

THIRD EPISODE

On October 25, 1915, I took the Civil Service Examination for Forest Ranger at Kalispell and received a rating of 77.00. My 1907 rating was 77.14. Bob McLaughlin, Supervisor of the old Blackfeet at that time gave the examination, and he asked me specifically if I meant to accept appointment and stay with it, and I advised him that this was my firm intention. Shortly after my return from the Border, I received a letter from Regional Forester R. H. Rutledge offering me an appointment as Forest Ranger at \$1100 per annum on the Absaroka National Forest with headquarters at Livingston, Montana.

On December 22, I informed the Regional Forester that I would accept the appointment. On January 3, 1917, not having heard from the Regional Forester I telephoned him and was informed that the job on the Absaroka had been filled, but there was a vacancy on the Gallatin National Forest that I could have. It was explained that it was a summer District with headquarters far from stores, schools and churches. I told him I was ready to go, so I left Kalispell on Monday evening, January 8, 1917 by Great Northern train to Shelby, Great Falls, Helena and Northern Pacific to Bozeman around midnight, January 9-10. My wife was to follow in better weather.

Gallatin National Forest - 1917

At the time of my arrival, the Gallatin the Forest headquarters was on the second floor of the Post Office Building. At 9 o'clock the morning of January 10, I reported to Forest Supervisor R. E. Bodley and met Deputy Supervisor Arthur H. Abbott. They looked me over and asked several questions regarding my experience, background, and what equipment I had brought with me. I explained that all of my field equipment had long ago been disposed of and that I was prepared to acquire whatever was necessary, including saddle and pack stock. It was explained to me that I would be assigned to the Upper Gallatin Ranger District with headquarters at the Cinnamon Ranger Station, but I would not be expected to take over the District until sometime in May.

1916-17 was proving to be a hard winter with heavy snowfall in the high country which was driving the elk, deer, and other game down into the lower country where they were encroaching on the settled ranch country and were consuming forage needed for domestic stock. This condition was particularly bad along the Yellowstone River north of Yellowstone National Park. In fact, the situation had become so aggravated that the State Game Department, the Forest Service, and the National Park Service had combined to establish a regular game patrol in an effort to give the ranchers some relief and to stop some poaching of game for elk teeth. In 1917 a well-colored pair of bull elk teeth could be sold for as much as \$25. They were being used as ornaments by members of the Elks Lodge.

I was informed that since the Forest Ranger stationed at the Big Creek Ranger Station on the Yellowstone was in Missoula taking the Ranger Short Course at the University, I was elected to fill in for him on the Elk Patrol, cooperating with the Ranger stationed at Dome Mountain on the east side of the river, Wesley D'Ewart by name, and two State Game Wardens stationed at the Chico Hot Springs near Emigrant--I should get over there as quickly as possible. The Forest owned two fairly good saddle horses which were being kept in town on feed. I was told I could use one of the horses until such time as I acquired stock of my own. The Deacon (A. H. Abbott) loaned me his saddle, bridle and chaps, we put Neverslip shoes on Harry, and I took off for the Yellowstone. This was Friday, January 14. The temperature was around 18-20° below zero so Harry needed little urging to step right along.

My route was east from Bozeman along the railroad to Chestnut, then southeast along Trail Creek and south to Emigrant, around 28 or 30 miles. It did not warm up any, and Harry was glad to see the livery barn at Emigrant, and I checked into the hotel for supper, bed and breakfast. At the livery barn I learned that there were two game wardens staying at the Chico Hot Springs Hotel. So I headed for Chico and met with Warden Charley Esgar and visited with him about the problems of the game or elk patrol, had lunch and then headed upriver. Boy, was it cold!

I found the Dome Mountain Ranger Station to be located at the D'Ewart Ranch which was owned by Ranger D'Ewart's cousin. There was a double-house arrangement, and Wes and his family lived in the south half. I introduced myself, stated my purpose in being there, and found there was a living quarters problem. One suggestion was that I might find bed and board at the Carbella Post Office, which was across the Yellowstone River, and was full of ice and not very fordable, with no bridge closer than 18 or 20 miles. Harry would do all right, with plenty of hay and grain and a warm barn to be shared with D'Ewart's saddle horse. The house was relatively new: living room with kitchen-dining on ground floor, two bedrooms on second floor. The Ranger D'Ewarts had a small baby, 8 or 9 months old. The local schoolteacher roomed and boarded with them. Well, anyway, we made out; Wes and I were away a good part of the time.

Our patrol extended from the Dome Mountain Station up the river on both sides to Gardiner. We established a cabin camp on Cedar Creek above the Dick Randall Dude Ranch. The Park Rangers had a cabin camp at old Electric which we shared with them. Our usual schedule was to ride up the west side of the river to Electric, camp overnight; and the second day, with two Park Rangers, we would ride the east side from the Park line down to Cedar Creek and camp at the Cedar Creek cabin. Then the third day, Wes and I would ride down the east side to Dome Mountain, rest a day, and then repeat the 3-day patrol in reverse.

We had some interesting experiences but did not have occasion to run down any elk poachers. We counted around 2,000 dead elk (dead from starvation) between the Park boundary and the Chico Hot Springs, most of them in the area east of the river and between Yankee Jim Canyon and the Park boundary. We collected many elk teeth and took turns taking the teeth as we came to each carcass. As luck would have it, my share ran mostly to cow teeth and filled a small 5-pound salt sack. Over the years I have given them all away and only have a few pair left in the salt sack.

We worked with Park Rangers Harry Trichman and Pete Larson. That was where I made my first acquaintance with the Army pack saddle. Practically all the Park Rangers had soldiered in the Park as members of the Army pack train that was stationed in the Park. Yellowstone Park from its creation until 1916 had been administered by a troop of U.S. Cavalry, and most of the enlisted men had been discharged to become Park scouts or Rangers. Around 600 head of antelope were being wintered on the flats between the Park and Electric, where they were being fed hay. It was quite a problem to keep them away from the ranchers' hay stacks. Herding antelope is like trying to pick up spilled quicksilver on a ballroom floor. We had a lot of fun! One day a scared buck antelope ran right under Pete Larson's horse, which bucked him off and headed for the horse corral. It was quite a source of merriment.

This was quite a cold winter and temperatures were down to 25° to 40° below zero until the last of March. There were heavy livestock losses all over Montana, and hay was almost unobtainable at any price. I do not remember the exact figures, but the Yellowstone and Gallatin elk herds lost 50 percent or more by starvation. Then it was decided to make an organized count of what was left of the Yellowstone elk herd. A crew of Park and Forest Rangers and State Game Wardens was organized to do the job. As I remember, this was in May 1917. The crew was assembled at Gardiner, and this is where I met Albert F. Potter, Associate Forester, who had come out from Washington to participate in the game count. The boys who were putting the saddle horse "cavy" together figured Potter was just another "dude", and they would have a little fun. So they assigned Potter a little old grey horse that was known to buck for a new rider, just to try him out.

Well, Potter came out wearing a well-scratched pair of bat-wing leather chaps and dragging a well-worn old hull that everyone could see had seen hard usage, saddled up the old grey, stepped up on him, gave him his head, and scratched him from ears to tail. Potter had been raised on a cow and sheep ranch in the southwest and had ridden in the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show for a couple seasons. The drinks were on the would-be jokers, and from then on, Potter was respected for the man he really was.

I did not go on the big count. What I think I know about it was hearsay from those who did participate. Someone had to stay on patrol,

and the job fell to Jimmy Friend, the Hell Roaring District Ranger, and Fickes. We were up in the head of Cedar Creek one day checking things out. Snow was fairly well gone, and creeks were running bank full. We were coming down out of the creek, Jimmy a little way ahead of me, when we saw a brown bear with two cubs. Jimmy was out of the saddle with his 303, and there was a dead bear that had two orphan cubs climbing a big spruce tree--real limby, too. Jimmy dressed out his kill while we discussed what to do with the cubs. I surely didn't have any use for a couple orphan bear cubs that were crying their hearts out for their mom. Jimmy said we would catch them and take them down to Dick Randall's place.

Catching the little female cub was fairly easy, as she just sat on a limb and cried. The black was a "bear of another color." He just kept crying and climbing the spruce. Jimmy said, "You climb the tree and shake him down, and I will catch him and tie him up." All right, so I climbed the spruce. About 40 feet up, the cub headed out on a good-sized limb where I couldn't go; it wouldn't hold my weight. After a time I was able to shake the cub loose; as he fell Jimmy caught him and tied him up. So we packed the dead mama on Jimmy's saddle horse which I led, and Jimmy hung a cub on each end of a stick about 5 feet long and carried the stick on his shoulder like a Dutch milkmaid with two buckets of milk. The cubs squalled continuously all the way down to Randall's but subsided when offered some warm cow's milk by the Randall children. Someone told me later that the black cub lived to a ripe old bear's age and was a dude exhibit at Gardiner for many years.

Later that same spring, Jimmy Friend participated in a real bear-killing episode. At that time, and still for that matter, the north boundary of Yellowstone National Park was 2 miles north of and parallel to the east and west line between the States of Montana and Wyoming, which cuts across the drainages of Slough Creek, Buffalo Fork of the Lamar, Hell Roaring Creek and Bear Creek, all of which drain from north to south into the Yellowstone River. In 1917 all of these creeks lying north of the east and west Park boundary constituted the Hell Roaring Ranger District, with summer headquarters at the Hell Roaring Ranger Station located on the creek of that name and about 3 miles north of the Park boundary. This is grizzly bear country.

A couple weeks after our bear cub episode, Jimmy saddled up a couple pack horses with supplies at Gardiner and headed into Hell Roaring to open up the Station for the summer campaign. Now the grizzlies have always figured that Hell Roaring was their country; anything edible was their meat. They also learned that man-built cabins were apt to have some good eats in them, so why couldn't they just help themselves--and the bears did just that. Man always had a problem of trying to build a cabin or food storage place that the grizzlies could not penetrate.



Elk counters' camp - Lamar River, Yellowstone Park - 1917.

U.S. Forest Service photo



Claget Sanders, 1924; he had been Forest Ranger since 1908. Sanders County named for his father.

Photo by author



Looking north over Bone Basin in 1924. Planted to Douglas fir trees in 1808 at suggestion of Sec. of Agriculture James Wilson who had seen the barren area from a train. Planting was failure.

Photo by author

As Jimmy stopped at the ford across the creek to let his horses drink, about 75 to 100 yards from the cabin he saw a big grizzly come out of the cabin where the door had been. So, he just stepped down off his horse with the Savage in his hand and thought, "I'll just put that grizzly out of his misery." As he did so, two more bears came into view and headed toward him. He downed them both, the third bear about 20 yards from him. A few minutes later, having heard the shooting, two Park Rangers rode in to be witnesses of this bear-killing episode. Such was a Ranger's life in the early days of the Forest Service.

About the middle of February I had purchased a team of matched sorrel-colored horses from H. W. Lloyd of Gardiner. They were broke to ride and drive, a real nicely matched pair at 1200 pounds each. I was quite proud of them until I learned after turning them on green pasture that they had been locoed from eating the loco weed which was prevalent in many parts of the west. As long as they were on dry feed, hay and grain, they were all right, but a few days on pasture turned them crazy.

1917 was the year that the automobile buses came to Yellowstone Park, and the Transportation Company was selling off the hundreds of horse-drawn rigs that had been in use ever since the first road was built in the Park. The Forest Supervisor had purchased one of these rigs for use on the Forest. So he sent me harnesses and told me, since I had a team, to drive the surrey to Bozeman, and I could use it to move my household goods from Bozeman to Cinnamon.

My wife met me in Bozeman, bringing her 15-year-old brother with her for company when I had to be away from the Station. This was around the first of June. We drove to Salesville, got acquainted with the proprietor of the store, purchased groceries, and then headed up the West Gallatin, destination Cinnamon Ranger Station. We stopped at the Squaw Creek Ranger Station where we met District Ranger Harold Knapp and his family and were persuaded to spend the night, as it was getting late and still several hours to Cinnamon. Knapp was a native of Hope, Idaho. They were nice, hospitable folks; and we learned quite a few things about the Gallatin Canyon and the folks who populated it. Next morning, with a fairly early start, we arrived at the Cinnamon Ranger Station. That's where I almost lost a wife.

The Station residence was a very old cabin, 16 by 28 feet, divided into three rooms. The south end was living room, dining room and kitchen, the north end divided into two sleeping rooms. Partitions were 1 inch matched flooring, no sound proofing. There was a good floor, not very old, the original roof, almost flat, had been poles with moss filler in the cracks between poles covered with 6 or 8 inches of dirt. The cabin had been built by a would-be homesteader and had been taken over by the Forest Service for a Ranger Station when the homesteader gave up and moved out. A year or so before my time, a board roof had been installed over the dirt roof to make it more waterproof. The cabin had not been woman occupied for a couple years, and this was evident. My wife was a city-raised girl



Gallatin N.F. - 1918 (originally Absaroka N.F.): Left to right - Nelson Storey; Supervisor Ralph E. Bodley; Hans Biering, Taylor Fork Cattle Co.; Ranger Fickes; and Col. Graves, Forester.

Forest Service Photo by S. Riley

who had never stayed in a house overnight that did not have running water and a full bathroom. The water supply was a water trough at a big spring about 50 feet from the back door. The rest room facility was a log affair about 50 yards from the back door.

When we arrived at Cinnamon the Station was occupied by Forest Guard Woodard, assigned to the District, and his young brother who had really made some effort to make the Station somewhat presentable, as word had gone ahead that the Ranger and family were coming. The first pressing need was lunch for five people. There was a long table, and the first thing was to cover a rather grimy-looking top with a new strip of white oil cloth. Lunch was about ready, the table set pretty nice, when someone slammed the back door fairly hard. The new white table cloth looked like it had been liberally peppered--dry dirt from the roof. My wife turned from the stove, saw it, gave one cry, and fled into the bedroom for a good cry. Well, we got things straightened out and had a real good summer getting acquainted with the nice people living in the West Gallatin. When it was time for Kenneth to go back to school, I put them both on the train, and Mrs. Fickes went back to Kalispell to stay until I moved in to town for the winter.

Before I came to the Gallatin, Abbott and my predecessor had started an extensive grazing survey of the Cinnamon District; and I spent a good part of the time checking grazing type maps and completing isolated areas that had been missed or passed over. I had one forest fire report during the season. On a Sunday in August, the Station crew went up to Ramshorn Lake to do some fishing. Just as we arrived at the lake a boy from the Buffalo Horn Dude Ranch came riding up to tell me that there was a fire in the head of Porcupine Creek reported by Per Diem Guard Billy Lytle who had a ranch at the mouth of Porcupine. I took off into the head of Porcupine and located the fire which had been found and put out by Lytle, after he telephoned the Station.

The fall of 1917, the Government ordered a military census of production of agricultural products, and the Forest Service was called upon to participate. That was the first time I ran into the name of Roy Phillips, Forest Ranger, Superior, Montana. The sample census report sent out for our guidance was signed by Roy. His ears must have been on fire most of the time that fall and winter. The Supervisor called me in early from the District so I could participate in the census. My assignment took in a quadrangle about 28 miles square, bounded on the east by the 111 meridian and on the north by the 46th parallel. This was all farm land west of Bozeman to Three Forks and north of Spanish Creek to Trident. It was required to visit each and every ranch and record all livestock, grain and other food products produced on the ranch. This took about 6 or 7 weeks of field work via horse and buggy and saddle horse. A number of times I was accused of being a German spy in spite of my credentials which I always presented when I approached anyone. Looking back, it looks to me like another boondoggle generated by war hysteria.

After the census was finished I worked in the Supervisor's Office making several short trips on game patrol. In April our daughter arrived via Caesarean operation that almost cost the life of the mother. Some time before that, my wife's mother died, and Mrs. Fickes became the guardian of her young brother and sister. At the end of the school year in Kalispell, the two became part of our family.

The winter of 1917-18 was another rough one for livestock. I had to winter my sorrells on a straw stack, and they came out of the winter in almost unusable condition. So I had to scratch around for replacements at considerable financial loss. A monthly income of \$91.66, some months \$91.67, even in 1918 could only be stretched so far.

The summer of 1918 was pretty much routine--counting cows and sheep, checking salt grounds and sheep bed grounds in the three Yellow Mule Basins. I toted a 90-pound iron telephone down off the top of Lone Mountain. My young brother-in-law, Kenneth, spent the summer with me and kept us supplied with trout. Late in August or early September, Supervisor Bodley, in company with Henry S. Graves, Forester, Smith Riley, Regional Forester from Denver, Hans Biering of the Cunningham-Biering Cattle Co., and Bud Storey of Bozeman, who became Lieutenant Governor of Montana, arrived at Cinnamon and spent 3 or 4 days riding over the Upper Gallatin grazing areas. Their purpose was first-hand knowledge of grazing conditions in connection with the winter elk feed problem, winding up at the Park Ranger Station at the northwest corner of the Park. These men went out of their way to help a young Ranger learn why and how to do his job. Their visit is still a green spot in my memory.

At this time the Gallatin staff consisted of Forest Supervisor Ralph E. Bodley; Deputy Supervisor Arthur H. Abbott (The Deacon); District Rangers Fred Aingers, Shields River; Ed Foreman, Bridger; Mike Nee, Hyalite; Harold Knapp, Squaw Creek; McLean, Big Creek (Yellowstone); and Clyde P. Fickes, Cinnamon Creek (Upper Gallatin).

Practically all of this gang was afflicted with a card game disease known as solo. Any time three of us got together in an evening, we had at it. This crew was about as congenial a bunch as it was ever my pleasure to work with in the Forest Service. Late in the fall of 1918, just before I closed the Station for the winter, the Supervisor, accompanied by Glenn A. Smith, Assistant Regional Forester for Operation, traveling and chauffeured by Fred Ainger in Fred's Model T, came to pay an official visit. So, after the supper dishes were put away, there had to be a solo game. Glen was also an addict. When the matter came up of who was to sleep where, it developed that someone would have to sleep on the floor. There were five of us. Well, Glen lost, and being the kind of guy that he was, he would not let anyone trade with him. We had fun over this episode for many years.

In September 1918, I received a letter from the District Forester informing me that the Forest Service had requested that I be exempted from the military service with this statement: "The responsible



Gallatin - 1918. H. S. Graves, at National Park on West Gallatin.



Henry S. Graves--Ralph Bodely, looking over Taylor Fork Range. 1918.

officers of the United States Government believe that you can render greater service to your country in the Forest Service than in the military organization."

The operator of the Bracket Creek sawmill had applied for a new sale, and it was necessary to cruise the proposed sale area in order to determine the volume available and the estimated price it should bring. So a crew consisting of Skip Knouff, an experienced timber cruiser from the Coeur d'Alene and G. W. Jones from the Savenac Nursery came over to do the estimating and appraising. Harold Knapp and I were to run compass for the cruisers; and Ed Foreman, with a broken leg, would attend to camp chores.

This was in January and February, and there was 2 to 3 feet of snow. We traveled on snow shoes. The compass man ran line with the Forest Service surveyor's compass and paced the distance while the cruiser counted trees on a strip 4 rods wide and estimated the volume in board feet. The area we were working in had been surveyed, and we had to tie in to both section and quarter corners. Also, we were working in the head of Brackett Creek. Our east and west lines ended at a merchantable timber line which made these lines vary as much as 5 or 6 chains in length. The east boundary, or limit, of the sale area was a very irregular line. It was an interesting job, and I learned a lot from Skip while running compass for him and was surprised at the accuracy of my pacing on snow shoes. The principal species was lodgepole pine with some Douglas fir and spruce. As I recall it, the lodgepole was surprisingly large, running three to four logs to the tree and up to 24 inches dbh. Later that winter, I made a timber survey and appraisal for a small sale on Sheep Creek which brought forth the following comment from the District Forester's office:

"This is a very excellent appraisal report. Mr. Fickes is to be congratulated upon the thoroughness with which this work was done. His prices are approved, and you are authorized to advertise the timber in accordance with the notice of sale which accompanied your letter."

Then on May 12, 1919, a letter from District Forester R. H. Rutledge informed me that I was to be transferred to the Nezperce National Forest, at Grangeville, Idaho, as soon as possible; and my salary increased to \$1300 per annum, effective June 2, 1919. Then on January 19, 1920, a letter from the District Forester R. H. Rutledge informed me I was promoted to Deputy Forest Supervisor at \$1400 per annum.