a result of that when I was about a sophomore in high school, the local forest ranger from the U.S, Forest Service there at Kingston came and made a career day presentation. It kind of intrigued me and it kind of fit right in with the way I perceived things and the way I liked the outdoors and I thought that might be a great opportunity for a career as much as sophomore in high school can think that sort of thing as I gradually approach graduation in 1957.

**Gary** -Do you remember the ranger's name?

**Wally** - His name was Clarence Stilwell and he had been the longtime Ranger there. Clarence ended up being the timber staff on the Kaniksu National Forest I think that is where he retired. Clarence only passed a few years ago he was a very prominent fixture in forest service in that part of the world. He was a great Ranger to work for, by the way. As I approach graduation I started to think about college and I had a lot of friends in high school that were to attend the University of Idaho and a good friend of mine, in fact one of my best friends, was going to enroll in the School of Forestry at Moscow and so I thought that was kind of interesting since I kind of had a natural leaning that way. I went down to Moscow which was only about a hundred miles from where I lived and took the aptitude test entrance exams and found out that that my strong suit was in Natural Sciences so it fit right in. So this friend of mine and I went to Moscow that fall and enrolled in the University of Idaho and spent the next four and a half years as an undergraduate student in the School of Forestry. I spent four and a half years because I laid out one semester after my junior year and worked to make some extra money so I didn't graduate until the mid semester of 1962, I should have graduated in 1961. So anyway, after my first year of doing basic under graduate courses at the University I applied for a job at the Kingston Ranger District right there close to home for a summer job in 1958. I was offered a job there at Kingston because I was a forestry student and they were trying to help out people that were interested in careers in the forest service. I went to work there for Clarence Stilwell who was still there at the time and it was just a great experience I spent about two or three summers working there at Kingston until I got out of school and got through my military obligation, One of my first experiences with the forest service which was really interesting because it was in 1958 as a 19 year old college student who hadn't been away from home. The ranger told me that I was going on a fire and sent me and another young seasonal employee from the Wallace Ranger District on a fire assignment. "You guys go down to Couer d' Alene and the fire boss and a couple other staff people will pick you up. You're going to go on a fire down on the Salmon River." I didn't even know where the Salmon River was well, anyway we ended up going to Dixie Ranger Station which is down in the Nez Perce National Forest. A very remote district and then about another 30 miles over a jeep trail down to the Salmon River. It was a big project fire in the Salmon River, where the Salmon River area burns every year and so it wasn't unusual to spend time down there on fires which I did later on in my career. I spent a lot of time on the Salmon River. Well anyway I got to MacKay bar and had no idea what I was going to do or I had no skills and I was just wondering what they were sending me down there for. They wanted me to be a time keeper for these big BRC crews on this fire at the time. They didn't have hotshot crews back then but they had these BRC crews were like the hot shot crews.

**Gary** - What were BRC crews?

**Wally** - BRC crews was the Blister Rust Control Program, which was prominent pretty much in western Montana and north Idaho where western white pine trees grow. It was a fungus disease that killed white pine trees so the BRC Crews who are organized to help eradicate, it's kind of a long process to explain but the BRC Crews helped eradicate the alternate host for the rust that killed the white pine trees. This control plan was predominant in western Montana and Idaho where the fungus was killing the Western

White Pine. Anyway they had these big camps located all over the forests. Every forest had a BRC camp or several. These BRC Crews were summer employees most likely college students they were really fit young guys, just like the hotshot crew of today. I ended up on the Salmon River as a timekeeper for two BRC Crews about 50 guys each probably about a hundred total. I was their official timekeeper. Every day, I logged them on and logged them off time at night and I spent probably close to two weeks there on that fire at Mackay Bar. Mackay Bar was an isolated airstrip. I think that was before there was any designation for the Salmon River as wild and scenic or anything like that. Mackay Bar was an airstrip and a little lodge and a grocery store and what have you in the little community of MacKay Bar. The only way to get in there was either by boat or airplane and that jeep trail that we came down off the mountain to the airstrip so I spent two weeks there keeping time for these BRC Crews.

While I was there, a kind of an interesting little side light there was an old hermit, really not a hermit but kind of a recluse from society who lived up the Salmon River. A guy by the name of Buckskin Billy and at the time there was no prominence attached to him. He was just seen up and down the river he walked up and down the Salmon River with a big old stick that he walked with. He wore an old steel helmet and he came into fire camp because I was in fire camp all day and we would sit and visit. I kind of learned a little bit about him. He was a retired petroleum engineer and he decided to drop out of society and move to the Salmon River to become a hermit. He had a little cabin there on the Salmon River. To this day if you get on any historical information about the Salmon River, Buckskin Bill was very prominent in the history and there's hardly anything that is ever told about the Salmon River that does not include Buckskin Billy I kind of felt fortunate that I was able to sit in fire camp and rub shoulders with this guy and listen to his life stories. It was just a little side light to my trip to the Salmon River.

I was thinking I was going to get to go home which I was very anxious to do but anyway the forest service had other plans. They had another fire on the Seven Devils on the Riggins District over on the Snake River in Hell's Canyon and they had a couple of other crews that were coming in from Washington and some pick-up crews and they needed somebody to keep time for them, so I became the logical choice. Instead of going home, I got sent to Hell's Canyon and flown in to a very remote camp by helicopter sitting up on the Seven Devils mountains looking down on Hell's Canyon and they flew these two crews in too. We had some Indian crews from Montana, we had a pretty big camp. We were about 14 miles from the nearest road and I spent another two weeks there and the interesting thing about that story was by the time they got that fire demobed, there was no helicopter to fly us out. There was a trail out of there to the closest forest service lookout where the end of the road was. At that time the helicopters were pretty primitive they were the Bell 47 style or whatever that only could haul two people at a time so they couldn't very well handle all these crews. All these Crews had to hike out these 14 miles, so low and behold when I got demobed they said we don't have a helicopter for you so you're going to have to hike out with the rest of the crews. So it took us darn near 10 hours to hike out the 14 miles. It was down in the canyon and back up the other side and a long way back in the hinterlands. I can remember getting to that lookout late that evening and I thought boy it was a good thing I was 19 years old and pretty fit. That was

a pretty interesting experience and then by the time I got home I said to the ranger thanks a lot what a four-day shift turned into a four-week assignment and I never have been that far, I don't think from home in my whole life.

That was a funny experience but continuing my education at the University of Idaho by going to forestry summer camp down at McCall after my sophomore year. Starting into my forestry classes in my junior year and late in my sophomore year. One time when I was going back to Kellogg to visit on a weekend and went to high school football games and I met this girl at a football game. I became enamored with her and so I started dating her and her name was Barbara Hatrock and she was a junior in high school at the time and I was a junior in college. So I go home as many times as I could sneak home on weekends and we would go out on dates and go to movies and such until I graduated from college in 1962 and she graduated from high school in 1962. We just got together as frequently as we could so after I got out of college mid semester of 1962 I did a short stint with the university working on some forest inventory projects. I was just kind of killing time and I was doing forestry inventory work for a consulting team from the University of Idaho on the Nez Perce Indian lands on the Clearwater. I did that and Barb and I got engaged and we set our wedding date for October of that year. I still had my military obligation to fulfill. Everybody was eligible for the draft once they got out of college and I had a friend that worked for the Washington Air National Guard in Spokane and he said they were looking for recruits and you didn't have to go and spend 18 months or work full time in the service you could do all your training at the Air Guard base on a OJT basis and do weekend drills and so I enlisted in the Washington Air National Guard. I was scheduled to go to basic training in June 1962 and so I went to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio Texas and went all through basic training there for eight weeks and then came home.

When I got home my mother had a couple of letters for me. One from the state of California division of Forestry and they made a job offer for a forestry trainee at the Sacramento district for the State of California. I had another offer from the US Forest Service on the Kootenai National Forest in Libby Montana. I didn't have to think very long about it as I had my experience with the forest service and I like the Forest Service and what it was, so I accepted the job in Libby Montana and was scheduled to report for the supervisor's office that month in August. Barb and I were scheduled to be married in October so I had a couple of months so I went to Libby and reported for duty and Bob Cron was the Forest Supervisor. I had a meeting with him at his office in the supervisor's office in Libby. He gave me a little orientation on the forest service and the Kootenai National Forest and gave me a pep talk on the do's and don'ts as a new forester and gave me a little atta-boy to get me enthused about going to work. So I was assigned to the Yaak Ranger District up in the northwest corner of the forest right up against the Canadian border and it had a little place called Sylvanite Ranger Station. I reported for duty at Sylvanite and Bill Magnuson was the ranger then. There was being some turn over at the time and they were getting a new Assistant Ranger Charley Fudge would come over from another ranger district as Assistant Ranger. This was my first permanent job assignment as a new forester. I did a lot of pre-sale work I was kind of low man on the totem pole so I just followed the other foresters around. At that time the forest service

didn't really have any specialists and the foresters did everything. We did all the resource work, we did stream surveys, we did wildlife habitat projects, and we did range allotment work. The foresters were pretty much multiple-use foresters. That is the thing that made the forest service so exciting since we got to see a little bit of everything and we didn't have specialists to do the jobs for us and it worked out fine.

One of my first job assignments and a really big one was before Barb and I got married in October. They sent me up to a remote timber camp way up in the northeast corner of the district by the Canadian border. They were putting in a big 22mmb timber sale on Basin Creek. One of the interesting things about that sale was there was some adjacent land holders, private in holders, John McIntire being the biggest one. He made his fame on the Wagon Train the TV show. We spent that fall working on the Basin Creek timber sale. Three or four foresters and a couple of engineers and engineering technicians and we worked out of a big spike camp up there. Because it was so remote we would do 10 days stents and then come out for four days and then go back in for another 10 day stint. That was my first big real assignment. We would go in there and we had to hike in there about four miles to the spike camp. We had big wall tents setup for the crew and we had a cook tent, and a supply tent. We had the forest packer bring in our supplies once a week by pack string.

One of the assignments that I got was the camp cook. She was a big heavy set lady, wonderful woman but she had been a sorority cook at a WSU sorority house and she happened to be living up in the Yaak at the time. So the forest service hired her to cook for us at spike camp. Getting her in and out of this camp was a real trick because we had to hike in up this creek bottom about 4 miles over a very primitive trail, lots of logs and walking through the creek. Here is this big heavy set girl and since I was low man on the totem pole it was my responsibility to get her in and out of camp. So on our track in there, we would arrive at the trailhead and it would take me probably 4 hours at least to get her into the spike camp. Then we would leave to go back out it was my responsibility to get her out to the trailhead so as a result on our trips in and out of this timber camp I was always the last one to get into camp and I'd have to go find the crew after I got in there. Then when we would go out I was always the last one to get out to the trailhead so by the time I got to the trailhead with her everyone was gone and in town. I did that for about two months until I took leave to go get married so that was my first initiation into the timber program with the forest service. Quite an experience!

**Gary** -You mention John McIntire and other people. What kind of issues did they present and how did the forest service deal with them?

**Wally** - You know being a newcomer to it, I wasn't really that informed into the political issues and stuff at a time and I wasn't very interested in it but I know I would hear conversations about Mrs. McIntyre and she'd write her congressman and senators and she'd write to the chief of the forest service and made all kinds of issues about our timber sale we were putting in adjacent to their lands. I don't know if there was anything that came of it. I think we finished up the timber sale the next summer and put in a real highly engineered systems of roads through the forest and tied into Eureka, Montana cross the

divide so it really opened up that country. I really think that's what the McIntyre's were afraid of was that they were resistant because they were so remote up there and primitive and they liked the seclusion. I think that was their biggest fear was that progress was coming to the Yaak. I don't think there was ever any long-term downturn as far as our timber sale. I think our timber sale went through as planned.

Anyway so I took a leave of absence for a little time and Barb and I got married. In preparation for bringing a bride to the Yaak I had to figure out where I was going to live because they didn't have any housing for me at Sylvanite, I think the fire control officer, the ranger, assistant ranger and the district engineer who we had just gotten each had houses but they did have several trailer pads there and there was quite a few foresters and technicians had trailers there and live there on the ranger station so I figured that was probably where I was going to live, I went to Spokane Washington and found an old used trailer about 10 years old.

That's one thing I need to add a little bit. Sylvanite had no electricity and they had a big old caterpillar generator power plant that they used to power the station but they only ran it sporadically. You had to have something that had gas appliances since you couldn't live there totally dependent on electricity. So I found this old trailer in Spokane and it was all gas and it had gas lights and gas refrigerator, gas heater you know you know the whole thing gas water heater propane not gas but propane. I bought this for \$2,400 and man that was a lot of money then and that was about half a year salary. I think, I was making \$4,300 a year in 1962 as a GS-5 Forester. I bought this old trailer and they said they would deliver it to the Yaak and I had to tell him where the Yaak was since they had no clue so by the time Barb and I got married and we packed up all our stuff and we headed up the Yaak. The trailer was there and fortunately some of the guys who worked at the district set it up so pretty much had it all set up when we got there. That was Barb and my first home. It was pretty primitive, it was a 28-foot trailer and an old one and not very well insulated. The Yaak got very pretty cold in the winter time, so Barb and I spent about two miserable winters living in that little trailer in the Yaak. We had 43 below zero temperatures about every winter at that time. Barb was a real trooper, 18 years old, right out of high school and she didn't complain once, it never was an issue with her and she took it all in stride. We spent about two and one half really interesting and challenging years there on the Yaak. It was a compound situation. We lived there far enough from town that you didn't go to town very often and while we were there our son was born. He was born in Bonners Ferry so we started our family there while we were at Sylvanite. Barb was just a trooper and I look back today and that I just think how I had nothing but admiration for the way she took all of that in stride. I don't know if I could have done that.

**Gary** - Tell me about the access into the Yaak.

**Wally** - We were about 13 miles off of the main highway which was Highway 2 which was the highway between Bonners Ferry and Libby. It was a dirt road at that time but now it's a state highway road and all paved, but at that time it was a county road. In the winter time it was a low priority road to get plowed and there was a lot of deep snow. If

you had to go to town, I can remember more than once going to town that we'd be pushing snow down the road all the way to the highway for 13 miles. You didn't go to town unless you really needed to.

So the generator plant that was there for electricity is another interesting story. It was a big old Caterpillar engine that was designed to run 24 hours a day for power purposes but for conservation of fuel, the ranger wouldn't run it full time but he would run it in the morning and evening. We started it about 5 in the morning and run until about 8 and then and run it in the evening from about 5 or 6 until 10 at night. Except for Tuesdays, they would run it till 11 AM so the women could wash clothes and use the dryers, so we did have electricity but it was not very dependable. One of the things that I remember was we would take turns running the power plant and we had an assignment list and you did it for a week at a time. I can remember that when it was my turn, I lived the farthest from the generator plant and so at 5 in the morning in the dead of winter and the snow was waist deep, I would get up and have to wade down to the generator in the dark with a flashlight, fire up the caterpillar which sometimes didn't want to start very much in cold weather. Once fired up the power plant, all the lights in the ranger station would come on instantly then go back again at night and do the same thing. When you would go down to shut it off you'd walk home in the dark.

All the time we were there, I don't think we ever flipped a light switch off in the trailer. In the morning, lights would come on and you would get up you get ready to go to work and at a night when the lights went off you went to bed or you turned on your gas lights. It was a real experience for a couple of young kids I tell you. We did that and got through my Sylvanite experience and I had some great experiences there primarily in pre-sale work. We had a large cadre of 4,5, or 6 foresters. Norm Yogerst was one of them, he ended up in the regional office and as a soils person, Charlie Fudge who was the Assistant Ranger there and he ended in Washington DC office for a while in timber management and I believe he retired as Director of Timber Management in Region 2 in Denver. H.C. Labrier was a forester there, he was the KV forester there, and he ended up as Trapper Creek Job Corps Center Director. I think he retired from that job down on the Bitterroot National Forest. I really met neat people there and was a great experience that I look back on that with fond memories even though it was pretty challenging way of life.

**Gary** - What was the social life like?

**Wally** - That's another story. We had a little sawmill there and there was an elementary school there at Sylvanite and then there were scattered residences up and down in the valley(in- holders). The forest service was kind of the center of the community with the ranger station which was a big compound. We had these old BRC bunkhouses, it was a BRC camp at one time. We had these great big bunk houses and they were old and they weren't used and were vacant. Anytime there was any social gatherings or anything planned for the community they would usually hold the parties and where we had rangers meetings for the forest. We had parties there in the bunk house and we would invite the whole community, the school teacher and his wife and a few of the sawmill employees and local residents from up and down the valley who were friends so the whole area was

like one big community because we were so isolated. The ranger's wife was kind of our social director, Rose Magnuson, she liked to have a party so she would find some excuse to have a party and we would have Halloween parties, celebrate Valentine's Day, and we'd celebrated Saint Patrick's Day. We'd get everybody together and one would get a record player and play music and we had a little social imbibing, which was fine at that time that was no problem having some. I remember having one of my old friends who is a scaler that lived in the bunkhouse he kept a case of Crown Royal under his bed and he would go up into Canada through the back way and he'd bring a case back, so drinking back in those days was pretty well accepted so we would have these parties and they would be some barn burners. We had some real parties in those BRC bunkhouses.

**Gary-** You mentioned rangers meetings.

**Wally** - I was there about two and a half years and in that time I was there they held two Rangers meetings there. They'd bring rangers from all the district's on the forest would come there and have the forest staff. It was a big bunk house, we had two regular bunkhouses plus the BRC bunkhouse so we could houses a lot of people there and we had a full-time cook there and helpers so it was a natural setting for fairly large gathering. The ranger meeting would last for 4 or 5 days and everyone lived as a big family and we've played volleyball in the courtyard around the bunkhouses and we had a basketball court..

**Gary** - As a young forester you're invited to these meetings?

**Wally** -Yah, the foresters were there I don't know how many people, I guess maybe I got invited because I was there. I don't know how many other foresters from other districts didn't get invited but I got to sit in on those rangers meetings and it was my first real exposure to personalities and administrative people at different levels. How the hierarchy interacted with one another and the deference they paid to the forest supervisor, except for one ranger we had. I can't remember his name but he was at Troy he and the forest supervisor didn't get along very well I learned that very well at the Rangers meetings so it's kind of an eye-opener for me with some of the staff people and the rangers. Chuck Kern was ranger at Eureka and he was a real character. Chuck brought a lot to the table and it was interesting to see the interactions with the forest staff and the Rangers pretty interesting so anyway that was my career at Sylvanite.

In February 1965 our son Jay was about a year old then and we ended up getting a transfer. At that point in time they didn't offer you a job they just told you where you were going to go. You didn't you get the chance to pick and choose and so they would say you're going to go over to Warland Ranger District, you're going to be the KV forester at Warland because the KV forester got a promotion and transfer. I got my promotion at Sylvanite to a GS-7 but it wasn't a promotion in January of 1965 I got transferred to the Warland Ranger District which was north of Libby on the Kootenai River about 15 or 20 miles north of Libby and much closer to civilization and modern amenities. No TV or anything but we had electricity and we had a good highway to town so Barb and I splurged and went to Spokane and found us a new trailer instead of

dragging our old trailer to Warland. I had a new trailer delivered from Spokane I bought a brand new trailer and geees I think I paid \$5,000 for it or something, had it delivered there to Warland. They had a pad there for us because there was no housing, there was only the ranger, assistant ranger and fire control officer that had houses. Warland was a small district, and it was a real change from the Yaak at Sylvanite. We went to Warland took over the KV job which is primarily post sale work from timber harvest activities, reforestation, timber stand improvement, site preparation and slash disposal from timber activities and I pretty much took over that in conjunction with the fire responsibilities that everyone had. Ed Laven was the Ranger and had come in as Ranger about the time I got there. I believe he retired off of the Nez Perce he worked most of his career on the Hells Canyon Recreation Area study team or whatever it was, but Ed was the ranger when I moved there. I think we had Ron Christianson as the assistant Ranger and there was a forester, Fred Hodgeboom and I and that was the sum total and the fire control officer and some technicians so we had a fairly small staff. I spent time from January 1965 and in 1966 the Libby Dam project has been approved and so they commenced construction in 1966 of the Libby Dam which was just a few miles below the ranger station and so I don't think I knew that it was at the time that I transferred over there that this was about to take place. It really altered the way we operated there pretty much the entire time I was there at Warland.

Libby Dam construction took place from 1966 to 1972 and the dam was dedicated in 1972. President Richard Nixon came out and dedicated the dam. I wasn't there in 72 but that was when the project was completed. During the years I was there it was interesting that I saw pretty much the construction of the dam from day-to-day drove by it every day on the way to town knowing full well that we wouldn't be there at Warland too long because they were clearing the reservoir area and appraising all the in holding and buying the land. So in 1968 the Corp of Engineers were building a new ranger station for the occupants of Warland downriver below the dam at the confluence of the Kootenai River and the Fisher River. At the same time they decided to do a consolidation of the Warland district with the Fisher River district which was at Raven which was way south on Highway 2. Canoe Gulch became the new headquarters for the consolidated district so pretty much the whole staff move down to Canoe Gulch in 1968, the houses were completed and the office was completed and the infrastructure was completed but they didn't have the trailer pads ready for the people that lived in trailers so Barb and I were one of the last ones to leave Warland. We worked out of there for probably for several months before we moved out to Canoe Gulch. In the meantime, the Corps of Engineers moved a lot of people in and occupied the houses in Warland. They were used for temporary housing for the Corp of Engineer people like the land acquisition people were there who were working at the in-holders appraising the land and buying out the in-holders in the reservoir area. I got to know a lot of Corp of Engineer people and became really good friends with some of them, partied with them and we spent time with them.

Anyway Barb and I finally move down that fall to Canoe Gulch with our trailer. A little highlight while I was at Warland, Barbara and I added on to our family, a girl. She was born there so we expanded our family there and she was a new baby at Warland there in 1966.

We lived with about three trailers that were there. The one next to us had this technician that that I worked a lot together and we became really good friends. They had a son that was the same age as Jay and we live next to each other. His name was Vic Coble and his wife was named Dorothy.

A story I like to tell is when he and I were working on a sale down in Dunn Creek and as I recall a fairly large timber sale and we were doing the initial recon on it. We were down there reconing it one day and we hiked in about 3 miles and we were up on a high ridge in Dunn Creek. We were to go in different ways to do some separate work and I said let's meet back here back here for lunch and so Vic said sure fine. Noon rolled around and I went back to the designated location and Vic didn't show up so I waited and waited and finally I started hiking down to where I thought he had been working and I kept hollering for him and finally I heard him way down the mountain hollering so I thought maybe he had gotten hurt so I hurried down the hill as I got closer he started yelling. "Go to town and get a gun, don't come down here. A bear has got me up a and don't come down here cause she will chase you up a tree too." So I hiked back to the truck got in the truck and drove back to the ranger station and by the time I got the Fire Control Officer and we got our rifles and we headed back out there and we got in there it was probably late afternoon 3:30 or 4 PM and Vic was still up a tree and so we fired our rifles and scared the bear off. The bear hadn't left because she had a cub up a tree next to Vick. Vick was pretty angry for being treed for something like six hours so the next day he went to town and bought a 44 Magnum saying no bear is going to put me up a tree again.

I thought about it years later, in 2018 or thereabouts I was sitting on my computer and I was wondered what happened to Vic Coble because we were really good friends. I got on my computer and Googled his name and low and behold, I knew he'd grown up and came from Missouri originally and a bunch of Vic Coble's came up and here was one that was a Missouri address and by golly there was a phone number there. I picked up the phone and called and the lady answered so I said: Is this Dorothy? and she said yes it is and I said you probably don't remember me but we were neighbors at Warland Montana in the 1960's. She says: "Oh my God Vic is sitting right here talk to him." That just shows you how things have changed so much and how people in this day and age can resurrect things. Vic and I had a great conversation and we relived a lot of experiences even though only worked together probably three or four years at the most.

**Gary** - You then moved the trailer down to the Gulch.

**Wally**- Ya, we moved the trailer downstream to The Gulch.

**Gary** - What was going on in the National Forest lands behind the reservoir?

**Wally**- They started clearing the reservoir probably around 67 or 68 or somewhere in there. It was a long-term project the same way clear into Canada and the total reservoir was something like 90 miles and there were some 50 miles in the United States it was a huge huge clearing project. There was a contracting outfit that came out of South

Carolina or somewhere so they brought in so much heavy equipment, I couldn't believe it. and they started clearing the reservoir and it was a really a huge project.

**Gary** -So the forest service lost all the land.

**Wally** -Yes all the land that was in the reservoir. We retained everything above the high-water mark was the boundary of the national forest. I don't know how much productive land was lost. The breaks along the river were pretty rugged steep but some of the prime timberland were down there in that bench area close to the reservoir. We lost some prime timberland. The forest service pretty much owned everything above the high-water, there wasn't many in-holders in that area. Anyway when I got to the Canoe Gulch Ranger Station, Bob Brown came in as the new ranger in 1968. I don't know if I mentioned that or not but Bob Brown came from the Avery District on the St Joe National Forest and he came in there as Ranger. Ron Christensen was still the assistant Ranger we ended up with a lot of foresters that came in from the Raven Ranger Station, just to name a few Herb Spradlin, Leroy White who ended up as a staff on the Custer National Forest, trying to think, Dave Sime, really a large number of foresters that combined into that District.

I was still doing primarily the TSI site preparation reforestation work for the district and I pretty much did a lot more fire prevention stuff. I started working with some St Regis Paper Company foresters out of Libby because they were the big in-holders on the Fisher River District to the south and they owned every other section some of the best timber land in Montana and St Regis Paper Company was in my estimation a good management company and good timber company. They had great staff people so I ended up developing a really good working relationship with some of their foresters so we started doing environmental education programs with the Libby School District and I worked in conjunction with the St Regis people so it was a great experience doing that and gave me a little more exposure to public involvement and working with people outside the forest service.

I guess another assignment I did have while I was there at Canoe Gulch. The Intermountain Forest Research Forest Station at Moscow Idaho, was doing a white pine blister rust study. It's in the summer of 1969 and they were looking for volunteers to come to Moscow and help do the leg work for this bluster rust study they were conducting so I volunteered for that. I left Barb and the kids at Canoe Gulch, and went off to Moscow. We weren't down there full time but it would be down there for two or three weeks at a time and then I come home for a while and then go back but I worked pretty much that summer of 1969 along with about 10 other Foresters from around the Region that had volunteered. We stayed in an apartment complex in Moscow and worked out of the research station there and I got to know a lot of the white pine blister rust researchers there Ray Stienhoff, Dick Bingham, Russ Graham to name a few. I got to meet a lot of other Foresters from around the region who had similar interests to mine to work on those kinds of projects. So it was very educational for me I learned most of that stuff from college about the rust program and white pine tree improvement program. In 1971 I was offered a promotion to the Falls Ranger District on the Kaniksu National Forest out of Sandpoint Idaho so I took that offer so Barb and I packed up and moved our

trailer to the Falls Ranger Station which was about 8 miles north of the little town of Priest River.

**Gary** - Before we get into the Falls Ranger District, I have a couple of questions you fill me in on. relationships with forest management staff about how things were with the forest supervisor's office which you were close to. Talk about kind of interaction did you have with the district with the forest office at that time.

**Wally**- I think that being one of the closest districts to the supervisors office in Libby at that time, Barb and I had the opportunity to visit and socialize with people outside the forest service and ended up getting to know the forest staff pretty well. John Emerson was the timber staff at that time and he had been Ranger when I was working seasonally at Kingston after Clarence Stillwell so I knew John from years ago so I got to reacquaint with John Emerson. John Emerson was a great guy and I believe he ended up as forest supervisor on the Flathead and retired out of the Flathead. John was there and a guy named Jack Puckett was the fire staff officer so I ended up getting back into golf. I used to like golf when I was a kid and Jack was an avid golfer so I ended up ended up getting to know Jack pretty well and started golfing with him and Glenn Mueller was the lands staff officer and knew him really well I knew most of the staff really well. We had a lot of show me trips on the district because we were close in to the supervisor's office and it was easy for the staff to come to the district and I remember meeting your dad for the first time when he was Regional Forester. We were sitting in our office at Canoe Gulch, and Jerry Beard, another forester, and I shared an office and we were sitting in our office one day doing some prep work and this man walked in and he was just casually civilian dressed and he started a conversation with us and we visited for quite a while and just asked some questions about what we were doing and we had no idea who he was. I don't know if he introduced himself or I found out afterwards I think he might have introduced himself eventually and his name was Neal Rahm and he was your dad and he was the Regional Forester at the time. I looked back and of it was a pretty cool experience.

**Gary**- He had some of his best conversations with people that did not know who he was. He wasn't out of orneriness but he just liked to visit with people and somehow there was a difference in the way people responded. He had a lot of good conversations with people who weren't reluctant to speak not knowing he was the Regional Forester.

**Wally** -I don't know if I ever met him again after that.

**Gary** - It was in 1972 sometime after the Libby Dam dedication and then he retired shortly thereafter. The one thing you didn't fill us in on was some of your suppression experience during this time. You had quite a career in fire suppression how are you developing at the time.

**Wally** - I did mention that when we were at Sylvanite being Western Montana it was a high fire occurrence area. We had some real barn burnering thunder storms that came through the Yaak. Everyone was real excited when fire season rolled around because it really was a change of pace. Boy you would get a lightning storm and it wouldn't matter

if it was 3 AM in the morning or 3 PM in the afternoon. You would grab your boots and head for the fire warehouse. Everyone would be mustering up at the fire warehouse waiting for a call for assignment from the lookout. We'd grab our fire packs and paper sleeping bags and everybody was ready to go. I can remember many times going out at two or three in the morning usually taking a seasonal employee or another forester with you, take your fire packs usually in a driving rain. I have never figured out why we were chasing smokes in a driving rainstorm.

The lookout would call in a fire and we would go to the nearest jump off point and we prided ourselves on who could find the fire the quickest. That was one of the big things with smoke chasing. Who could find the fire with the least amount of wayward trips so that's smoke chasing thing was a real thing. That hung on for quite a few years through the Warland years smoke chasing up and down through the Kootenai River. Most was in the middle of the night so the big old thunderstorms would come in the late afternoon and so by the time you got a fire call it was after dark.

I remember taking a seasonal employee one time when I was at Warland. We got a fire call after a big thunderstorm and there was smoke reported way up at a remote ridge on the south end of the district. I took a seasonal employee and we took off and we made it to the trailhead. We started hiking. There were a lot of grizzly bears in the country but I didn't tell the seasonal about that. We were hiking towards the fire, we must have hiked in 3 or 4 miles and it was 3 or 4 in the morning. We were getting pretty tired so I thought there was an unmanned lookout up there on the ridge so I thought maybe in the morning we could climb to the lookout and find the smoke. I can remember bedding down in a paper sleeping bag and there was just a strong bear smell. You could smell bear when you were close to one. All that time we were sleeping in these paper sleeping bags and I just thought we've just might be a sandwich for a grizzly bear but I never told that seasonal employee because I didn't want to spook him. The fire thing was a real fun thing and that kind prepped me in my grounding in fire suppression activities. Lots of times you would go on those darn fires and some would be bigger than you thought and you might be there for 2 or 3 days by yourself putting that thing out maybe with one helper so you got to learn to be pretty independent. You know smoke chasing, you just took it on knowing you were going to be there until it was out. It wasn't like the old smoke chaser movies that the forest service used to show that would tell you about the guy who was a lookout and he grabbed his fire pack and take off and would hike for days and put the fire out and go back to the lookout. That was a training film. We were not that independent, but we got pretty savvy about finding fires and putting them out. In 1967, I was at Warland and the big Sundance and Trapper Peak fires took place in Idaho. I can remember the time there was a call out. Sundance was 55000 acres and Trapper Peak 16000 acres. They were bringing people in from all over the country because of that time those were big fires. Several of us got dispatched to Trapper Peak Sundance fires and I spent quite a bit of time as a sector boss I'd work my way up to sector boss in the large fire organization. So I was a sector boss for several weeks on the Trapper Peak fire on the upper Priest Lake side of the fire. Later assignments I started branching out into safety officer work and first starting of the fire behavior stuff before it became a formal job assignment. So anyway, fire was an integral part of our training. Just generally you just

knew you were all going to be called upon to perform job assignments on fires whether it was a smoke chaser fires or project fires.

**Gary** -One of the other things when we were talking earlier you talked about the relationship developed with Forest personnel through Toastmasters.

**Wally** - Oh yeah, actually when I was in Sylvania, we were a long way from town but Charlie Fudge was a real progressive teacher and he was Assistant Ranger at Sylvania. He thought I needed some broadening in my training why don't you join Toastmasters with me. So I did and Charlie and I would go all the way from Sylvania to Libby and all of us and pretty much the staff people in the SO came to Toastmasters. I never thought about it at the time but I guess that was really a great experience becoming acquainted with the staff and becoming a little bit better public speaker. I'd never become a fine public speaker but at least I could stand up and speak to people and I attribute that to Toastmasters. It was a great experience. We had our meetings at Libby at the Caboose. Was there a Caboose? It was a little bar out there on Highway 2 which is close to where they put the new supervisors office and the Caboose was where we had our Toastmasters meetings. I can remember George Mahrt who came in as the forest supervisor when I was at Warland and George Mahrt and John Emerson and Jack Puckett. Jack was a good public speaker I always enjoyed listening to him. yeah that was a great experience at that time while I was there.

**Gary** - On the Kootenai, you talked about foresters doing all the resource work, by the time you left had that changed at all and what were the issues at the time you were there that the forest was having to deal with.

**Wally** - I don't think that the National Environmental Policy Act had been enacted yet in 69, I don't think outfall from that had not taken place yet so we were still functioning under the multiple use concept. We were still pretty much taking on all of the analysis work for timber sales for any other activities we had on the forest. The foresters, I remember doing stream surveys, wildlife habitat surveys, range allotment checks. We did have range allotments on the Kootenai but we did all of that. I don't think we had any specialist. We didn't have any range specialists, we didn't have any wildlife people, we didn't have a soil scientist, we didn't have any hydrologists. None of that existed then. For sure the forest service made some mistakes scientifically from some of their activities but they learned from it and I think it was a growing process for the forest service but like everything progress changes everything over time. I got a little summation I was going to give at the end about my observations from NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act.

In September of 1971, I was offered a promotion to a GS- 9 Forester to the Falls Ranger District on the Kaniksu National Forest out of Sandpoint, I don't know if I mention it being just north of the town of Priest River. A small district about 200,000 acres and a small staff and pretty much I had similar responsibilities there. As a GS-9 Forester I did the pre-sale timber prep and did a lot of contract work with timber stand improvement with local contractors.

I had one of the first women saw crews to do timber stand improvement work, thinning, and I had five women who worked pretty much autonomously with a crew boss. They were local people, they weren't college students, mature women in their 40s and 50s and they did a great job for me and became long time friends with those ladies. They actually did tree planting too. They probably were one of the first all women's crews to do that sort of thing if not on the forest if not in the region but surely on the forest.

Barb and I moved to the Falls, a small station. which had a place to park our trailer on a trailer pad. I think we moved our trailer from Montana there and lived in that trailer for the first year then we splurged and went over to Spokane and bought another new trailer much bigger trailer because our kids who were much bigger and by that time our kids were starting school. That's where our kids call home. They went all through school in Priest River. My daughter went all through school there except for her junior and senior years. They pretty much grew up in Priest River. It was a logging town, it was an early day logging town with about three big sawmills, and the forest service and the community were really integral. The forest service and the sawmills and the townspeople were like one. We were really close to town so Barb and I really had our first opportunity to socialize and make friends outside the service. We did that to back at Canoe Gulch but even more so at Priest River. Our years at Priest River were the ones that we remember. Libby was a great place to grow too but Priest River with our kids growing up there we became friends with a lot of people and we're still friends with a lot of people to this day. We have a lot of people in Priest River who we still call friends and we visit with them periodically but anyway in 1971, I was supposed to get a GS-9 promotion but in 71 for some reason the feds froze off promotions. I don't know what happened but there was no promotions in 1971. I didn't get a GS-9 until the next year when they unfroze the promotions.

I spent the early seventies there and got involved in community activities, played town team basketball with locals in Priest River, play golf at the local golf course and made a lot of friends with local people. In 1974 Barb and I decided to move into Priest River so we bought a lot in Priest River and we had a home built in Priest River. Low and behold I don't even know if we moved into the house yet when the announcement came that they were going to consolidate the district with Priest Lake. In the process was actually a bigger consolidation, they were going to consolidate the three North Idaho National forests, the Kaniksu, Coeur d'Alene and St.Joe into one single administrative unit and it became the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. This was in 1974. So we kind of got caught right in the middle of that and we just had our home built and we thought it was going to be our home for quite a while. So as a result of the consolidation The Falls District closed and we were absorbed into the Priest Lake District, so immediately all the employees at The Falls District either transferred to other districts or had to start commuting up to Priest Lake for work. So I commuted to Priest Lake along with two or three other people from Priest River who were technicians at The Falls. So we started our careers at Priest Lake. The ranger at the Falls District Ranger went to another ranger district in Montana and a couple other people transfer to other districts.

The consolidation of the forests was really traumatic. The three forests prior to the consolidation there were 16 Ranger districts on the three forests and after the consolidation there were only eight ranger districts on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. It went from 16 to 8 but of those 16, four of those districts were transferred to other forests. The Trout Creek District which was on the east side of the Kaniksu National Forest was transferred to the Kootenai National Forest. The Colville National Forest was on the west in Washington, the Newport Ranger District was transferred to the Colville, and in the same stroke they transferred the Colville National Forest to Region 6. So they moved the Colville National Forest to Region 6 which was part of Region 1. They moved the Newport District which had been part of the Kaniksu to the Colville. Then the St. Regis Ranger District which was on the Coeur d'Alene National Forest, which was the most eastern district on the Coeur d'Alene National Forest which was in Montana and got transferred to the Lolo National Forest. The Potlatch Ranger District which was the southernmost district on the forest on the St. Joe was transferred to the Clearwater National Forest. So four of the district's transferred out to other forests and so there remained eight districts out of the original 16. So the Idaho Panhandle became a huge 2 million acre forest.

**Gary** - Those transferred districts were generally on state boundaries weren't they.

**Wally** - Kind of, the Trout Creek District was pretty much totally in Montana, the Newport District some of it was in Idaho but most was in Washington, and St. Regis in Montana.

**Gary** - I think those lands that were in Idaho we're eventually transferred into the Idaho Panhandle.

**Wally** - Yes they did but some remained because Priest Lake still had quite a bit of the Priest Lake District was surprisingly in the state of Washington. It was all primitive area, really remote areas, up on the northwest side of the Priest Lake District was in Washington. Beautiful country but pretty remote but it was in the state of Washington yep in fact I remember, I don't remember what the occasion was, but Rupert Cutler. Was he the Secretary of Agriculture?

**Gary** - Yes I believe so.

**Wally** - Well Rupert Cutler came to Priest Lake one time; there was some issue with that part of the Priest Lake District that was in the state of Washington.

I don't know what it was but we had to provide a cadre of people to escort him into that primitive area when he came out from Washington DC. Anyway, we went through the consolidation and I was commuting back and forth from Priest Lake and in 1975 the shake-up had really created a lot of displaced people. We had a lot of district rangers and staff people from the districts that were displaced. Charlie Mosier who had been the ranger at Magee became fire staff at Priest Lake so I was working for him at Priest Lake at the time. Charlie was only there for a year or less and then he was reassigned as a

ranger on the North Fork District of the Clearwater so lucky for me, I got a GS-11 as fire staff on the Priest Lake District after Charlie left, Stepped up to that job and took on a lot more fire responsibilities, did a lot of more training, went to Marana, Arizona, did fire behavior training as a Fire Behavior Officer at Marana. After training at Marana, I ended up doing a lot of fire assignments not as specialist yet at that time but most of my fire assignments at that time were still freelancing as a safety officer, sector boss, some of those types of things.

So after I became trained in fire behavior, then I started getting assignments with fire teams doing fire behavior analysis and did some interesting assignments with that. I went to a big fire in the Bob Marshall Wilderness one of my first FBA jobs was on a remote fire on the Bob Marshall, went to some other fires, a lot of them down on the Salmon River country. We had a Type 2 Team on the forest the Del Mitchell was the IC, but first, it was a state guy was IC, guy by the name of John Preston who was our IC and later he retired or quit the Type 2 team job and Del Mitchell took over. Del, I think, he was a line boss on that team and then Del took over as IC on that team. The rest of the time I was on that team I worked as an FBA with Del Mitchell. This was how Del and I became good friends. He later became my boss, he was Ranger at Wallace and then came into the Supervisors Office after Dave Aldridge left and he became the timber/fire staff. He was my boss in Coeur d'Alene. This was kind of subsequent to my Priest Lake years when I was working but I was working with the Type 2 team. I don't know while working in Priest Lake did I mention my law enforcement.

**Gary-** Not yet.

**Wally -** Well while I was in Priest Lake the forest service was going through kind of a transition where we had always relied on local law enforcement people for law enforcement on National Forest land from the state and county. So the forest service was beefing up their law enforcement capabilities and they were looking for, they had instituted a really high intense training program for law enforcement officers and one being a national program for Level 4 Law Enforcement officers and their intent was to establish Level 4 law enforcement officers for every District. Nobody at Priest Lake wanted to do that, so somebody else asked why don't you do that so I said well, so what do I have to do?

I ended up taking on that responsibility. I went to Glynco, Georgia in the fall of 1979 for a three-month stint at the National Federal Law Enforcement Training Center at Glycoe Georgia. Every federal agency trained there except for the FBI and Secret Service. We had something like 96 federal agencies training there, so when I went down there I think we were in groups. Our training Cadre of land management agencies, we had Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, the BLM, the Tennessee Valley Authority and the other one, the National Park Service. So we all train together and had 25 trainees in the Cadre. We spent 10 weeks at Glynco Georgia going through that training. I was 40 years old at that time, It was a really physical thing, we had to go through physical fitness training and we had to go through self defense tactics, high-speed pursuits driving.

Anyways it was a real eye-opener but I went through that at 40 years of age and I came out of that. If I came out and survived that then I can survive anything anywhere.

I went back to the district and took on the law enforcement responsibilities for the Priest Lake District and subsequent to that even after my time after moving to Coeur d'Alene I took on quite a few fire assignments in a security capacity. In 1984-85 when Montana burned up with huge fires all over the state we had a large supply depot established at the Aerial Fire Depot in Missoula had tons and tons of equipment and personnel and stuff. We had a real large Cadre of law enforcement people in Missoula doing security work for all of that material that they were massing for all these fires. I spent a lot of time in law enforcement security details. I remember later on we had, I don't remember what year maybe 85. It wasn't a big fire, it was on the Lewis and Clark National Forest out of Judith Gap on the east side of the forest over there on the Lewis and Clark, and we had a lot of Indian crews and it was a huge camp. Man, we had like 1,500 people in that camp and about half of them were Native Americans and there were like four of us there on the security detail for this big camp. So we had an uprising between some of the tribes that were in camp that just about came to violence. We had different members of the different tribes threatening each other's with Pulaski's and stuff. I thought we were going to end up in a real civil war for a while in that fire camp but that was one of my exciting fire details but anyway did the fire stuff and law enforcement. I spent the last 7 years there at Priest Lake from 1974 to 1981.

In 1981, the job opened up on the Panhandle S.O. for a Fires and Fuels Specialist and the man that had filled that job was Ed Kautz, he was a displaced ranger from The Calder Ranger District in the 1974 consolidation. He took a job in Milwaukee in Region 9 so I was under the impression I was going to get promoted to a GS 12 sub staff job, sub staff position in the supervisors office. Once I got in there and took the job they decided down grade it to GS-11 so I spent the last 11 years of my career, 13 years actually from 81 to 94 in that fire and fuel specialist job in the SO and I finished my career as a step 10 GS-11 so I had a lot of time is a GS-11.

It was such a rewarding career though that I have no complaints at all. My promotions were fine, my assignments were fine, and I have nothing but fond memories of the forest service. My career on the Idaho Panhandle was coordinating and managing all the forest fuels activities between the 8 districts far-flung enjoyed doing it, met all of the district people, spent time working with Type 2 teams that I was assigned to and got involved in fire prevention programs. The fire prevention program was just getting a new rebirth because of the wildland-urban interface that was taking over the country.

Because large fires in the west were threatening population centers homes were burning not any different than today, but the wildland-urban interface was a buzzword and we kind of picked up on that. I used that as a springboard to develop a fire cooperative group in North Idaho, the five northern counties in conjunction with state and city fire agencies and private enterprises. We developed fire cooperatives for all the five northern counties which was just a vehicle to bring fire prevention to the forefront with the public in particular the wildland-urban interface issues. As cities started to grow and we ended up

doing that with some federal grants and we published some fire prevention materials to give out to the public and through the cities and state the state of Idaho and all the municipalities really dug in on this. I got to know every fire chief in North Idaho and I knew every state area forester from the state of Idaho, We became a really close-knit group and I still maintain contact with a lot of those people today.

That was kind of the culmination of a lot of my career that leads me to that point I guess the final thing that kind of really topped it all off in 1994. I hadn't planned to retire but in 1994 the forest service budgets were decreasing and they were downsizing but prior to that there was this plan to have a big celebration in Washington DC for Smokey Bear, it was his 50th. Smokey Bear was officially introduced as a fire prevention symbol in 1944 that officially started. It was his 50th birthday. So the forests and the states were all invited to present some kind of Smokey Bear celebration thing in Washington DC in August of 1994 in celebration Smokey's 50th. So I was kind of, because of my prevention activities on the Panhandle, I took the lead for Region 1 to develop some kind of presentation for the Washington DC celebration. Region 6 wanted to buy in and become part of it so I went to Portland and hooked up with some Region 6 people and we put together a program that we thought would be impressive for Smokey's birthday.

So I worked in conjunction with Region 6 people and we put this all together and we had contracted to have a display prepared and we had it all shipped back to Washington DC prior to our traveling back there. Then in August there was a Cadre of six to eight of us they went back to Washington DC to celebrate Smokey's 50th. Barb got to go along and she was really tickled over that and Barb and I got to see Washington DC. We were there for a week we got to see Washington DC from one end to another and she had a friend there that worked in the Justice Department in Washington DC and she took time to take us to Gettysburg and it was kind of a really a highlight of my career to go there and we met the chief at Smokey's celebration. I can't remember who was Chief was at that time, they did change Chiefs a lot back then I can't remember who it was. If I saw the name today, maybe it was Max Peterson, I think it was Max's.(no he retired in 1987 it was Jack Ward Thomas)

We had a huge display, we took up the whole ellipses from the White House to the Washington Monument. you've ever been there this ellipse is just a great big area that's kind of set up for public things and so we had this thing set up on the ellipse and it was a one-day celebration but the Chief came out we had these displays set up for Smokey's 50th and it was just a fun time. We were in a hotel just off the mall there so we were within walking distance of everything in Washington. Barb and I went to the Capitol. We walked to the Capitol one time, I can remember, we walked to the back door and I think it was on a weekend. There was a metal detector at the back door where you see the big steps on the back of the capital and there was nobody around and we just walked up and there was a guard there, We asked if we could go in and he said sure. So we went into the metal detector and we were in. We walked all over the capitol inside walked up and down past senators and congressmen's offices and went to the Rotunda and saw all the statues and stuff. Today you wouldn't even get close to that place. We just walked in and nobody paying any attention to us.

Well anyway we came back from Washington and I was offered, Del asked me if I'd be interested in retiring. Del ask me because they were trying to downsize and the buyout was available. I was eligible to retire and I said I didn't want the buyout so I told them if you give me a directed reassignment, I'll retire right now so they said okay. I think Bob Ohlmsted, and I and John Criswell, we all retired on September 30th 1994. We had a joint retirement party for us. It was kind of a culmination of my career, it was a wonderful career with the forest service and I think my summation is.

I mentioned earlier about the NEPA thing. My overall observation about the forest service and the changes I saw happen over that 33 1/2 years. After NFMA was passed in the seventies forest service public involvement became a priority as special interest groups were putting pressure on the forest service from both sides. There were best management practices people who wanted to manage the forest like we always managed it. There was the John Osborne's of the world who was an environmentalist from Spokane Washington and everything we tried we do it was challenged. Osborne would file appeals to our timber sales. So we saw these drastic changes and then the public involvement we started the land use planning thing, came public involvement meetings and stuff and I participated in a lot of that.

My biggest takeaway was that the forest service kind of got whipsawed because of the divisive interests of the special interest groups. The forest service was trying to do the best job they could and they wanted by law to do the public involvement and get public input but in the process but I felt like we got a diluted product. I think that a lot of the decisions that we made we're so compromised that they weren't really the best management practices but as a result of this whole thing the forest service saw their budget decline because timber sales were drastically reduced and timber revenues, you know that yourself, were drastically reduced. Sawmills up and down the state just gradually started to disappearing. I remember between Coeur d'Alene and Bonners Ferry there used to be a dozen sawmills and probably now there probably isn't one or two today. You look at that and think, I guess it's progress and I guess it's in the best interest of the public. My perspective from the inside out and looking at the forest service from what I've seen from when I commenced my career, I just feel fortunate that I that I got to work for the forest service when it was a stand-alone agency. We did a good job, I think, so I guess that's a summarization of my career,

**Gary** - I kind of agree with you. I've talked to a lot of retirees, they all feel that they were doing a good job and even though some of them was misguided for one reason or another and we have a greater balance of resources including timber.

The litigation and that really stymied a lot of what we were doing but sometimes people feel like they were look down upon as the reason why the forest service declined. It was your fault and they resent that because they think they tried to do a good honest day's work throughout their career and they feel like they are not given the respect in many quarters today that they feel like they deserve.

**Wally** - You know I look back on my earlier experience we were still doing trail maintenance, we had pack strings and supplying gypsy camps so I kind of got the tail end of the early day forest service of the 30s and 40s and early 50s when the forest service. There still was a lot of primitive lands and we hadn't really gotten into roading, development stuff and so I look back on it that and I really got to see a unique part of the forest service back then. I'm sure the people back then that were working in the thirties and forties when they got to be retirees in the fifties they probably thought we were doing terrible things and they were doing the right things so it's all a matter of perspective. I think the forest service is still one of the best federal agencies around

**Gary** - I think that one of the benefits of these oral histories will be used to highlight these perspectives and from different people over different time periods without saying it's good or bad but different. This will be a fun project as I move forward. Now I want to thank you for being the first contributor at least from my standpoint and hopefully there will be many more what I'm going to do sign off right now and the recording okay.

**Wally** - Thank you very much and thank you I hope this project really takes hold and documents the forest service in a very positive light.

**Gary** - I think I told you what the museum title for these oral history interviews are **Unsung Heroes**. There was a lot of people that contributed to the organization over the year and hopefully many of these stories we'll come up in the months and years ahead.

**Wally** - I can remember seeing and I have a few copies of the **Early Days in the Forest Service**. The five books that were put out.

**Gary** - I have all of them.

**Wally** - I enjoyed reading those and reading about some of the experiences of the people way back you know and listen to some of the early day forest service people tell about the forest service. It's a great thing and of course these oral history will just reinforce that.

**Gary** - Of course from your's and my generation, we are the "Way Back" from today's generation. Thanks Wally.