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Ames Forestry Club

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1947 Forestry Summer Camp

The summer of 1947 found the Kaniksu National Forest once again the scene of the Iowa State Forestry Summer Camp. The camp itself was located in northern Idaho 12 miles north of the little hamlet of Priest River. One hundred twenty-six forestry students attended the summer camp session.

Methods of transportation enroute to camp were varied. They included such diverse forms as trains, cars, trucks, buses, jeeps, motorcycles and thumb. Students spent the first days busily comparing traveling experiences and, in so doing, unearthed more than a few unique happenings. One of the most noteworthy was the Bruce Plum, Morris Lenz incident. Bruce Plum, a neophyte in the art of manipulating a motorcycle, chose a most inopportune moment to mistake the gas throttle for the brake handle. As a result he smashed down an electric gas pump. Needless to say the irate station owner did not feel adequately reimbursed by their subsequent 30 cent purchase of gasoline.

At times forestry camp seemed much like a menagerie with its chipmunks, snakes, cats and porcupines. Dan Downey kept the cooks in a constant state of alarm by his display of writhing snakes, while Milt Sherbring succeeded in harnessing a chipmunk. A cat, who had an insatiable appetite for fish, adopted Riley as a guardian. Consequently Riley's spare moments were spent foraging for fish for his protege.

Beards were in vogue at camp. Some of the most hirsute growths included Don Jirsa, Steve Remington, Jack North, Jim Hills, Eugene Readinger, Russ Hansen and Don Riddle. Some of the beards were so effective that several of the boys were accused of being members of the House of David. The red hat fad seemed to sweep the camp and most everyone owned one of the late models. The most popular model was the model with the front brim pinned back by a large safety pin. Another interesting fad was the collection of signs for the adornment of the barrack walls. Two of the more unique were "Prater Mountain Lookout" and "In Sympathy with Rio Tavern."

Fishing in the Priest River proved rather fruitless. However several of the boys caught enough trout for fry's in the surrounding creeks. Lack of success was blamed on excessive rains in the spring and on the boys from the Summer Camp of 1946 for taking out too many fish from the streams.
Vince Kenneally and Jack Keaton were the instigators in the organization of a softball team and an orchestra. The team finished the season by defeating the Priest River aggregation and the band successfully toured the surrounding night spots and the Priest River city hall.

The crystal clearness of the lakes and rivers around camp were a constant source of amazement to everyone. Priest River, which ran about twenty feet back of camp, was no exception. It provided a place to swim on hot afternoons and was the setting for many attempts at rafting by the aquatic minded individuals. However its swift current and many rocks caused the hastily built vessels to end up on the rocks.

The Fourth of July week-end provided an opportunity for sightseeing throughout the Inland Empire. Itineraries included Seattle, Priest Lake, Diamond Lake, Spokane, Canada, Couer d'Alene, Sandpoint Pend Oreille Lake and the Grand Coulee Dam. Overnight camping trips were popular with the more rustic minded.

Professor MacDonald was very liberal in the use of the trucks and on Sundays they would journey with swimming parties to the surrounding lakes. On week nights and special occasions they would shuttle back and forth with their human cargo between Priest River and the camp. Occasionally some of the boys were not ready to go back to camp at the scheduled departure hour. Consequently they were forced to hitch-hike home. If they were unfortunate enough to miss the occasional farmer or logging truck they were obligated to walk 12 miles back to camp. Sympathetic policemen were sometimes persuaded to allow the more fatigued boys to sleep in the town jail.

Campfires were held every other Thursday evening with Jack Keaton as master of ceremonies. Professor Larsen and Professor Goodspeed were frequently called upon to sing “Alouette” and “Old King Cole.” Other favorite entertainers were Milt Sherbring and Ben Carson who succeeded in bringing down the house with their Bergen and McCarthy act as “Slivers and Chips.”

Bill Arlen and Bob Jackson were the cause of much anxiety one evening when they failed to return from Prater Mountain Lookout. They had left camp without the necessary equipment to sleep out of doors. Upon arrival at the lookout they discovered cots and blankets, decided to remain overnight, and called to inform the camp of their decision. Anxious friends who were not cognizant of the call organized a searching party. Upon arrival at the lookout they discovered Arlen and Jackson sleeping peacefully.
The middle of August found the campers departing to their respective homes for a few weeks vacation before fall quarter. The only reminders of camp are the occasional sight of a red hat on the campus and the nostalgic memories of the camaraderie that existed during our first brush with practical forestry.

Summer Camp Classes

CLASSES at the 1947 Iowa State College Forestry Summer Camp opened with fire school at which time rangers from the district were on hand to instruct the student foresters on the proper use of fire tools and the methods employed in suppression and pre-suppression. The last day of fire school consisted of the foresters manually putting to use what they had mentally learned about fire lines.

At this time the entire camp of foresters was divided into four groups, each of which was to act as a separate and complete unit on both practice and actual fire duty. The "progressive step-up method" was used in building the practice line and as the fellows had been taught, this particular method is very efficient when circumstances permit, but just knowing how to build a line does not get the fire line constructed.

Utilization

The course in utilization consisted of being jammed into hard riding trucks and being bumped along over miles of dusty roads to sawmills, shingle mills, pole treating plants and logging camps of various sizes, shapes and forms. At these points of destination, the students, headed by William (Bill) Chilcote, or a superintendent on the site, were conducted on a tour, at which time notes were taken. Each night these notes were consolidated into reports, some of which proved to be lengthy, but who can deny Mr. Chilcote's outlines were a good means of learning, and remembering what had been learned?

Mensuration

In contrast to utilization, which everyone thought to be the easiest and most exciting course at camp, was a course in mensuration under Professor Goodspeed and his assistant Jimmie Sims, which entailed a little more physical exertion than did utilization.

The first step in this course was the running and plotting of an open traverse to acquaint and reacquaint the foresters with the staff compass and trailer tape. This was followed by the main

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project, which consisted of running at least a ten percent cruise over "sparsely vegetated areas." The class was divided into groups of three, each of which acted as a cruising team.

The final step for each team consisted of running a traverse around their designated areas and making a map of the area. The foresters then ran cruise lines across the area at ten-chain intervals. At two-chain intervals along each of these cruise lines all trees above ten inches d.b.h., within imaginary circular plots were tallied as to species, diameter and by log lengths. At the termination of cruising, the tallies were formulated into various kinds of volume tables.

Silviculture

In the course in silviculture, headed by Drs. Larsen and McComb, the foresters were taught methods of reproduction, stand improvement and reforestation as well as information relating to forest types, soil types, vegetative species in the immediate locality and groups of species found growing together on the same site.

In all of the forementioned courses, only a small portion of the class work was held inside; the large majority of it being combined with actual experience in the field.

Utilization Trips

TRIPS over dusty, bumpy roads were a common occurrence to the foresters this summer at camp. Anywhere in Northern Idaho or Eastern Washington seemed to be within range of the forestry trucks. (Although we're not denying that they did break down occasionally.)

Most of the trips were made under the supervision of Mr. Chilcote, utilization instructor. He had previously made arrangements with the managers of many mills and logging camps for us to visit these places and study their methods according to a pre-arranged schedule.

Several of the trips made by the utilization section were to sawmills. The range was great—from the large Diamond Match mill at Newport, Washington to a small gypo concern operating near Priest Lake.

The outlet mill at the start of Priest River was the first one visited, and it was here that many Iowa Staters witnessed for the first time the transformation of a log into a piece of lumber. Although the outlet mill was small it was well known in the district for its capacity output from old, outmoded machinery.
Another standout mill visited was the Olsen mill a few miles distant from the Falls Ranger Station. This was an example of a small mill completely equipped with modern machinery and what it could do. The efficiency of the men here seemed nothing short of terrific.

The highlight of all the utilization trips was, perhaps, the one to the large Diamond Match Company mill at Newport, Washington. Here was an opportunity to see a log completely transformed into a seasoned, planed, pile of lumber loaded on a railway car and ready for shipment to the retail markets. Although the main objective of the Newport mill is the production of match stock, it is also equipped to mill large quantities of lumber for commercial use. On the yards were located a large planing mill and a dry kiln. The mill, itself, used a 12 inch, 13 gauge bandsaw for a headsaw, was equipped with resaws, and was so constructed that its power was supplied by the burning of its own wood wastes. The two eight-hour shifts daily produced 140,000 board feet.

The longest trip taken was to the Inland Empire Paper mill at Spokane, Washington. Upon our arrival there, the superintendent took us on a conducted tour of the mill.

The tour started at the mill pond where the raw wood is stored before use and ended finally at the warehouse where the finished paper is stored. We learned that hemlock, spruce, and white fir are the species of wood most commonly used and that spruce produced the best grade of bond paper manufactured there. As we proceeded further into the mill, the superintendent pointed out the machines which split the logs, barked them and chipped them into fine pieces. We saw the machines which "digest" the wood by a chemical reaction into a pulpy mass and the subsequent change of this pulpy mass into long, continuous ribbons of paper. As this long ribbon of paper passed over the rollers and dryers it was cut to various specifications and then removed to storage space.

The North Idaho Shingle mill also received our attention. There, squinting through large clouds of fine cedar sawdust, we watched the rapid change of the large cedar logs into tightly packed bundles of valuable roofing shingles. Everyone watched with a shiver of apprehension expecting to see fingers and arms fly at any second as the workers unconcernedly went about their highly skilled tasks. Every job in the mill seemed to be a dangerous one. It was somewhat with a sigh of relief that we left the mill, particularly after watching the workmen on the Shingle Clippers who cut and sorted the shingles with scarcely ever a glance at their whirring saws.
Three pole treating companies were on the itinerary of the utilization section too. At these plants tree length logs are run through large peeling machines which pared all of the bark from them and to a certain extent “trued” up the log. These peeled logs were then given creosote baths by the “hot and cold” method of pole treatment.

The Diamond Match Company floating camp located on the Eastern shore of Priest Lake at the mouth of Indian Creek aroused considerable interest in the foresters. It was reached by barge leaving from Cavanaugh Bay. The camp, itself, was movable, being built on a platform of heavy logs to give it floating support and stability. It floated a short distance from the shore and was connected to it by two catwalks. Other buildings such as stables, toolshed, etc., were located on shore.

Of primary interest was a newly constructed flume which reached back from the lake-shore six miles into the mountains. About 280,000 board feet of lumber to the mile was used in its construction. This lumber was supplied by a portable mill which moved with the construction crew. The flume took logs up to 38 inches in diameter and 20 feet long. The head of water was supplied by Indian Creek. After being cut, tree length logs were skidded by caterpillar to the flume landings where they were bucked into 16 foot lengths with power saws and then sent down the flume which emptied into Priest Lake at the Floating Camp.

Iowa Staters Battle The Flames

The forest fires at the Iowa State College Forestry Camp at Priest River, Idaho were interesting in more ways than one. For most of the boys, the impressions gained while taking part in the fire fighting were their first.

The 130 boys were called together one morning about ten days after camp had begun. Professor MacDonald, director of the summer program, announced that the entire day was to be spent in listening to lectures and practicing the methods of fire fighting as used on the Kaniksu National Forest.

Several men from the office of fire control had come from the regional headquarters at Missoula, Montana. The fire control men for the local area of the Kaniksu were also present. Each man explained a phase of fire suppression work and several of the men demonstrated proper handling of fire fighting tools.
The entire group of campers was broken into four main sections and each section further divided into four seven-man squads, all of whom hiked to a site east of camp. There the sections were separated from each other and the squads began setting up practice trench lines in the manner demonstrated during the morning. The squad in the lead of each four-squad section took out only top litter and part of the fallen logs, the second squad cleaned the line somewhat deeper, and as the fourth squad finished, the line was cleared down to mineral soil.

A week later, the boys were taken to a logging camp in eastern Washington where they were to obtain practical fire fighting experience. Several of the government men had marked out an area full of slash to be burned. Saws, axes, Pulaskis, etc., were passed out to the crews set up the week before, and the center of the slash was fired.

The squads took stations on the boundaries of the area designated and began trenching. Many of the boys decided during the first half-hour that there wasn’t much to a forest fire, for the flames that could be seen a few hundred yards away appeared to be no larger than a big autumn bonfire.

Unexpectedly, the wind came up strongly and in a twinkling the flames had rushed up to the trench line and pausing for only a moment, leaped across and with a roar shot up into a nearby pine crown. The boys fled from the terrific heat, amidst a shower of hot cones, most of the fellows remembering to hang onto their tools. Even the Forest Service men hurried a little.

New lines were cut on top of the ridge up which the fire was running and with the cessation of the wind the danger was over.

The next day everyone was on hand again to learn what is meant by “mopping up.” Most boys agreed after the first hour of it that it was an unpleasant business. Smoke in eyes, hot boots and hot feet, and no drinking water when it was wanted combined to produce an undesirable atmosphere.

Later on during the camp session, there were two small fires to which a few boys were called. Both were of little consequence. Paratrooper fire fighters were jumped over one of these fires: It was amusing to see the parachute men swinging helplessly from the trees in which their 'chute canopies had caught. Fortunately for everyone, the fire discouraged itself and was nearly burned out by the time the boys from camp arrived at the scene. It has not been definitely determined whether the parachute men made it down unassisted or not. Both of these small fires were near the Diamond Match Camp No. 2, on Priest Lake.

The fire on Sundance Mountain presented a problem of unusual nature . . . the job of getting to the burning area was
nearly the hardest part of the work. The truck with boys in the box labored up the valley between the surrounding summits as far as it could go. Here the shovels, axes, Pulaskis, saws, and water bags were passed out. For the next three hours, breathing came fast and unspoken, unspeakable words formed on the lips as 26 boys, Professor Goodspeed, and Tip, the Forest Service guide and fire fighter, fought their way up a twisting mountain trail.

At the edge of the timber line the fire was slowly eating its way through some trees at the upper fringe of the timbered mountainside, and was burning out duff and grass between the heavy rock slabs. The crew stayed on the job all night, watching the border of the burned area and putting out any spot fires. A relief crew walked up the side of the mountain the next morning and the first crew started for camp and a warm shower. The relief outfit played a watching game and when they left, a five-man crew remained to see the job finished.

The big fire occured about ten days before camp broke up. Lightning struck a snag in a logging district in the extreme north part of the Idaho panhandle, near Naples, and set a hot fire into action. One truck load of boys left camp early in the evening, another departed shortly after midnight, and a third group was taken to Naples the next day. The fire remained unchecked so long that volunteers were flown out of Spokane and trucked to Naples from all the nearby towns. During the third and fourth days of the fire the boys returned to camp. With 1,000 acres destroyed, the danger was past. It must have been a tough battle, for the boys were thoroughly “done in” by the time they came back.

The government paid all fire fighters $1.05 per hour. For those who did not go out during a fire, but remained on “stand-by” status in camp, the pay was $1.20, since the government in such a case did not provide food for its “stand-by” help.

Fire fighting is a good experience to look back upon. For those who might have been familiar with the terrain, it was perhaps easier than for others, but for those who did not “know the area” it was an experience to be remembered.