

COMMENTS BY LEONARD E. BELTZ ON A SUMMER WITH OSCAR EVANS
IN 1934

I was a seasonal worker on the San Bernardino National Forest and applied for a job of timber cruiser in 1934. I was accepted and reported for duty in Yreka, California along with 17 other young foresters who either had or were about to finish a degree in Forestry. I was married in July of 1932 so had my wife to arrange for. One other cruiser by the name of Bill Lough, was also married.

Oscar permitted us to acquire a complete camping outfit for the wives and to set it up about an eighth of a mile from the timber survey camp. This set up worked out fine as my wife, Adeline, was an outdoor girl and enjoyed camping. Myrtle Lough tolerated it but never enjoyed it though. Bill Lough and I stayed in the timber cruiser's camp and ate there also.

Charles Beardsley was the party chief and Mrs. Zink was our camp cook. She was one grand cook, too. She watched every man eat and soon learned his likes and took care of it in her cooking. An interesting sidelight was that each man prepared his own lunch which worked out fine. To my knowledge, there never was a gripe about the food. Mrs. Zink had raised a large family, and some of her boys worked for the Forest Service. One, I am sure, was a District Ranger and an outstanding one.

Oscar took us out in a heavy stand of timber for some training. I was impressed with his system of training of the cruisers. Each man would estimate the DBH and the number of logs by eye first. Then, we would measure it by Biltmore and Diameter tape and the height by Biltmore and Abney Level and tape. This was done covering many trees of various sizes and species. On the basis of results of our estimates, Oscar decided who the *Cruisers* would be. The others became compassmen and mappers. Oscar however, did his own check cruising, and each cruiser had to check within 3% to continue as a cruiser. One incident on checking occurred when I mentioned at supper that I had cruised all day without a Biltmore stick. Oscar's ears were sharp, and he heard it and mentioned to Charles Beardsley that he wanted to check me on that line the next day. We returned to the line with Oscar the next day thinking he would check our first "40", but, no, he had to check the last 40! We told him it was a

a mile away and the going was rough, but he said, "Let's go". So, away we went. We forgot about his age so left him quite a ways behind so he called us back telling us he had something to show us. He showed us a little cone built in sand and asked us if we knew what it was. Neither of us did so he explained about the doodle bug and commented that neither of us was much of a cruiser if we didn't know that little bug. We arrived at the last 40' and found our mark, a kicked out place in the duff. Experience from previous checks had taught us to mark every two-chain spot so we could rerun our line exactly. In this case the compassman and I cruised with diameter tape and abney, and Oscar tallied. I heard by the grapevine that the check came out .2% up or down. What Oscar didn't know was that without a Biltmore stick, the compassman helped me out by taping the diameters for the whole day's cruise!

On Saturdays we worked only 4 hours on the line, and Oscar permitted us to take our wives along so they could see what and how we worked. The Klamath was steep and rough, and we would keep the ladies up by tow using the Biltmore stick in lieu of a rope. The crew, while on the Klamath, was tied in to the fire organization. One lightning bust we were dispatched to a fire about dark and traveled for hours without finding the fire. Finally, we did find it, though, and it had covered about 10 acres. We started building a fireline about the fire, and the line passed through a yellow jackets nest. I am sure everyone was stung at least once, but not ~~one~~^{one} would give a warning to the next guy. Needless to say, we did get a line about the fire and were relieved by another crew the next day. This must have rubbed off on me, as I recall one incident when I was cruising with Spike Slattery as a compassman. The going was rough! So, I would sight the line ahead so I could help him stay on line for two chains. What Spike didn't know was that his line centered a large hornet's nest hanging down from a limb. He headed out on the line and ducked under the nest, and a hornet made a pass at him, and he looked up and saw the nest, and he headed down the mountain. Talk about being mad as a hornet! He sure was, when he came back up the line. While in the camp all the crew was studying to take the Junior Forester Examination that was coming up. Bill Lough and I studied with them and also took the exam. I passed along with most of the

fellows just out of school and received an appointment to the Mississippi National Forest in Jackson, Mississippi effective the first of January 1935.

Charles Beardsley was engaged to a school marm from Chicago. They were married at his grandmother's in Idaho, and after a short honeymoon, they returned to the Timber Cruisers' Camp. Oscar relented and permitted the married couples to spend the nights together. Marjorie Beardsley, as a bride fresh from the city, had problems with the isolation, but she stuck with it and having much encouragement from the other wives. Needless to say, very strong ties were developed in the seven months of cruising on the Klamath National Forest and the Tahoe that year.

When we broke camp, Oscar bid our wives all goodby and he dropped a tip to Adeline, namely; "get him there on time". That stemmed from my practice of never hurrying, as I was convinced that "haste makes waste". One more thing should be mentioned which gives you an idea of how kind and considerate Oscar was of all who worked for him. On our way to Mississippi by car in December of 1934, we had a car wreck which was followed by a second wreck which caught me between the ^{running} boards breaking both my legs--one in three places. I landed in a small hospital in Long View, Texas where I was hospitalized for three months. Word of this somehow got to Oscar, and he notified the cruisers, and we received a check for \$300 which sure came in handy! Talk about friendly folks--those Texans really took care of us! Adeline occupied a bed in my room in the hospital for \$1.00 per day. Extra food would appear on my tray for breakfast, too! The doctor was a bone specialist with lots of experience with broken bones from oilfield workers.. My one leg had to go into traction to keep the leg muscles from zigzagging the bones and causing the leg to be about 1½ to 2" shorter than the other. My appointment ~~was~~ cancelled when I couldn't show up for duty. However, the Supervisor there wired me and said there would be a job for me as soon as I was physically able to report. It took a good 8 months before I could pass a physical exam for an appointment, though.

In 1934 Oscar had two crews working on different forest. Both worked until they were shut down by snowfall. Each had a party chief and a cook. A report leaked out from the other camp that a Ranger had been assigned there for a period for experience in cruising. He was estimating by eye and was checked by Oscar and found to be over 100% off! Needless to say, that ended his experience!

All in all, I considered that year of cruising timber to be the highlight of my 37 years in the Forest Service.

Incidentally, I was sent to the Klamath as zone boss on the Haystack Fire ⁽¹⁹⁵⁵⁾ that burned about 85,000 acres, and I found myself backfiring trying to save much of the country we covered in our cruising. Sure was a disheartening experience!

Signed "Leonard E. Beltz"
(Retired 1966)
Plusas National Forest

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