

SCOTT LEAVITT

An Oral History Interview
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and
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MAUNDER: This is Elwood R. Maunder and Tom Morgan interviewing Mr. Scott Leavitt of Newberg, Oregon, July 6, 1960. Mr. Leavitt perhaps you can give us a sort of brief biographical sketch of your family life; how you came into this country and how you got started in forestry.

LEAVITT: We came out to Oregon in 1901 from Michigan after serving in the Spanish war--1898. Naturally you have a little wanderlust if you've ever been a soldier. I took up a claim in the Coast Range Mountains which I didn't prove up on because I broke a leg. I'm glad I didn't prove up on it, because when I got into forestry work I discovered the way we held the claim in those old days wasn't quite according to Hoyle. That's what brought me out here to Great Falls City as a headquarters. I met my wife up there--back in 1903 and in order to carry on while I was holding my claim I worked summers in sawmills up there doing one sort of job and another and teaching school in the winters. In connection with teaching school, after I gave up my claim I landed

finally down at Lakeview, Oregon in 1906. The Forest Service came in to Lakeview in that year and set up a headquarters at the Fremont National Forest and I took the ranger examination in 1907, based on my experience in the mountains and sawmill work, school teaching and as a noncommissioned army officer in the Spanish war. All of those things had pointed me toward the outdoor life and I became district ranger on the Fremonts, and in 1909 I was offered the opportunity of going to ~~Eiley~~^{Ely}, Minnesota.

MAUNDER: Could you tell us a little bit more in detail the method by which you got into active participation in the Forest Service? How were you recruited? What tests did you have to take?

LEAVITT: I took the oral ranger examination which isn't given any more. But this was the method of recruiting practically all of the old original ranger foresters in the Forest Service. There was a requirement that you know how to take care of yourself in the woods and how to put a log through a sawmill. In the forest range of Fremont you had to know something about how sheep and cattle were handled on the range; you had to saddle and ride a horse; you had to ride it bareback; and you had to put a pack on the horse; throw the diamond hitch; you had to take a compass and show that you could draw a line and pace and do simple land measurements--that sort

of thing. That was all in the field test and in addition, there was a written test that covered a good many of these same things from the standpoint of-- oh, I remember very clearly one question was how to make baking powder bread so you could feed yourself; how to take care of meat when you were camped out and quite a lot of very practical questions at that time.

MAUNDER: How did you happen to turn to the Forest Service? Had you heard about it?

LEAVITT: Oh, yes. I heard about it this way to begin with: The first district forester of the Ogden district was my brother Si Leavitt, who is now the oldest living graduate of the forest school of Michigan. He was one of the original Pinchot boys as they first called them in the old days and was for a time chief of boundaries in the Washington office, so I knew about the Forest Service. That kind of work appealed to me. I thought I saw more in it. I had become tired of teaching school and moving around from one place to another.

MAUNDER: You were teaching elementary school or high school?

LEAVITT: No. I was the principal of the school down at Lakeview-- it was just when the project was building up the high schools. It was more or less of a natural thing when the

Forest Service came in while I was there wishing I had some other kind of work to do and that I would take that ranger examination which was a very simple examination to me. I got the highest grade of anybody in the area when I took it because I'd been giving and taking examinations myself and there wasn't any trouble about that. That was the beginning of my Forest Service experience. I dwelled there on the Fremont with cattlemen and sheepmen at the beginning of the footing of the national forest under administration. The timber sale policy wasn't extensive down there in those days like it has become since. The public relations work required of a ranger in those days was perhaps the most important thing you had to do in addition to forest protection. The fire protection system was to ride up on top of the highest peak and look around for fire. If you saw smoke you had your packhorse with grub and tools and everything, and you went into the fire and began to fight it until the smoke got big enough so another ranger came. You didn't have any telephones and you didn't have any assistance--it would be just yourself in your district, that's all. It was a very primitive way of handling things but it was the way in which the whole fire protection system and the whole handling of grazing, and the whole

development of the national forest system was covered.

That's the way it began.

MORGAN: What was the attitude of the people toward the Forest Service?

LEAVITT: I didn't have any particular run-ins with anybody in my district. I learned to sit around the campfire and to talk with these people and to try to find out their problems and to just work out everything with them. Of course, in those old days when there were some misunderstandings and people weren't properly handled--I didn't have any of those difficulties that some of the rangers had--the prospectors and others tried to drive them out. I didn't have anybody try to drive me out or threaten to shoot me or anything of that kind, although some of the fellows in those old days did. I got by very well.

MORGAN: You didn't sense any feeling of hostility on the part of these people?

LEAVITT: There were some people who didn't exactly like the idea of having any regulations about the running of their cattle and sheep, because before, whichever band of sheep got out on the range first had it. Between the cattlemen and sheepmen there was hostility. It was only a little while before the establishment of forests down there that we had severe

range difficulty and shootings and that sort of thing, but we didn't have any in my district during the time I was there.

MAUNDER: There were no real fire prevention organizations in the field then?

LEAVITT: No, nothing of that kind at all. In fact, not a great deal of training of the foresters. You were supposed to know how to get around out there. You had your general instructions and the supervisor or head ranger would come around once in a while, but you were left pretty much on your own resources and you realized that the main thing with the fire was to get to it right off. That's the same principle they follow now; but now, of course, they establish lookouts and telephones and walkie-talkies. They seem to have just as many fires and just as much trouble as we did up until 1910. We had that big fire in Idaho and in Montana and a big loss of life. That's when we started organization of fire fighting forces and impressed upon Congress the necessity of building trails and telephone lines and that sort of thing.

MORGAN: In your opinion, did Greeley do very much in District 1 in order to cope with the fire in 1910 before it happened? Had he done a great deal of work towards establishing some system at all?

LEAVITT: That depended, of course, to some extent on the initiative and leadership of various supervisors--but we had Greeley as the head of the Service in the old District 1 at the time I worked there. In fact the Superior National Forest back in Minnesota that I went to from Fremont was at that time District 1--it was handled out of Missoula. And that's the reason that on the way to Superior I stopped in Missoula and got instructions and a little inspiration from Bill Greeley--it was my first contact with him.

MAUNDER: Can you tell us a little bit about that actual first contact?

LEAVITT: Greeley wasn't old. He and I were both born in 1879. We were the same age. He impressed me very much at that time with his quality for quiet leadership. In any of the talks I ever had with him he never raised his voice at all about anything. He was a leader in thinking and inspiring his force. I thought a tremendous amount of Greeley as a leader and had a great deal of confidence in him. I remember the statement of one man that I replaced when I became supervisor of the old Lewis & Clark--this man stayed there and worked on the forest for a while. He said, "When Greeley comes around it's just like when father comes home." I always thought of that and I think that sizes Greeley up.

MAUNDER: What kind of an impression did you have of Greeley prior to your actually meeting with him face to face? What type

of reputation did he have in the service?

LEAVITT: His reputation hadn't reached me down there at Lake View.

MAUNDER: It hadn't. Then you were coming to meet a man whom you had only heard about.

LEAVITT: It was very early. 1905 was the beginning of the present Forest Service and that was in 1907. He was one of the district foresters sent out by Pinchot in setting up the old system of forest districts. I hadn't heard about him except I'd seen his name in the field program which we had in those days. (We got that little printed book every little while that had the names of the forests. It didn't give the rangers to begin with though it gave the district foresters and supervisors. I remember I felt very proud when my name showed up in that for the first time.)

I had another contact with Greeley when I was back temporarily in charge of the Superior National Forest in northern Minnesota. I went back there after talking with Greeley. There were two of us that went in first--Johnny Baird and myself and we set up the ranger force. I was in charge until the end of the time I was there. Greeley came while I was there and I can remember our travel was largely by canoe. Bill Greeley and I went out to a logging camp where we spent the night. We didn't have any of our own bedding with us.

After I returned to Oregon I asked him to present a talk to the Rotary Club of which I was president. In his speech he recalled the night that we spent in the logging camp. We arrived in the camp towards night and the only bedding that was available was a horse blanket. We slept in what used to be called a bull-pen, where the lumberjacks had their socks all around the stove. That was before the days when the logging camps were modernized.

Bill Greeley had a very complete understanding of the program of lumbering in that kind of woods. Lumbering was very much different from what it was out in the western country. He had a very complete knowledge of this and he talked understandingly about the programs and he didn't give any orders. He checked up on the things that were being done for fire prevention and in general left a good feeling.

MAUNDER: Do you remember what company that was?

LEAVITT: Yes, that was the St. Croix Lumber Company.

MAUNDER: Do you know who the owner was?

LEAVITT: Well, I'm just trying to remember that man's name there-- I knew it very well, it doesn't come back to me though right now.

MORGAN: From other sources, Mr. Leavitt, I've come across the feeling that during that period Greeley was in Montana as district forester

he was too much of an autocrat--that is, he wouldn't delegate authority and there seems to have been some dissention among the people there in District 1.

LEAVITT: I didn't encounter any of that. I was never in the regional office except when I went into supervisory meetings. I was supervisor in the forest on the east side of the mountains all the time that I was there, and those forests were not visited as often as the forests in the more heavily timbered areas on the west side of the mountains close to Missoula. They might have encountered that sort of thing over there, but I never had any contact with it. I was given a pretty free hand in running my forests.

MORGAN: You were in control then.

LEAVITT: Yes. Of course, Greeley himself, I can't recall whether he was over there more than once during the time. I got there in the spring of 1910. My contact with him as district forester was just in 1910-1911.

MORGAN: A great part of that time you were busy fighting fire, I believe.

LEAVITT: I was on the Beaverhead first when I was in Montana in the spring of 1910 and we had fires there. I had charge of one on the Wise River. And at the same time of the Idaho big fires where men were loosing their lives, we had two

fires and great fire danger. It was Greeley who chose me as supervisor of the old Lewis & Clark. He left the next year.

MORGAN: Yes, you're right. 1911 he left.

LEAVITT: Yes, 1911. I got there in 1910 and then Silcox took over as district forester. At the time I was there he quit to do war work and then recommended me for the job I was given through the request of the Council of Defense. Rutledge took over and was chief when I resigned from the Forest Service. I organized and directed thirteen employment and labor offices in recruiting for war work.

MAUNDER: This was war work in Montana in the lumber industry?

LEAVITT: No, no. It was the whole setup of recruiting for war work and it had all of the features of an employment service-- Federal Employment Service. It was an emergency service for war recruiting, but we placed people in all kinds of jobs. We set up offices in a hurry. I was fortunate to have a first class executive assistant and to get good men at the heads of the offices. We worked in a hurry to set that thing up and had it going right away. Previous to that we had been asked to lead and direct the War Emergency Public Service Reserve. That created a list from every precinct in Montana of men that were available with

different skills; so if we needed mechanics or men experienced in any kind of war work we knew who they were. We had them all classified and could get in touch with them right away.

MAUNDER: You were directing people into all industries. And were you also directing some into forestry?

LEAVITT: I acted as recruiting officer for the Tenth Engineers and Twentieth Engineers of forestry regiments. As a recruiting officer I passed out qualifications and so on. I have never been out of touch with forestry work. I specialized in it.

I tried to make myself recognized as a fellow that wouldn't try to fool anybody about the necessity of this or that in the way of forestry legislation and could be depended upon to tell the truth. I had one experience where I cashed in on that theory. It was after the disastrous floods in the Mississippi Valley. A flood control bill for the Mississippi Valley was brought in without my knowledge. I'd been pretty busy with my own committee and other committees of which I was a member. The bill came onto the floor and I went up to the first desk and got the form that is used to make an order of amendment. I wrote a very simple amendment, "The President is hereby authorized and directed to report to the Congress the place

of forestry in flood control." That is practically the same language. And I offered it on the floor. There was no fight made against it--it passed almost unanimously. The amendment was in the bill when it left the House and went to the Senate and as a result there was a very extensive report done by E. A. Sherman. The bill and amendment came up to the Congress and was printed. The purpose I had in mind, of course, was to establish close connections between forestry and flood control and to make sure that the whole of forestry's values would be included in any program that was set up. I used that just as an illustration of how it was always in my mind; when opportunities came up I took advantage of them.

MORGAN: You were in Congress in 1922 until 1932.

LEAVITT: I was elected in '22 and in those days we took office on the 4th of March following--the 4th of March in '23 to the 4th of March in '33.

MORGAN: I would imagine you were right in the thick of this fight for the Clarke-McNary legislation.

LEAVITT: Yes, I was there. That was the bill, I think, in which I acted as a sort of voluntary liaison between the floor and Bill Greeley who was waiting outside for developments. I was going out and talking with him and then coming in and getting information on the floor of the House and getting information

from him as to procedures and what I might be able to help with on the floor of the House.

MAUNDER: I've heard it said, Mr. Leavitt, that prior to the passage of Clarke-McNary there was a great struggle within the forces of forestry over legislation to meet the fire needs and that Gifford Pinchot represented the one faction and Bill Greeley the other. Could you give us any background on that?

LEAVITT: I wasn't aware of that conflict at all. It never came to my attention.

MORGAN: Pinchot's ideas were embodied in the Capper Report which called for federal legislation which would set up regulation of the private timber landowners in their cutting practices and in their fire protection system. Opposed to this theory of regulation was Bill Greeley's idea of cooperation between the federal government, the state government, and the private timber landowner in cutting, fire protection, and reforestation. Of course, the Clarke-McNary bill was the one that established this.

LEAVITT: The Bill Greeley policy was the wisest policy in my judgment. I always agreed with his policy. I never knew of any open conflict with Pinchot on that. After I was in Congress, the issue came to the floor again with Earle Clapp, who was

acting chief for a while and that was a pet idea of his-- this control of cuttings on private lands, etc., but they never got that through have they?

MORGAN: No, it's never been put through. We're still operating under the Clarke-McNary cooperation clause.

LEAVITT: Yes, it would be a pretty hard piece of legislation in my judgment and experience to get through as a law--turning the whole lumber industry over to the Forest Service as far as the handling of cutting and all was concerned. These other agencies are doing it in a cooperative way-- federal government and Clarke-McNary and states. There's close cooperation there with timberlands associations, and as long as they can continue to handle it satisfactorily they will have a lot easier sledding than it would to try to put the other method into the law.

MAUNDER: Tell me, Mr. Leavitt, how did you get into politics?

LEAVITT: That is another story. I had been supervisor of two national forests. Both forests had livestock, sheep, and cattle, and I had very good fortune in my relationships with the stockmen in the two forests. When I had to resign from the Forest Service to do war work, my first job was as director of the Public Service Reserve. There was a local volunteer's official through whom registrations

could be made and cards filled out. These were then siphoned into our central office until we had a fairly complete list of men and women who were available for every kind of work. The work might have to be done in connection with winning the war or carrying on industry and agriculture.

I was called on frequently in those old days to make speeches of various kinds on Memorial Days or Fourth of July--orations as we use to call them. The speaker's name would be advertised on a poster and while it wasn't all over the congressional district, it covered some of it. When the boys began to go away in the First World War, they went away in contingents and a speech was made and a band played. I don't know how many of those speeches I was asked to make. Those and other addresses of various kinds were reported in the papers and then in addition, of course, every year the local paper in Great Falls, The Great Falls Tribune, published my annual grazing report. It went all over the north end of the district as well as the central area, and that occurred for a number of years. In one way and another I got a wide acquaintance. I had as my executive assistant in setting up and organizing the War Emergency Employment Service, Bob Cunningham,

a man who had been on the secretarial force of Senator Purvis from Kansas. Bob said to me, "Now's your chance. You're known all over the district. Now's your chance to go to Congress if you want to." I got to thinking hard and thought that would be a pretty good idea. I didn't have any money. One didn't have any money working in those days for the government. But I had that acquaintance, and I announced my candidacy. This didn't discourage anybody else because politically I wasn't known. There were several others that announced for the nomination also. I won the nomination on a Republican ticket in a large field by not a very large margin over my nearest competitor. I was elected five times.

MAUNDER: Had you been active in the party prior to this?

LEAVITT: No. I was always a Republican but I hadn't been active. I expect everybody who was interested knew what party I belonged to. When you worked with the government under civil service you couldn't be politically active. You could express a private opinion but you couldn't act as a party official or make any political speeches or anything like that. It is an unusual story, I guess, because I ran without money-- I just was elected, that's all. I always figured that my

forestry work helped the stockmen around the forest where I had been supervisor and they supported me very generously.

MAUNDER: What did you do from the time of the end of the war up to the time you were elected to Congress?

LEAVITT: In my home town of Great Falls the secretary of the chamber of commerce died suddenly and I filled in for him for about a year. During that period of time I had another break that helped me to be known. I was in the organizing of a national park-to-park highway association between Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. The idea of the association was to connect all of the national parks with the highway as a way of circulating people through the West. I went on that tour and for a year was president of the road organization. I had been president of the Montana Highway Association for sixteen years. After the tour there was a little time that I took advantage of and gave some talks about parks--the parks weren't known in those days like they are now. I wrote to all of the railroads that were involved and put together a set of slides--it was before the days of movies. I gave a few lectures for which I didn't expect payment. At the school it helped to raise money for the library or something and they would pay my expenses.

I used the same kind of posters with the same colors and pictures that I had in mind using later when I ran for Congress. I had the posters up along the highland a year or so before so the people could remember when the political posters came up that it was the same fellow who helped them get their library or something. All of these little things went together and that is the way I got in. A man goes into office on his own ambition pretty largely. You feel that the call you make on the people sounds alot like their own voices. I don't know of anyone else who started exactly that way, but then it was just a set of circumstances and I took advantage of it.

MAUNDER: You had no support from the members of the Chamber of Commerce there at Great Falls to help you along.

LEAVITT: No. I wasn't secretary when I ran for office but after I filled in and worked at one thing and another the time shaped up for me to run.

MAUNDER: To what extent, Mr. Leavitt, was Anaconda Copper Company a factor in politics when you were beginning?

LEAVITT: They were an active factor in politics. That is, they took sides in a case where they thought there was necessity of their taking sides. In the first campaign, they didn't support me and I don't know whether they opposed

me or not. I don't know who they were actively for, but they didn't do anything for me. As time went on it would depend on who was running against me. The one time that a man who had worked for them a good deal over in Lewistown ran against me in the primary, they openly supported him, but I was nominated. In the elections there were times when they were for me and times when they were against me. I never was their candidate in the sense that they had anything to do with my running. They didn't have any fear of me because I was interested in the development of power and irrigation and everything that had to do with the advancement of Montana. I wasn't interfering with them or calling on them for support.

MAUNDER: Did you have a good support from the press when you were running for Congress?

LEAVITT: Well, the Republican press, yes. They were very good.

MORGAN: Were you familiar with Burton K. Wheeler the Senator from Montana?

LEAVITT: He ran for Senate the first election and I ran for the House. We both ran almost the same in my district. It was not that he was opposed to me and I was opposed to him, but it just turned out that way. I knew Wheeler very well. I had known him before when he was the United States District

Attorney. I had ten years down there. I had the Republican nomination for the Senate but it was no good during the New Deal, and Montana hadn't had a Republican senator for many years.

MAUNDER: Who did you run against?

LEAVITT: Murray. Murray has just retired. He's been down there ever since. That was the election of 1934. I won the nomination--the race against Wellington D. Rankin--and had more or less of a battle for that. But again I had to run without funds and I ran against Murray whose uncle had died and left him a fortune. It's like anybody trying to beat Jack Kennedy in the primaries in this election that just ended. There's nobody else who has the time or the money.

MAUNDER: The Republican party had no money to put into the election.

LEAVITT: They gave me a thousand dollars, that's all.

MAUNDER: No campaign chest support from outside.

LEAVITT: It was considered that the New Deal had the state and always had the Democratic senator, and since many years before there wasn't any great amount of help at all.

MAUNDER: Can we go back a little bit then into the twenties to the time when you were in Washington as a congressman and get from you some of your experiences there with Greeley when he

was there with the Forest Service. To what extent did you get to know him in that period?

LEAVITT: During that period we were guests in his house at different times. We had a very good close friendship between the two of us and our families and as far as I know, he thought the same of me as I did of him.

It was the 25th anniversary of the Forest Service in 1930 that I introduced the bill to erect a memorial to Theodore Roosevelt--to his leadership in forest conservation on the Continental Divide, (south of Glacier Park on the boundary line of the Continental Divide between the Lewis & Clark and the Flathead National Forest.) I made a speech before the House in regard to it and the bill was passed. We have a monument up there if you ever go through. You'll find it standing in the center of the highway; the highway divides and goes around. The shaft is the same shape as the Washington Monument with tablets on it erected to his leadership in forest conservation and has on it a quotation from him. I was thinking that was when Greeley was there, but I think Greeley was gone at that time.

MAUNDER: Yes, he was gone by that period.

LEAVITT: Bob Stuart was the chief when that went through. My contacts with Greeley in connection with legislation while I was down there were concerned with forestry matters. I tried to keep myself informed and be helpful on the floor in connection with any debate or anything of that kind or to answer questions. Some of the matters were very simple, but many of them had to do with authorizing exchanges of forest land between the Forest Service and private owners. There was a continual amount of watching in connection with appropriations bills, and that sort of thing. I tried to keep the confidence of the members so my opinion would have some weight. That's about the story.

MORGAN: When Greeley left the Forest Service in 1928 and came out to the West Coast Lumbermen's Association, there seems to have been a feeling on the part of the more ardent conservationists, the Pinchot school in large, that he had sold out to the industry. Did you come into any contact with this sort of feeling on the part of your other friends in the Forest Service.

LEAVITT: I heard some little comments dropped that indicated there was some of that feeling. I remember when there was some talk about who was going to be the new chief

down in Washington, someone said he hoped it wouldn't be Greeley. I had a good many years outside the Service dealing with problems from a different angle, while a good many in the Forest Service had gone from schools, and stayed in and had lesser experience, and naturally had a little different viewpoint on some things than I might have had. I had to deal with every side of each of these problems when I was in Congress, and I had to try to understand them. So when Bill Greeley left I felt a good deal of regret that he had left the Forest Service. I thought he was very valuable to the Forest Service because I knew, as a member of Congress, that he had a very valuable influence in Congress among the members. They had confidence in Greeley--Greeley and Sherman particularly, seemed to be men that committees and members had confidence in. They weren't trying to put anything across that wasn't all right. I hated to have him leave, but I didn't have the feeling that he was selling out. I knew he was getting a bigger salary.

There were several years when I was in Congress, that it wasn't extremely difficult to get through constructive forestry legislation. The government was shaping up and understanding the necessity of forest conservation and of course it was always a fight between

whether it should be stated this way or stated that way, but the general proposition of forest protection and conservation from the standpoint of selective cutting and things of that kind--they were beginning to understand. Not as much and not as well as it's understood now by the general public. One of the things that makes me feel very good about the whole situation is the fact that whereas even in the days I was doing informational work and public relations work in the Lake States we were doing more or less fundamental work in getting people to understand the necessity for forest conservation and why we were re-establishing forests on areas that had been denuded of forests; and also the necessity for fire protection and care by the public. Now, I hardly ever listen to a program on television but what Smokey Bear or some idea comes on that the public has accepted. I remember sitting around the campfire with the stockmen and talking from an angle that he could see the necessity of not burning up his range when the idea was just a fundamental, very simple beginning. Now it has grown and the public has accepted it. There's no question about the sentiment now. But it has been a growth largely of public relations work and education. I will give a lot

of credit to women's clubs and organizations of that kind that work with you in giving opportunities to speakers.

MAUNDER: Do you think the Forest Service had a particular talent for public relations?

LEAVITT: Well, to go back into that a little bit, I can remember when there were two expressions, whether you called them schools of thought or not. Some use to say, "Well the best public relations we can have is the work of the ranger"--the man on the ground and the man in the forest who provides his office with the kind of work he does-- that's the best public relations. Well, that's a very essential part of it; you can't succeed without that. But if you stop there the general public doesn't know anything about what's going on in the forests. You have to reach out with the cooperation of the newspapers and magazines. I don't know any opposition to the conservation idea now. But it was a battle when we started.

MAUNDER: Who did you feel were your chief opponents in this battle?

LEAVITT: To begin with? Well, there was something we used to ponder in the attitude of people that the government was kind of nosing in on things that were local problems. A good many people didn't see the necessity of spending a lot of money because there were plenty of forests.

They didn't like to see them burn up but they opposed the idea of spending so much money to fight fire. All that was required to counter this thought was establishing the idea of how much the country and the local communities depend on forest resources. There was some opposition, of course, on the part of individual lumbermen who didn't want to be interfered with or told that they had to cut or pile brush or do anything of that kind on the national forest area or on a public lands area. It took a while to overcome that sort of opposition. The same kind of opposition was among the stockmen. The land was public range and had always been open to them. If they got there first with a band of sheep they used it, and they fought for their rights if necessary. I don't know any stockman now who is opposed to a reasonable amount of handling of the public ranges in a way to preserve them instead of destroy them.

MAUNDER: What factors or events in your lifetime do you see as having been most influential in changing these attitudes on the part of the lumbermen and the stockmen?

LEAVITT: I think that with the lumbermen, it is partly the younger generation that has come up. The old lumbermen were largely of the lumberjack type. Many of them, whose

families later became wealthy and socially established, had bark on them almost like a tree. I'm speaking now about back in the Michigan woods where I grew up as a boy. I can remember a story they used to tell about one of these newly rich lumbermen. His family and friends were out in a boat on Lake Michigan and a storm came up. They all managed to get ashore and as soon as the lumberman jumped out of the boat onto the shore, he says, "Thank God we're once again on vice versa." He was trying to talk like an educated man without being one.

I can remember the old lumberjacks going down through town with a drive. The men out of the camps would tear up the town while they were going through.

My father used to become a little concerned about a fire getting too close into our town. I remember he and I were walking around one time and we found a man with a shovel who was putting dirt on a fire. That was enough of an oddity for me to remember--the fires just burned unless they got into a town.

There has been an evolution of thinking and education. When I was back in Wisconsin, as late as 1936 there was

a movement in which I acted in an advisory capacity, to obtain the requirement of teaching conservation in the schools. There was a woman's group and other such groups that were interested and got to the legislature. This movement grew although there was some opposition. Today, every teacher in Wisconsin has to take some training in the conservation of natural resources and has to teach it. I can put my finger on it in a number of different ways--it was actually a change in the whole attitude. The old opposition seems to have pretty well gone with the passing of a generation in which opposition was a natural thing. With a growing nation it was possible to cross the country, using up our resources and not think about any policy whereby they could be replenished. A forest was cleared off on a homestead and the timber was burned, except what could be sold to the sawmills. This old opposition has receded into the background and become ancient history. We couldn't say it's all this, or all that--I think the Forest Service had the movement led by Pinchot on forest conservation in those old days. It was a new idea, but he was a warrior for it. I think he deserves a lot of credit for whatever leadership we had in those days and that was

pretty good leadership. I was three years in the Service while he was the chief. We old-timers got an inspiration from Pinchot.

MAUNDER: How did you feel when Pinchot went out of the Service?

LEAVITT: I didn't like the idea at all. I thought that he was very shabbily treated. I could understand that he had violated some orders of his superior--had come out against the policy that Secretary of the Interior Ballinger had established with regard to lands in Alaska--and he very openly opposed him. I have to revise the way I've approached that--he actively opposed those policies up there and made an issue out of them. He was a bureau chief, who in effect was attacking and criticizing the cabinet officers and there wasn't very much for the president to do except to ask for his resignation. Pinchot was perfectly willing to sacrifice himself and I think that very fact was very effective. He probably had as much effect on advancing the idea of conservation of natural resources as he could have had if he had stayed in there another ten years. It dramatized it.

MAUNDER: In other words, you think that public opinion was brought more into the forestry and conservation camp because of his action?

LEAVITT: I think so. He was willing to sacrifice himself for his beliefs and made people stop and think about what he was advocating.

MAUNDER: You never had the sense, as you said earlier in the interview, that Pinchot and Greeley stood in opposition to one another.

LEAVITT: I never encountered that. I don't know why I didn't, but it was never brought to my attention in those days.

MAUNDER: I was under the impression that in the period leading up to the passage of the Clarke-McNary Act there was a good deal of jockeying for position in Congress as to what kind of legislation would be passed, and that Pinchot was in favor of legislation that would put all the power in the hands of the federal agencies. Greeley on the other hand was in favor of putting it in the hands of the state agencies. The Clarke-McNary Act had in a sense constituted the compromise between these two, in which it became a cooperative venture of both state and federal agencies. There was a good deal of head knocking before this came up.

LEAVITT: There always is on anything of that kind down there, but I can't understand why I didn't meet it head-on with

effort by the two sides to convince me personally one way or the other. I didn't encounter anything like that. I was doing a lot of my own thinking based on my Forest Service experience and was dealing with forest uses and I knew Clarke and I knew McNary and I had confidence in the bill. I thought it was a good bill. There has always been this contest, more or less, between these two ideas and it goes into many things, not only forestry practices. There are some who are extremists one way or the other on how far the Federal Government should be allowed in and how much recognition should be given to state agencies and private industry and individual initiative. I've always been in between with the idea that all of those various agencies have their place and you can coordinate them under a program. You can keep your individual initiative and keep the necessary controls by federal, state, and local governments and have them all working harmoniously. I think that's more effective--it has been more effective.

MORGAN: You were ready to comment on your opinion as to whether or not Greeley sold out in 1928.

LEAVITT: I never had that feeling about Greeley. I know that there were some who did and I thought that was unfair to

Greeley, to a man of his character and his interest in forest conservation. I thought that it was a very unfair idea and I didn't believe it at all. I believe myself, knowing Greeley, that he felt that he could serve the general cause of forest conservation more completely by putting himself in the position of influencing the lumber industry as its representative, to help bring about the sort of cooperation that was finally achieved. I think that is one of the great contributions of Bill Greeley to the whole picture of forest conservation. I think that he represented and helped lead the changing attitude of modern day lumbermen. He helped to shape the change--to bring it about with his understanding and knowledge of the Forest Service attitude towards all of these problems.

MORGAN: Kenneth G. Crawford, in a book called The Pressure Boys; The Inside Story of Lobbying in America, you probably confronted this in the 1930s if it was apparent, states that during the decade of the thirties when Greeley was no longer in the Forest Service, there was in the Service itself what he called "Greeleyism" and by this he implies that there was a direct connection between industry and the Forest Service. In other words, the Service was sort of a handmaiden to industry because of

the large number of Greeley men who were still in the Service. Did you feel that was true that this sphere of cooperation which was maybe more...

LEAVITT: Greeley's policy taught all of us in the old Forest Service to be cooperative with the lumbermen, the local settlers, the sheepmen and cattlemen, and those who were interested in recreation--that it was a big general picture and it wasn't like some saw at the very beginning when they didn't want any grazing anywhere in any forest area, because the only thing they saw was the growth of trees. There were extremists like that in the very early days. Well you can't carry out a movement in a country like ours without support of the people ultimately--at least the majority of the people you're dealing with. There's an old saying by some great English statesman that says, "Public opinion is the great ocean by whose level all heights and depths are measured." I don't know any other way to put it that presents it like that. Anybody who's dealing with the public in connection with a cause that he's interested in must understand that public opinion must ultimately support his movement or he's not going to be able to accomplish all that he wants. That was the theory and

the idea that I gathered from what little contact I had through the years with Greeley--he was of that attitude of mind that was understanding of the problems of everyone that he was dealing with. He tried to view the whole thing from everybody's standpoint and tried to bring about a situation that would result in forest conservation. The conservation of natural resources which was his great aim was to be accomplished with the support and cooperation of the lumber industry instead of its opposition.

MORGAN: You wouldn't give any truth then to the idea that possibly the Forest Service became subservient to industry because of this policy.

LEAVITT: Oh, no. I never had anything like that hit me, either when I was in it or when I was in Congress or when I went back to it--I never encountered that. Now I wouldn't want to pass judgment on anybody else's idea. There's a human trait if you're seeing a thing from just one angle, somebody else doesn't see it from that angle. Here are three of us sitting here in this room and we couldn't look at my mother's picture up here from the same angle. I look at it from here, and you from there, and you from over there--we're all seeing the picture, but from different angles and you

can't get everybody to look at any problem from exactly the same angle. There are people who seem to think that if the other fellow doesn't see it from their angle, that there's some ulterior motive there--something working on him that's a little under the table--it's shaded somehow. And that isn't necessarily so at all. It might be in some cases, but I'd rather believe that people are honest in their opinions. I've been able to get a lot farther that way than if I was always looking for ulterior motives.

MAUNDER: Mr. Leavitt, looking back over your years in this field, what people do you see as standing out as perhaps the half dozen most influential people in their lives in the field of conservation? I know this is an arbitrary distinction to make on short notice, but casting your mind back over the period--who are the five or six men who you think of as most important in conservation history?

LEAVITT: Of course, I'd start out with Pinchot and I would include some of those early men who the present Forest Service doesn't know anything about except having only heard of them. There was Albert Potter who was very influential in his leadership in setting up a grazing policy that recognized the rights and needs of the stockmen and also the necessity of forest conservation and making the two work together.

MAUNDER: Did you know him personally?

LEAVITT: Yes, he was a stockman down in--I think it was New Mexico-- and he heard of the Forest Service through a representative of a group of stockmen down there who had spoken with Pinchot back in the formative days. He impressed Pinchot as a man who was fair minded, who understood the problems of the stockmen and who also was interested in forest conservation. Pinchot brought him in as grazing chief.

MAUNDER: Pinchot prevailed on Potter to come in.

LEAVITT: That's what I always heard--Potter never told me that himself.

Another one who impressed me that you don't hear about much any more was Will C. Barnes. Now Bill Barnes was another practical stockman and he was a man who was very capable. He was a writer to some extent. Quite a few of the things that he wrote were published. And he had a very interesting experience back in one of the Indian wars for which he won the Congressional Medal of Honor. I can remember running across him one time when I was in Congress. I was up in the White House for some reason and ran across him there with his Medal of Honor collar around him. He was in the Forest Service

as an assistant chief, but he had the run of the White House. He had been invited there along with other Medal of Honor men. He had been in an outfit in the army that was surrounded by Indians. When they asked for volunteers to break through to bring some relief, he and another fellow volunteered. He went out in one direction and the other fellow went in another direction and he told me that he heard firing and he knew they got the other fellow. So he just went right out. He got the cavalry troops that came and rescued them. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor. That added a little to my interest in him, of course, for it had a little bit of glamor in connection with it.

This wasn't his great value to the Forest Service, however. It was his ability to talk with stockmen and forest users of any kind in a way that was very friendly and persuasive and left everybody with a good feeling. He impressed me quite a little at the beginning. The newer men don't know of Will C. Barnes.

There were several others in there, in those early days--I couldn't leave out and wouldn't want to leave out E. A. Sherman. E. A. Sherman came to a rather-- what I thought was a tragic end with the Forest Service.

His last years were after Silcox became chief. He had been assistant chief and what impressed me greatly about him was that he could come up to Congress, come before a committee and have the members of Congress listen to him and believe him. I talked with several of them (I'd known Sherman before when I was the supervisor) and he had their confidence. He was invaluable to the Forest Service in contacts with Congress. There were others who would come up and make a first class showing and be full of facts and information, but they would be treated like any representative from any bureau. Sherman, however, seemed to have a kind of a friendly way about him and looked kind of like Abraham Lincoln and he was valuable. I don't know how far I should go--of course there are a number of rangers I could name who I thought were good.

MAUNDER: That's good, give them some recognition.

LEAVITT: Some of the rangers? Well, there's one old ranger who's still alive. I wish you could go and talk to him--he's over in Helena, Montana right now, and he's over ninety years old--John P. Bonhan. He was a cowboy type of ranger--took the old ranger examination like I did and was the district ranger on the old Jefferson in Montana

which is now part of the Lewis & Clark. He had a way with the stockmen so that they recognized him as one of them. He knew as much about their business as they did and he was very influential in securing cooperation. I think it's a good idea to speak to some of the rangers because those men really at the beginning of the Forest Service were the foundation of it. They were like the roots of a tree out among the people. As far as national public opinion was concerned, men at the top were the ones who were heard of and were influential, but without these fellows on the ground, the Forest Service never could have become established in the public mind as it is now.

MAUNDER: They had the practical know-how.

LEAVITT: They had the know-how and they had it to begin with. Did you ever get what they called the old "Use Book" and read the qualifications of the rangers? Back in the days when I took that examination you had to know the local problems, the local country, and the local people. And as I've said the ranger was like the roots of the tree. The top of the tree waves around in the wind more and maybe the fruit shows up up there instead of down around the roots, but the roots are down there feeding the whole thing.

I wouldn't want to go into every one of the different regional foresters and so on that I've known, because I'd have to kind of pick and choose among them. They haven't been as influential with me in fixing my ideas as those early men. I would include Greeley, of course, and there was E. T. Allen here in this area. He was a very important individual in the establishment of this Region 6 and I met him in those old days. I was quite impressed by him. He didn't like Pinchot. I don't know whether you've ever ran across that or not.

MORGAN: I have.

LEAVITT: He didn't get a very good deal with Pinchot someplace along the line. I don't know whether that ought to go on the record or not.

MAUNDER: Oh, yes. It's all part of the story. We know a good deal about the story.

LEAVITT: I know he told me after I was in Congress--he didn't tell me just what it was, but he wasn't very much impressed with Pinchot. He didn't care much about what happened to Pinchot. I think it was the time when Pinchot was defeated for governor of Pennsylvania after he had been governor once. I think it was along about that time that I ran across Allen. Anyhow, he had some influence on my early thinking.

MAUNDER: What do you think was E. T. Allen's great force?

LEAVITT: I couldn't answer that question in any way that would have any value, because my contacts with him were as head of this area as chief inspector and then he became the first district forester at the very beginning of my service and I thought of him as a man up there on top without my having any direct contact with him until long after. I would like to confine my names to those early men that the present Service doesn't know much about.

MAUNDER: That's very valuable and very helpful and we are grateful to you for giving us such a frank statement of your recollections of this period and of the men and events that you feel have been most important in the development of forestry and conservation history.

LEAVITT: I always gave Teddy Roosevelt a lot of credit for my enthusiasm in those early days. I thought of that when I was talking about the monument--that was the only way I could express my great admiration for his leadership and that monument is up there at the top of the Divide and, of course, maybe I got a little of my almost hero worship of Teddy from being with the Army down in Cuba. I wasn't with the rough riders but I was there farther down

the line at the time.

MAUNDER: There was a great deal of idealism in being a part of forestry in the beginning.

LEAVITT: In the beginning, yes. It was a crusade with us. It is pretty hard to get across the feeling of the original forest rangers and members of the old Forest Service in their various capacities--the men who had to establish public understanding right on the ground around the campfires. You got the feeling of being part of a crusade and we became very much filled with the idea. I don't suppose a hundred percent of the old-timers felt that, but a good many did. I used to talk with them and feel that spirit.

MAUNDER: Do you think there has been a slackening off in that spirit in recent years?

LEAVITT: I don't have the contacts to answer it in the very last few years. There was some of it back in the Lake States Region 9, because we were establishing new national forests when I was back there. There was a little of the pioneer spirit back there then, because you encountered some of the same situations that the Forest Service had in the beginning. In the older established parts I have some contact, because I have a son who is a forest supervisor in Missoula--supervisor in the Lolo National Forest. He has some of that old spirit that I had.

I've had kind of a general feeling that it's like the difference between the old volunteer army and the regular army. I have to use the old Spanish war as an illustration. We were all volunteers in that war--every man. And for many years we were proud of it. We used to talk about it. We've kind of calmed down now as we've gotten older--we talk about it a little among ourselves. We don't claim any credit on account of anything because there have been so many other wars since. I've often thought something of the situation and the feeling of the old-timers which the newcomers can't quite understand because the conditions are so different. There isn't any battle on their hands now with public opinion like we had to start with. There are some opponents of certain measures, certain things that they want to do here and there, but there is no battle to be fought for the conservation idea now--it's just a case of keeping it going. We've already worked up; you just have to keep it flowing. How could you have just that same spirit? You get in a car tomorrow and go up into the hills and do something like that where we used to start out on a saddle horse in a pack outfit and camp wherever we were at night. Camp with a cattle or sheepman and sit around

the fire and talk with him. I remember talkin' to one one night when a cougar yelled just outside of the sheep. It brought everybody right up. All of that sort of thing. It was different.

MAUNDER: The physical world in which we live today...

LEAVITT: The whole thing is changed. We've gone through the atomic age and we're getting on through the space age now. I can give an illustration of the old Forest Service on that which always appeals to me--from old Seth Bullock. He was one of Teddy's rough riders and a distant relative of Teddy's mother. He was kind of an old-timer out in the Black Hills and he became a ranger in the very early days and he finally resigned. He said in resigning, "As long as they call a tree a tree and a bug a bug, that's all right with me. When they begin to call a tree a Pinus ponderosa and a bug a Dendroctonus monticolae, that's too far up the gulch for me." That's a good place to leave this. That's just the difference between the old Service and the new.

MAUNDER: We want to thank you Mr. Leavitt for this interview.

