

PART II

ERM: You got rather far removed from the subject of grazing when you went back East, I take it. It was no longer a major consideration in your new assignment.

RME: No, it was entirely different.

ERM: When you were supervisor out here, how much of your time was involved directly in the grazing problem?

RME: I'd say that it took probably 50 percent of my time. The timber sales took quite a lot. The Whitman was a big timber forest too, and we had some big sales there, mostly to the Mormon people. They had some big mills and some big sales. These sales were handled in a different manner in those days. Anything bigger than two thousand feet was a project sale and handled by the supervisor and not by the ranger. We had a man from the supervisor's office in charge of that sale. He lived out on the sale and did the scaling and one thing and another. So that the grazing people--with all the permittees we had and the immense amount of livestock--really took a lot of time. As I said, there were twenty-odd grazing associations on the forest. They took a little time, too. They had questions, you know, that they would ask.

ERM: Did you go to their meetings?

RME: I did sometimes, yes. Or else I'd send Walter Dutton or somebody else. Some Forest Service man attended most of those meetings so he could answer their questions and explain to them--or try to explain to them anyway--what we were doing. Of course, we didn't satisfy them all the time. But we didn't have any real trouble, except with Stanfield. He's the only one that made any trouble. Some would growl a little bit but it didn't amount to anything.

ERM: If that's the case, then the struggle or the so-called strife between the Forest Service and the grazing industry has been somewhat overdrawn in what's been written. Would you say that's the case?

RME: Well, I suppose underneath all of the grazing people had some pretty strong feelings, but they didn't express them very much. At least, not to my knowledge.

ERM: Maybe after you left some of these strong feelings came out.

RME: You're right on that point. From all I can learn, afterward, it got pretty hot.

ERM: I have had the impression that there was a great deal more controversy between the Forest Service and the grazing industry than your experience until 1922 indicates. It must have come in the next ten years after that and up to the passing of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934.\*

RME: Oh, yes.

ERM: After World War I the stockmen began to really attack Forest Service grazing policies in a very strong way. And they began to enlist their congressmen and senators to fight the battle for them. They insisted upon a moratorium on reduction until after a full congressional investigation had been made of the grazing situation. Do you remember that?

RME: I remember a lot of talk about it, yes, but that was when I had left that area.

ERM: When you were still in the West, you say that 50 percent of your time was spent with grazing matters, consulting with stockmen at their various meetings and when they'd come into your office to quibble about this thing or that. You would usually mollify them, I take it, and they would accept the situation. They would not make a hullabaloo about it.

RME: They seemed to accept it, anyway. And, of course occasionally, I guess it's true of most activities, some thought they could buy a little something.

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\*Taylor Grazing Act of 28 June 1934, 48 Stat. 1269.

ERM: Did you have many cases of trespass by them?

RME: Oh, yes, we had quite a few of those.

ERM: How did you deal with them?

RME: I can't recall that we had any particular trouble about it. If we had some kind of trespass on areas which shouldn't have been grazed, I don't remember what the deuce we did about that, but it wasn't very much. I think that there wasn't very much of any penalty that you could apply to them, but we found it and we made it apparent that if they didn't discontinue that, something might be done.

ERM: If you didn't really do much about it, just slapped them on the wrist, that kind of treatment does not usually stop people.

RME: Well, it did more or less. We didn't do too much of it, really. Of course, in those days stock, sheep in particular, were driven and not hauled somewhere, and that meant that on the forest we had definite lines laid out where they could drive their sheep and not anywhere else. Occasionally they'd get off those and, if it was bad enough we'd assess a little penalty of one kind or another. But there wasn't much of that. Honestly, as far as the forest was concerned we didn't have much trouble.

ERM: Do you feel that you had enough manpower to adequately police the area?

RME: No, we didn't have enough manpower to really assess what was going on. If it was really violent, we found that out, but in little things, very often we didn't. Most of the rangers had practically no help, and in the supervisor's office we had a minimum of help. It wasn't until these studies began that we had anything to go on to complain much about. Then when we found out that there was overgrazing, we began as gradually as we could to reduce the demands by trying to educate the stockmen about our findings.

ERM: But they were not very sympathetic with those findings, were they?

RME: Oh, no, they weren't sympathetic but they took it pretty well.

ERM: Did they diminish their demands to have their flocks and their herds on the land?

RME: No. Occasionally somebody would try to leave a little something in my hand to get what he wanted. But he didn't get anywhere with that, of course.

ERM: But there were actual cases in which efforts were made to bribe you into looking the other way?

RME: Yes, that's right. I remember one time in particular. This man who was very prominent in Oregon came into the office, and we discussed his situation very amicably. We had made some changes in the way he could graze his stock, and I was telling him what he could do and what he couldn't do. When he left he shook hands, and I found something in my hand. I looked at it and I didn't count it, but it was a pretty good-sized roll with a lot of twenty dollar bills in it I could see. He'd gone out and down, so I chased him down, caught him on the sidewalk, and gave it back to him.

ERM: What did you say when you gave it back to him?

RME: I told him that he shouldn't do that kind of business, because I wasn't that kind of man. I wasn't selling anything.

ERM: Couldn't you have brought action on that matter?

RME: Oh, no, I wouldn't. I didn't see any point in doing that, he wouldn't do it again.

ERM: Were there other such instances?

RME: Well, yes, occasionally but not often. They all got their money back, and they never tried it more than once. There weren't many-- not as many as I would have expected in that kind of situation. When we began to cut their flocks a little bit, they didn't like it and it was tough on them.

ERM: Did this primarily come from sheepmen?

RME: Sheepmen, yes. I don't recall one from cattlemen.

ERM: Were the sheepmen most concerned about the grazing rights?

RME: Yes, they seemed to be. Another thing you had to be very careful of was to keep the sheep and the cattle separated. Sometimes we'd have a little argument about trespass of cattle on a sheep area or sheep on a cattle area. But we always settled that pretty amicably.

ERM: During the World War I years, there were a great many pressures to increase production to meet war needs. Was there any relaxation of grazing policies in those days? Were they less stringently enforced because of the national needs for wool and meat?

RME: I don't recall that they were, as far as I was concerned.

ERM: In other words, you continued to reduce the amount of grazing even during the war years?

RME: Yes, the best we could.

ERM: Were no pressures brought on you from Washington or any other source to look the other way and not to enforce new policies?

RME: No, I don't recall any at all.

ERM: What were the interagency relationships in those days?

RME: In Oregon there weren't any other agencies.

ERM: What about the public lands outside the national forests?

RME: We had nothing to do with that. We kept within the forest boundaries and there was no trouble.

ERM: In other words, there was no counseling such as between yourselves and the people in the various bureaus of the Department of the Interior?

RME: No. They weren't doing anything anyway.

ERM: They weren't?

RME: No, not that I know anything about.

ERM: Were they following different policies than you were?

RME: Whatever they were doing, we didn't hear much about it. Later, of course, that picked up, as I understand it. My time out there, as I say, was 1922, and that's pretty early.

ERM: Had you any contact with these people?

RME: No, almost none. I don't even remember who there was around Baker that we had any contact with. Baker was where we finally went for our headquarters. I don't remember anybody. The rest of the public lands were left pretty much to their own devices in those days.

ERM: And they were less stringently controlled as to grazing or cutting of timber or anything else?

RME: Oh, yes. Apparently so.

ERM: And you had no interagency consultation with the managers of these other federal lands that were out there?

RME: No, we didn't.

ERM: Your work continued then in this area on through the war years?

RME: Yes, until 1922. I spent quite a lot of my time in Portland. For some reason or other, they would call me in there to help them on something that they were doing. So I spent quite a lot of my time outside of Baker. We had quite a time moving from Sumpter to Baker. It took them eight years to get approval. Sumpter, as I told you, was an old mining town of about eleven hundred people. When we tried to get the office moved, Baker was then really the metropolis of eastern Oregon. LaGrande and Pendleton have come up some since then, so I don't know whether Baker still is or not. I don't know if this ought to go into the record, but I was promoted to supervisor as a result of my supervisor's apparently eating some poisonous mushrooms.

ERM: Is that right?

RME: Yes, it killed him. \*

ERM: Who was that?

RME: Henry Ireland. Then I was stepped up. I was assistant supervisor--deputy supervisor they were called in those days--and I was stepped up to supervisor. Our headquarters was still in Sumpter.

ERM: That's where this picture was taken of you standing in front of the snow.

RME: Yes. The last winter that we spent there the snow was seven and a half feet deep on a level--that was the accumulation. The Sumpter Valley Railroad, which was a narrow-gauge railroad, ran from Baker eighty-odd miles across three summits to Prairie City in the John Day Valley in those days. At the end of the last big storm, it took them four or five days to get through those cuts in the hills. They had five Shay engines, geared, hitched together, and they'd punch the snow until they finally punched their way through. It was a fight.

ERM: So Sumpter was isolated?

RME: Oh, terrible. Well, then Henry died and they promoted me. We were finally ready to move, and the Portland office said, "No. We'll wait awhile. If we move you down there now, it's going to be bad from a public relations standpoint, because those people who were opposed to the move, would blame you for moving it soon after his death." They were right about that. So we stayed there for another six months and then we moved down to Baker. Things worked out well in the Baker office. I became involved in many things and organizations in Baker; and the office became an influential part of the town life. A nice town and many nice people.

ERM: How much was public relations taken into account?

RME: Not much. There wasn't anybody that could do anything about it. There really wasn't any public relations man back in those days. I guess there was a fellow that was called a public relations man, but heck, he didn't do very much. He couldn't. He didn't have any organization or anything else. Public relations locally

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\*According to the Forest Service Directory for July 1916, Henry Ireland died May 31, 1916.

depended upon the character and the actions of the man there-- the ranger or the supervisor or his assistant. I must say that I was very fortunate in that respect because I had a group of men who were very well thought of in their localities, and certainly I got along very well in Baker. When I left there, I had a party that really knocked me cold. I could hardly believe it. It was wonderful.

ERM: In earlier days, the Forest Service had not been too popular in the West. Because of all the public lands that were put into national forests, there was great feeling against the Forest Service.

RME: Yes, I know.

ERM: How did you work to overcome that?

RME: I didn't run into it very much. In some of the timberland, yes. Well, I more or less ignored it, and when I couldn't do that, I tried to explain the situation as best I could. Actually, as far as the newspapers were concerned or anything of that kind, almost nothing was said during my time out there. I don't know what happened later.

Mrs. Evans: I think the personality of the man makes a difference. Those Baker men took your word for it, Robie, that it was all right, I mean, if they couldn't do anything about it. Even today the Oregonian comes out with articles against all the land in Oregon that is owned by the Forest Service, you know.

ERM: Of course, a very high percentage of the land of these western states has been put under the Forest Service or some other federal agency, such as the Bureau of Land Management, the Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or some other form of federal management control.

RME: That's right. Of course, in those days we had no environmental movement either.

ERM: You mentioned that a lot of your time was spent in timber sales activity in the national forest.



RME: Well, yes. You see, all those big sales were made out of the supervisor's office. It took some work getting the sales ready and a lot of conferences with people who wanted to bid on them, and then all the time you had to keep in touch with the purchasers too. The timber sales and grazing were the two activities that took the time.

ERM: It's frequently said that the Forest Service, until and after World War II, served primarily as custodian of the national forests, and that it's only since then that it has got into land management and the sale of resources on those forests. But your experience indicates that there were a great many sales going on in the forests back in the late teens and early twenties.

RME: Oh, yes, there were. We had four large sales on the Whitman. I mean large ones that ran over a hundred million feet. They were handled out of the supervisor's office, as I said, in those days by a man who lived on the sale, did the scaling, and if he needed some help, we gave it to him. The ranger had nothing to do with those. He handled the little sales of a few thousand feet and the tree sales during the wintertime to get some firewood and that kind of stuff. And he handled the grazing until we had a grazing man. The rangers still handled it, but when Walt Dutton was appointed as the grazing man, he devoted himself mostly to the studies of the effect of grazing on the forage, and the timber in the young groves, and so forth. So from an administrative standpoint, he didn't have very much to do. The rangers really handled the grazing from an administrative standpoint, but his findings had a lot to do with how the permits were issued, and he was good at it, too.

ERM: When did you retire?

RME: I retired in 1949.

ERM: You retired three years before Richard McArdle became chief. Did you ever serve under Mac?

RME: He was in charge of state and private forests in those days. I used to see a good deal of him. We got along very well. He's a fine man. In fact, I knew all of the chief foresters up to the last one, Edward Cliff. I retired after the end of the war. I knew him casually. I haven't kept up with the Forest Service lately.

I believe when a man retires, he ought to retire. Some people stick around and I think they sometimes make more nuisance than when they were more active. However, I keep up with what's going on. I take the forestry magazines and, lord knows, nowadays there's plenty in the newspapers. The Forest Service is a different organization than when I was part of it.

ERM: How would you define that difference?

RME: It's hard to say. I don't believe I want to do that.

ERM: I think I understand but you wouldn't be saying anything that others before you haven't.

RME: The number of people that it takes to do the job seems a little bit exorbitant sometimes.

ERM: Compared with what you had to work, they have a lot of money now?

RME: Yes. Of course, I don't keep up enough to know whether what they turn out is worth the effort or not.

Mrs. Evans: I think that Robie thought that when he retired, the more he stayed away the less he'd miss his work. We haven't been very close to the Forest Service. We write to a few old friends.

ERM: Do you have any old friends of the Forest Service living near?

RME: Gosh, no. All my compatriots are dead. I was ninety years old last August.

ERM: You were!

RME: Yes.

ERM: I would never have thought that.

Mrs. Evans: I think this is wonderful to bring back experiences since we lost all the papers that he wrote. He had to do publishing, like everybody else, to join the Cosmos Club and that sort of thing. We lost all those copies.

ERM: When you went back East, what were the circumstances that caused the transfer? You had actually spent all your career up to that time in the West.

RME: That's right. I don't know why I was sent to the East. I got a letter from the regional office saying that I was offered this position back in the Eastern Region and recommending that I go. Well, I liked where I was very much indeed; I liked the people; I liked the work, and I liked the country. I was in a quandry. So after a while, I wrote two letters, one saying I would and one saying I wouldn't. I kept them and after about a week, I decided to send the one saying I would. But I have no background on it all. Nobody ever told me why.

ERM: Was Greeley the chief when you were transferred?

RME: Greeley, yes.

ERM: How well did you know Colonel William B. Greeley?

RME: Quite well and I had great admiration for him. I liked him very much indeed. I thought he did a swell job for the Service. And he did all right after he left too and came out here to the Pacific coast.

RME: One of the men who followed him used to be a supervisor in Idaho, and when I was a supervisor in Baker and I'd have a supervisor's meeting which I had every year, I would call all the people in and we talked things over for three or four days. He always came across the Snake River and joined us.

ERM: Was that [Ferdinand A.] Silcox?

RME: No, Silcox was there during the war.

ERM: Was it Earle Clapp?

RME: Yes, Earle Clapp. I knew Silcox very well, too. Ethelyn and I were very close friends of Silcox and his wife. We used to spend a lot of time over there. We knew the Greeleys very well, and the others very well indeed and enjoyed them very much.

ERM: How did you feel when Bill Greeley left the Forest Service?

RME: I felt a great deal of regret. He was a good administrator and he had a good mind. I thought he was handling the Forest Service in good shape, too.

ERM: Did he ever explain to you why he left?

RME: No, he never did. I've never heard that there was anything of a disagreeable nature in connection with his time in the Forest Service.

ERM: Well, you must have been aware that in the Forest Service in those days there were two different factions.

RME: Oh yes, sure.

ERM: How did you see those two factions? What were they?

RME: One wanted to be very strict and bear down on everybody and the other wanted to be a little more lenient. Of course, there was the faction that wanted the folks to be told whether they could or could not cut timber. Some were pretty adamant in their views but they were, I think, in the minority.

ERM: Pinchot was among those. And so was Earle Clapp.

RME: Clapp was the one that they were more against than they were against Pinchot. Mainly, Earle was a fine man. We knew him very well, too. But his personality wasn't quite the same. The personality has quite a lot to do with things, you must know as well as well as I do.

ERM: How much did political loyalties enter into this difference? Was it a difference between conservative people who were Republican-oriented on the one hand and Democrats who generally were more liberal on the other?

RME: If that existed, I didn't feel it.

ERM: You didn't see it in those terms?

RME: No, I didn't.

ERM: When you moved back to the East Coast, did you move from a supervisor's position out here to a regional forester's position?

RME: No, to an assistant regional forester position. I was in charge of timber management back there--anything that had to do with timber in the Eastern Region, which then extended from Maine to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean, with Arkansas and Louisiana thrown in. Then later also the eastern half of Texas. Then the Depression came along, and it caused a need for a lot of work. The Forest Service got severely involved in that, as they should have, and the territory was too big. It was unwieldy.

Silcox was then the chief forester, and he split the Eastern Region. The twelve southern states went into the Southern Region and the fourteen northeastern states went into the Northern Region. He called Joe Kircher and me in and said, "Joe, you are in charge of the twelve southern states, and Bob, you stay up here. You're in charge of the northern area, Region 7." Region 8 was down below. In those days there were five hundred CCC camps in my territory. A lot of them were on the national forests then in existence and

a lot on the state forests, but they were really under my control, too. All kinds of programs of that same nature just blossomed everywhere. We were busy. My office grew bigger than I ever thought it would, and we were certainly busy.

Just about two years before the Second World War came along, I built a community down in southeastern Kentucky, near London, of a hundred units at a cost of just about a million dollars. There were a hundred units that ran from two and a half acres up to about fifteen acres, and we built a nice little house on them with a bathroom. Then we let the people in the Kentucky mountains know that these places were going to be available to anybody that wanted them. We got a world of applications. I got an Extension Service woman, an Extension Service man, and a forester and they picked out of these about a hundred twenty-five or thirty of the most promising applications and then went around and interviewed them individually. They finally worked it down to a hundred. The people came onto those places, and we charged five dollars a month rent for the little places, and I think it was ten or twelve dollars for the biggest ones, just so they could be paying something. It wasn't entirely free. Then we put an Extension man with it to try to teach the men how to handle their land so it could produce the most stuff and an Extension Service woman with the women to try to teach them how to use the bathroom and the rest of the modern things in these little houses. If you could have seen what happened to those bathrooms, you would be surprised. Most of them had never seen one before. They did everything with the bathtubs and the toilets and what not, except what they were supposed to do. Then the war came along.

ERM: What was the purpose of that project?

RME: To try to improve the method of handling the land in the mountains that these mountaineers were living on. These people had been living on them for generations and it was awfully primitive. We thought-- somebody thought, I didn't, I was doing it because I was told to do it--that if they could be educated a little, if it would work with them, it might percolate back to those in the mountains and they could live better than before and raise their standard of living. But then the war came along and the whole thing ended. The land was sold. Some of the people who were living there bought the land. What happened to them after that, I don't know.

Mrs. Evans: It was opening the region by roads and putting in better schools that made the changes in those very areas.

ERM: The Great Depression had terrible effects upon people in terms of unemployment, but also out of the Depression emerged a lot of ideas and developments that were very good. The CCC was certainly a marvelous thing.

RME: You bet. Yes, it was.

ERM: And we are still benefiting from it. And some of those other experimental things have had salutary effects over the years. It certainly built the Forest Service up.

RME: I don't think there is any question about that at all. It built up my outfit, I can tell you. It was terrific! We worked hard.

ERM: The CCC boys built lots of Forest Service facilities, research buildings, laboratories, headquarters, and campgrounds.

RME: And beautiful recreational areas. In all those forests from the White Mountains in New Hampshire right down through Pennsylvania and in West Virginia and Kentucky and Virginia, we built some beautiful recreational areas with lakes and beautiful big houses. It was remarkable and they are still using them. They weren't wasted.

Mrs. Evans: And they did lots of good for the men who were working with them.

RME: Then, of course, they were disbanded when the war came, and in their place I got twenty conscientious objector camps of two hundred men each, and they were not so productive as the CCC camps.

ERM: Did you have any prisoner-of-war camps?

RME: No, we didn't have any prisoner-of-war camps. Just those I have mentioned, and that was enough. In the Depression we had a lot of WPA people and PWA.

ERM: Public Work Administration.

RME: Yes. You know Timberline Lodge on the side of Mt. Hood? They built that. I helped reach the conclusion to do it. I was very proud that they did it, and they did a wonderful job. Now they are figuring on a very expensive addition, and they need it all right. It needs some repair too.

ERM: It is a beautiful place.

RME: Yes, it is. Those big logs, and the staircases.

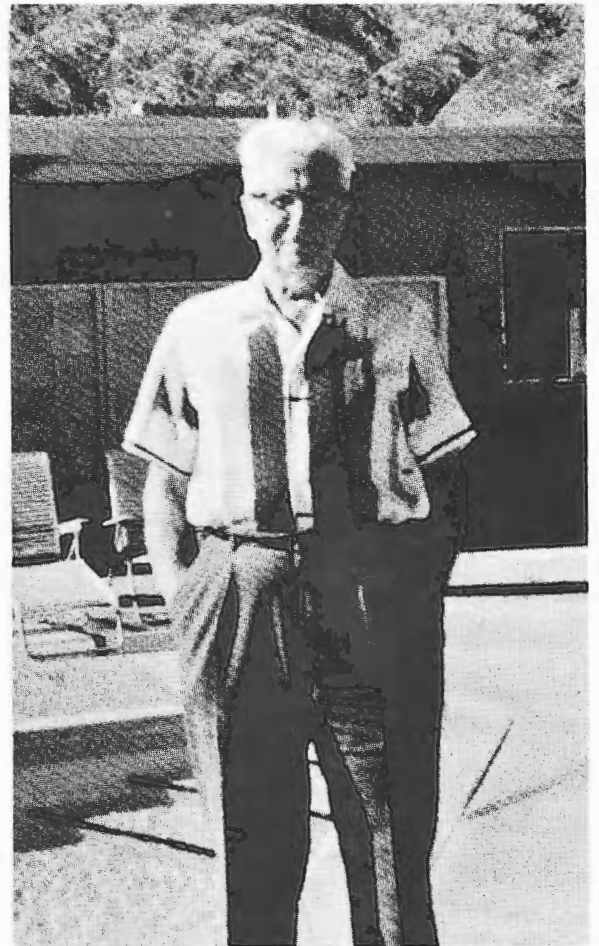
ERM: I would like to come back again sometime folks and talk with you at greater length.

RME: Come on back. I'd like to talk to you.





Mrs. Evans on the occasion of a 1964 South Pacific cruise, and Mr. Evans during a 1968 vacation in Palm Springs, California.



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