

# “Old-Timer”

## Jacinto D. Reyes, Veteran Ranger, Who Has Served Continuously for Thirty Years

By WILLIAM V. MENDENHALL

IN THE southwestern corner of the San Joaquin Valley, in California, where the desert meets the forested slopes of the San Rafael Mountains, lies the Cuyama ranger district of the Santa Barbara National Forest. Within this area spreads the Cuyama Valley and practically the entire drainage area of the Cuyama River.

It was into this country in 1854 that Rafael Reyes drove 2,000 head of cattle and 1,000 head of horses in search of feed. It was there he settled, making his cow camp in the head of the Cuyama, at what is now known as the Ozena Ranch. His nearest base of supplies was Ventura, thirty miles by trail over the San Rafael Mountains.

Mr. Reyes was married sixteen years after he settled in the Cuyama and in 1871 Jacinto D. Reyes was born—Jacinto, who today is the oldest forest ranger in point of service, having worn the shield of the government continuously for thirty years. After he finished school Jacinto lived at the ranch in the Cuyama and assisted in the cattle business. He learned the entire country from the cattleman's viewpoint before the Forest Service was established. In 1900, when the Forest Reserves were administered by the Department of the Interior, he went to work as a ranger for Supervisor Slosson, and since then has been in continuous charge of the Cuyama district.

During his early period of service many of the later-day men of prominence in the Forest Service visited the Cuyama district as cubs and profited by their experiences with Jacinto on the open range. Among them were W. B. Greeley, Will C. Barnes, A. W. Sampson and P. T. Harris. On one of these trips, Jacinto relates, Barnes, on leaving the Snedden Ranch with only six miles to go to the San Emigdio Ranch, indicated his fear that they would arrive too early to be invited to dinner and suggested that they make the trip in a roundabout manner so as to arrive there just in time to get their names in the pot. He claims that Greeley still owes him a pair of socks on a bet that was placed on the amount of timber being scaled.

The veteran ranger tells of entertaining President McKinley and President Roosevelt on their visits to California.

“In 1901,” he said, “President McKinley visited Ventura, and all of the rangers were called in. We were also introduced to Secretary Hitchcock of the Department of the Interior and to Secretary James Wilson of the Department of Agriculture. In May, 1905, President Roosevelt visited Santa Barbara, and we were again called in. We escorted the President in the parade, and I had the privilege of riding on the right side of the President's carriage.

“We were in town amid the pomp and ceremony, but we did not have to wear evening clothes.

The rangers appeared on all occasions in double-breasted blue flannel shirts and corduroy trousers.”

The conditions surrounding the Cuyama ranger district required that Reyes be more self-resourceful than is usually necessary on the average ranger district. His splendid record illustrates the excellence of his judgment and the public with whom he has had to deal have evidenced absolute respect both for him and the organization which he represents.

Jacinto has taken an active part in practically all of the serious fires which have occurred on the Santa Barbara Forest. He had a very important and active part in the Matilija-Wheeler fire of 1917, during which many houses were burned in the Ojai Valley, and in the Kelley Canyon fire of 1922 and the Tujunga fire in 1919—each of these fires burning over an area close to 100,000

acres. In 1921 he had thirty-five consecutive days of actual fire-fighting and in 1922 thirty days.

Living in this environment for forty years has made Reyes a type that is not common in our present-day civilization. He has gone through his share of hardships and come out with a smile. His kindness to animals as well as people indicates the trend of his nature. He has a pack mule, still in active service, that he has owned since 1907, and his thoughts when out in the woods are just as keen for the comfort of his stock as for himself. On many occasions, in order to protect his stock, it has been necessary for him to expose himself to danger, and this he has invariably done without hesitancy.



Jacinto D. Reyes  
Dean of Uncle Sam's forest rangers