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1965 Montana Summer Camp

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"Sir, can you tell us how to get to Greenough? It doesn't seem to be on our map." We were four tired, but anxious, foresters enroute to summer camp. After driving from Missoula along the muddy Blackfoot, we saw the sign which read Iowa State University Forestry Camp. The lane led us a few hundred yards through beautiful ponderosa pine to the University of Montana spring camp which was to be our base of operations. It was nestled in the trees along the edge of a large meadow.

The other 33 had already arrived, some of them in the camp bus and the camp truck, others by car. In no time at all, we piled our gear in our “summer cottages” which were soon to become “home-sweet-home.” The two months which lay ahead were to be brimming with activity. Before the end of camp, our group of budding foresters would see at first hand a nearly complete picture of forestry in the “Inland Empire.” We were destined to a summer of enjoyment in one of the most scenic areas of the country. There were also to be the inevitable miseries of summer camps, such as rock’n’roll in the camp truck and the peanut butter blues. Many people that we visited will surely remember us as the guys in the funny, yellow hats.
In our first class meeting, we were greeted by Dean Bolle of the University of Montana, who oriented us on the camp and its history. It was interesting to learn that the Leubrecht Forest descended from the early mining and railroad operations, and that mining has had an important role in the forestry of the area. Biological factors as well as economic and other factors influence the use of the land in this region.

Summer camp country.

The northern Rockies are blessed with examples of all phases of forestry. Frequent field trips acquainted us with many of them. For example, private industry was illustrated by trips to several companies. Anaconda's mill at Bonner, Montana, is completely equipped with modern machinery. Near Bonner, we toured Anaconda's logging operations and saw forest management by a private firm at first hand. Most lumber mills in the Missoula area sell chips from their waste trimmings to the Waldorf-Hoerner Paper Products Company nearby. This is a good example of efficient use of raw materials. At the paper mill these wood chips are stored outside for months at a time in large piles. The rather dry summer climate limits the deterioration of the chips. Bleached pulp and heavy paper for making cardboard are produced here by the Kraft pulping process. The Van Evan Plywood Mill and the Missoula White Pine Sash Company presented other processing methods and products.

The longest trip of the summer took us to Potlatch Forests, Inc. at Lewiston, Idaho. Being a highly integrated company, Potlatch gave us a good picture of private forestry in many aspects. Management policies in protection, disease control, regeneration, and recreation were viewed. The Lewiston mill included a pulp and paper plant, a sawmill, a veneer and plywood plant, research facilities, and the general office. This company is especially interesting because its management plan must include control measures for the white pine blister rust disease, since white pine is the chief species grown.

Government agencies play an important role in forestry. A trip to Swan Lake, Montana, revealed that the forests managed by the Montana Forest Service are utilized solely for the sake of the state's educational system. Management programs are conducted which provide the maximum income for education. The federal government's role in forestry in Montana was seen by visits with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the United States Forest Service. Range management is important in this part of the country, where ranching is common, and grazing must be controlled. Private and public lands often are used for grazing purposes as well as for timber production. The Forest Service operates on the principles of multiple use, which are designed to make the most efficient use of the land that will best meet the needs of the public. This multiple use concept was emphasized by a visit to the Seely Lake Ranger District to see management on the district level. The Forest Service also provides research facilities and forest protection. The Northern Forest Fire Laboratory and the Smoke Jumper School at Missoula are important in protecting the region's forests.

You can all be good scalers, in about fifty years.
The National Park Service presented their policies and problems to us at scenic Glacier National Park. The management of forests in national parks must be such that the public is satisfied. This sometimes causes problems such as with fire, wildlife, and timber utilization. Some very interesting discussion was brought forth relating to these problems. A scenic trip to Logan Pass brought out some hidden skiing blood in some of us and also some wet clothes. The view was fabulous from our bus which swooped around the sharp curves of the “Going to the Sun Highway” with the agility of a mountain goat.

Classes in forest biology and mensuration were taught at camp between field trips. Concepts of ecology, forest influences, and silviculture were explained as they applied to specific areas. The important tree species and competitors of the camp area were learned while in the field.

In forest mensuration, we learned to use simple methods of surveying and volume estimation. These skills were used in preparing a topographic map of a big “hill”, from which one crew “never returned” from “chaining ‘round the mountain.” Also, we used elementary tools for estimating the value of 320 acres of standing timber.

Time was found for recreation in the evenings and on weekends. Jungle rules were in effect most of the time in volleyball, while the clang of horseshoes often lingered till dusk. A few hardy foresters found time for fishing and hiking in trout streams and wilderness areas nearby.

While Greenough at first seemed to be in the middle of nowhere, it was soon realized that it is actually in the middle of everywhere as a summer camp. No finer sampling of forestry, or of the professional forester at work, could be found in another place. The value of camp was probably not the same for all, but it did serve as a good indicator of the forestry profession. In this sense, it was a rung in the ladder of education for all.