

## Ex-12, Ex-Guard, Ex-Ranger

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Many young men now interested in the study of Forestry in the schools of the United States have spent some part of their summer vacation at least with the Forest Service as guards or field assistants; and all of those that have, were bundles of enthusiasm from the first moment of work. This enthusiasm grew even after camp broke for the last time. Reluctant "good-byes" were said, and memories of a most enjoyable and profitable vacation were told at gatherings before and after classes during the whole of the following year of school.

The average Forestry student is apt to be lured by the apparent free and picturesque life of the Forest rangers he has observed during his summer's work, and to be tempted to "lay out" a year to work in the Service and become a Forest ranger. He reasons that he is as full of red blood as any man, and has the other qualifications that go to make a good ranger.

"Have I not a start on a technical education?" he asks himself. "Can I not speak the Latin names of the trees, shrubs and forage plants? Then why would I not make good as a Forest ranger?"

He feels that he can easily work in that capacity for a year, and, with his first hand experience, go back to school and feel that he is better fitted for the B. S. degree in Forestry.

A young man once had such views and proceeded to carry them out—almost—for he did not return for his degree. He received an appointment as Forest guard on the Plumas National Forest in California.

Upon reporting to the Forest supervisor for his first instructions, he was sent to a remote sawmill and logging camp to act as scaler. He had never before seen a sawmill and was somewhat skeptical concernig the outlook of a life among "lumberjacks". Even after arriving at the mill, his ideas were not raised by appearances of either buildings or men. Thoughts of the vacant chair in his Eastern home insisted on coming to

him, try as he would to be brave and force them aside. The lumberman for the Service was on hand, and, after assisting the new guard by helping him fill his bunk with hay and introducing him to a few of the men about camp, he gave the guard a few instructions regarding scaling, and then departed to carry on other duties.

From the start, the guard received valuable lessons, acting in the capacity of agent between the Forest Service on one hand and a corporation on the other. His knowledge of eastern lumber markets, defects and diseases of logs and merchantable timber was good technically, but poor practically. Hence, a great deal of guessing was done at first. However, with a Company scaler checking him on every log, he was able at the end of two months to know a log in a dozen different ways; and know them he must, for the Company scaler was an old and experienced man who would split hairs to get the best of the Government scaler. No official relation existed between these scalers, and certainly a very small friendly one. The lumberman in charge of the timber sales found plenty of room for improvement in the methods of his subordinate's scaling, but he was patient and explained each detail specifically. Midnight oil was burned often to make sure that reports were correct and that they checked to the one-half cent, because a copy of each weekly report was to be sent to the District Forester, the Forest supervisor and the lumberman in charge of the local sales; and the scaler had received his reports back on two occasions with a curt letter asking for greater care.

He soon became more familiar with his work, and with greater familiarity came greater confidence. His interest increased, and no opportunity was lost to learn more of the science of scaling.

The guard wrote letters home, full of glowing accounts of his work, of how enjoyable it was, of how he loved the life; and yet, he carefully left out any hint as to his experiences at the hands of joke-loving "lumberjacks", the eventless evenings (save for the entertainment furnished by a family of skunks that did their nightly quarreling underneath his 6x8 cabin floor,) and early morning breakfasts consisting of soggy hot cakes, greasy bacon and strong coffee.

The diversion offered, when the mill was closed down by its

owners because of an overstocked yard, was more than welcome. The guard was ordered to report to a ranger some miles distant, to assist in the building of some improvements on the station grounds; but a cloud of smoke coming from behind a ridge of forest covered hills told of a more important duty. Several of the idle mill hands were called into service and were soon on their way to a fire with the embryonic Forester in glorious command. Rangers had already seen the smoke from their stations or had learned of it by telephones, and were coming in by one's and two's. The fire was a stubborn one, and in the following four weeks the guard learned the full significance of the clause describing the necessary qualifications of those aspiring to rangers' appointments which reads thus: "He must be able to perform hard labor under trying conditions." He was willing to work and held his own with the rangers, growing well acquainted in the mean time with a multitude of facts concerning the successful handling of men on the fire line, as well as the fighting of different kinds of fire.

When the fire was out and the Ranger's Station had been reached, the guard took a personal inventory. He found that his clothes had been burned and torn beyond repair, that his boots were reduced to sandals, that his face was covered with blisters and peculiarly colored patches of whiskers, and that his hair was long only in spots, burning cinders having removed parts of it. He had lost twelve pounds in weight, and not a little of his desire for a ranger's berth. He thought it strange when one of the departing rangers said to another, "Well, Jim, if I have a fire over on my district when I get back, I'll send for you to come and help put it out," and the reply came back, "Sure I will; that's the only time we have for a little fun except at the ranger's meeting." The guard had seen nothing even hinting at fun, unless a day's work with a shovel, axe, brushhook or rake, breathing dust and smoke, could be called fun.

After a day's rest, the guard was called into the supervisor's office, told to go to a large timber sale sixty miles distant, and use every means to collect a good quantity and quality of pine seed. Here was a new field, and here again the guard found his technical knowledge good but his practical information undeveloped. He worked on a logical basis and soon had a sys-

tem working, for which he received favorable mention from his Supervisor and from the District Forester. He had learned the importance of tact and used it. He was assisted in many ways by men with whom he came in contact. He made friends among the loggers, and they assisted him in locating cones whenever possible, incidentally nicknaming him "Pine Cone Pete."

At the close of this work he was transferred to the planting crew, where he became perfectly acquainted with the business end of the grub hoe, garden hoe and rake.

As the date for the examination for rangers was approaching, he spent his evenings in front of the camp fire, studying subjects which had not yet come into his experiences. On the day before the examination he tramped twelve miles across country to the place where it was to be held, and spent the two following days in struggling through the ordeals of the examination.

He was then transferred to the lower portion of the forest, where he was to assist an old ranger in taking care of 115,000 acres of timber land known as District No. 6 of the Plumas National Forest. Here he ran into the real test of fitness for following the life of a Forest ranger. The season being winter and operations being slack, he spent several days painting and lettering sign boards to mark roads and trails through the District, and drawing grazing maps (which were returned because of poor draftsmanship). When the rain ceased and snow came, he spent his time land-surveying, cruising, burning brush on sale areas, improving ranger station facilities, surveying out special and free uses for inhabitants and repairing the telephone lines, all of which had to be done on skis, the snow being too deep to permit travel by horse.

It was here, too, that he received some novel experiences as an ex-officio game warden. A band of Greek laborers were employed in a railroad construction camp some miles distant and were violating the game laws by sending men from their number out to furnish their table with "out-of-season" venison. The guard started investigations and found plenty of evidence. A warning of this was sent to the Greek's camp in some unknown manner, and a few days later, while following a trail carrying conclusive evidence, a screaming ball from a high power rifle

struck an arm's length from the guard. The ball came from a steep and densely wooded hillside some few hundred yards distant, and besides carrying its message, gave the guard an opportunity to claim a record for time consumed in making one's self invisible behind small trees. The offenders were brought to justice, but a more strategic method was employed in their capture.

With the coming of spring and the going of the snow, operations were resumed in the northern part of the Forest. After five months experience on District No. 6, the guard was transferred to the extreme northern part where he assisted another ranger in surveying the Forest boundary line, building fences to improve the station, laying a pipe line from a spring in the hills back of the station to the house, repairing the sheep counting pens, etc.

With the advent of spring came the usual large droves of sheep, goats, cattle and horses that are users of the National Forests for the grazing season. The ranger's duties were to count each drove of such stock, recommend the grazing charges to be made against them, and act as chaperone to each drove as they went over the special driveway to their allotted range.

The guard by this time was beginning to know some of the duties of the Forest ranger and was made jubilant by receiving notice of his success in the ranger examination and a promotion from Forest guard to Assistant Forest ranger.

Other work being rounded up and started in good shape in this District, the new Assistant ranger was transferred to the telephone crew, and for two weeks acted as lineman on this crew.

The completion of this work found it the 10th of June, and while waiting for the saw mills to begin operations he was sent to a newly established reconnaissance camp where he met two of his old college friends, together with several men from other colleges. In the following days he enjoyed a taste of his old college life, which, when transferred to the camp of a group of Forestry students, is the most enjoyable and congenial one can conceive of, and requires a talented author to describe.

The Assistant ranger soon after was notified of the opening of the sawmills and was ordered to report to a large logging camp far in the northern part of the Forest where he acted as

scaler until the close of the season. After assisting in a post-season reconnaissance and cruise, he was furloughed to return to college and resume his course in Forestry.

He returned to the Plumas Forest the following year and the call of the woods has kept him in the woods work, though not in the Forest Service. He has now completed a year in the employ of a large logging company, operating on the lower Columbia River. The experience gained while with the Forest Service has been of daily use to him in his work, and the call of the strenuous life of the Forest ranger is still strong within him. The memories of many small successes or failures encountered during those years are sources of great enjoyment when lived over with the aid of a diary and a collection of snapshots.

In conclusion it may be well to say that the one thing a man should possess, who intends to follow Forestry as a profession, is the power of using tact in all his dealings. When a man is given a Forest Service badge, he is invested with a certain amount of authority that requires very careful handling. Failure to use due tact, especially with such persons as forest users or outsiders who love to argue against the policies of the Service, easily "gets one in bad" and once "in bad" it is very difficult to get back into the good graces of men who are so easily made enemies to the Forest Service. The Forest officer will have problems confront him in every manner, and he must be able to see quickly the other person's point of view before acting. This applies to everything pertaining to life in the Service, from the handling of a sale of a million board feet of lumber down to the granting of a free use permit. The public are the users of National Forests, and the Forest officer is the agent who must conclude all permissible deals in a manner satisfactory to both parties.