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Fire
Fires of 1910

Central
Forest

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FOREST FIRES

THE ADVENTURES OF THREE MEN IN THE GREAT FOREST FIRES OF 1910

By Ed Thenon, Kooskia, Idaho

In the year of 1910 while serving as Assistant Forest Supervisor on the Selway Forest Reserve under the supervision of Major F. W. Fenn with headquarters at Kooskia, Idaho, a small town on the Clearwater River, I received instructions in the latter part of July that year to make a trip throughout the Forest Reserve for the purpose of establishing and surveying around choice areas to be used as Forest Ranger Stations. The object in doing this was to withhold the ground from homestead entries for use as camps by the Forest Service at strategic points for pack trains and fighters when fires occurred in that part of the Forest. The essentials required of a well established station are: an abundance of grass, dry wood and good water. Idaho County is about 90% mountainous and has some of the finest scenery in the United States.

In leaving Kooskia with my two assistants, Mr. John Kirchner and Mr. Charley Strite, with out saddle and pack horses our route took us up the Clearwater River, so named because of the clearness of its water the year around. Our first night's camp was at the Forks. Here the river is branched in two streams, one, the Selway, coming in from south east, the other, the Lochsa, from the northeast. From this camp our route led up the Selway and that night we camped at the Selway Falls, a rapids and falls formed at some prehistoric date by a slide from the mountain which left boulders in the river channel, some of which are twenty to thirty feet in diameter. Salmon and trout are unable to make it over these falls except in a high stage of water. At the time we camped there the stage of water was rather low and the eddy just below the falls was just about as full of salmon as it could reasonably be. The salmon were making great efforts to get over the top. The water was pouring over a rock

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some six feet high and this particular place seemed to be the point for their efforts. We saw but one that was successful in making it during the few minutes we were watching them. The school of salmon floating around in the eddy reminds one of the schools of smelt seen around the mouth of the Columbia River.

Next morning we resumed our travel and camped at a place called the Three Forks, a country with several creek bars and flats where several homesteaders were located. This place being about seventy-five miles from the nearest town or railroad and accessible only by a trail, the homesteaders soon move out. Why this place was named Three Forks I never was able to learn as Moose Creek is the only stream flowing into the Selway at this place. From this camp we had to pick out our route through the mountains to the Montana State line, there being no trail on the route we had to take. Our intentions were to follow the main ridge between Bear Creek and Moose Creek to Bear Creek Pass on the Idaho and Montana State line where I had instructions to investigate an irrigation project. In leaving the Moose Creek camp we ascended the point of a very steep ridge five or six miles to the top. There we saw a band of eight elk feeding just across the head of a gulch and about two hundred yards distant from us, and near where we discovered a small lake in a cave-like depression in the hills. We stopped here for a short time to examine the place as a prospective ranger station but found it lacked some of the essentials necessary for that purpose. We had made no arrangements to camp here, intending to go on a few miles further before camping for the day, but when we got back to our outfit, we discovered what looked to us like a very bad storm coming up from the west in the wake of a very strong wind. I figured it would reach us within a half hour, so I decided to put up camp there. I asked Strite to dig a pit, start a fire and try to

bake us a couple bannocks before the storm reached us, if possible, while Kirchner and I put up the tent and got the outfit under cover. The ground where we put up the tent was rather sloping so by bedding down with our heads up hill it did away with any need for pillows. Everyone was working fast but Kirchner and I had barely gotten the tent up and the outfit under cover when the storm struck us. Strite had his pit dug, a fire started and the bannocks one in each pan, and set up in the rim of the pit for baking. The rain did not come down in drops but in sheets and the wind was a young hurricane. Of course, we all got under cover in the tent and then had to hold the flaps shut and the tent down to keep it from going up like a balloon. At that time none of us thought of supper but in 15 or 20 minutes as the storm began to die out and rivulets commenced to run through under the tent, I asked Strite to look outside and see if our bannocks were baked. He stuck his head out through the flaps of the tent, then turned back to us and said: "Just look at 'em." We looked out and saw the pit full of water and running over the rim with the two bannocks bobbing around like corks and trying to make their getaway over the top. This caused our supper to be delayed some. John and I had the laugh of our lives while Strite was making a speech in such words as to leave to the reader to guess at.

In going on next morning we followed the ridge 3 or 4 miles where it became so rocky and covered with large boulders as to be impassible for our horses and forced us to change our route. In leaving the ridge we turned south and soon came to a lake situated in a most beautiful park-like country with considerable meadow land, dotted here and there with alpine fir timber. As this place proved to be an ideal spot for a ranger station, we ran out the lines and established one here, the next morning, naming it the Park Lake Ranger Station, the name being changed later to Indian Lake Ranger Station.

One who has never had the opportunity to see a wild mountainous country has missed something if he is a lover of nature. The alpine fir tree is one of the most beautiful trees, in my estimation, that nature produces. They are evergreens with the branches extending from the ground and gradually tapering to cone shaped tops 150 feet or more in height. The branches are so dense as to make it impossible for the trunk to be seen from any side. At a distance they very much resemble church spires. They grow only in mountain meadow land so far as I have been able to observe.

On arising and coming out of the tent the first morning at this camp, I saw some large animal across a narrow point of the lake. It seemed to be standing in the water near the shore line with its head toward shore. A satisfactory view of it could not be had from camp, so we all went down the shore to a place directly opposite and only about 400 feet from it. It did not seem to pay any attention to us and proved to be a large moose that was feeding on a fringe of grass along the water's edge. We watched it a short time and thought we would see how scary it might be, so we all started to jump up and down and yell like an Indian war dance. Mr. moose slowly turned his head towards us and seemed to say: "Go to h---, you can't scare me," then slowly walked out of the lake and into the brush quite unconcerned.

Having finished our work here we were up early next morning for a start to Bear Creek Pass. Just as I got out of bed I heard a thumping noise sounding like someone coming with a horse. Looking out of the tent I saw a big bull elk with a magnificent set of horns standing off about 100 yards looking at the tent and now and then stomping with his front feet and shaking his head. After watching him a few minutes we decided to try the same gag as we did on the moose, so we jumped out of the tent and started the same war dance, but Mr. elk was no moose for he did not

show any appreciation for our performance, neither did he stop to thank us for the free exhibition given in his honor. He whirled around so quick on his hind feet that he struck a tree directly behind him with his head with such force as to knock him to his knees but soon got on his feet again and if there ever was anything in this world that wanted to get out of sight in a hurry Mr. elk was it.

On leaving this camp we decided to abandon the ridge altogether and attempt to cut across country in the general direction of Bear Creek Pass and in following another ridge we were forced to camp that night at a place where horse feed was a scarce article. Now anyone used to traveling in the mountains will know how difficult it is to hold horses at a strange camp where the horse feed is poor. About the first thing they will attempt to do is to back track to the first good feed and often will not stop there but continue on to their home place. So we thought by camping right on top of the ridge and on the trail, as is, and by taking the horses some distance ahead on the route before turning them loose to pick the scattering grass, we could hold them for the night. We figured that if they tried to back track we could easily hear the bells and stop them before they passed our camp. We did this and then arranged camp for the night, one to gether the wood, one to stir up the bannocks. Strite took a bucket and shovel and went down the hill to look for water. Kirchner and I finished our work and sat down to wait for the water so we could make our coffee. Strite came in soon with a bucket of liquid-looking stuff that needed considerable investigation before we decided that it would make a pretty darn good cup of coffee without using any coffee in the makings. We all slept that night as if the angels were protecting us. Next morning while the chief cook was preparing breakfast the other two took ropes and went out to get the horses. In about two hours the boys came in leading nothing on the ends of their ropes. They

said the cuties were back-tracking and were now well on their way. The horses had gone well down the side hill and after passing our camp had come back on the trail and on their way. So John and Charley had come back to camp for a snack before continuing on their pleasant trip. About 10 a.m. they came in leading the prodigal sons. They overtook them about three miles back at a bad windfall which had caused us much trouble in getting through the day before. We immediately packed up and moved on.

Out on this ridge some three or four miles we came to the "break-off" where the descent was so steep as to make it very difficult for us to get our horses down to the stream. From the size of the creek I assumed it to be Bear Creek. This later proved to be true. There had at one time been a good trail up this creek but at this time we found it well blocked with windfalls. However, we were able to make Bear Creek Pass rather late that night and found it to be a fine camping place.

Next morning in looking around I discovered a newly dug ditch which emptied into Lost Horse Creek on the Montana side of the State line. In following up this ditch I found it led back across the State line into Idaho and along the side of the divide to a lake in Idaho. The water from this lake was taken down Lost Horse Creek to irrigate a new orchard tract in the Bitter Root Valley. This then was the project I was to investigate.

The contention was this: If the promoters of the orchard tracts did not have a permit from the State of Idaho for this water, they were appropriating this water illegally. Not finding anyone at the pass connected with the company, we went on down Lost Horse Creek to the Valley. Before the Valley proper was reached we passed through the orchard tract. It lay around the mouth of the Creek well up on the slope or rim of the Bitter Root Valley. We passed directly through it on our way to

Hamilton, Montana, only a few miles from the orchard tract, and where the company office was located. In passing through this orchard tract I took particular pains to note just where the value of it might be as there was no soil, vegetables, vegetation or fruit trees to be seen anywhere on the route through it, nothing but a gravel bed. Later Hamiltonians informed me that the promoters were selling these tracts sight unseen to their eastern friends. I concluded that this was the only way they could be sold or even given away. Hamilton at this time was a town of perhaps one thousand inhabitants and the only industry I observed was farming which included the whole valley. The soil in the valley proper is rich but without sufficient water for irrigation purposes it's a dud so far as growing crops is concerned. We passed many farms on our way down the valley where the crops were entirely burned up, while there were others that had the finest of growing crops. The reason for this was the amount of water accessible for each place.

At Hamilton I looked up the office of this Eastern Company. The lady attendant informed me that the President was very busy and to have a seat. This, making it appear that business was brisk, was an old joke to me. In about a half hour I was presented to the official who was as affable as a man expecting to do ten thousand dollars worth of business with a client, but after I stated my object in calling, his glad smile disappeared altogether and all I was able to get out of him was: "I see. I see." I got no information whatever that did me any good, so I reported the results of my efforts to my supervisor. Later I learned that the matter had been adjusted in a way satisfactory to all.

I may here state that the Supervisor of any Forest Reserve has jurisdiction over all things, or business matters within the boundaries of his Forest, while the District Forester has the same authority but covering all the Forests within his District, which may include several States.

My next work was to be at Big Sand Lake on the Idaho side of the State line. In order to reach this lake we had to travel down the Bitterroot Valley to the mouth of Blodgett Creek and follow up this Creek to its head, go through Blodgett Pass to Big Sand Lake some two or three miles from the pass. We were informed before leaving the valley that the trail up Blodgett Creek was not open to travel with horses, as it had not been cut out for years, but as it was the only route to the lake from the valley we had to make the attempt. The trail was fairly open for several miles to where the creek bed narrowed up to a width of 25 or 30 feet with perpendicular cliffs on each side. Here some water spout had formed a drift pile from cliff to cliff and about 20 feet high. We left the horses and went to investigate the chances of getting by. We found it impossible to get around so I climbed on top of it and decided that the only way to get by was to "go over the top." As this was to be quite a job we had to camp there, and taking our axes and saws we went to work. We first had to cut a way over the top then build up on both sides with drift wood and chink up the holes. After this work was done we were able to pass over it next morning without any trouble and continue on our way feeling quite gay over the success in overcoming our first hard obstacle. However, this funny feeling soon passed away as within a few miles of our last scene of trouble we came to another drift pile almost identical cliffs, size of drift, and everything and again we had to camp to do the work. We used the same method as before and built a bridge over the drift for a passage way for the horses and were again on the way next morning.

We followed the Creek to its extreme head which lay in a deep basin surrounded by a rim so steep as to be impossible anywhere within our sight for horses to pass over. We knew at once that we had missed

Blodgett Pass somewhere back of us. We left our horses stand in the basin and picked our way up to the top of the rim to look around. We saw lots of signs of mountain goats and sheep but no Big Sand Lake in sight. In coming back down the basin looking for the pass we met 13 elk. In the lead was a large bull with a magnificent set of horns. In coming back along the trail about five hundred yards we found a very dim trail leading off in the right direction and by following this a short way we could see the pass. There were steps cut in the steepest places for horses to enable them to hold their footing in making the climb. Before these steps were made it is well known that trappers and old mountain men had "lined" their horses over this pass. We made our way over the pass and in a few miles came to the lake where we camped that night.

Big Sand Lake is perhaps half a mile long and a quarter mile wide and was teeming with trout at this time. A dense stand of green timber surrounded it. My business here was to survey out the boundaries of a twenty acre tract for some lady in Montana who wished to lease it for a summer resort. While here we had visitors who were camped at the other end of the lake. One of them was Ranger Weholt of the Selway Forest, one was L. A. Fenn, son of our Supervisor, the other gentleman I did not recognize at once but in being introduced he spoke up at once and said: "Why, I know Mr. Thenon. I met him out at Kooskia about a month ago." This surprised me somewhat, but as I gave him a closer scrutiny I readily recognized him as Prof. Shattuck of the University of Idaho at Moscow, Idaho. When I met him in Kooskia he was fresh from the College while here after he had made a 3 or 4 weeks' hike through the brush and timber without a valet, seamstress, or shave he was much changed in appearances and that is what caused my ignorance. If the Professor should ever see this, I beg of him to excuse me. The Professor and Mr. Fenn were out on detail work as "bugologists" or in other words, were hunting bugs, worms, microbes, beetle

fleas, or what is it that has been destroying timber in places throughout the forest. They were also taking samples of the different timbers for testing purposes to find what each kind is best adapted for.

Having finished my work here we back-tracked to the Bitter Root Valley, this being the best route to our next place of work which was to be at Packers Meadows, or perhaps better known as Lolo Pass situated on the divide between Idaho and Montana and at the head of Lolo Creek. This trip took us further down the Valley to the town of Lolo or Lolo Station on the branch railroad running up the valley to Darby. There was a good wagon road leading up Lolo Creek about 12 or 14 miles from the station to a Hot Springs where a hotel, swimming pool and a few other buildings were. On our arrival at this place I stopped a few minutes to study the merits of the place as a summer resort. After making a close observation I wondered why this would attract much patronage but as I looked around and saw a man in the swimming pool just having one hilarious time with his bathing suit pulled on over his other clothing I knew that this was the place to come to when you wanted to make yourself an eligible for the Gold Cure Hospital.

Just as we were about to leave here I saw someone coming up the road driving a span of horses hooked to a buckboard. When he came up to us he inquired for three men that had left Lolo Station that day and had come up this way. I told him that I guessed we were the fellows he was looking for. He then introduced himself as W. B. Greeley of the District Office and said that he had wired our supervisor for any help he could spare for use on a large fire in the St. Joe Forest and Mr. Fenn said that he had three men somewhere in the Bitter Root Valley and if he could pick us up he could use us. We assured him "outwardly" that we would be very glad to help him, but "inwardly" we thought something else. I received quite a lot of my education around forest fires and never yet have I

fallen in love with one. Mr. Greeley instructed us to return to Lolo Station, leave our horses somewhere in pasture, take the morning train to Missoula, and come to the Office where we would receive further orders.

We all returned to Lolo Station. Being rather late when we got there to look for pasturage we began digging into our packs for our supper and we had a most elaborated meal from a bucket of cold beans that we had packed around with us for a few days. Supper over we hunted up a livery stable to put our horses in for the night. When unpacking I asked the proprietor if our packs would be safe in the barn over night. He assured me that they certainly would and to just pile the outfit in an empty stall, which we did and then took out bedding and went out to look for a bed-ground. Next morning while Charley and John went out to look for pasture I went hunting a place to store our outfit for the time we might be at the fire. In about an hour we were all back at the barn. With errands all done we were ready for breakfast. In going through the outfit for the pack that contained the most of our grub I failed to find it. I called this to the attention of Charley and John. After making a careful hunt around the barn without finding it we had to conclude that it had been stolen. Which it had been. We missed that particular pack sack as well as our breakfast a whole darn lot as everything we needed seemed to have been in that pack sack. Of course, when it was missed we had a fair sized "set-to" with the proprietor, but this was time wasted as all he would say was: "Look around, you might find it." We looked up an officer, constable, marshal, or something and all he said was: "Look around, you might find it." It just seemed to me that they both were well drilled in what to say about it when we voiced our trouble. The pack contained by surveying outfit, compass and chain which were quire valuable and for which I

was held responsible. It also put me in a dilemma for doing any more of the work I was sent out from Kooskia to do. The pack sack also contained our bacon, sugar, rice and several cans of milk, also a new suit of underwear, shirt and socks just bought and still in the original wrapper. But other pleasures were on the way which caused me to forget this. Just before train time I went over to the barn and coached the proprietor up a little more on his history especially on his ancestors. This helped me some but not enough.

We arrived at Missoula that afternoon and I reported at once at the District Office where I found Mr. Greeley and his assistant, a Mr. Silcox. The District Forester informed me that I was wanted to take charge of about 40 men that they had gathered up around town and take them out to a station on the Milwaukee railroad called Adair. He asked me to call at the office about 7 p.m. that evening and he would go to the depot with me to arrange for the transportation of the crew which he had already instructed to be at the depot at train time. Later on herein it will be presumed that the crew had many friends at Missoula whose business seemed to be in Spokane, Washington. At the appointed time we were all at the depot and the first thing Mr. Greeley did was to call all the men up in a bunch so that he could count them. There were 46 of them. He told them to stay there until we came back. We then went into the ticket office and Mr. Greeley got 46 tickets and a pass for me and my 2 pals. When he handed me the pass he said that it was made out in his name (W. B. Greeley) but it would be all right for me to use on any railroad in the State. The train soon arrived and as soon as the conductor came down the steps Mr. Greeley stepped up and explained to him that he had 46 men there, pointing to the bunch, who were going to Adair to fight the forest fire, and gave him 46 tickets

for their fare. Then turning to the men he said: "O.K. boys get on." The men were all in the coach before the conductor got through counting the tickets. Mr. Greeley did not give each man his ticket because his experience told him that if he did this several of them would sneak back up town and trade the ticket off for something more to their liking.

After the train got well under way the conductor came in from the coach ahead. I was seated in the back end of the car where I could observe all that was taking place in the car. I heard the conductor talking very loud and could see that he was having a fuss with the men but did not know at that moment what it was all about. As he moved down the aisle nearer to where I sat I heard him demand two of the boys tickets or its equivalent and told them they would be put off the train at the next stop if they did not come through and finally asked them: "Where is that darn boss who seems to have charge of everyone on this train? Where is he?" One of the men near by knew me by sight and pointed me out. The two men in the seat directly behind just at this time poked me with their fingers and said: "Say, buddy, when he gets up here you tell him that we belong to your crew. Will you?" I turned to them with a smile and asked: "Well don't you?" They quickly said: "Sure and you know it." and added, "We are trying to make Spokane and you know how it is." The conductor glared around a moment and striding up to me demanded: "Are you the man in charge of these d--- fire fighters?" (I will here state that never before or since have I ever heard a conductor swear and curse at his passengers.) I told him that I was. He then asked: "How many men to you claim to have on this train?" I said: "46 men." He said: "The hell you say. There are 55 men right now riding on this train that claim to belong to your crew. How about it?" Then he demanded the fare for these extra men. When I said that there was nothing doing he commenced gesticulating in such a rage that I thought he might biff me one side of the

head, so I took out my pass to show him that we three, at least, had a right to ride on his train. I thought that he was going to tear it into bits but instead he looked it over but with so much blood in his eye I don't believe he could see to read it. However, he tore off a piece or punched it or something I do not just remember what it was and handed it back with the remark: "Another darn fake." Then turned to the two men directly behind me and demanded their tickets. They pointed to me and said they belonged to my crew. Well, it was real funny, the phantom-like exhibition he went through at this point. It gave us the time of our lives. He then turned to me and asked: "Are these two men going?" I said that I thought they were. At that he took me by the sleeve and said: "You come with me through this train and point out to me everyone of those men you claim as belonging to your crew. No one is going to play me for a sucker and every man that is trying to put one over on me is going to be thrown off at the next stop." I tried to explain to him that I positively could not identify one of those 46 men giving him the circumstances of how I happened to be in charge of them. At that he turned on his heel, went out the back end of the car for all the world like a man going for a gun. I did not learn just what his religion was but it was very evident that he was no deacon in anyone's church. (All this trouble was caused by his allowing these men to get on the train without giving them a conductor's check and therefore, as the train moved on, he had no way of knowing just who had a right to ride and who had not.) During the balance of the trip we had no further exhibition from the conductor.

On arriving at Adair at 2 p.m. in the morning where a Forest Ranger was to meet and entertain us, we got off at a place where a heavy excavation for the railroad was made. The embankment was all rock and

very steep for 20 feet down to the natural slope of the hillside. It was very dark at this hour and all the light in sight seemed to be a lantern bobbing around further up the track and a dim light about 200 feet down the hillside which might come from some building. I paid no attention to the crew but John and I made our way up along the track to the lantern. A man was examining a lot of freight and bedding strewn along the track that had been thrown off the train. There was no depot or any other building here to be used as a station and I wondered why this place was given a name.

The man with the lantern happened to be the ranger, a Mr. Pulaski. I gave him all the information I thought it necessary for him to know and asked him where to bed down the men. He waved his hand around and said: "Just anywhere. The country is all vacant." I sized this ranger up a minute so I would recognize him when I saw him again, then John and I got our blankets by the aid of the lantern and picked our way down over the embankment to the natural slope of the hill where we both started to feel around with our hands and feet looking for a place on the slope large and smooth enough to lay down on without laying across the rocks and as nothing like this could be found we sat down on a rock and waited for daylight and then picked our way down through the boulders to the building of the dim light. We found it to be a boarding house for a crew of men who were constructing a railroad tunnel (Taft Tunnel) to improve the road at that point. There were also a few shacks scattered around occupied by lady gold diggers who were making their living off the tunnel gang. We all had breakfast at the boarding house where I was able to check up on the number of my crew and found that 38 of them got off the train there which was considered pretty good.

I have often wondered if those men staying on the train were able to work the conductor all the way into Spokane by claiming to belong to

my crew, but from the expression on the man's face when I last saw him I would say that he was unworkable.

Breakfast over, Ranger Pulaski invited us all to pack the freight and camp outfit, put off the train the night before, one-fourth mile up the hill to a small level spot just large enough to establish a fire camp near the fire line. John was sent to another camp near a quartz mine (The Monitor) and Charley and I worked on the fire line here a few days.

One morning Pulaski looked me up and said that I was to take charge of a crew coming up the St. Joe River from Avery with a pack train. Avery is a small town being on the other side of the divide and it would be several miles from here to where the camp was to be located. I had Charley go with me and we followed the guide up a creek, without a trail, to its head and over the divide to the head of another creek which the guide said was the camping place. I noted at once that this was no place for a fire camp if safety was considered, being on the east side of the fire with all high winds usually coming from the west. However, as we had no choice in the matter just then we had to make the best of it. The guide left to return to his camp and we took our shovel and ax and cleared off some ground for the camp, dug a water hole in the creek where only a trickle of water was in evidence.

The pack train was to be here by 2 o'clock but it was now 3 o'clock with no sign of them yet. I decided to go down the trail towards the river to meet them thinking that perhaps they may not have been fully informed as to just where to camp. Down the trail about 3 miles I saw a man coming up on foot. When we met I found it to be our District Forester Mr. Greeley. He seemed much pleased to meet me and asked me how I came to be in that locality. I explained the reason and told him the camping place had been selected and made ready and I had come down the trail to meet the outfit. He said that the pack train was about one mile back of him, that he had

come up on foot from Avery ahead of them for the very purpose of establishing their camp and there being no saddle horse available at Avery he was forced to make it on foot. He sat down on a rock remarking that he was in great luck by meeting me there as it would save him three miles climb and back as he had to be in Avery again that night, which was a twelve mile hike from here. While we were talking here he took a knap sack from off his back, dug out half a loaf of bread and a hunk of cheese and commenced eating, offering me some. As I observed him setting there munching on bread and cheese, my opinion changed somewhat of the so-called white collared ducks sometimes at the head of Government Departments. For here was a man, a real he man, who was not side stepping any hardships in making good the administration of his department. Mr. Greeley is a very fine man and is well liked by all who know him. (At this time, 25 years later, he is Chief Forester for the North West Lumbering Association with headquarters at Seattle, Washington.) Mr. Greeley soon left for his hike back to Avery and I led the pack train up to the camp ground.

Next morning after I had the men scattered out on the fire line on each side of camp, I took a long hike along the lines on both sides of camp to better get the situation in hand. I found that the fire line within two miles of camp at each side had extended well past camp, leaving the camp situated in rather a crescent of the fire lines. This, of course, worried me considerably as a great deal of the standing timber was dead and caused the fire to often jump the fire line trench work.

One morning a few days later I had Charley take charge of the men as I was going down to a ranger station about 12 miles away on the St. Joe River to phone Avery for a pack train to move our camp to a safer place. Arriving at the station I took down the receiver and at once heard someone say: "Who is it?" before I could say more than my name they cut in

with: "You're just the man we have been trying to get in touch with. You are wanted at the Missoula office just as soon as you can get there. They are having bad fires over on your Forest and your Supervisor wants you over there. You will be further instructed when you get to Missoula." I then informed him of my business in calling him up, telling him of the danger the camp was in and that the camp should be moved at once to a point nearer the river. He promised to send up a pack train just as soon as one was available and for me to go back to camp, put who I thought was the best man there in charge of the men and then go on in to the District Office.

It was dark when I got back to camp. I gave Charley the news of our change in the work and next morning I selected two men to take charge of the camp each to take part of the crew and trench the fire line both ways from camp, and to cut down all stumps and standing dead timber within reach of the fire line and to be sure to keep this part of the fire line completely killed out until the burned-over area inside of the fire line had burned out and was cooled off enough to enable them to move camp over the fire line on the burned out ground, and if the pack train did not arrive by that time to move the camp over by hand. This was all I could do for their safety in case of a bad wind starting up.

In the meantime Charley had rolled our blankets, put up a lunch for each and we were on our way. I may here state that during a high wind storm a few days later there were several men burned up at this fire a few miles from the camp we were now leaving, also two men were found in a short prospector's tunnel who were suffocated by the heat and smoke caused by this wind.

We picked our way cross country to the Monitor Mine intending to get John there and take him with us, but a man there said John had become very sick and thought he needed to be operated on, and that he had gone to Missoula. A good wagon road led down from the Monitor Mine to Saltese,

a small town on another branch of the railroad. We followed this road for perhaps 7 miles to the station. On the way down to the station I remarked to Charley that it seemed very strange to me that John should become sick so suddenly, as I had known him for twenty years and had never known of his being off his feed even for one meal. Charley answered by saying: "I don't believe John was a darn bit sicker at his camp than we were at ours and we didn't need any operation either."

We got to Saltese at 7 p.m., inquired the price of supper which was 35¢ each, pooled our resources and found that we had one dollar and twenty cents, got our supper and found that our train was due at 2 a.m. in the morning. As we were afraid to bed down for fear of missing the train we decided to sit up for it. On being directed to the depot we strolled up there to wait for the train. The depot was an old box car. There were no lights in evidence anywhere except down town. We sat down at the end of the station meditating on the happy life of a fire fighter.

About 10 o'clock we heard someone coming up the path. He was trying to sing. He ran fairly into us. He had a pistol in one hand and waved it before my face and demanded fifty cents. I believe that if I had had it I would have given it to him, but not having it I had to so state. This did not seem to affect him in the least as he turned to Charley menacingly with the same request and I expected to see some trouble now. However, he took Charley's answer just as agreeably as he had mine and walked off in the dark around the station. Soon other people began to appear and we could hear the fellow making the same request and saying that he was going to the next town and wanted fifty cents to pay his fare and was going to get it. He must have either gotten it or run into some hard luck as we did not see or hear of him again.

Around 2 a.m. the train came along and we got going again. When the conductor came along I handed him my pass. He looked it over carefully

then looked at me with rather an amused smile and asked: "Are you W. B. Greeley?" Well, this somewhat stumped me and put me in doubt as to just how I had better answer him. I thought that if I said no he might put me as well as Charley off, and if I said yes he would know that I was lying and put us both off anyway. I concluded to play George Washington and gave him all the particulars in the case. He doctored the pass, handed it back with a smile and moved on. A good fellow I thought. Wouldn't you?

At the District Office I found Mr. Silcox in charge, Mr. Greeley being out on the fire line somewhere. Mr. Silcox ordered me to take the first train going up the Bitter Root Valley to the Lolo Station, gather up our horses and outfit, get them into a box car he would have the down coming freight spot for us and early the next morning we would be taken up to Hamilton, thereby saving a day's time in travel. He said there was a pack train with 45 men leaving Darby this morning going in over Lost Horse pass to a fire on Moose Creek, and these men had no one in charge, that I was to overtake them before they reached the fire and have charge of them and that the guide with the pack train informed him that he would reach the fire from Darby in two days. I said: "Mr. Silcox, I came through on this same route a short time ago and it will be impossible for this guide to reach the fire in two days from Darby." He waved my argument aside by saying: "This guide is an old trapper and he knows what he is talking about, and he knows the country." Well as my fish were too small to fry in his pan I let it go at that. I asked him about John. He said he knew nothing about him.

I left with Charley for Lolo Station that afternoon and about the first thing we saw on arrival there was John sitting on the platform in front of the store and upon recognizing us the smile on his face was a first prize winner.

I went to the depot to see the agent about the box car. He said it would be ready in the morning. John had already visited the horses and reported them to be OK. John being the only capitalist among us he bought a few days grub and we ate lunch and retired for the night. When I left Kooskia on this trip I did not expect to have any need for funds until I returned, so I did not take any with me.

In the morning we had some trouble in getting the horses into the car as there was no stock yard or chute at this place, so we had to build up one to get our stock in the car. This was done and the outfit in the caryby the time the train came along. We all got in and were taken to Hamilton and our car spotted at the chute at the stock yard where we unloaded and started to pack up to continue on. Being yet early in the day we intended to go on at once. A man was fussing around there and when he saw us packing up he came over to us and wanted to know what we intended to do. I gave him the necessary explanation and told him we intended to go on at once. He informed me that he was there to see that none of the stock or outfit was taken out of the stock yard until the transportation charges were paid. I could say nothing for a minute, just stared at him, for again our cream pie was made of sour milk. He said that I must go to the agent and settle all charges before I could take the outfit. I told the boys that there was some mistake about this, that I would go up to the depot and see about it, and for them to stay there and watch that man, pointing at the fellow, to see that he did not steal the horses while I was gone.

At the station the agent said that the bill for the box car had not been paid and that he had orders to hold the stuff until it was paid. As he did not seem to be making any use of my explanation I left him and went out looking for a phone office. Then I asked the lady in charge if the Forest Service had an account with them. She said yes, so I asked to be

connected with the District Office. Soon someone said: "Hello, who is it?" I said I wanted to talk to Mr. Silcox. In a moment someone asked: "What is it?" I gave him my name and wanted to know just why he had gotten me all balled up down here. He said: "What? What is the matter with you? Why aren't you on your way?" I was delighted to tell him that he had us hung up down here like a bunch of thieves, that the agent told me the transportation on that box car had not been paid and our outfit would be held here in the cattle pens until it was paid. He seemed much surprised at this and said: "You go right back to that agent and tell him to release that stock at once." I went back to the agent and reported this message. The agent said: "You go right back and tell that fellow that I am running this office and the stuff is going to stay right where it is until the charges are paid." So back to the phone office I went and reported what the agent said. The District Office ordered me to go and tell that agent that that bill would be paid, to let me have that stock so I could be on my way, and they then criticized me for loafing around Hamilton so long.

By this time I was getting pretty tired, it being a quarter mile between the phone office and the depot, and I thought it a good idea to call for one of my assistants to come and help me a while. However, I went back to the depot and found it closed up for the night. I went back to the stock yard and reported the pleasant results of my work. We sat down on our packs and lunched on our crackers and cheese. I asked John if he had money enough to pay the freight bill which the agent said was twenty-one dollars, so we could at least get out of Hamilton. He said he had but did not like to do it for fear of having trouble in getting back the refund. So we commenced figuring on our bed-ground. It wasn't so pleasant inside the stock yard so I said let's take our blankets and climb over the fence and find a place outside. One of them spoke up and said

that fellow is still hanging around here, and if he saw us he might have us arrested for stealing and throw us in the detainer for ten days, so we bedded down inside for the night.

Next morning bright and early I was at the depot but the agent had not yet arrived. I sat down on the platform and waited, and in about an hour he came along. I told him that the charges were paid and I wanted a release for my outfit. He asked: "Where do you get this - the charges paid?" I said: "That was the last report from Missoula last night." He said he had not heard about it but would find out right away. He wired the agent at Missoula and got a return at once that the bill had been settled, and again I was on the way.

I hustled back to the outfit and we were soon on our route to Lost Horse Pass. The distance from Hamilton or Darby to the mouth of Lost Horse Creek were about the same. The trail up this creek by taking the right hand fork, led through Lost Horse Pass. This was the route the pack train was on that I was to overtake. We had been delayed one day at Hamilton. We could have made better time had we left Lolo on foot and led our horses. The pack train ahead made a trail plain to follow. We camped a few miles beyond the pass that night.

In the morning we went on and at noon as we stopped for lunch we saw a bunch of men coming along the trail in front of us. They stopped and gathered around us. There were perhaps 18 or 20 of them. They said that they had left Darby, with the crew ahead, two mornings before and that the guide had lost his way and had lost a day's time before he got back on the trail again this morning, that they had decided that they had all the fire fighting they wanted and were on their way back to Darby. They said they had all left Darby on foot and each had had a tool to pack, saws, axes, shovels and grub hoes. I noticed none of them were packing anything here not even a lunch as they ate up the grub we had before they

went on. The tools these men had been packing turned up missing later.

That night we caught up with the pack train, three days after they had left Darby and two days after we had left Hamilton and we were still a day's travel from the fire.

At the Three Forks Ranger Station, next day, I met Ranger Louie Fitting who was to take us to a camping place about eight miles up East Moose Creek near the fire line. I had been up this creek before and knowing there would be no horse feed near where we might camp, Charley, John and I thought it best to leave our horses around the station, which was a gravelly flat of 30 or 40 acres. As rangers' horses had been feeding around there all summer it was quite barrentof grass, so we decided to take them down the creek a mile or two where there was a swampy slough and then walk the eight miles to the camp. As Louie Fitting intended to come back from the camp next morning he took his pack and saddle horses with him.

Fitting and I left the station well ahead of the pack train to have time to select the camp site before the train arrived. At a distance of about eight miles the trail left the creek and led up the hill about one mile here we found the fire line and near by was a very small spring of water. Fitting thought it a good place to camp as it would be handy to work from camp. I looked around some but did not like the camp site and not knowing the conditions of the fire lines I decided to go back down to the creek and stop the outfit then for the night and hold the pack train long enough to enable me to look around in the morning for a more suitable place if one could be found. We got down to the creek in time to stop the train there and proceeded to make camp. Everyone got busy. I was putting up my tent and giving the place an inspection and found it to be a very large cedar flat with a heavy growth of large green cedar trees. The smoke was so dense in this locality as to make it impossible to discover a fire until one was practically on the fire line. The spreading crowns of these large cedars were so dense as to close up any view of the sky overhead.

After getting my tent up, in looking around I missed the pack train, as they had grain with them for the horses I supposed they were to be with us over night and return outside in the morning. I asked about them and one of the men who had helped them unpack spoke up and said one of the packers told him that back three or four miles along the trail they had heard a fire cracking up on a side of the hill, and they intended to pull back out of there at once. Well, this was something else again.

I started at once to go back down the trail to investigate the report. Mr. Fitting had left his horses at a small slough back down the trail and he went along. We traveled down the trail about three miles, well back of where his horses were, keeping a sharp look out but found no signs of any fire, and I concluded that the packer had heard a bear or elk moving in the brush.

In going back to camp Fitting decided to lead his horses along and tie them up for the night so as to have them handy for his return trip in the morning. On our way back to camp it began to get dark and within perhaps a quarter mile from camp it became so dark that we could no longer see the trail. We stopped and I lit a match to look at my watch. It was 4 o'clock p.m. and neither one had ever known of anything like this ever to happen before. We consulted each other for the reason. While the smoke was very dense and the overhead crown heavy, we could not believe that this was the sole cause of its becoming pitch dark at this time of day. While there may have been a total eclipse of the sun at this time, we never did learn for certain the cause of this phenomena.

We called out from here to see if we could be heard at camp. Someone there did hear us and we called for a palouser (a home made flash light made by inserting a candle through a hole made in the side of a lard bucket with the bail hooked through the rim at the top and bottom for a handle.) We did not know if they understood us or not, but as they

could not find us without a palouser they soon came and led us into camp. Here, everyone who was doing anything was using a candle. The cook and helper were having difficulties in getting our supper. Fitting tied his horses at the edge of the creek. When the call "Come and get it" was heard, we each got a tin cup and plate and helped himself, pay and take it style, and sat on the ground to eat.

There were thirty men at this camp. Soon after supper the men began to retire, all but myself. Being one of those persons who use the bed extensively as a place where lots of time can be spent in thinking over one's troubles, I bedded down at 10 o'clock but did not go to sleep. A short time thereafter I heard something dropping on the tent and believing it to be rain drops I jumped up and went outside to see. I turned up my face but not feeling anything I spread out my hands but still could feel no rain. I reentered the tent and lay down again and soon heard what I thought was a shower of rain. On going outside the tent again I discovered that there was a strong wind blowing through the tree tops and needles and refuse from the tree tops were dropping on the tent. I said: "Damn, why couldn't it just as well be rain," went in and lay down again.

Not long after this I heard someone just outside my tent calling, "Ed." I recognized the voice as Louie Fitting's. I said: "Hello, what's the matter?" He said: "Come out here, I just saw a star fall on the hillside across the creek and it has started a fire." I was outside at once and sure enough he pointed out a small fire starting well up on the hill across the creek from our camp. I knew it was out of reason to think a star could have set this fire and in looking around to the west, the direction the gale of wind was coming from, I saw the sky aglow with pink color spread across a width of several miles. I knew at once all about Fitting's star and where it came from.

The fire was coming at a high rate of speed. Already it was beginning to throw shadows in our camp and we certainly were right in the

middle of its path.

I aroused the men at once and ran out a few steps to the creek to see what the chances were for us there. I found the creek to be six to eight inches deep and about eight feet across with a strip of sand six feet wide which had been strewn along its edge by a sharp turn in the creek. A drift pile eight feet high and twelve feet long was at the upper point of this strip of sand.

I ran back to the men who were all up by this time and upon seeing what was about to happen some of them were beginning to cry and take on pretty bad, while others were as cool and calm as if this was an every day occurrence, and these were the men who were to be so valuable to me that night and who followed out my every order throughout the night.

I ordered the men to move everything out on the strip of sand and pile it up in one pile. Some of them were so excited they could do nothing and wanted to try to make their getaway ahead of the fire. I knew this was an impossible thing to do. I got up on a log and called all the men's attention to me long enough to advise them not to leave this spot, to stay together, and not to make an effort to save themselves by leaving the creek that this could not be done. I said: "If we all lay down in the creek during the crisis no one will be hurt and we will pull through all right."

The cooler heads got busy moving our outfit to the sand strip while I was sizing up that drift pile trying to determine whether to set it on fire and try to burn it up before the crown fire reached us or leave it and try to keep it from burning until the overhead fire had passed over us. I did not want this drift pile and the crown fire over our heads to burn at the same time as it would make our position much worse. I got a water bucket and decided to keep the drift from burning until the overhead fire had passed on. The men were busy piling up our camp outfit not far from the drift pile. The fire was close by and the drift had already caught

fire several times and had been put out with buckets of water. At this timesome one reported that all the camp had been moved and I ordered them to wet all the canvas and throw it over the grub pile. By this time pieces of burning bark and cinders were coming down all about us. I was very busy with my drift pile. It was catching fire in places faster than I could put it out. I stopped long enough to tell the men to take all the blankets and soak them in the creek.

Charley and Fitting had the two horses covered, heads as well as their bodies, with wet blankets. By this time the heat from the crown fire was plainly felt as it was only a few rods away and the wet canvas thrown over the grub pile had already caught fire.

I was throwing a bucket of water on the grub pile when I heard a commotion among the men and left my work to see what it was about. We had all rolled in the creek several times before this to keep our clothes soaked I found that two of the men had completely lost their minds. One of them had become violently insane and three men were trying to hold him and to lay him down in the creek. The other one was dancing around and singing a lullaby.

Right here was the time when those cool headed men were of inestimable value to me as several other men became frantic at this time and wanted to rush off too, I don't know where. I ordered every man to get into the creek, lay down and put a wet blanket over his head. I set the lullaby boy down in the deepest water and told him to stay there and threw a wet blanket over his head. He would not lie down. The three men with the other fellow (he was our cook) had gotten him to lay down in the creek which had quieted him some. The others who became wild were also taken care of by the cooler headed men and were laying down in the creek by this time. There were two or more blankets for each man so we were not short on these.

I looked down along the strip of sand and saw that all men except Charley and Ritting were in the creek. These two were dashing water on the blankets covering the horses.

I turned to the grub and drift piles and found them both blazing. I grabbed up my bucket and dashed a bucket of water on the canvas and at this very moment the crown fire was directly over me and some sudden shift in the wind brought the heat right down upon me. The heat was so intense that it took my breath away. I swayed around a step or two and with the empty bucket still in my hand I dropped to my knees. This was the critical moment, the crisis, and the only moment during this ordeal that I felt sure my time had come and that it was the end. On falling to my knees and for no particular reason I stuck my head into the bucket. This proved a blessing as I was able to draw a breath instantly and was relieved of the terrible strain. I got to my feet and with two or three steps I was in the creek where I lay down with the bucket still over my head. Having no blanket with me I kept the bucket over my head for it had certainly saved my life.

In perhaps five minutes the wind changed and this relieved us somewhat of the intense heat. The lullaby boy (I did not know his name) was still singing and now and then calling for some one to throw another bucket of water on him. I raised my bucket enough to look around some but saw no one moving except Charley who was throwing a bucket of water on the horses' blankets, then laying down again in the creek. Later he said that the blankets had dried out to such an extent in those few minutes as to catch fire from the cinders falling about us. The cook had quieted down considerably.

The over-head fire had passed on and the heat was gradually moderating. Now we had the ground fire only to contend with, and soon we began

getting out of the water to huddle around the heap of coals left by the burned drift pile to dry out our clothing. The snags and blazing old dead trees across the creek gave us plenty light to see. The grub pile and cans were a heap of ashes. Three men and I were suffering great pain with our eyes. They were smarting and burning so badly that it was almost impossible for us to open them enough to find our way around.

To make sure that everyone was there and safe I had the roll called and found two missing. We could not come to any conclusion but that they had tried to outrace the fire and lost their lives in the attempt. Some of the men who knew their names began calling out to them. Soon we heard an answer from down the creek and then the two deserters came wading up the creek to us. I scolded them some for leaving camp, and asked them why they did it. One of them remarked that they could not see how anyone could survive in this place so they went down the creek to see if they could find a place they thought might be safer. They found a large old cedar tree across the creek with the stump part high enough from the water to enable them to crawl under and they stayed there. After the fire had passed on they were much surprised to hear someone calling as they thought they were the only ones who had come through the critical time alive.

Now there was considerable danger from falling timber. There were several standing dead trees near us that were burning and one had already fallen almost into our camp as a warning. A little later John wanted to use a bucket and walked down the sand strip to where one was, and just as he bent over he reached out for it a tree struck it and smashed it flat. If the bucket had been a foot further away the tree would have killed John instantly.

The horses remained very quiet during all this excitement. This may seem strange, and it is, but the fact that they had wet blankets over their

heads and could see nothing that was going on around them accounted for it.

The cook's condition had improved so much that he had no further need of attention from us. However, he did not get back to a normal state while here, but I was informed some weeks later that he had entirely recovered. The "lullaby boy" was taken to an asylum.

By this time it was getting daylight. Breakfast, and how to get it was now our problem. We sized up the ash heap under which were our supplies. One of the men got a chip and commenced to carefully scrape the ashes off the pile. The four of us whose eyes were affected were sitting down trying to nurse our eyes that were paining us so much. I had been snow-blind some years before and the pain in both cases seemed to me to be identical. One of the men said he knew of a remedy that would relieve our pain. He went over to the grub pile and commenced digging around and soon came back with half a cup of table salt and told us to dash some into our eyes. We did this and I thought it was more ashes than salt for a while, but it surely helped us and by using it often several times our eyes improved nicely.

The men now had the ashes pretty well scraped off the grub pile. One had a pot and was filling it with half baked beans. One had a pan and was carefully dipping up flour, while another pulled out a slab of bacon, fried on one side only, and breakfast was soon on the way. One was still digging around in the heap for coffee and sugar but found none. All sacks and wrappers were burned off the stuff making a sweet mess of it. One took a large coffee pot and filled it from the creek and put it on the fire with the remark that it would look like we were having coffee anyway. "Yes," another one said, "it ought to be good and stout too from the ashes in that water." We had some kind of a breakfast.

As there was no reason for us to stay here any longer without tents or supplies and no fires to fight, I decided to try to get out to the Three Forks Station where I knew there were supplies if the station hadn't burned up. As this station was built on a large flat that had been cleared of all timber and brush I thought it might have escaped the fire. Charley was going with me but I told the rest of the men to stay there until I found out whether or not we could get through the burned over area which I presumed would extend the eight miles to the station. If it was safe to go through I would have Charley return at once to have them all come out. I had them spread out the bedding to dry so they could bring it with them. Then Charley and I left for Three Forks Station.

By keeping in the creek part of the time where the ashes were still too hot to travel in we finally got where we could see the flat and it had been burned over wherever there was any grass to burn. I felt very doubtful of finding the cabin still standing, but we soon came where we could see it. We were very curious to know how this could be. We could see that the fire had burned the thin stand of grass all around it and when I walked around it I discovered why it had escaped. The ranger's horses had used the ground around the cabin for a stamping ground and had the soil all stamped up into a dust pile for ten or twelve feet around the place and this had protected the cabin from burning this night.

We had been here but a few minutes when Ranger Weholt arrived. He was as much surprised as we were to meet here. He wanted to know how in the world I came to be here at this time. It took us some time to explain all the circumstances. He said he was camped at another fire last night about three miles from us. He saw the big fire sweep past and connect with his fire. His camp was on a clean burned-over spot inside the fire

line, and he was in no danger of being burned, but the high wind blew up such a dust of ashes that it made it very uncomfortable for him all night. He said he knew the spot where we had camped, and he would go at once and bring out my men for me. I felt very thankful for his kindness in doing this as Charley as well as myself were "dog-tired" as we had been on the go for thirty-six hours with practically no rest.

We began thinking about our horses that had been left in the swampy slough a couple miles down the creek. I felt confident they would be all right if they had stayed where we had left them as there was a ranch and a large alfalfa field on the west side of the swamp, the direction the fire came from with practically no timber or anything to burn around the swampy place. We went down to see if the horses had stayed there or had been frightened by the fire and left. We found ours as well as some other horses there and all in fine shape. The green alfalfa field had separated the fire to such an extent as to leave the fire lines quite a distance from the swamp.

When we returned to the cabin we found Ranger Ray Fitting (a nephew of Louie Fitting) there and after the "whys" and "how come it so's" he gave us his experience of the night before. He had just arrived from up West Moose Creek where he had gone the day before to look up a place for another camp. When he was four or five miles from the station on his return trip a brisk wind began to blow and he saw a fire coming down from the Sixty-Two mountain that would cut him off from reaching this station. There was no trail up this fork of Moose Creek which made it slow traveling, so he began looking around for a safe place for the night and found a bluff with a shelf of rock projecting out over the creek and crawled under this and lay in about three feet of water until daylight when the fire had passed over him and gone on.

Here I wish to inform the reader that the fire starting from Sixty Two camp spread to such an extent that it connected up with several other fires that were burning on the forest. It had traveled fourteen miles in a very short time when it burned over my camp at midnight on East Moose Creek. Also this was the date, and presumed to be, the same wind storm that caused the fire to burn up those men, heretofore mentioned, on the St. Joe Forest fire that I had left a few days before.

Mr. Ray Fitting, at this date, 1935, is Supervisor of a Forest Reserve in Idaho. Mr. Weholt is also now connected with a Montana Forest Reserve.

The pack train with the two men which had left our camp that afternoon made all haste to get out of the Moose Creek country and made camp late that night on a high bunch grass ridge several miles south of us and well outside of the path of the fire, where a good view of the fire could be had. They sat up that night to watch the fire and saw it as it swept over our camp and on toward the Montana State line. They thought it impossible for any of us to have survived such a fire and when they reached Darby late the next night they reported all this to the ranger in charge there who in turn wired the report to the Missoula Office. The Missoula Office sent a wire at once to my Supervisor, F. A. Fenn, at Kooskia for more particulars. Mr. Fenn had heard nothing of the trouble at this time but he phoned immediately to the Selway Falls Station to Mr. Harvey Renshaw who had charge of a fire crew at that place, to take a few men to cut out windfalls, proceed at once with pack horses to Moose Creek and investigate the rumor. I knew nothing of all this at the time.

Now to resume the story: Mr. Weholt came in with the crew from the fire camp at dark that night. As John was a good cook I selected him to cook our supper, which he did, and it was a very good supper too.

Next morning I instructed the men to stay at this station until they heard from me. I was going to try to get out to the Selway Falls cabin, a distance of about thirty miles and the nearest phone to us at this time, to see what could be done about getting the men out of there. As the whole country seemed to have been burned over no one knew where a fire crew might be needed again. Not knowing what the fire had done to the trail between here and the Falls, I decided to leave my horses here and try to make it on foot. Charley had a family living within the Forest Reserve boundaries who might have been burned out so I had him go with me.

As soon as we got to the river trail we discovered that the fire had reached it and blocked it with windfalls for several miles. When within about twelve miles of the falls we came to some men cutting out the windfalls. Mr. Renshaw, an old friend of mine, was in charge. He was much surprised and very glad to see us, and of course explanations were in order. Here he informed me of the telegrams concerning our camp that the Supervisor had received from the District Office and the orders he had from Mr. Fenn, who he said was worrying his head off about our safety.

Mr. Renshaw also told me of Mr. Al. Peterson, an employee of the Forest, who was on Sixty-Two mountain the night of the fire. He was cut off from escaping with his horses and camp outfit and had to abandon them and escape on foot to the Selway River, a distance of six miles. (Later the horses and outfit were found burned up.)

Charley and I continued on our way and just at dark a rain began which soon became a downpour. I well remember this date, August 27, 1910. It soon became totally dark. The trail along the river being graded enabled us to keep on going slowly by feeling along it with our feet. We were very fortunate in reaching the cabin soon thereafter.

It now being 9 o'clock p.m. I did not expect to find anyone still

at the Kooskia office. However, I took down the phone and gave it a ring, and heard Mr. Fenn's voice say: "Hello, who is it?" I gave him my name and I noted by his voice that he was under a great strain. He asked about the rest of the men. He said he would at once send a messenger with the good news to my family who were living in Kooskia.

At the cabin we had a time feeling around in the dark for matches. Our clothing being soaked, the matches in our pockets were out of commission. After we found them we soon had a fire going and spent the rest of the night drying out. A heavy rain poured down nearly all night and this ended the fire season for 1910.

We started out early next morning and hoofed it to the Forks, now Lowell Post Office, and stopped at the Lowell house that night. Horses were available next day for the trip to Kooskia. When we arrived at Charley's home we found it O.K. He stopped there and I went on to Kooskia.

The pack train at Darby was ordered to return at once to the Three Forks and take the men back to Darby, which they did.

At the office in Kooskia I spent three weeks in explaining what became of my surveying instruments and just as I became highly enthused over my success in being relieved of the responsibility of paying for them I received a letter from the District Office asking me to account for 20 axes, 20 shovels, 20 grub hoes, and 20 saws that were issued to me from the Darby office and were missing at the check-up of the tools. As I was held responsible they would thank me to report at once so they could finish the checking for the season. I spent several days in digesting this before making my report which was as follows:

District Forest Office,

Missoula, Montana.

My dear sir:

Your letter concerning missing tools at hand. Am much pleased to note that you have charged up the missing tools to me and wish to state that never in my life have I been in Darby and never do I intend to be. I was one hundred miles from Darby when those tools were issued to my crew. I know nothing whatever about those tools, in fact that is a great deal more than I know about them. Hoping this report is very agreeable to you and thanking you in advance for any other responsibilities you may find me guilty of, I am,

Very truly yours,

Ed. Thenon

My report must have been very satisfactory as I heard nothing more of it.

Mr. Kirchner and Mr. Strite are now living here near Kooskia, Mr. L. A. Fenn is an attorney here, Mr. F. A. Fenn, Harvey Renshaw, Louie Fitting and Al Peterson have passed on.

No doubt there are several of those men still living who passed the night with me in the Moose Creek fire, and to those who may read this I wish to say that never have I forgotten or failed to feel grateful or to appreciate the help those cool-headed men gave me during that night.

At the end of the next year (1911) I resigned from the Forest Service to enter other business, mostly mining where the gains have been small and the losses large so far.

I am now very busy patiently waiting for Townsend's \$200.00 per month old age pension, and I am very confident that I will get it just as soon as Adolf Hitler becomes my grandmother. I thank you.

Ed. Thenon

Kooskia, Idaho