



The Dixie Ranger

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BRINGING PRESCRIBED FIRE TO SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN FORESTS

No! Can't do it!

These were the emphatic words of Ranger Bunch Nugent when I proposed we try prescribed fire as part of shortleaf pine management. I had returned to the office after a day of prescription work in the Hiawassee Lake area of the Tusquitee District of the Nantahala Forest. We were obviously turning fine shortleaf pine forest into low quality scarlet oak by following the old Nantahala Marking Rules. This was in the fall of 1956 as I recall. I had recently come from the Catahoula District of the Kisatchie where I had been introduced to prescribed burning under Ranger John Beale.

Ever since the beginning, in 1911, the Forest Service objective had been to eliminate all fire in the Appalachian forests. On the Tusquitee we had a Smokey Bear campaign going and an aging, but still vigorous, Fire Warden organization. Large wildfires of the recent past, as evidenced by our Fire Atlas, seemed to be over, thanks to Ranger Nugent's policy of not hiring locals for firefighters in some areas, our anti-fire campaign, prompt suppression, and attempted prosecution of incendiaries. Forest policy and Ranger Nugent were not about to allow the introduction of deliberate, prescribed fire.

Some years later, in 1965, I had my chance. I became Forest Silviculturist for the NF's in North Carolina and could see the need for prescribed fire. With the consent of my boss, Les Oliphant, prescribed fire was promoted for site preparation on the Nantahala, Pisgah and Uwharrie for applicable situations.

Jim Lunsford, Ranger on the Hot Springs District, was the first to take up the challenge. He burned an area west of Hot Springs on Spring Creek. It burned hot, hotter than needed. The regional office soil and water people learned of it and came to North Carolina to investigate. They wrote a several page report condemning burning in no uncertain words, citing a number of references. Fire was bad for the soil—period! I had learned this in school too. However, in looking at the burned area with Jim, it appeared to me that the “peds”, indicating erosion, were not primarily from the fire but were on skid trails resulting from logging. This fit my previous experience on the Highland District where, as Ranger, I examined the Scaley Mountain Fire in 1963, an incendiary fire west of Highlands, for soil and water damage. There was a surprising lack of soil erosion potential from this hot wildfire.

The second prescribed burn was done by Ranger Howard Burnett on the Wayah District. He burned a stand west of Franklin using Arrowood Job Corps people. The third burn was done by Quentin Mack, Assistant to Ranger Helton Carmichael, on the Toecane. He burned a stand north of Burnsville, toward the Tennessee border. Local people were notified by radio of the impending, highly visible burn. These were the first three mountain prescribed burns on the Nantahala and Pisgah forests. Other Rangers were more cautious about reintroducing fire.

About a year later Jimmy Walker, then Timber Assistant on the Tusquitee, began using burning along with seedtree cutting, to reproduce shortleaf pine. The results were exciting! One area had 10,000 shortleaf seedlings per acre. Another surprise was a good crop of blueberries that was produced along with the shortleaf seedlings. These were the first planned, natural shortleaf regeneration stands on the Tusquitee, or any other mountain district, to my knowledge. L. C. Loudermilk, Forestry Technician, was excited to see the shortleaf seedlings but took fire very conscientiously. Charlie Bailey, a happy-go-lucky Forest Worker, could burn seemingly without a care in the world.

I was transferred to the Francis Marion-Sumter in April 1970 as Forest Silviculturist. A site preparation job by dozing on a mountain top on the Andrew Pickens District really disturbed me—too much soil movement. We wanted no more of this. Fire for pine planting site preparation would certainly be preferable. Here, too, fire had not been used. No fire had been the policy for this mountain district, very unlike our coastal Francis Marion districts.

When Assistant Ranger Joe Blair arrived, he was brash enough to try burning. He successfully burned two or more areas for site preparation with winter burns. Joe and his burning were strongly criticized by soil and water people in our office. Joe took the brunt of the criticism very seriously as was his nature. I couldn't see serious erosion problems and the fire obviously killed back the rhododendron, laurel and small hardwoods to ground level as we wanted, making a good planting site for pine. The question was, was the loss of some pines and nutrients serious enough to overrule the silvicultural benefits? Supervisor John Orr's decision was to continue to use prescribed burning where other methods wouldn't do the job.

Jim Abercrombie, Joe's replacement, was an enthusiastic user of prescribed burning. He began trying summer burns for site preparation and developed his slash and burn technique into a science for pine planting as is well documented. Prescribed burning soon became used for wildlife purposes and more burning was being done for this reason than for timber management. Perry Shatley and crew became skilled mountain prescribed burners. By the 1980's prescribed burning had become an accepted practice.

People mentioned above could add considerable detail to these recollections. Also, when and how was prescribed burning initiated on other Appalachian forests? ■

—Don Peterson, St. Joseph, Minnesota



Luncheon September 10th

Our next luncheon is September 10th at the Petite Auberge restaurant on North Druid Hills Road in the Toco Hills Shopping Center. We gather at 11:30 a.m. for fun and fellowship. Lunch will be served at 12 noon. Please call to make your reservations no later than September 8. Call either Peaches Sherman 770.253.7480 or the Brays at 770.253.0392. The cost of the luncheon is \$10. We hope to see you there. ■

"Live your life each day as you would climb a mountain. An occasional glance toward the summit keeps the goal in mind, but many beautiful scenes are to be observed from each new vantage point. Climb slowly, steadily, enjoying each passing moment, and the view from the summit will serve as a fitting climax for the journey."

—Harold V. Melchert



MAIL FROM OUR MEMBERS

DAVE WEBB, Atlanta - I hope you have a good spring and summer and get to travel as much as you want to do. I just finished my 13th Elderhostel trip, this one to Branson, MO., which is giving Nashville a lot of competition. Elderhostels, with their quarterly 150-page catalogs of places to visit, are a great way to see the country, offering more insights on locales than the local or state tourism offices or the Grey Lines Tours. Most of them now house participants in motels instead of college dorms, a major change from the way they started out. Free catalogs of their programs are available from Elderhostel, 75 Federal Street, Boston, MA 02110-1941, phone 617.426.7788.

PAUL TIMKO, Roanoke - I apologize for overlooking the due date on my address label. This check should take care of me through '99.

Irene still has not retired from her retail business that she has owned for eighteen years. It keeps us both very busy. Our middle daughter, Mary, manages the business that includes ballet dancewear, competitive swimwear, exercise wear and costumes of all kinds.

Some of my friends may be interested in hearing that our 2 sons and three daughters are scattered around the eastern States. Mike has never left Massachusetts, Rick is in South Carolina, Carol in Georgia, Mary and Terry are here in Virginia.

WALT ROBILLARD, Atlanta - I do believe I am behind in my dues. It is just one of those things that one takes for granted. To make certain that I am current, I am enclosing a sufficient amount to cover two years. Apply the amount as needed.

It seems as if the FS is just a memory of the past. Your news letter is a nexus that keeps 30 of my past years to today's world. I am so happy that I came in when I did. I rather doubt if I could take it today. It seems as if the "new guard" never read Greeley's letter. I remember the first day I arrived at the ranger station in Laurel, Mississippi on November 7, 1957 on the "Chick", the Ranger, Joe Couch, gave me a copy of the famous multiple good letter and made me memorize it. Both Joe and the letter are happy memories.

JOHN SCHULTE, Hoschton, GA - Don't want to have to keep watching to make sure we've paid our dues and not missing any issues. Thanks for the work y'all do to keep us all informed - it's so much fun to read the reminiscences into the past. These 'young folks' have no idea how great the Forest Service used to be!

JIM PAGE, Smyrna, NC - Sarah and I continue to enjoy "Down East" coastal living almost in the shadow of Cape Lookout. Filled the freezer last summer with shrimp I caught with my cast net off the end of our dock. We also landed plenty of fish, oysters, and clams. Great life till hurricanes come along, and then there is a bit of a challenge for a mountain boy living just 4 feet above sea level.

JIM HEFNER, Athens, GA - Thanks again for reminding me my dues were due and thanks for another great *Dixie Ranger*.

Andre'e and I are busy taking care of the "farm" and our three grandchildren - 2 boys and a girl. We do a little traveling and have made two trips to England, Scotland and France in the past 4 years.

Glad to see plans are underway for the FS 2000 reunion. We were at the other two (CO and Utah) and had a great time as I am sure you did. Hope we can get the reunion here in the South in 2005 - let's work on it! Best regards to all our friends who read *The Dixie Ranger*.

LYMAN GRAY, Tallahassee - Enjoyed *The Dixie Ranger*, but was sorry to see that there were very few Comm Techs listed in the Directory. My first job with the Forest Service was at the Stuart Nursery on the Kisatchie. Then I was Comm Tech on the National Forests in FL for 28 years. In this capacity I worked on most forests in R8. I retired in 1974 on an option and then did Campground Host work in southwest Virginia for 4 years. I have been working for 18 years for Eldercare Services.

I do not know if you are familiar with a Public Broadcast Video Series GREAT AMERICA'S OUTDOORS. I am sure all retirees would enjoy them. They are mostly National Forests and National Parks. I have the one on National Forests in Florida and also the one on the Kisatchie NF. I have shown them to several conservation groups and they were well received. I enjoyed my *Dixie Ranger* and I am looking forward to the next issue. Are there any books on the History of the Forest Service? (For those of you interested in the video series, you may contact Lyman via e-mail: lgray5@juno.com) - Betty)

ROBERT THATCHER, Asheville - I'm lagging behind again! Enclosed is my check for dues for 1998-99. I so enjoy *The Dixie Ranger* and don't want to miss a single issue.

Just a little news on what's going on in "this part of the woods"...this Saturday, June 6th, I will assume the presidency of NARFE chapter 156 in Asheville. I will be privileged to be installed by the President of the NC Federation of Chapters who will be in town to talk at our monthly meeting. The North Carolina Supreme Court recently voted in favor of State government retired employees regarding a tax refund or credit. We expect to be benefactors, too.

Back to the Chapter—our current President is moving to Virginia, so, as First Vice President, I move up. We have about 460 members currently. I hope I can do a reasonable job.

On another front, the Southern Appalachian Man and Biosphere program recently held its spring planning meeting at the NC Arboretum in Asheville. Members from the Cooperative's Executive Committee, for which I am Secretary, and a large number of Federal, State, University and industry representatives were present. The focus over the next three years will be on native plants and exotic pests, watersheds, and sustainable development initiatives. I am sharing the results of the meeting with others who could not attend, as well as providing a record for those who were there.

In a moment of weakness (last August), I invited forest entomologists and others to hold the 42nd annual Southern Forest Insect work conference in Asheville this August. I also agreed to serve as local arrangements chairman (was I out of my mind?). Arrangements are pretty well in place. We will headquarter at the Quality Inn Biltmore from August 3-6. We're expecting from 110-130 attendees to come from all across the South. Thank goodness for the willingness of many people to help in bringing this all to fruition.

Just so I won't be sitting around wondering what to do, our Men's Club at the Biltmore United Methodist Church is again planning to organize and man a food trailer at the Mountain State Fair in Asheville in September. This will be a good fund-raiser. The Fair will last 10 days this year. Over 150,000 visitors are expected. Needless to say, my wife Harriet and I will be looking for a break this fall.

JACK BOREN, Alexandria, LA – Enjoyed the May Issue. You two do a great job in putting the newsletter together. I work on one with the Purple Heart Chapter here in Central LA so I know what it takes to get one out.

Now for the latest in the saga of the History of the Kisatchie's only special agent for 20 years.

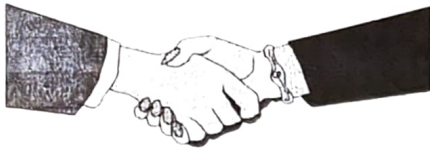
Interesting to learn that one of my old supervisors, Frank and Joyce Ferrarelli, are still tooling around. Kay and I are heading out in mid-June for an extended trip through eastern Canada. Going in at Montreal, around the Gaspe, into New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Then back into the states and a visit with John and Katherine Allen at the ranch at Crawfordsville, GA.

Carl Hoover's comments on the Clenny Trail in Mt. Ida in '63 brings to mind a story. I believe it must have been in early '64 cause I didn't go to work for the Kisatchie until November 1963. Anyway, and this had to be in early winter cause it was colder than the inside of Hitler's heart. Ranger Carl called for help with a series of fires on the Jessieville RD. After checking into the situation, using my most astute investigative prowess, knowledge of arson and overcoming my modesty, I did my thing. I found the records showed that most of the recent fires had been spotted and reported by one of the District's "pick-up" part time fire fighters—a local very young resident named Mack D. Clenny. One investigative arson tool was you always looked closely at the person who reported the fire. Following proper investigative techniques, I called Clenny in for an interview at the Work Center. After a couple of questions, it became apparent that this was a case of "job" fires. Under questioning, Clenny admitted that he needed the money and he got paid "gud" to fight fires, so he just set some to make more money. We put this in the form of a written statement. At about this point in the interview, Clenny jumped up, ran out the door, hopped in his car and took off. I had no idea where the roads went, and I just let him go. Well, with the statement in hand, the local DA issued a warrant. And Judge, I believe his name was Steel, set a trial date for Mt. Ida. You'd have to have been there to appreciate the trial. Mt. Ida was an old town with a real old courthouse. Winter, second floor, no heat. All of us sat around a pot-bellied stove. Judge on one side, the bad guys on one side and the good guys, suits, coats, etc., on a side. Clenny and his family, all in tattered overalls, coatless, shivering, kinda moaning just sat there. Judge Steel, looking like 'what are we doing here to these poor people', presided. Wasn't much of a trial. Seems as though the Judge established that fires had been set in violation of State law. Clenny admitted to having done the dastardly act. I truly don't remember what the sentence was, but it was probably that Carl Hoover was really responsible for the whole thing cause he would hire Clenny full time. It was my first successful arson case so I felt good about it.



I really don't know where the title of SA Training #1 came from, unless it was the first one at Glynco, GA, since 1963 when the R-8 Special Agent force was Joe Couch, RO, Warren Cagle, SC, Randy Miller, TN, Jim Evans, MS, and me on the Kisatchie. We had a number of training programs. Here is the identification of those as best I can remember:

Left to right: Back row—Ernie Anderson, WO; Billy Ball, Texas; Graham Bollinger, SC. Middle row—Clyde Simpson, FL; Baker Edminston, NC; Jim Webb, RO Personnel (I don't know how he ended up in the photograph), Wayne Miller, AL; Frank McCullough (?) TN. Front row—Warren Cagle, RO; Clifford Gartrell (our gal Friday in the RO Law Enforcement Division—if you wanted anything from RO/LE, talk to Clifford); Ed Outlaw, AR; Jack Boren, Kisatchie; Roy Moore (?), KY; and Eddie Walters and I can't remember which forest he was on. Without notes, I may not have identified all the forests correctly. As Joe Couch used to say about the importance of taking notes, old Chinese proverb: "The strongest memory is weaker than the palest ink."



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

James E. "Scooter" Brown (Ruth)
RR 2 Box 12-C
Robbinsville, NC 28771
Phone: 828.479.6805

Jerry Rockett (Sandy)
304 Sandy Beach Rd
Heathsville, VA 22473

Max Swilling (Eleanor)
2154 Chaparral Dr
Snellville, GA 30078
Phone: 770.736.7735

Changes to the Directory:

James F. Herd (Ilona)
300 Point Place Dr
Westminster, SC 29693
Phone: 864.972.7505

Bill Hess (Cheryl)
236 Indian Cove Dr
Dawsonville, GA 30534

IN MEMORIAM

Frank E. Pullium, age 81, of Atlanta, GA, died May 8th. Survived by his wife, Mary Frances Pitchford Pullium, son Michael and daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters. Mary Frances is a Forest Service retiree who retired from the Human Resources Staff Unit in 1983 (?).

John Wernham, Palm Harbor, FL, died May 19th. No other details available at this time.

June Luncheon Huge Success

John Cissell, Superintendent, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, Marietta, GA, was the guest speaker. Mr. Cissell gave a brief history of the battle that took place during the Civil War. Thousands of visitors take advantage of the amenities of the park each year. It was a most interesting presentation. Forty members attended this luncheon. It was good to see Dr. Leroy and Ann Jones. Max Swilling, our newest member, and his wife, Eleanor, were also in attendance. Ray Hall, part-time resident of Florida and Georgia, happened to be in town for this luncheon.

COPING WITH CHANGE

MY first computer was given to me in 1991 by my neighbor when she got a new one. After having used a typewriter for the previous three years typing *The Dixie Ranger*, the computer was fantastic. No more cutting and pasting because I had made a mistake and there was no way to correct it without retyping. Then in 1992 Bert bought the first computer in our household—a 486. After he had used it for a number of months he kept telling me that he thought I would like one. In 1993 I bought a 486 and, oh, my, what a dream to use. That is after many frustrating hours, much crying and gnashing of teeth, I could get it to do some of the things I wanted it to do. My daughter was most helpful because she sent me a manual on Microsoft Word for Windows. Her office had just up-dated their system and none of the young ladies in the office needed a manual, so I got one. Just this past April I got a whole new system—multimedia, 166 MHz with Pentium processor. So far I have only cried twice. This machine can do so many wonderful things that I am so excited about using it. It is so user-friendly! I have some new ideas for *The Dixie Ranger* that I want to present to you throughout the years ahead, but it just dawned on me that I cannot do it without you. If I don't receive letters or articles you have written, all my updating will be for naught. So let's do great things together—more letters, interesting articles of your days in the Forest Service, what you're doing now that you have all this free time in retirement. Many of you have said that you feel you know me even though we have not met. I know many of you from name only. Others I have worked with during our years together in the Forest Service. I believe you could just sit down and write me a letter. Look at Charlie Blankenship's letter in the last issue. Great newsy information about people that a number of us know. You could do the same thing. So I encourage you to write, send articles, give a book review (any kind of book) that you think someone else would enjoy or like to know about. I'm looking forward to hearing from you—*Betty*.

"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

RE-STARTING A RUSTY ENGINE

The very first official activity on my first day with the Forest Service was a brief orientation with a Personnel Officer. He explained how lucky I was to be accepted because I had applied at just the time when there was a critical shortage of available foresters—a desperate need, in fact. He hinted that they would take just about anything that came in. I had a hunch he wasn't the morale officer.

My orientor must have noted my absence from forestry activities, beginning 15 years earlier with a kind invitation from Uncle Sam to join him for a period of free room and board, with guest tickets for "Adventure Cruises" thrown in. This limbo-time, emphasized with great care, made for a no-confidence start with the Forest Service.

In addition, I was keenly aware that I was joining an organization of high-level researchers (Southern Station) to whom, I imagined, my accumulated mental dust called for a leper bell for use in the hallways. To overcome all this, I adopted the bureaucratic two-step: Walk fast and always carry at least two pieces of paper.

Almost every researcher wrote things. Many of these were understandable if read slowly. But "slow" came to a complete halt on the writings of one Lew Grosenbaugh, a recognized genius in the field of Biometrics. I was awestruck of anyone with a mind

like that, and was uneasy on our first one-on-one meeting in his office.

But Lew double-crossed me. He turned out to be the most amiable easy-going, down-to-earth guy you could hope to meet. He even seemed to ignore my mental retardation, forestry-wise. This cordial first meeting made later "business" sessions with Lew much easier.

I was supposed to be assistant editor at the Southern Station (no laughing, please). This job was a piece of cake AS LONG AS the Editor, Norb Sand, was on hand to do the heavy lifting. But to my dismay, he took a vacation. It was during this scary time that Lew brought me a manuscript for editing, one that he needed in a hurry because he was going to present it as a paper at the national SAF meeting in the next few days.

Well, I tried, but hit "Danger Ahead" signs in an early paragraph where it said (direct quote): "Single universal correction factors possessed all the faults of ratio estimates, regression corrections suffered from violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variances and frequently from non-linearity of deviations..." Yipe!! Just before going into complete brain-sprain, I trundled the package, unmarked, back to Lew. I explained that I could maybe prod the punctuation a bit, but little more. Lew couldn't understand my

problem, and took about fifteen minutes to explain the paper's meaning. I began to get a glimmer of comprehension. So I had to ask him why he didn't write what he had just told me. Bad question! No scientific paper of stature is to be written for rinkey-dink mentalities like mine.

I asked Lew how many people out of his audience of several hundred would be able to understand his subject. He pondered a moment, and then said, "Two."

"TWO???"...I couldn't believe he was serious. He was! I have since adopted Lew's concept, and have found that it gives me courage to put together something for *The Dixie Ranger*. I aim for an acceptable readership of two. Just to bolster my confidence, can I see a show of hands? Yeah, both of you!■

—Robert W. Neelands

From the Editor : This special layout for Bob Neelands' article is new to *The Dixie Ranger*. I would like your comments if you don't like it. I would like to try different ways of printing the DR to make it more interesting, but at the same time I want it to be easy to read. As I get more experience in using Windows 95, I'd like to put this experience to work and present it to you for an exciting newsletter.

Book Review by Jim McConnell

The Trees in My Forest by Bernd Heinrich is an interesting book about 300 acres of forest in Maine. Heinrich is a biology professor at the University of Vermont and has a quirky view of all things natural. He doesn't mind cutting trees in his forest but opposes planting trees to replace those he has cut. The last two chapters of the book try to explain why this is a good idea, but really doesn't fly because it is limited to his forest in the state of Maine. Otherwise, he gives delightful accounts of trees in chapters like: Trees?, Trimming the Deadwood, Evolution of Small vs. Big Trees, Tree Geometry and Apical Dominance and Sex in Trees, among others. The little experiments and studies he describes are more on the high school level than college or scientific level. Nevertheless you can sit back and enjoy the book and appreciate the joy a lot of people can derive from a relatively small forest.

Trees in My Forest by Bernd Heinrich is printed by Harper-Collins, hardback cost \$24.00. I picked up a copy at Borders Book Store with a 10% discount. You should be able to find a copy in most libraries. ■

JUNIOR FORESTER ON THE SABINE

The following is an excerpt from Excelsior: Memoir of a Forester by Laurence C. Walker, a Lucy Hunt Professor, Emeritus, of the College of Forestry, Stephen F. Austin State College. Dr. Walker was also the first dean of the School of Forestry. This is the first of three installments to appear in *The Dixie Ranger*.

The Civil Service Commission announcement in the spring of 1948 called for some 30 junior foresters (P-1 grade, the entry-level professional) for the US Forest Service. Penn State graduates alone could fill the need. Other federal agencies, state organizations, and industries recruited a few. I had an advantage: disabled veterans not only got 10 points added to their CSC examination scores, their names went to the top of the list.

We spent much of the last term at State College boning up for the exam. The faculty produced a file of old exams from which we studied. It was a subject matter test, not a round-peg-in-a-square-hole psycho quiz. This example sticks with me: In a forest tree nursery you observe here and there, among the longleaf pine grass-stage seedlings, stems that are making height growth. What species are their parents? And which species is the paternal? The test was given to the entire graduating class at the State College Post Office.

I got a good grade, received the 10 extra points, and was listed near the top of the roster. A CSC-assigned physician signed off on my physical and mental condition.

(He also tried to get me to give up forestry and go to medical school. The country was still short of doctors; but why, twice, should I be encouraged in that direction?).

Lacking confidence in receiving a Forest Service appointment, I had already gone, by mail, directly to the superintendent of the Shenandoah National Park, bragged on my knowing every trail in the Park, and received an assignment as a ranger. I also informed him that, should the Forest Service opportunity come along, I'd want to leave the Virginia mountains. He agreed, and I bought a uniform. Soon, however, I became a Junior Forester on the Sabine National Forest in East Texas. The southern openings were my choice because I figured everyone else, from every northern school and the several southern colleges, along with all the graduates of western institutions, would request the West. This reflects, I think, some misguided instruction in silviculture. In the South were the opportunities to watch trees grow, to manage forest for goods and services, and to participate in the greatest "green revolution" the world will ever witness. But no one told us so.

On To Texas

I checked as my first choice the Texas National Forest for another, and better, reason. It was the redhead who laughed at my jokes when I met her while stationed at Camp Fannin five years before. The war widow still laughed at my jokes when I "chanced" upon her during the cross-country hitchhiking tour following my Army stint. In those two years since discharge, I put on a lot of miles, all *via* the thumb, between State College or DC and Tyler or Wheaton College in Illinois. The bombardier's GI pension paid for her escape from the family farm. I skipped my graduation to be present for Anne's at Wheaton. Seeing her and the Sinclair family, all with railroad passes, off by train following commencement, I raised a thumb for Tyler, Texas, arriving only a day later than the train. Scared as a kitten stranded in the top of a tall tree and thinking of all the freedoms I was voluntarily surrendering, the preacher had to repeat the vow question, "Well, do you?" A fellow with Yankee blood in his veins, a woods worker, and maybe a Republican, it was a bit much for Mr. Sinclair to handle. However, we borrowed his car and honeymooned paddling a canoe among the broadly buttressed baldcypresses and the brightly hued floating water hyacinths in the black backwater bayous of Caddo State Park. (Years later I was asked to work out the ecology of the vegetation of a stream

that empties into the earthquake-created lake).

Assigned to the Sabine

The letter said to report to the Supervisor of the Texas National Forests in Lufkin. I got off the bus mid-morning in late June, wearing my only suit, a woolen gray, to make a good impression. Directions given at the bus station sent me south on US 59. My heart sank when, soaking wet and toting my suitcase from downtown, I had been directed to the *Texas* Forest Service. A kindly forester drove me to the west side of the city to the National Forest supervisor's office in an old CCC warehouse on State 103. From there, on that day, a staff forester drove me to San Augustine where I'd settle in on the Sabine National Forest, one of the four forests that comprised the Texas National Forests (now the National Forests in Texas.)

Ranger Ivan J. Nicholas and I were the only professionals for the 180,000-acre ranger district (which was synonymous with the National Forest.) Ranger "Nick" served in that capacity from 1946 to 1955. But John E. Johnson, a local experienced man (LEM) who began working for the Forest Service in the CCC days, was indispensable. Though not a professional forester, he had assistant ranger rank and salary. His father before him rode horse back as a fire patrolman in these woods. And from Johnny and Ranger Nick I learned more forestry than in all my undergraduate studies.

Only then did I begin to learn what the work of a forester and the tasks of the professional are all about. From them I learned much silviculture that could be passed along as a forestry school teacher to the next generation. *Axes, Oxen, and Men*, my history of the Southern Pine Lumber Company, is dedicated to Ranger Nicholas.

Early on the job, the aforementioned Johnny, 15 years my senior, attempted, I think, to have some fun getting the new kid lost in a logging operation in a river bottom. Leaving me for a reason unknown, he told me to wait. After a couple of hours there and day's end approaching, I walked out, probably a good two miles, to his pickup. This neophyte didn't intend to spend the night in that moccasin-infested maze of river bottom skid-road trails, all of which look alike following a harvest. I had not yet encountered alligators. Somehow, I walked straight for the truck as a bee heads for its hive. An hour later Johnny arrived at his pickup. He never said a word. I wonder, was it he who was lost in the woods?

Snake Scare

Working alone, before the days of snake leggings and hard hats, I used the official marking ax to blaze and stamp the butts of hardwood trees for a small timber sale. "US" was molded into the hammerhead of the short-handled ax. Hearing a swishing sound, I looked down; there at my knee was the open mouth of a moccasin. Instantly I knew why herpetologists

call them cottonmouths: inside the jaw is a pure white ball of cotton-appearing flesh. I don't understand the physics of the next maneuver, but I went straight up, then sideways 10 feet before gravity brought me down.

Stupidly angered, I cut a fork stick, trapped the reptile, removed its head, and quit the woods for the day. Adrenaline shock soon followed as I realized that had that calf-size pit-viper sunk those two extended ivories into my leg, the buzzards would have enjoyed my eyeballs before Ranger Nick could have found me in that soggy bayou.

Silvicultural Practices

Ranger Nick always made the district's quota for timber sold and harvested. As I recall, we sold enough stumpage in the 1949-50 fiscal year to pay for the forest, bought in 1935-36. Purchase of the national forests under the authority of the Weeks and Clark-McNary acts has to be one of the best deals the government ever made. These southern forests would continue to be good investments if the radical environmentalists would allow foresters to manage this renewable natural resource.

After protection from wildfire and timber trespass (theft), our principal effort went toward thinning and timber stand improvement (TSI). Pine thinnings went to sawmills and pulping plants. TSI involved marking hardwoods that were of commercial value for hardwood mills that marketed them

for bridge timbers, crossties, and other purposes utilizing low-quality stems. TSI also involved utilizing the herbicides ammate and 2,4,5-T, the former in cups chopped into tree bases and the latter in frills made with axes at waist height.

In the mid-1980's, a summer session of graduate students needed a 3-credit course. The one we put together had us going to the old atlases of Sabine practices (thinnings, especially) and then finding the sites on the ground where the effects of these practices could be ascertained three and a half decades later. Here's what stood out for those students: Thinnings of loblolly and shortleaf pines, resembling what forester antagonists call selection harvests, just don't work. No seedlings or samplings could be found in the understories.

The Bootleggers Vehicle

Ranger Nick assigned tasks. Among my first was to check out a hardwood timber sale in the Sabine (meaning cypress) River bottom, a broad flood plain of rich alluvial soil. The vehicle issued me—along with a badge (don't wear it where it can be seen), a passkey, a marking hammer, and a government driver's license—was a 1940 Plymouth sedan. We called the revenuer-confiscated bootlegger's car the Taxi, for you could still see the word under the thin coat of Forest Service green paint. Hidden inside the doors' interior panels were shelves for stashing narrow flasks.

When rain came to the bayous, I called it a day, hiked out to

the Taxi, and headed for the ranger station, an office above a grocery store in San Augustine, some 50 miles distant. I soon slid off the ungraded dirt road and into a ditch.

The FS was too poor to own come-alongs or any other equipment useful for dragging a car from a ditch to the "road." (I had never driven, even in the Army, on an unpaved road; when pure silt mud's involved, it's an art.) I hiked to a peckerwood mill operated by two brothers living in adjacent homes. I learned later I "yoe-hoed" at the house of the wrong brother, awakening him from sleep. One would have graciously helped me; the one I selected growled, "Get the tractor from the shed and bring it back."

I'd never been on a tractor saddle, but I did have a flashlight with which to study the gear chart plate. The tractor and I were on our way. By midnight, I had dragged the Taxi to the ridge of the road and returned the John Deere. Another two-hour's hike back to the bayou's edge would have me on my way to a warm, dry bed. So I thought. Cautiously advancing the old car, it quit after a few hundred feet. The gas gauge read empty. But I had filled the tank that morning!

To be continued in the next issue of The Dixie Ranger.

A PHIL NEWTON STORY

Maybe everyone has a Phil Newton story. I have one and it was the only time I ever met him. In 1968 I was detailed to the RO to assist TM put together and deliver the new compartment prescription and CISC (Continuous Inventory of Stand Condition) system to the field. As we made our presentation in South Carolina, I thought the district rangers were going to blow the roof off when they learned that they now were going to be required to keep a continuous record on each timber stand on their district. Every point we made was challenged, not by one, but by several of the roughest, toughest bunch of rangers I had even seen. About an hour into the presentation I was beginning to wonder if we were going to be able to finish. Then Phil stood up. He was the TM staff officer in the SO. I remember him as a small man in statue, probably 5'9" or less, but all of a sudden he became a giant of a man in my eyes. After the roar subsided he told them in a quiet voice that he understood their concerns but that "this is the way that it was going to be and you need to listen and learn how to make the new system work." Then he sat down. There was stony silence. From that point on the only verbiage we heard from the audience were questions to aid their understanding. Phil Newton was truly a big man. ■

– Roger Dennington, Social Circle, GA

COMING –

Continuation of Junior Forester on the Sabine. What happened to the gasoline?

A Cruise on the Volga River from Moscow to St. Petersburg by Bert Bray.

An up-date on the Forest Service History Center.

"Hollows, Peepers, and Highlanders" – a book review by Jim McConnell. ■

"The greatest thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving."

– O. W. Holmes

"The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today."

– Franklin D. Roosevelt

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NOTE: Please make reservations for the luncheon by September 8th. Phone numbers appear on page 3.

CONGRATULATIONS to the Oconee Ranger District, Chattahoochee-Oconee NFs, for taking the top honors as the USDA FS Southern Region's District of the Year Award. Selected from about 100 other ranger districts throughout R-8's 13-state region, the Oconee district, based in Eatonton, GA, earned the award for outstanding efforts to effectively use partnerships and cooperative ventures to restore the health of forested areas that were left barren in the 1900s. "Their efforts to restore those lands represent one of the most prominent conservation and restoration success stories in the South", said Regional Forester Elizabeth Estill. District Ranger Tony Tooke accepted the award on June 17th.