Some of my memorable contacts with Oscar Evans.

* John M. Buck

About 7/1/32 – Drive on Sunday from Lake County to New Beber.

At 8 a.m. on Monday I found camp on Ash Creek some 15 miles east of Aden. The crew was already at work, but Evans was in camp. It was the first of the month and bill-paying time. He gave me a typewriter and a stack of purchase orders (Form 815?) to type. I had a very slow "hunt and peck" typing method that was really never perfected. He had me put the typewriter on the ground under a ponderosa pine tree. I was a bit unhappy with this arrangement but did my best for a couple of hours in spite of an achy back.

I was soon to learn that Oscar had a strong interest in "a day's work for a day's pay." I was leaning against the tree having a smoke and resting my back when the man approached me and with a big flourish he grasped his watch chain, pulled out the large gold watch, and looked at it and loudly exclaimed "Young man in this camp we work from eight to five." He then turned on his heel and returned to his tent.

Note: This detailed in the California T. & T. for one month to learn the R-5 Timber method. 1931 was my first year in the California Region as a permanent employee.

The above incident illustrates Oscar's way of letting a new recruit know that he was boss and that his word was the law of the camp. Throughout my career I had many bosses "needless to say he failed to but never said this "tactic" worked again. Back then..."
Oscar had more than his share of problems with camp chores. He seemed to have an old, a weary look on his face, and his voice was very low. Such was the case, the man who at the last week's camp I had been camp a few days when upon approach the cook tent for breakfast there was a foul odor coming us at the door. We all filed in to stand at our place, and wait the sentence of the man who was the designated procedure. He arrived in turn and stood in front of his place at the head of the table. He sniffed the air and bent down to a plate of scrambled eggs and again sniffed. He then glanced at the kitchen and there stood the cook with his town hat and suit and a suitcase in hand. He then uttered a couple of mild swearwords to the cook to get his stuff into the truck and appointed two of the crew to stay in camp and do the cooking. He went off to town.

We could only guess what Oscar done that provoked the cook to save in camp and plan such a colorful and smelly demise for camp. No one dared ask. The next camp cook arrived a few days later. This time it was a woman.

*No matter how bad the situation was I don't remember Oscar ever using anything like good old uncle skinny's language. I can remember a couple of documents and that's about all.*
I believe Oscar enjoyed training men in timber surveys. He was good at it. It was of course easy for him to explain because he had designed the system himself, written two manuals (books) on it, and had worked at it for about 20 years by the time I became a S.F.

The morning we kept us in camp and went through the whole procedure of land surveys, contour mapping, the place of timber, perhaps in the timber sale program for the Region, places for the future etc. He presented this material in a manner that was easy to follow. This was followed by some fine training by the District Range, and something about the timber management program on the land by the timber staff officer.

(Russell the little Giant)

My training period was nearing its end when Oscar decided to make a check cruise of the timber estimating. I had been the mapper on a two man cruising team for two weeks and had been the estimator on a two man team for about 1½ weeks. The estimator was in charge of the team and on one forty acre piece at the top of the mountain and a long way from the road, I made the decision to leave red flagging at the start and finish of the cruise line. This was mandatory procedure but I had decided on their last run for the day that we couldn't be checked on the one, because of its remoteness from the road. But I couldn't have been more wrong.

The next morning Oscar, Jimmie Pierce (my companion) and I headed for the check cruise after the rest of the cruisers had been let out at their starting locations.

First we crossed a sage brush flat for about ½ mile and then started up the long steep grade on the side of the mountain. It wasn't long until Oscar decided to let take his morning survey which occurred almost to the summit each morning regardless of where he was. He stopped and...
Driving and I went on for a ways. I asked Don to go ahead and find our starting point as near as he could remember and place a red flag for our check. This he proceeded to do and I waited for Oscar. Eventually we found Don and started the check cruise. We were close to the original line but not exactly on it even though Oscar asked if we were on the original line, and I told him we were off.

That night the check measurements were compared to the original cruise and as was to be expected the results left something to be desired. Oscar's comment on the discrepancy was "that's the check cruise I've made in my whole career."

I of course had gotten what I came for. I knew enough about the method to proceed with a timber survey on my own at anytime. In addition I had learned from observation of Oscar's management of people a few things to avoid.

Many years later and after Oscar had been retired a few years, we attended an S.A.F. meeting together at Challenge. It was the spring field meeting and it rained continuously. The roads were extremely muddy and only four-wheel and Jeep could travel to the designated places. The back of my Jeep station wagon was full of bodies and Oscar was riding shotgun besides me. I took the occasion to remind him of the "worst" check cruise and told him of the reason for it. His only reaction was to chuckle a little. I often wondered if he had a spy watching over me while I was a visitor in his camp.

About 1942 or 1943 funds for operating timber survey disappeared with the war effort. Oscar was assigned to the Eldorado where I was Timber Staff Officer. His crew was to come from the Snow Line Conservation Officer camp. His field man as well as the cook would be O.Os.
The first job was to cruise some government land on the north end of the Tablerock 2.7 where there was no timber, estimating. Oscar Sweet was to collect management planning data in the same area and would also be at the leased at the Timber Survey Camp.

Oscar had to make considerable arrangements in his way of dealing with those men who had no interest in the work and had no concern for getting the work done. Progress was very slow but by the end of the season the required work on the Tablerock was complete and several proposed leased acquisition private land parcels on the Eldorado had been surveyed.

The turnover of men was very high. Only a very few of the men approached the performance standards required by Oscar. His problems with cooks was particularly aggravating to him.

The whole idea of using C.O.S on timber surveys was a better pill to Oscar and I can see if helped him make up his mind to retire 19-

Note to Carl Wilson: I of course was in camp when Oscar had his problem with his long endurance one evening. I believe John Hall was one of the two left at the truck and reason to secrecy by Oscar. I hope witnesses to this incident helped with the report.
In the summer of 1925, I was doing range survey work on the Stanislaus and Oscar had a timber survey crew on the forest. Two man crews ran lines started at a known corner and, without making any attempt to retrace the lines, used the compass direction used by the GLO. They put a light bark blaze on the trees on or near the line. They ran out the proper distance and jabbed a Jacob Staff in the ground where their line ended. At this point they started looking for the corner. If they found it, well and good; a notation was made of the direction and distance to the corner. If they didn't find the corner, a cruisers Tag was placed on the closest tree and it was designated as an approximate corner.

In the range survey work we generally used the topographic maps for control. However, a portion of private land was selected for its grazing value. These areas I ran out on foot. I got hot under the collar when one of Oscar's lines decoyed me off the proper line.

Needless to say, when Oscar and I met in the Sonora office, a wild argument ensued. A part of Oscar's argument that I could not refute was that he wanted to be able to tell where his men had been. The best part of my argument was that retracing the line was more accurate. I was finding an occasional corner that his men were missing. He conceded that that was likely true but that I had had a lot more experience than his boys. That could be true. I consider myself the last of the section corner hounds that started with Harvey Abby and progressed to Ivan Cuff, Oscar Evans, Marc Edmonds and yours truly.

An interesting byplay with Oscar follows. On a late spring day in the Ferry Building, Oscar was rushing around wildly loading his field office equipment in a pickup. Out of the goodness of my heart I decided to help him. Oscar was urging me to hurry up and, in my haste, I clumsily dropped something and swore. For a long moment he stared at me in a very disapproving fashion. Finally he said, "I thought you were a Christian."

Russ Benson