

# British Columbia



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## REGIONAL FIELDWORK IN THE EARLY 1950's by Geoff Bate Part One of Two

During the summer of 1952 I was appointed dispatcher at Golden. The ranger there at the time was Jack Coles. He was the father of Larry Coles, who for many years was the Superintendent of Scaling in the Vancouver Forest Region. The staff in the Golden Ranger District that summer consisted of Frank Old, Irvie Robinson and Reg Hamblin. Reg was stationed at Bush River.

I had had summer jobs with the Forest Service since 1949. I had been a lookout, initial attack crewman and silviculture slash crew labourer. However, this was my first opportunity to hold a position of greater responsibility. We had a fairly busy fire season in 1952 and I gained a lot of experience. I will be forever indebted to Jack, Frank, Irvie and Reg for their support and willingness to pass on their knowledge.

Dispatcher positions were generally only summer appointments. Mine terminated on September 30th and I contacted Maurie Isegor in Nelson and inquired if he was aware of any jobs that might be available during the winter. Maurie put me in touch with Ted Young, the Assistant District Forester. A few days later Ted contacted me and advised that there was an opening on the tree marking crew. I was to report to the foreman, Bruce Broadfoot, on October 1st.



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The marking crew that winter consisted of Bruce, Eric Peterson and myself. Red Wassick joined us in the spring of 1953. We travelled throughout the Nelson Forest District, generally marking "leave trees" on timber sales that were to be selectively cut to a diameter limit. The "leave trees" were supplemental to the diameter limit restriction and ensured there would be a seed source after logging had taken place. It was also important to ensure the trees left were evenly spaced to provide shade for the germinants. On south and west slopes, in particular, seedlings will die due to a lack of moisture.

In some instances, trees were "marked to cut." This practice was undertaken where old, fully mature trees were located in areas containing immature trees of merchantable size. In some cases, the immature trees were larger than the "vets."

The trees were marked about 4 1/2 to 5 feet above the ground and on the root collar. This made it easy for the inspecting forest officer to check for trespass cutting. Art Waldie, our Silviculture Forester, authorised the prescriptions and checked our work. Blue paint was used on "leave trees" and red for "cut," while orange was used for timber sale boundaries. A special paint called Tree Blaze was used. Pressurised Panama pumps were filled, pumped and carried on the back throughout the day. The paint contained a fish oil base which was as strong as rotting salmon. After each shift the pumps were cleaned, filled with kerosene and pressurised so that they would be ready for work the next day.

There was always a potential for leaking valves, drift and accidental tripping of the paint gun. It was therefore not particularly difficult to identify the tree marking crew either by sight or smell!

Most of the work was confined to the Douglas-fir, western larch, ponderosa pine and western white pine stands. Therefore we were seldom very far away from main roads. Travel expense budgets were restrictive and from early spring until late fall, regardless of amenities that were available, we were expected to live in tents. As we made and broke camp at least once a week we became quite proficient at it. After selecting a site, Bruce was pretty upset if a comfortable camp wasn't set up in 30 to 40 minutes, including cutting the firewood. Bruce was an excellent cook as well as being a good foreman. So, for a young guy like me it was a great experience. (Our meal allowance was \$2.50 per day and my monthly salary was \$188.)

I recently visited some of the sites we marked in those days and I am satisfied that we did a good job. Some areas have been selectively logged once or twice since the original cut and look ready for another harvest.

We had the usual number of forest district staff in Nelson at that time. Harry Forse was the District Forester. I.B. Johnson was in charge of Protection and Jack Payne in (Timber) Management. Foresters, in addition to Art, included Fred Sutherland, Larry Parlow, Jim Munroe, Ray Gill, Bill Bishop and Bill Hall (as well as others I cannot recall). Ollie Christie and Jim Robinson were the Ranger Supervisors.

It soon became obvious that the self-proclaimed elite of the regional field crews were the timber cruisers. In the early summer of 1953 there were several vacancies and, in order to gain experience, I applied for one of the compassman positions and was accepted. The first cruiser I worked for was Dave Malenka, who is now one of the senior field staff of Crestbrook Forest Industries. Dave and Yas Shinde were two of the cruisers that come to mind, and there were others. Shortly after I joined, Rich Drew came on the crew. At one point, for various reasons, Rich was my compassman and at another I worked for him. In the summer of 1954, when I was appointed cruiser, my compassman was John Muraro.

I thought one of the immediate advantages to getting into cruising was to get away from those intolerable Panama paint pumps. Ironically, one of our first jobs was to cruise a large area in the Boundary country. As heights of land between drainages are not easily identified in this area, it was decided that it would be necessary to mark the timber sale boundaries with paint. So, my old marking clothes were pressed back into service!

Our forester - supervisor was Fred Sutherland. Fred, when just out of his teens, was a gunner in the front turret of a Lancaster bomber. He was one of the 30-man Royal Canadian Air Force contingent accepted as a volunteer to the RAF Bomber Command for the Dam Busters assignment. This group successfully bombed the Mohne and Eder dams on the Ruhr River in May of 1943. Of the 30 Canadians, Fred was one of only 16 who returned from that famous mission. After the war he became one of many ex-armed forces personnel who entered forestry at UBC. Fred has recently retired as the District Manager at Rocky Mountain House with the Alberta Forest Service. I found Fred to be a very modest individual. It was only through unusual circumstances that we found out about his wartime experiences.

Most of the smaller and more accessible sale areas were cruised by the ranger staff. The regional crews were therefore required to cruise the drainages that were far off the beaten track. One of the larger timber companies would apply for the cutting rights to an area. A Kail plot would be made of the entire drainage using available maps and air photos. A Kail plot was made by transposing, to scale, information such as creek and river locations and timber types directly from the air photos.

Most of the areas in the Nelson Forest District had not been mapped by the Surveys and Inventory Division, so information was skimpy and often inaccurate. Air photos consisted of those taken by the RCAF during the Second World War. The photos were extremely useful but, at 40 chains to the inch, they lacked the timber type detail that is now available. It was therefore important to accurately map timber types while cruising.

Regardless of the area that had been applied for, we were instructed to cruise the entire chance or drainage from valley bottoms to the height of land. We were expected to remain on the sale area until the job was finished, which in some cases might be from two to four weeks.

On larger areas a crew consisting of two or three cruisers and their compassmen might be assigned to the sale. We would walk from the closest road or boat access, which might take a couple of days. On our Trapper Nelson packs went our cruising equipment, fly, sleeping bag, personal items, mess kit and grub for about three days.

Additional food would be provided by parachute delivered from a fixed-wing aircraft. We would preselect a site and time and Fred would arrange for the air drop. We would find the site - a small natural opening or an old burn - and light a fire. The drops were made by Don Thomson, in his single engine Beaver (GYM) which was owned by Pacific Western Airlines. He would fly to the site and spot our small fire. If all went well his air observer would release the cargo using either parachutes or free drops.

It was always a source of amazement to us that the eggs would be free dropped and canned goods and other durable items would land softly thanks to a large parachute. We always planned on a scrambled egg dinner after a food drop but sometimes we were pleasantly disappointed. Another challenge occurred on those occasions when cargo and chute would hang up in a snag or in the top of a tree. You were never considered a good axeman until you had successfully cut down a four-foot diameter tree with a belt axe.

Using game trails or by simply blazing a trail along the main creek we would establish a baseline the entire length of the drainage. We traversed the baseline and stations were established 20 chains (1/4 mile) apart. Each morning the cruiser and his compassman would walk to one of these stations and then commence the cruise strip by travelling at a direction approximately 90 degrees to the direction of the baseline to the height of land. The compassman would advance on strip dragging a two chain metal tape. The tape had a trailer which was about an additional half-chain in length.

EXECUTIVE NEWS

It is with regret that, due to reasons of ill health, Pit Desjardins has been forced to resign as President of the Forest History Association of British Columbia. Past President Bill Young has assumed the role of Acting President until the 1992 Annual General Meeting. At that time an election will be held to form a new executive.

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FOREST HERITAGE AT THE PACIFIC FORESTRY CENTRE

During the month of February (3rd to 28th) the Pacific Forestry Centre will be hosting a public celebration of our forest heritage on southern Vancouver Island. The celebration will include:

- displays in the atrium (Monday to Friday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM) from various organisations such as government agencies, museums and associations to depict their special interests or current projects,
- evening talks (some days, 7:00 to 9:00 PM) to highlight history, pioneering days and tall tales from the past, and
- a Saturday morning (9:00 to noon, by bus) famous tree tour to selected locations around Victoria.

If you would like to know more about the past and about those who have blazed trails before us, contact FHABC member and director Dr. Bob DeBoo at the Pacific Forestry Centre in Victoria (phone: 363-0751). Volunteers from the FHABC ranks to help out with the exhibition would be very much appreciated.

## SEARCH FOR OLD DOMINION FORESTRY PHOTOGRAPHS

Starting in about 1903 the Dominion Forestry Branch of the Canada Department of the Interior started to collect photographs about forestry. Staff were encouraged to take pictures, and selected negatives were sent to the Ottawa headquarters with background information. Photos accepted were given a serial number and, presumably, entered into a central register. Working or display prints were returned to district and regional offices.

By 1930, at the time of the Transfer of Resources, the serial numbers were into the 21,000's. The collections continued into the 1950's and 1960's, but large numbers of photos and reduced budgets eventually conspired to end the central collection.

After 1930 the subsets in the regions were neglected, became scattered, and many were thrown out during recurrent housecleanings. The central set evidently suffered a similar fate, although many photos were subsequently transferred to the National Archives of Canada. Of the over 21,000 numbered photos taken during the period 1903 to 1930, we have located only about 6,000 to 7,000. We are now compiling an annotated catalogue of these.

We are appealing for help in locating more of these photos, before the Forestry Canada centennial in 1999. The photos were usually printed in 3 1/2 by 5" size. They were typically stored in brown envelopes of 5 1/2 by 7" size, on which the annotated details were written or typed. Some of the regional subsets were mounted on 4 by 6" cards, with details added to the top of the card. The common distinguishing feature of each photo is the serial number appearing on the bottom of the image, usually in the middle. The number was inked onto the negative so it shows up as white numbers.

Subsets were established at Dominion Forestry offices - at the provincial or district headquarters, and at forest headquarters. Upon the Transfer of Resources, most of these subsets became the property of the provinces in which they were located, while a few stayed at the local federal offices. During the post-1930 period of dispersal, some photos were retained at those respective federal and provincial offices, some went to provincial archives, but most seem to have disappeared. Some went to dumps, others were salvaged by alert staff and are now held in unofficial or private collections.

We propose to reassemble as complete a set of photographs as possible in time for the Forestry Canada centennial. The first step is to complete a descriptive inventory of photographs, including their annotated details such as title, location and date. This information is being compiled in a computer program which will allow searching by keyword. We hope to have the work finished by March of 1993.

Would anyone who has any of these photos in their personal or corporate collections please let us know. Or if you know of where some might be located. We will follow up on all leads to arrange permission to record the details and, later if needed, to make copies from the originals and return them if desired.

Photos have been found in personal collections, family photo albums of former Dominion Forest Branch rangers or other employees, in old reports, local archives and government offices.

We would appreciate whatever help people can give us. Please get in touch with Dr. Peter Murphy, Department of Forest Science, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2H1 (phone: work, 403-492-4413 or home, 403-459-1176) or Dr. Fred Pollett, Forest Science Directorate, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1G5 (phone: 819-997-1107).

19920 The Camp of the Eau Claire & Bow River Lumber Co. on the North Ghost River. Bow River  
January 1928  
J.A.Hutchison



↑  
DFB NUMBER

Typical card-mounted Dominion Forestry Branch photo from a regional subset.

Annotations include photo number, date, location, title and photographer.

BOOK REVIEW

Ministry of Lands and Parks. 1991. Reflections of the past -  
Manning Park memories. Victoria, B.C. 52 p.

Manning Park was created in 1941 and to commemorate its 50th anniversary the B.C. Parks Branch has published a booklet entitled "Reflections of the Past."

The park was named in memory of Ernest C. Manning, Chief Forester of British Columbia, who met an untimely death in a plane crash on February 6, 1941.

The first chapter in the publication was written by FHABC member Helen Manning Akrigg (Manning's daughter) and tells the story of the Chief Forester's career.

Other chapters offer reflections on the history of Manning Park and were written by Robert R. Mierendorf, Robert C. Harris, Louise Shaw, C.P. Lyons, Yorke Edwards and Gail Ross.

For those interested in Manning Park and its history, "Reflections of the Past" offers interesting and enjoyable reading.

W. Young

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This newsletter is the official organ of the Forest History Association of British Columbia. It is distributed at no charge to members of the Association, libraries, archives and museums. Items on forest history topics, descriptions of current projects, requests for information, book reviews, letters, comments and suggestions are welcomed. Please address all correspondence regarding the newsletter and changes of address to the editor: Mr. John Parminter, # 1 - 949 Pemberton Road, Victoria, B.C. V8S 3R5.

Membership in the Association is \$7.00 yearly, or \$30 for five years. Should you wish to join or obtain further information please write to the Treasurer: Mr. Edo Nyland, 8793 Forest Park Drive, Sidney, B.C. V8L 4E8. The Acting President, Mr. Bill Young, can be reached at 6401 Conconi Place, Victoria, B.C. V8Z 5Z7.