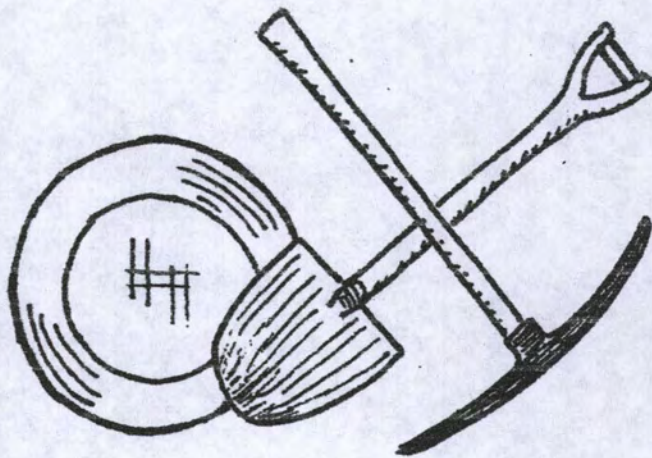


# **Memoirs of an Old Prospector**

by

**Noel Routson**



**Edited by Peter Preston  
for the  
Heritage Program  
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Introduction to  
"Memoirs of an Old Prospector"

Noel Routson, the Old Prospector, was one of those unique individuals who grew to manhood and spent most of his life in the central Idaho wilderness, in what is now a management unit of the USDA, Forest Service, the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness.

Noel arrived in the wilderness in 1910 when he was a year and a half old, in the company of his parents, John and Lettie Routson, who were establishing a homestead on lower Big Creek, near the mouth of Cabin Creek. The Routson family at that time also included Noel's older siblings, John, Edna, Adelia, and Emmit. The Routson homestead was the former "ranch" of the Caswell brothers who, a few years earlier, had been instrumental in establishing the gold boom at Thunder Mountain. Scattered along Big Creek were a half dozen other homesteaders and miners who were a mutually-supporting "family".

Although the Idaho National Forest had been established in 1908, the Big Creek-Thunder Mountain area was not included in the National Forest until 1919. Access to the Big Creek area was a journey of several days by horseback via Warren, the South Fork crossing, and over Elk Summit into the Big Creek drainage. This far-away wilderness became Noel Routson's experience for the learning period of his childhood. Here he learned horsemanship, woodcraft, and the ways of Nature.

Staying at the old Caswell ranch only a year, the Routson family moved upstream on Big Creek in 1911 to take over the Yardley place at the mouth of Acorn Creek. This became home for the Routson's until 1925. John Senior became the Big Creek mail carrier for many years, which provided a meager but steady income which was supplemented by extracting a little bit of gold from the Werdenhoff mine. Noel and his siblings were taught the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic by mother Lettie, and father John taught them woodcraft and about prospecting. The passion for prospecting and mining stayed with Noel for his lifetime.

Noel was the baby of the family for a number of years, until Robert Grant Routson was born at the Acorn Creek ranch in 1916. Robert was the last of the Routson children. As the boys matured they all went to work for the Forest Service as temporary summer employees, building trails, bridges, telephone lines, lookout houses, and whatever work was to be done. They were all workmates of my long-deceased father-in-law Don Park, and all worked for Dan LeVan, the Forest Ranger at Big Creek from 1924 to 1950. Among the Big Creek extended family was Ranger Dan LeVan's son Danny who came to look upon Noel Routson as a mentor. Dan Jr remained in close contact with Noel throughout Noel's life.

The Routson family lived a most unusual life in the wilderness. Noel's older sister, Adelia Routson Parke, authored a history of the family, published in 1955, titled "Memoirs of an Old Timer." Noel's story, "Memoirs of an Old Prospector," has overlap with sister Adelia's book, but is Noel's personal story of the Routson family as seen from his eyes. I had given thought to editing Noel's manuscript to make it grammatically correct and to add information to clarify some of the story elements; but I decided against editing the manuscript because it would have lost the the flavor and impact of Noel's words. Thus, "Memoirs of an Old Prospector" is presented here as Noel Routson wrote it.

Dan LeVan Jr, knowing that I was collecting historical information about early days in the central Idaho wilderness, led me to seek his mentor Noel Routson, as Dan had heard that Noel had written an autobiography. I did meet with Noel in July 1995 for a tape-recorded interview and it was during that meeting that Noel agreed that his "Memoirs of an Old Prospector", which he wrote around 1980, could be published by his former employer, the Forest Service, as a document for the Heritage Program. I feel fortunate to have had that meeting with Noel Routson, to shake his hand, to hear him speak and tell stories about my father-in-law and other old timers when they were workmates in the 1930's. Noel died not quite a year later on June 17, 1996; he was 87.

Dan LeVan Jr, upon hearing of Noel's pending demise in early June 1996, composed the poem, immediately following this introduction, to honor his long time friend and mentor. Noel Routson will be remembered, to use Dan's words, as "an exceptional man, dear man of the Forest Men."

Peter Preston, Editor  
Mathews, Virginia  
February 1997

## SILENT FOOTSTEPS OF A NATURE MAN

by

Dan H. LeVan Jr

They all walked with silent footsteps, those folks of the forest and the surrounding wilderness. They were there by choice and a desire to be adopted by the elements that surrounded them, challenging them to become inseparable with whatever they were becoming a part of - Nature: their most honest soul mate and their greatest adversary. They were those of any blood, and of any time, who would be children of Mother Earth. It would not be of them to disturb the quiet of Nature's way, nor to interfere in pre-destined conflicts that were the ways of balance. No, they would step around these happenings, but they would also stop and stand against designed wrongs that would destroy that balance. Nature was always their conscience, always walking with them, behind them, within them, never to be lost. Noel Routson, my dear friend, you are a Nature Man:

You with silent footsteps who, even now,  
Walks with the beauty of Nature;  
God's beauty, God's Nature, and you,  
Quite perfect, for you are Nature.

Now, as you were then, with small bare feet,  
Walking, never stopping, even in your sleep,  
Small bare feet that took you through your dreams,  
All your dreams.

Bare footprints beside puppy footprints,  
Can you count the miles?  
The oozes of mud,  
The pain of playing.

The happiness as she stooped  
To take the mountain sunflower from you,  
After you walked those hot endless miles,  
Clear up the mountain to get the special one.

Small bare footprints where you saw the frog;  
Footprints circling those of a fawn;  
Little footprints with big footprints,  
Going the same way, together.

SILENT FOOTSTEPS OF A NATURE MAN

by  
Dan H. LeVan Jr.

Footprints left everywhere a boy could leave footprints,  
Even some of those were backtracked;  
They had to be  
If you were going to learn.

Footprints in the mountains, collected in memory,  
Sunken into history, grown naturally, through your years,  
Growing still in thought, as beautiful as ever,  
Letting us read your story...

A story of beautiful life paralleling God's plan.  
You have followed in His footsteps well; your footsteps are good,  
Not easy to follow in goodness, respect, kindness, and love,  
For you are an exceptional man, dear man of the forest men.

We stand! Now, waiting to follow your fine footprints.  
We stand in awe of your example in life,  
Of what is grand, of what it should be.  
We honor you, we salute you!

We love you, now more than ever, as  
Step by step, your hallowed, silent footsteps  
Go now without fear  
Toward the top of the ridge, the step over.

For now we can but wait,  
Still learning from you.  
When we get there  
We will find your footprints and follow.

MEMOIRS OF AN OLD PROSPECTOR

by

Noel Routson

"It's not the gold I'm wanting as much as just finding the gold."

-- Robert Service

## CHAPTER 1

### "Our New Home and More Happenings"

I was born in Weiser, Idaho, in 1908. At this time I had two brothers, John seven, Emmit two, Sister Edna four and Adelia nine. When I was two years old we moved to New Meadows, Idaho, stayed there two years and then moved to Central Idaho, a very remote area, which is now in Idaho's Wilderness. We settled on the old Caswell place on Big Creek, a tributary of the Middle Fork (River of no Return) in 1910. This place and vicinity are rich in historical lore, having been the center of many events in the famous Sheepeater Campaign of 1878 and '79, when the Sheepeaters were expelled and put on a reservation. Dave Lewis was a government packer for the soldiers, during the Sheepeater Campaign, and he told us about several battles and maneuvers. One battle was fought about three miles below the Caswell place, on Big Creek. At this point the trail crossed Big Creek. When the soldiers got half way across, the Indians opened fire from a rock formation, on the north slope. A wall of rock hid them from view and made a regular fortress. One soldier was hit in the leg and was bleeding badly. They were all sitting ducks and no place to maneuver. Their only escape was down river. After about eight miles they made their stand on "Soldier bar" and held the Indians off. The wounded soldier, Egan, died that night and was buried there, thus the name "Soldier Bar." In about 1937 the Forest Service made a landing field there and set up a grave marker.

After the Sheepeaters was taken to a reservation, Dave Lewis took up a homestead about four miles upriver from Soldier Bar, and lived there for the rest of his life. He made his living by hunting cougar. The bounty at that time was \$50.00. His ranch was small but served to furnish enough hay for his horses. He would say "there's just enough room here to whip a dog." Dave's mind was clear as a bell. He would go back to his Civil War days and quote dates and names to perfection. I've heard that cleanliness is necessary for health and long life, however, in Dave's case this is not true. He died at the age of 90, had always looked after his own needs and enjoyed good health. He never changed clothes until they wore out, never took a bath, unless he fell in the creek, and the dirt on his bald head was cracked like a clay mud-hole that had been in the hot sun. His four cougar dogs lived in the house with him and, during a meal, there was always that feeling that something was watching. You could throw a table scrap in any direction and it would never reach the floor. Slim Vassar, a fire dispatcher for the Forest Service, used to say, "I'm always very careful, when I'm at Dave's house, not to fall because I know I'd never get up again." Dave's sourdough jug had stalactites built-up from the table to the floor. The way Dave lived had nothing to do with his pure heart and true friendship. He was a grand old man and we all loved him. He was always eager to help his neighbor and never expected anything in return. Dave Lewis can be envied for the quiet, peaceful, happy life he led in those beautiful mountains. Worries were very few, and each new day brought new joys. In June of 1937, Dave got sick and headed for Big Creek Headquarters, by horseback, 35 miles. He got there the second day. We nursed him until the doctor from Cascade arrived, and then he was taken to the Veterans' hospital in Boise, Idaho, where he died soon afterwards.

One summer while we were on the Yardley place, a traveler come by from Salmon City. He told us Dave was very sick and needed help, was down with a double hernia. Dad and Mom got medicine etc. together and headed for Dave's place, 13 miles down river. When they arrived, Dave had high fever and was unconscious. His hernia had come out on both sides, the bag was swelled and black. They first gave him an enema and then started working the hernia back in place. This took all night and by morning Dave was resting and the fever had gone down. The next day Mother worked two balls of yarn into the hernia openings, and Dad made a truss from buckskin. After two days Dave was up and around and feeling fine. He was always grateful for the folks' saving his life.

#### "Shepherd Bill" Borden

Mr. Borden come from the Borden milk family and was educated to become a Catholic priest. He could talk fluently in seven languages, and had an overwhelming ability as an orator and could hold an audience spellbound. Most people thought this brilliant man wasted his talents living in this isolated wilderness, but who can judge that? Bill was a good man, loved his neighbor and did many things to help those in despair and in trouble. Maybe by words of sweet poetry or by creating an air of joviality and happiness he managed to give them renewed strength.

During the Thunder Mountain gold rush, Bill would locate claims, even on top of the snow, and sell them in Boise, Idaho. On one occasion he had just sold three claims and was flush. He first went to the furniture store and bought a fancy bed, and lounging chair. The clerk said, "Now, Mr. Borden, where do you want this delivered?" Bill said "take it to the jail, I will be there before long." Sure enough he was. Bill liked to imbibe, and this had happened before. Every fourth of July, we had a big celebration in the mining town of Warren, Idaho. I would come on several occasions with Dad. The main entertainment for us kids was to corner Bill Borden and get him to recite poetry. It seemed there was no end to what he knew. Thanatopsis, word perfect, The Raven, by Poe, and many, many more.

On one occasion the mayor (Mr. Bailey Dustin) from South Fork of the Salmon, had a podium built, covered with red, white and blue bunting, with a pitcher of water ready to wet his tonsils. The crowd was gathered, the mayor had just cleared his throat to start his patriotic speech. At this time there was a stir in the crowd. Many were laughing and directing their attention to Bill, pushing his way toward the podium. He had a wood milk box in one hand and a gallon jug of moonshine in the other. Soon Bill was standing on the milk box, after taking a long drink from the jug, plunged into an exhilarating exhibition of oratory that started the crowd into uncontrollable laughter. All the mayor could do was clear his throat a time or two, then bow out.

The celebration included hand drilling contests, both four and six pound hammers with 7/8 inch drill steel. One man could drill into solid granite, seventeen inches in five minutes and two men with the six pound hammer could drill thirty-seven inches. There was also horse races, three-legged race, greased pig, greased pole, boxing and wrestling, baseball game, women's nail driving contest, and this all ended with a big old time fiddle dance. George Schafer usually won the drilling contest.

One summer the storekeeper (Jess Root) received a tombstone from people who had their grandfather in the graveyard at Warren. They offered \$35.00 to place the stone on the grave. The location was up a narrow, steep switch-back trail about 500 feet from the main street. The stone weighed about 270 lb. The storekeeper had asked several to



take it there, but had no offers. It was hard to balance on a pack horse, because of its size and weight. One day Shepherd Bill was sitting on the porch talking, when Jess Root jokingly said "Bill if you can pack that stone to the graveyard, you can make \$35.00." Bill without a word tied the stone securely to his Backboard, slid it to the edge of the porch, where there was a drop of three feet. He got underneath the load, thus helping to gain leverage. By now people were gathering to see what would happen. Bill as usual got the crowd in a good mood, and without any hesitation gave a quick surge upward and without a rest took the stone to the designated marker.

On one other occasion, a fisherman on the South Fork of the Salmon River had caught at least 140 lb. of steelhead salmon. This was in April and Warren Summit still had seven feet of snow. The fisherman sold the fish to the Warren miners. Bill Borden volunteered to take the fish to Warren for 6 c a pound. By getting an early start he made Warren in seven hours, a distance of twelve miles. They packed the fish in ice to preserve them on the trip. Borden weighed 180 lb., 5 ft. 7 in. tall with broad shoulders and a barrel chest.

On one occasion in 1904 Borden was asked to help the W. A. Edwards family move from Warren, Idaho to Big Creek, a distance of 45 miles. The trail traversed two summits, Warren Summit 7000 ft., and Elk Summit 8700 ft. It was in the spring and the party hit snow on Elk Summit. The horses started floundering, so Borden had to carry their boy Napier on his back. Napier was about four years old and was spoiled to high heavens. "Mother's loving pet." He would kick, bawl and scream. After Bill could stand it no longer, in exasperation he called to Mrs. Edwards, "When you get this brat to Big Creek, give him away, and make another one. Maybe you will have better luck next time." Bill Borden died in 1935, in a small log cabin, on the South Fork, down river from the Dustin Ranch. He had many friends, and his name was a legend throughout the back country.

The W. A. Edwards family come from Macon, Georgia. Mr. Edwards had a law practice there, and Mrs. Edwards was a college graduate from a highly sophisticated southern family. They had one son, Napier. In 1902 Mr. Edwards had to give up his law practice, in Georgia, due to poor health, and try to rejuvenate his health. Stories of the Thunder Mountain gold rush gave him the incentive to try Idaho's back country, about 120 miles from the nearest railroad and approximately 102 miles from the only doctor at McCall. They took up a homestead where the Forest Service Ranger Station on Big Creek now sets. They acquired several mining claims and built a log cabin. Their home was called Edwardsburg and they run a Post Office there. It was here the family spent the rest of their lives. The Edwards family was hospitable and would always help those in need.

In about 1909, my Dad, John Routson, was working in a quartz mine, near Edwardsburg. We lived in a log cabin, Mother and five children. In January we had a fire that burned down the cabin. It was early in the morning, with the temperature around 30 below zero. All Dad had time to was carry us kids outside, beyond the fire and lay us down in the snow, wrapped in blankets. We lost our food and clothing and was destitute. Edwards family took us in and we stayed with them until we found another cabin. I will always have a soft spot in my heart for the Edwards family and their generosity. Later on that spring Mother had a miscarriage, and our brother was buried near Edwardsburg.

## CHAPTER 2

### We Move to the Old Yardley Place

In 1911 we bought the Yardley place seven miles upstream from the Caswell ranch. This was our home until Dad sold it to Walter Estep in 1925. Mother had been a schoolteacher in Midvale, Idaho before she married, so each winter she taught the kids until 1918 when we moved to Weiser, Idaho, for schooling. Dad stayed at the ranch. Each summer he would work for Dan McCrean in a placer mine at the old Dewey mine in Thunder Mountain until later years. He had a mail contract from Warren, Idaho to Clover for twelve years. In the summer after school was out, my brother Emmit and I would help Dad with his mail route. We would ride 20 miles a day between the camps. The horses were always turned loose to graze, and next morning I would roll out at 4:30 a.m. and wrangle them. Invariably they would climb to the highest ridge in those Salmon River Mountains. I could climb like a scared rabbit, but sometimes had a late breakfast. The mail route was 120 miles round trip, which we made in six days. Summer, he used horses with 120 pounds of mail limit, and winters Dad used webs, with 65 pounds limit. At 20 miles per day, two high sum its to go over: Warren Summit, 7500 feet elevation, and Elk Summit, 8670 feet.

When I was around six years old, at the ranch, I was always interested in rocks. Would fill my pockets every time I went out. Dad would tell me what kind they were, and this would whet my appetite for more looking. Several years before this a Mr. Bell had uncovered a lot of showings in this area around the ranch. So one day I stumbled on an old tunnel. The rock was all green and about seven feet wide, and the tunnel fifty feet long. This was a real thrill. I took some samples home, and Dad got gold colors by panning the ore. Later we sent a sample for assay and it went 1/4 oz. gold and 6 oz. silver. . Gold was only \$20.00 an ounce then, so it wouldn't pay to work. Later I found another long tunnel with vein four feet wide showing beautiful pyrites of iron and chalcopyrite. It also panned. Later on I found out that the formation was granodiorite, with some porphyry dikes and belts of quartzite. Veins run easterly and the formation northwesterly. Some lamprophyre dykes run for several miles. These I never panned or assayed. This system of faults should be thoroughly prospected. Nearby in the same general area, the government found formation that may be a host for yttria ores. However it's in the Wilderness, and they keep the prospectors hobbled, with regulations. Of course this situation may be relaxed in time.

At seven years old, I was allowed to go hunting alone, for grouse (big blues). I had a single-shot 22 rifle, and knew how to use it. When I spotted one it took a while to get into position, needed a rest, and then my target was just under the wing. Sometimes the grouse would sail out of the tree for a half mile before falling. One day I started climbing a steep bluff in order to take a short cut. When I got almost to the top I lifted my weight just above the last rock shelf, and there, about 12 inches from my eyes, was a big timber rattler all coiled and ready to strike. There was no warning, because he had just shed his skin. I let all holds go, and fell to the bottom into some fine slide rock, which cushioned my fall. After I got through shaking I made a wide circle and come out above the snake, with a big flat rock I splattered him but good.

My thoughts go back to our life on the little frontier ranch. What joys we experienced. The close bond of our family, working together and laughing a lot. We made our own toys and dolls from anything available. They meant more to us than the most expensive things that we have today. Each of us had our own chores to do. This gave us pride in thinking we were part of everything, helping to push the wheel of life. Each night we would gather around our mother, and she would read a chapter from the Bible, then explain in simple words what the lesson meant. This served as a basic guide for all of us. No matter what temptations came along during our life, we would always remember the messages dear old Mom had revealed to us.

On our ranch we always raised a big garden, had a flock of chickens and two or more milk cows. Game was plentiful. The streams were teeming with fish. The big red side trout and Dolly Varden was our favorite. All we needed for a fishing pole was a diamond willow (even crooked so we could fish around the bend of the river). A plain hook, grasshoppers and salmon flies. Our creel was a forked willow. We fished for the skillet, by watching closely, when the fish opened his mouth for the bait, slack off slightly and then take the fish to camp without any dawdling around. On some of our fishing trips we would be barefoot. Our dog, old Pat, would go in the lead. Sometimes we could hear him barking, usually this meant excitement. Seemed like Pat would always wait for us, so we could see the fun. There all coiled to strike would be a rattle snake. Pat then would start playing his victim by slowly circling, soon it would strike out. This was the big mistake. Like lightning the dog would grab the snake by the middle and vigorously shake until one half the body would fly off. This dog undoubtedly saved us from getting bitten many times.

My brother John was about seventeen and could be considered a real mountain man. Dad had taught him to trap, hunt and fish, and how to survive under very adverse conditions. During the winter John would catch a variety of fur-bearing animals and hunt cougar with the dogs. On one occasion, my sister Edna went with him on his trap line. It was late November, with snow on the ground. The trap line took them to higher altitude, finally topping out on a ridge overlooking a large scope of country. Just across a ravine they noticed a hole in a big lime bluff, both got curious and decided to investigate. They found a cave about two feet in diameter, running back at least 20 feet to where it looked more spacious. Right at the end was a dark form and after some eye-squinting John could see two shiny objects about four inches apart, in the semi-dark nest. He backed out very quickly and reported his find. After a hasty conference, it was decided John would push his 22 rifle ahead and try to get a shot. Edna when she heard the shot was supposed to help pull him out backwards, without any waste of time. Slowly John crawled back, and after giving his eyes time to adjust to the darkness, the dark form came into focus. There was no chance to use gun sights, so he pointed carefully and pressed off a shot. Edna pulled with all her might and John wasn't exactly sleeping, because the black form was thrashing and moving out of the cave. Upon getting out the two kids took off for the high country, not looking back. In about an hour they returned and there lying on the outside of the cave entrance was a big fat 2-year-old black bear, shot in the head. When Dad heard their story he was furious that they took such a dangerous chance. The bear grease come in handy for the winter however.

## CHAPTER 3

### Happenings Around Our Mountain Home

In 1916 my brother Bob was born at the Routson Ranch (Yardley place). My father and sister Adelia helped with the birth. Mother had spent hours coaching Adelia how to cope with any emergency also what to do in general. My father had previous experience. I was eight years old and can remember that wonderful day very vividly. We was shocking hay in the field about one o'clock, Dee came running to where Dad was working and told him that Mother had started labor pains. We were told to wait in the barn. After two long hours, Dad come out and said "You can all go in now and see your new brother, everything is fine." It was sure a thrill to know that all went well. The nearest doctor was 100 miles away, at McCall, Idaho, twenty miles of that distance by rough, dangerous horse trail and the rest wagon roads. We always figured God must have been watching over us. Dave Lewis named our brother Robert Grant, from the Civil War generals.

We stayed on the ranch two more years, and then moved back to Weiser, Idaho, to be in school. Dad stayed to complete his mail contract. That fall we left the ranch for Weiser, it was the middle of November. We encountered many hardships. Three feet of snow on Elk Summit to buck with horses. It was difficult to keep Robert warm under these conditions. After four long days we arrived at Warren, Idaho, just in time to catch the Fulton mail run to McCall. The stage was a 1917 Cadillac, the first car that most of us had ever saw. Even to this day when I smell gasoline exhaust, my mind flashes back to that day. Another thing I remember was the night we spent in McCall, at "The Peabody Hotel." Mother was starting a fire in our room. When I saw her putting those "black rocks" on top of the kindling, I said "Mom, those rocks will put your fire out." We had never saw coal. When we started to school it turned out that we were all ahead in our respective grades, thanks to Mom's teaching.

### Another Baby Born at the Routson Ranch

During the month of June 1920 I was 12 and staying with my father at the Routson Ranch on Big Creek, during school vacation. Dad hired a man to help put up the hay, which was done by using a hand scythe or sickle. The crop usually amounted to about 15 tons of timothy and red clover. The hired man was Ed James, and his pregnant wife and little girl about two years old. I was sleeping in the barn and Ed had been keeping a horse, "Old Buck," in the barn for emergency. One morning at daylight I was awakened by Ed saying "hurry and come, I think my wife is going to have a baby!" I ate a hurried breakfast and, by then, Old Buck was saddled and ready to go. Ed said "Go down to the Conyner Ranch and get Mrs. Conyner to come help, also watch Buck when you cross the river fords, and don't get into swimming water, he can't swim." Then I took off. Big Creek was rolling high, muddy, swift and treacherous. It was about seven miles to the ranch on Cabin Creek, mostly narrow, twisting trail with three fords across the river, to bypass high bluffs of rock. The first ford proved to be all right with good footing. The water was swift and hit the saddle blanket. The next ford looked very bad and I was real shaky but Buck plunged right in and started across. About mid-way I could feel that the water was going to be too deep for wading. I remembered what Ed had said (that Buck couldn't swim), so I pushed myself out of the saddle and caught the tail as I went by. It wasn't any too soon. Buck started rolling like a barrel, and the current took us down the river. I knew how to swim, but was afraid in that raging torrent, with big boulders all around. My head would go under and then bob up like a cork, but I managed to cling to

that tail. After about one hundred yards of drifting down river, we hit a sand bar and the horse got its footing, about fifty feet from shore. Buck stood on that sand bar for twenty minutes humped up and coughing. At last I remounted and we picked a route down stream, angling towards shore. It was sure a relief to get on dry land.

When we reached the third crossing it looked worse, so I took the high water trail. When I reached the Conyner ranch they were there, and soon we started back. This time I took the high water trails. It was much slower but safe. When we arrived, we found Mrs. James in good shape. A seven pound girl had been born and Mrs. Conyner took over from there.

#### Trip to Thunder Mountain

In 1915 my Dad wanted to visit the Conyners at the head of Monumental Creek, so I was chosen to go along. We took the old high water route that started at our place, in order to miss dangerous trails on Monumental. The trail was the same route where Dave Lewis, Ira McGarry and three-fingered Smith traveled when they found the rich gold ore that became a legend. The way it happened, the three old timers was coming down from the old Dewey mine at head of Monumental Creek. The first night, they camped at a spring, on top of a ridge high above Monumental Creek. They stayed all night, and early the next morning one of them went after the horses that had gone down on Monumental for better grazing. The other two men waited in camp. Ira noticed a big black boulder of porous rock nearby and when he broke it open, it was actually held together with threads of gold. This was the only boulder they could find, after looking all day. Anyway, they located three claims. They decided to go after supplies, powder and tools in Warren, Idaho so they could do their location work and try to dig down below the overburden. Ira was going to Warren, while Dave and three-fingered Smith went to the Lewis ranch and put up the hay crop. They promised each other not to tell anyone about the discovery.

They went their separate ways and after three days of travel, Ira reached Warren. Ira had a lot of dust in his throat to get rid of, so he walked briskly to the saloon. There he met some of his old bosom friends. During the exchange of greetings and displays of pure friendship, it was finally Ira's turn to give an account of his activities. At such times, with the help of whiskey and companionship, one has the uncontrollable desire to divulge one's overwhelming excitement. So Ira reached in his pocket and brought out his beautiful specimen of gold ore and laid it on the bar. At once there was quiet in the bar, as every man examined the rock. Then his friends started crowding around the hero, each taking his turn buying drinks. It wasn't long, with the aid of the drinks and congenial companionship, until Ira made a slip about the gold rock's origin. The next morning Ira was slow in getting up and after buying his supplies it was noon before he got started on his return trip. It wasn't until he arrived at the Dustin ranch, on the South Fork (Salmon River) that he found out five men had passed by with horses, traveling in the same direction. The third day when Ira got to his treasure camp, there was five of his buddies waiting. There was nothing left to do now but join forces and search for the bonanza. After a week of unsuccessful effort, the party broke up and ended their prospecting activities there.

The float was on top of the ridge and had no chance to move, except by erosion. Later years I thought back to the day Dad showed me their camp. I believe the float come from a spring, showing red gossan and a definite fault swale. The black color of the rock was probably caused by bornite copper ore, which is characteristic of other faults in the

same area. I believe more depth is what they needed. Dave Lewis told Dad the story and he was very trustworthy and honest, but wasn't a true prospector. He thought the rock come from a meteorite, which of course is impossible (gold melts at lower heat levels). I always wanted to get back to this old camp ground, but never had the opportunity.

The Thunder Mountain excitement was brought on when the Caswell brothers found gold at the Dewey mine on Mud Creek, a tributary of Monumental. The Dewey discovery was made in a clay sheer zone, between a contact of basalt and schist. Shortly afterwards the Sunnyside was discovered, showing quartz, and the whole area turned out to be low grade ore. This area is now being worked in 1980. The Dewey has a 25-ton mill, and the future looks bright for years to come, if gold holds its present value.

#### Other Prospects

I looked the old Butler property (iron clad) over in 1934, and believe this whole district has potential for further development and prospecting. The "iron clad" fault runs approximately N.5 E. and dips S.E. 70 . The width in some places is about 14 feet and varies. The ore in one tunnel seemed to be mostly on the hanging wall, where it showed very high grade free gold. There are several roughly parallel quartz lenses, two of which are followed by tunnels. I noticed near the quartz lenses there was shear planes with various attitudes, some replacement. The general formation is in the Yellowjacket, with quartzite and some breccia. There is also copper. The iron clad is near the head of Copper Creek, east side of Monumental. I had a friend, "Ace Reed," who spent several weeks prospecting on Monumental Creek and he found a 40-foot fault over half way up Deer Creek, running towards the "iron clad" showing. This fault panned gold and showed copper. This draw-back to this mineralized belt is the "Wilderness" which does not give a free hand to the prospector and mining companies. Perhaps some day these restrictions will be lifted.

## CHAPTER 4

### The Jensen Brothers and More Happenings

The Jensen brothers, Eric (Spider) and Jake, lived about seven miles from the Routson ranch, on Crooked Creek. They had a gold quartz mine and treated their rich ore with a one stamp mill. At first they spent their winters trapping for money to start their mine operation. Eric, Jake and sister Olga come from Finland in about 1889, and started out from Grangeville, Idaho. On the boat coning to the U.S., both brothers were gamblers, and they kept this profession until moving to Crooked Creek. From Grangeville they went to the Buffalo Hump gold excitement and worked on several claims. One night in a poker game, Eric ended up betting with an old prospector that come through from Crooked Camp in the Thunder Mountain district. Eric put a bear hide and \$100 in the final pot, against a quit claim deed to the Snowshoe gold claim that had recently been located. Eric won the pot and this caused the two brothers to move to our country. Sister Olga went to Fort Bragg and lived there until her death. She married and had one son.

Here I will mention my Dad, as he played a part in the life of Jake. My father was looked upon by neighbors as being a country doctor. He had very little training as such, but was always willing to help, and many times risked his life in order to do what he could. In the back country, John had saw several of his neighbors suffering from tooth ache, with the nearest dentist over eighty miles distant by horse travel or snowshoes. During a trip to Weiser, Idaho, John consulted with a dentist who gave him two forceps, one real heavy for jaw teeth and one smaller, for front teeth. This dentist also spent time showing how they should be used.

Back in the mountains it wasn't long until the neighbors heard that Routson could pull teeth, and during the next few years, several had their teeth pulled. Usually they would wait until the tooth was practically gone or ulcerated before they come for help. There was nothing to ease the pain except Dad kept a jug of good whiskey on hand and usually they drank very freely before the extraction. No charge was ever made for any help that Dad could give; it was a matter of being a good Samaritan. Upon these tooth pulling occasions, all five of us kids were never far away. Our Dad wouldn't allow us to be there, but we always managed to peek from a convenient vantage point. This was a big day, and well worth waiting for; to see the victim squirm with pain, and try to shout to the high heavens. The operation usually took place in our yard. The patient, half drunk, would lie down on his or her back, with John holding their arms with his knees, left hand placed on the forehead and the forceps in his right hand. After the forceps were in place (deep down on the tooth), they never come out without the tooth. John was strong in the wrists and knew just how to twist for leverage. It seemed that our sadism tendencies were appeased, for the many baby teeth that we had to have pulled.

One day our neighbor, Eric (Spider) Jensen, come to our house with a very bad ulcerated jaw tooth and it was really painful. He asked to have it pulled. John gave him two water glasses full of whiskey and got everything in readiness. Soon the whiskey took over and the "Spider" was very jovial, but not to the extent of overlooking the foreboding forceps. Then "Spider" told John that the "toot" was very much better. (He was a Russian Finn and had quite a brogue). Then he went on to say that his "brudder Yake" was a bleeder and that he himself might bleed to "det." Then "Spider" started back home, singing a Russian song. We kids were robbed of our fun, for that day. A week went by and the "Spider" showed up again, with no improvement in the tooth. He was begging to get it pulled. Again John gave him the whiskey to help deaden the pain and again the "Spider" tried to back out. This time John said "All you want is to drink my whiskey that we have for medicinal purposes. Now this time the tooth is coming out." And sure enough it did. He never bled to "det" either.

About December of 1915, early in the morning, the dogs were barking, so we looked out of the window to see what was going on. There come "Spider" on a trot, towards our house, paying no heed to our dogs (they would usually keep him bayed for a half hour, while we enjoyed the show). However the dogs wouldn't bite, and would only bark at those who showed fear. We could hear him holler a hundred feet away, "John, John come quick. my brudder Yake is dying!" Then, in his excitement, he turned at the door and started back up the trail. Dad said "Come back here, control yourself, and tell me what happened!" After careful persuasion, "Spider" told us that his brother had not had a bowel movement for two weeks and was out of his mind and had a high temperature. John soon had castor oil and epsom salts, along with an enema bag and other medicines, ready. "Spider" was like a quarter horse, fauncing the bit. When they started out, John soon found out that to stay up with this little man would be almost impossible. Dad was a powerful hiker and had gained a reputation of being one of the best, but to cope with a man full of love and desperation and charged with adrenalin, was a different story. They made the seven mile trip to the Jensen cabin in one and one half hours, over a narrow, icy, steep mountain trail.

Upon entering the cabin, they found Jake in a critical condition: high fever, out of his mind, and his stomach was bloated. Right away, Dad felt for evidence of appendicitis but it was hard to determine with the man in this state, but something had to be tried or it would soon be too late. Dad finally was able to give an enema but it didn't give results. Then they both got some castor oil down brother Jake and started to gently massage the stomach. After several hours, Jake began to respond to treatment and it wasn't long until the fever broke. At this time, a neighbor, Jess Root, arrived and they were setting around talking. Jake was apparently asleep and they still didn't know whether he had come back from the shadows. They was reminiscing about an engineer who had come through the country the summer before and stayed all night with Jake and Eric. Jake was trying to weld a 2-inch steel shaft that supported his 650-lb. stamp, on his quartz mill. Jake only had an old-fashioned bellows to furnish air, and charcoal instead of hard coal for heat. The engineer watched Jake work, and soon told him that the job couldn't be done in that fashion. A big argument ensued. To go back now to the conversation around Jake's bedside. Jess Root said "I don't believe Jake should have argued with a full-fledged engineer, with all of his education." Suddenly their attention was turned to Jake. He was setting up in bed, shaking his finger at them and, in a loud voice said "and'God, I still think I was right."It was a well known fact that Jake was stubborn, but to assert himself at a time like this, just about took the cake. Later Jake proved his point by welding the shaft to perfection. Eric always said "My brudder, Yake, is a yeenus!"

That same winter, in February, we saw something coming down our trail that was hard to figure out. The dogs were barking up a storm. In the lead was Eric, in harness, pulling a queer-looking sled and, following behind was his brother, Jake, steering the sled with handle bars. When they arrived and set their load in the house, it turned out to be an old-fashioned baby cradle, about 30 inches wide and five feet long, two big heavy wood rockers, with wood upright, spaced stays, jointing a top railing. One side would slide up and down for easy access. The workmanship was done to perfection and would make a lot of furniture makers jealous. My mother was pregnant and expecting that coming summer. This cradle was made in appreciation for what Dad had done for them by saving Jake's life.



### Another Story About Eric

Always when the "Spider" came to visit our household, he would carry his violin in a case slung over his shoulder. He thought, without a doubt, that he was one of the great violinists of that time. We children were always glad to see him come, as it meant some good entertainment – but not from the standpoint of good music – that was hard to take, but great fun just to watch. After the tune-up, "Spider" seemed to turn into a different person. First his eyelids would half close and a dreamy (sick calf) look would come over his face. The music would start real slow, like the wind wailing in the pines. Then ever so slowly, the tempo would increase, along with a louder and louder noise. With the increase in timing, his eyes would come wide open, roll back and forth faster and faster, at the same time the facial muscles would contort into lines of misery and the chin whiskers would tremble like a billy goat eating taffy. This was our cue to get out, quickly, so we could roll on the floor, with laughter, in the bedroom, without hurting his feelings.

One Christmas Eric come to our place to celebrate by singing songs, dancing, etc. with the neighbors. Dad had given Eric a big glass of punch and he was really "in the groove" with his fiddle. He stepped back to let the dancers have more room, and fell backwards into the wood box. He continued playing, without missing a note, and when the tune was over, my brother, Emmit (about ten years old) said "Eric, please play "Turkey in the Straw." Eric turned around, very indignant, and said "You nin come poop, I just got through playing that..." Everyone in the house had a good, healthy laugh. Just because we children had a lot of fun with the Jensen brothers didn't mean that we never loved them. No one ever had better neighbors.

### Snowshoe Mine and Vicinity

In 1928 my brother Emmit and I worked for a mining company that had the Snowshoe mine. The company drove a 400-foot cross-cut tunnel and tapped the vein, the ore was good, and for several years thereafter the ore was mined and the concentrates hauled out to a smelter. Finally mining costs got higher and they shut down. At present the claims are held, and possibly some day it may reopen. Nearby the Jansens had another property, "The Yellowjacket." A Mr. Scott owns these claims, and started putting up a mill the summer of 1980. The YellowJacket has a great potential. My brother and I located a quartz vein between the Snowshoe and Yellowjacket and sold it for \$3,000 cash in 1934. This claim, the "Buckhorn" is still held.

The geology of this belt consists of gneissie biotite-quartz diorite, which, in the general vicinity, contains many highly altered inclusions of sedimentary rocks, mainly schist, white quartzite, and near the Jensen cabin limestone. A big tertiary dike, mainly granophyre, cuts the formation west of the Snowshoe high grade, and undoubtedly caused most of the enrichment in these faults. There is some cross faults which in most cases only extend the width of the veins. The average dip is 60 NE, and the strike is N 50 W. The ore runs from S20 to \$50 with \$35.00 per oz. gold. There is also silver and copper. Jensens run their one stamp mill, with picture highgrade, and made a living.

## CHAPTER 5

### Building Trail and Prospecting

In February 1931 the Forest Service decided to build a trail from the Dave Lewis ranch to the mouth of Big Creek, where it would join the Middle Fork (Salmon River) trails. This Big Creek route had been by-passed up to this time, because of bluffs and slide rock. The old trail was higher up on the opposite side and went over Burnt Creek Summit. We organized our crew at Big Creek Headquarters, where the supplies had been kept that winter. The government pack string had been wintered on lower Big Creek. The crew consisted of six men, including our Ranger, Dan LeVan. We had nine government mules with a bell mare. We loaded out of Headquarters with 200 pounds on each mule, and started for the Dave Lewis ranch 40 miles downstream.

The second day we arrived there, and found old Dave in good spirits and doing fine. Our first camp was made on a flat across from the Lewis ranch. Right away we started work. This was very rough country, where mountain goat and the big horn abounded. Every day we could see the golden eagle trying to capture the young sheep or goats, by swooping down and catching a lamb or kid off by itself, picking it up high enough to drop them in a slide or bluff area, then later to clean the bones. There was a \$2.00 bounty on the brown eagle, at this time. (They now have a birds of prey sanctuary, with signs to show them where to go!)

By April 15th we reached the Soldier Bar Box Canyon with our trail. Here the walls of the canyon was only about eighty feet apart, and rising several hundred feet vertically; in fact on the trail side, the walls overhung the trail. Big Creek here was a raging torrent during high water. The only way we had to build trail was by laying big flat rocks on top of each other and lapping them for a crib effect. After the rock was laid, it was covered with six inches of clay. This kind of trail will last for several years.

On April 21st (about 10 a.m.) I was working under the big bluff, bent over placing a big, flat rock in the crib, when suddenly there was a cave in from above. I was mostly buried with fine rock and one big boulder weighing a ton or more pinned my hair to the rock crib. The crew working behind me saw what happened and quickly dragged me back into a shallow cave. It was none too soon, as tons of rock started falling but no one else was caught. I was knocked unconscious for about twenty minutes and later suffered shock. Our camp was located about eleven miles down Big Creek from the nearest phone at the old Caswell ranch. My brother, Emmitt, who was one of our crew, took off for the phone, to try and get help from the Werdenhoff mine and to notify our folks in Weiser, Idaho.

Five men come down from the mine and it was decided to clear a field on Cabin Creek, so a plane could land from Cascade. The second day after the accident, the trail crew made a stretcher and started carrying me up Big Creek. We arrived at the man-made airstrip about four p.m. Bill Gowan, the pilot, was already there, with my brother John from Weiser, who come along as a guide. This was the first plane to ever land in that country. Bill Gowan had been a World War I pilot, and was accustomed to flying "by the seat of his pants." The trip was made to Boise in good shape and I was soon in the Veterans hospital. (Forest Service accidents were taken to the Veterans hospital at that time). The X-rays showed I had a compression fracture, in the second dorsal vertebra. After about two months I was able to leave the hospital and resume my job as fire dispatcher at Big Creek Headquarters.

When I got back on the job they told me a story about old Charles Mahan, a Ramey Ridge prospector. Mahan had spent most of his life in the back country and had never saw an aeroplane. The day we flew up Big Creek, heading for Boise, he spotted the plane across Big Creek from his cabin on Ramey Ridge, flying at about 9,000 feet. Mahan was flabbergasted with excitement. He had been listening in, on the phone, to all the calls, but seeing the plane was the payoff. He rang Big Creek Headquarters real quick and when Harold Vassar answered, he said, very excitedly, "Slim it's all over for that plane! It's going to crash... the wings are just barely flapping!" It took a lot of explaining about all aspects of flying to convince him that aeroplanes didn't flap their wings like big eagles.

### Premonition

My mother in Weiser, Idaho told Dad that I had been in an accident, just at the same time it happened. They never received the phone call until six hours afterwards, so there was no way of knowing. In our family on several occasions these things happened; and she was never wrong. The spring we built the Big Creek trail I used Sundays to scout around the country and prospect. One day I was on Big Creek above the Lewis ranch. I noticed two small veins in a bluff where the trail passed. The veins were highly oxidized and showed evidence of silver. On one side was gneissie diorite (dark) and the hanging wall was limestone and quartzite. I traversed up the hill about 3/4 mile and here you could see the limestone belt running at a northerly direction up the mountain, at one point an east west stringer cut out from the limestone about six inches wide; it showed solid galena in places. This assayed 15 oz. lead and 15 oz. silver. I never done any more prospecting here, but I think the main limestone should have a replacement of galena. The belt was around 20 ft. wide. Dave Lewis said he had found silver on lower Rush Creek, that should line up with this fault. Another time I found free gold in a spring at Rush Creek lookout. It seemed to be in a clay sheer zone. I never prospected for the source.

## CHAPTER 6

### Dad Has an Accident, and Other Happenings

About the summer of 1925, Dad left brother Emmit and I at the Werdenhoff mine while he carried the mail. We was working on Smith Creek cutting out a buckboard road, to Big Creek and thus have a route by way of Profile Summit or Elk Creek. The distance was about five miles. We knew how to use the cross-cut saw and ax to perfection, also dynamite, but not how much it would take to move a stump. Some holes still mar the landscape along that route, and to find the stump would take a lot of searching. We lost one day just filling in one hole.

In July Dad hired a man to pack the mail, while he worked with us to do the assessment work on the Werdenhoff quartz claims. The first morning we started it was decided I would wrangle the horses, to pull in mining timbers, while Emmit and Dad cleaned out the tunnel to get ready for hand drilling. I walked up a steep trail with them to the tunnel and helped wheel out a few loads of muck, then I went on to track down the horses. The horses had the whole country to run in, so it was always a job to find them. I had gone perhaps two miles, when I heard three quick rifle shots. We had been taught that this signal meant "help." So I immediately started back, on a trot, over an old game trail. Soon I arrived at the Werdenhoff cabins and there I found Dad in bed suffering with severe shock and not talking coherently; my brother had headed down Smith Creek for help. I placed hot water bottles around his legs and covered him with blankets. He was cold and shaking all over. In about an hour he started talking coherently, but was in terrible pain.

This is what happened. The fall before, Dad had stored some powder and blasting caps inside the tunnel on some timber logs. When the mucking was completed he placed seven sticks of dynamite side by side in the wheelbarrow and set a full box of blasting caps (open) by the powder. The wheelbarrow was on the tunnel dump, where the sun could dry the caps. After a few minutes, he made a primer (put fuse in blasting cap) to test if the caps were good, after being in the tunnel all winter; they could draw dampness. He split the end of the fuse, in order to light it, then after the fuse was spitting sparks — not thinking — he passed the lighted fuse over the open box of caps. The sparks set the caps off thus the concussion detonated the seven sticks of dynamite. Dad was standing between the handles of the wheelbarrow, so he received the full impact of the blast. It threw him against Emmit, who was standing behind Dad, and they both ended up twenty feet back against a wall of rock, near the tunnel portal. Dad was knocked unconscious; my brother was dazed, but was soon able to stagger to his feet.

My father was a big man, six feet two weighing 190 lb., and my brother was six feet two weighting 220 lb. It was over a half mile by a steep narrow trail that traversed a forty degree slope to the cabin. Emmit's adrenalin must have been working, because he lifted Dad on his back and carried him to the cabin. Then he grabbed the 30-30 rifle and shot three times to summon me. At the cabin, Emmit laid Dad on the bed and started for help at Big Creek Headquarters. It was then we got our first lucky break. Dad's mail carrier, Walt Estep, was just passing the mouth of Smith Creek, so he volunteered to come help. Estep had been a trained first aid man for the army, this contributed in large part for helping to save our father's life. Estep worked over Dad for two hours or more, washing wounds, putting iodine on, and in some cases stopping the bleeding. We all knew that Dad would have to go outside to a doctor, so Estep left to get his truck and meet us the next day on Elk Summit. It was decided that I would go to the phone, at the Scott cabin, on Smith Creek, and call for more medicine at Headquarters and then go get the horses for the next day. I took off down Smith Creek on the run, thinking of

nothing but "help." It was dark by now and the only light I had was a palouser (1/2 gal. lard pail with wire handle, and hole cut midway in the bottom for a candle). At the Scott cabin I got the watchman (Hubert Nipe) at Big Creek the first ring. (This was another break). I told Hubert to notify my brother John in Thunder Mountain that Dad was in bad shape and that we needed help, also to notify Dr. Numbers at McCall to come in the next day and meet us around the smokehouse on Elk Creek, and for Hubert to bring more bandages and medicine to the Werdenhoff. After this I started for the horses on McFadden prairie. After topping out on a high ridge I could hear the horse bell and soon had them all tailed and started on a trot for the Werdenhoff. Dad was still in shock when I arrived and very weak, so now we hurried getting the horses saddled, putting Dad's saddle on our favorite sure-footed Old Fred.

By this time brother John arrived from Thunder Mountain, a distance of forty miles, by rough mountain trails, his saddle horse was about fagged. We packed light, some food, medicine and blankets. Then we dressed Dad warmly and boosted him into the saddle. I got on behind to keep him from falling off. Emmit led the horse. We left for Elk Summit for our rendezvous with Walt Estep or the doctor, a distance of eight miles by trail. This seemed like the longest eight miles of my life. After the first mile, Dad became very weak, and it was difficult to keep him from falling. That morning we had found a quart of brandy in the cupboard and had put it in the saddlebag. We decided to see if this would help. Let me say here that alcohol used in the right way and at the right time has its place, and in this case was one of the factors that helped us. Everytime Dad took a swallow, it would give him much needed strength to fight the good fight. It took us three hours to contact our help. We did not even try to hold back the tears when we saw Estep with his old Ford truck.

When brother John had arrived that morning it was certainly a "big lift" for a couple of discouraged scared kids, who did not have much hope left. We knew that our prayers was being answered. Dad was in the hospital at McCall for two months. My sister Dee Parke helped to nurse him back to health. The accident had taken its toll. Dad lost the sight in one eye, copper was embedded all over the front of his body, even to the third lining of his stomach. But strange as it may seem, he went on to live to the ripe old age of ninety-one years. The back country was a hard frontier life, but it brought friends and families together in time of need with a friendship and devotion that is hard to find any more. Back then it seemed everyone was part of one big family. Also we all have a spot in our hearts for our country Doctor Numbers.

**Geology of the Old Werdenhoff**

This mine is near the contact of the Yellowjacket formation and granodiorite of the Idaho batholith. The Pueblo group (nearby) is in granodiorite. This formation is made up largely of light-colored quartzite, but also includes dark green argillite. These rocks strike north and dip thirty to forty degrees east. Near the veins the gold is noticeably scattered, most feldspars are almost entirely altered to "ericite. Quartz latite porphyry and dark colored lamprophyre dikes cut granodiorite and the Yellowjacket formation in the vicinity of the Werdenhoff. The quartzlatite porphyry, known locally as "birdseye porphyry," is exposed in several of the underground workings and they have been responsible for most of the ore in that area.

There was around 2500 ft. of grass-root tunnels driven by mining outfits, at the Werdenhoff. Mostly to sell stock on the high-grade ore. The lower tunnel was never finished, to tap the fault at around 800 ft. depth. Poor air closed them down, without enough money to complete. In general there is a big north and south fault, intersected by several east and west veins, all showing some values. Depth is the only way to open up this showing and prove its merit. The ore minerals include pyrite, chalcopyrite, sphalerite, galena and tetrahedrite. Some assays run 45 oz. gold but the company assays range from a trace to 1 1/2 oz. gold and silver from 5 oz. to 15 oz. The Pueblo claims, approximately 1 1/2 air miles to the north of the Werdenhoff, are mostly in the granodiorite, instead of being mostly quartzite and argillite. The system strikes north and dips to the east. Here the quartzite porphyry also runs along the footwall side. Some ores assay good and is similar to the Werdenhoff.

About two miles northeast from Pueblo is the Golden Hand, which turned out beautiful gold specimens and made the company thousands of dollars. The ore at depth run out, where it sets on a synclinal fold. Perhaps with more development work and drilling, the ore may be picked up below. The minerals are about the same as the Werdenhoff, and formation belongs to the Yellowjacket. Calcite shows up with the high grade and there is more schistose rocks showing.

#### Skiing Out of the Hills

One winter, my brother Emmitt and I had been working At the Snowshoe mine (Jensen property). About the first of the year the mining company ran out of money and had to shut down the mine operation. There was only one thing left to do – head for Weiser. So we started preparations for the trip. No one had any skis or webs, so we made cross country skis out of blackpine timber. We soon had the skis completed and started on our trip. There was three of us traveling together, the extra man was Leo Brust. The third day found us at Elie Beaton's place on the Secesh River, approximately seventy-one miles from where we started. The next morning when we left Beaton's the thermometer showed fifty below zero. As we started towards McCall, you could hear the blackpines cracking like rifle shots all over the country. As the green timber expands from the cold sometimes the tree will split the bark, full length, on the grain.

After about a mile, my brother said "I have to travel at a faster pace or my feet will freeze." I told him to go ahead, that Brust and I would try to stay together. Leo was only about five feet four inches tall, with very short legs, so his progress had been less than average. After about another mile my feet began to freeze and I told Leo, "Now if we don't go faster they will find us on the trail tomorrow, frozen to death." With that I took off. Later, about a mile behind me, I heard a commotion coming and there topping over a rise was Leo, his arms waving and his short legs going like pistons. He was shouting, "Wait for me." From there on to McCall, Leo was right up with us.

About five miles ahead we caught up with Jasper Harp, who had the mail contract from Warren to McCall. He used a double-end toboggan with four snowshoed horses and was hauling about one thousand pounds of freight. When we met Jasper, he had one horse down floundering in the deep snow with a broken showshoe. We helped him replace it and he took the broken shoe, put it over a white fir tree top that was sticking out of the snow, and left it. We thought it would be a good time to be sociable, so my brother handed him a full pint of 100 proof moonshine. Jasper said "I don't care if I do." When he started drinking, you could see his adam's apple bob up and down like a cork

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in a tempest. Soon the bottle was empty and he tossed it aside, saying "Boy! that was  
good." We both said "it sure was" (with our tongues hanging out). That night we drank a  
toast to Jasper, while sitting in a warm hotel room, in McCall. We had covered thirty-two  
miles that day. Harp would make it a day later.

Horse showshoes were made of hard wood or steel. About eight inches long, seven  
inches wide, and turned up slightly on the front end. There was three holes to  
accommodate the three horse shoe corks. Clamp and straps come up around the fetlock.  
Without them horses were helpless in deep snow. After being trained horses would  
throw their feet slightly to one side, and never stumble. These horses seemed to have a  
special sense of following the trail, when it was drifted full. The next summer Jasper  
said he measured the distance fro. the ground -to- the shoe, in the tree, and it was  
twenty-seven feet.

### Skating Out of the Hills

One winter, my brother Ernest and I had been working at the Snowshoe mine (Lensen  
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shut down the mine operation. There was only one thing left to do - head for Vester.  
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## CHAPTER 7

### Wilderness Doctor and Baby Born at Werdenhoff

In about 1927 my Dad sold the Werdenhoff quartz claims to an outfit from Tacoma, Washington, J. B. Mason. That fall in November, brother Emmitt and I got a job with the outfit driving tunnel. The summer before, we had worked for the "Idaho National Forest," Emmitt as trail foreman and smokechaser, and I as commissary clerk and smokechaser at Cold Meadows Ranger Station. The tunnel was driven all by hand drilling and a wheelbarrow to muck with. It was four feet wide and six and one half feet high. Two men would make about sixty feet a month.

I was working with Bob Carey, from the South Fork. He was quite a hand to brag. One morning when we had started drilling, Bob said "You know after I get my distance you can just blow out the light and I can drill all day." "Do you have your distance now?" I asked. He said, "Of course, I'm really on the beam today." I raised up real quick and blew out our two carbide lights. When his hammer came down you could hear him holler clear out to the portal of the tunnel. He had hit his hand instead of the steel. I had a grumpy partner for over two days. Work went along as usual and we were all settled for winter.

About the 30th of November we got a telephone call from Ramey Ridge, via the Forest Service ground telephone line, that Matty Mahan had injured his leg and needed help. Kolbar was staying with him that winter. Mahan was an old prospector who had his claims on Ramey Ridge. He was around seventy-five years old. His cabin was about fifteen miles from the Werdenhoff, over the 7500 ft. Pueblo Summit. Early next morning five of the crew took off on snowshoes, with medicine etc. Enough men was left to keep the work going. Emmitt and I was among those who went. After seven hours of breaking heavy snow we finally reached our destination and found Mahan with blood poison setting in on his leg. He had a high fever and was very restless. We sized up the situation and decided that he should be taken out to a doctor. We soaked his leg with hot epsom salt packs all night, while some of us fixed up an old sled to haul him on.

The next morning we got an early start for the Werdenhoff. For the first mile we pulled him up a steep ridge to the top, from there the route led down towards Beaver Creek. It was a job to hold the sled back from going over the bluffs. From Beaver Creek we started climbing a steep trail up Cache Creek. This trail was very narrow and two of us had to go below, to keep the sled from turning over, in deep snow and brush. After two miles we reached an old wagon road at the Penn-Idaho mine, abandoned for several years. (This property later was worked by the Golden Hand outfit, and they had some of the richest gold ore ever found in the United States). From there to the Werdenhoff was two miles up to the Pueblo Summit and three miles down hill to the Werdenhoff. Finally after dark we reached our camp, dog tired and ready to call it a day.

It seemed we had just hit the bunk, when the alarm clock went off at 5 a.m. After breakfast we bundled up our passenger in a sleeping bag, put in some hot irons to keep his feet warm, and took off for the smokehouse fourteen miles away over 8700 ft. Elk Summit. There we were supposed to meet a buckboard from the South Fork. By changing off breaking trail we got to the smokehouse by 4 p.m. The buckboard was waiting for us, and after bidding our old friend goodbye we went back up our trail two miles to the "old smokehouse" that was built during the Thunder Mountain boom. This old building had no doors or windows, and all we could do was build a fire, in the middle of the dirt floor. That was an unforgettable night -- smoke so thick you couldn't see and the temperature dropped to 20 degrees below.



The following day five tired men arrived back at the Werdenhoff. We were told by our foreman (Jim Homberger) to rest up the next day, so none of us had any complaints. Next day when we started back to work, my brother Emmit complained about feeling weak and tired. Homberger told him to stay in the bunkhouse and rest up. That evening when I got in from my shift I found my brother with a high fever, weak and all choked up. I'd never had much experience with this sort of sickness so I conferred with Homberger. They were very helpful in doing everything possible. We tried physics, enemas and cold packs to bring down the fever, but Emmit become gradually worse each hour. We decided to call my Dad in Weiser, Idaho and have him bring the doctor (Numbers) from McCall.

Dad soon went to work. Brother John drove him to McCall and there they got the doctor lined out. Roy Stover had a team of Irish setters, these dogs had won several blue ribbons racing around the country. The doctor was taken by this team to Warren, Idaho, and from there they picked up another team of dogs (mongrels from around town, but they had more stamina than the racing team). Three men went from Warren with Dad to help break trail for the dogs, all were real mountain men, filled with spirit and had iron wills. It was five days after we called Dad that the doctor arrived at the mine.

Going back to the second day of my brother's illness. Emmit was unconscious, and started to hemorrhage from his nose. I applied ice packs to his head and neck and kept his feet warm, but to no avail. I knew he was dying but there wasn't anything I could do but pray and watch. It was a regular nightmare happening right before my eyes – to say I wasn't scared would be a lie. With his pulse so weak and his face absolutely colorless, I knew his life was ebbing away. In desperation, with tears streaming down my face, I screamed to God, with all my might, to bring him back. Very soon it seemed my prayer had been answered, some color come back to his face and his pulse become stronger. Afterwards Emmit told me he was dreaming of climbing a mountain, and with each step he became weaker. Finally, when he had gone down, without strength to move any more, he heard someone calling for him to come back. When the doctor arrived he told us we had done everything possible under the circumstances to save Emmit's life. He said it was a combination of pneumonia and stomach flu. His treatment was what turned the tables and saved Emmit's life.

Dad stayed after the doctor left for McCall. There was some very important medicine due the next day, at the smokehouse, for Emmit. Dad left early in the morning and made that 28-mile round trip alone. The night before it had snowed and every step was made breaking trail with his webs. Dad was fifty-four years old, at this time, and I would say very few young men could have made that trip.

My brother and I will always have a very warm spot in our hearts for the doctor and those very strong-hearted men who came through by straining every ounce of their endurance. Their names were Bill Roden, Fred Schafer, and George Benson. In about a week after the doctor left, my brother started to gain strength and soon afterwards was able to set up and take nourishment. Six weeks later he was pulled over Elk Summit by hand and dog team and then went on to Weiser to recuperate. Everyone in that rugged country welcomed the chance to help his neighbor. It's too bad that we can't have more of that spirit today.

### Robert Vassar is Born at the Werdenhoff

During the winter months of 1932, I was driving tunnel on my gold quartz claim at Crooked Creek. My wife was with me, we had been married in August 1931. At the same time, Harold Vassar, and Edith his wife, was stationed at Big Creek Headquarters. Harold was the caretaker there for the Idaho National Forest, during the winter months. Later during fire season Harold (Slim) was a fire dispatcher at McCall, Idaho. They had been married the year before and everyone in the back country found them to be fine neighbors, with their refreshing smiles, ready wit and eagerness to help others.

That spring in April, "Slim" called me on the phone one evening and asked if I would help take Edith over Elk Summit to meet the stage, on the South Fork, and then she would go on to McCall and be near their doctor in case of any complications with her pregnancy. They were expecting in two months. I said "of course I'll help." We decided the Werdenhoff dog team would be the only way to get over 8700-foot Elk Summit, and that I would meet them at the Werdenhoff the next day. They had seven miles to hike, over mostly bare ground, with patches of snow on the upper end. The next morning they started early and had good hiking until they reached snowdrifts two miles below the Werdenhoff. The patches of heavy snow proved to be very bad. Each time Edith put her weight on a forward step she would break through and the strain was terrific, to get righted again. Dogs were useless for this kind of trail.

When I arrived, they had been there for more than an hour. Slim was in the woodshed getting extra wood for the stove and he said, "Noel, I'm worried! Edith is starting to have pains." I said "perhaps she will be all right when she gets rested up." I had hiked twenty-one miles to get there. Edith was laying down resting and seemed in good spirits. The pains was coming about every half hour. It wasn't long before we knew, this was the real thing. Edith had been a nurse, so she told us everything to get ready. Warm fire, plenty of boiling water, first aid kit and two Coleman gas lights – in case one went out.

"Slim" rolled his own cigarettes and I remember he made three tries to get one ready, but each time, in his excitement he spilled the tobacco all over the floor. After the third try, he said, "I didn't want a smoke anyway." From then on, "Slim" got himself under control and was in there pitching. The old watchman at the mine was very helpful in finding some things we needed. Soon we were real busy. I remember tying a rope on the foot of the bed so Edith would have something to hold on to, and that help to relieve the pain. This was her first child and she was thirty-three years old.

Finally around 10 p.m. the baby was born – a boy around six pounds, right away he started crying – which was good. Edith had me take a pair of sterilized scissors and cut the navel cord about three inches long, fold it down on the tummy and make a belt out of three inch gauze to hold it in place. We were all so happy by now that everything was going so good. We could have shouted for joy. "Slim" was the proudest father I had ever saw. They named the boy "Robert." It was around midnight by now, and after talking it over, we decided to try and get through to Mrs. Spillman by phone. She was a former trained nurse, living with her husband, Bert, at the South Fork power plant, twenty-two miles by way of Elk Summit. We started ringing the phone. Since all the lines were hooked together, it was hard to get a strong ring to register. Finally an old sour-dough, Miles Howard, answered and I told him what we were trying to do. Miles had a new phone, so his first ring got the Spillmans. I asked them for help, and it was arranged that they would meet me at the old smokehouse, fourteen miles away.

At 4:30 a.m. I left the Werdenhoff with nine sled dogs (German police with an Irish setter leader) hitched single file on an eight-foot toboggan, with a tail break. The trail was solid and soon I was traveling at a breath-taking clip for Elk Summit. It was probably 6:30 a.m. when I topped out and started down the other side. Around 7:30 a.m. I met the Spillmans, half a mile above the smokehouse, they were a welcome sight! I loaded Mrs. Spillman on the sled and had quite a quarrel with Bert. He wanted to ride also, but this was impossible, he weighed 250 pounds, and the dogs were getting tired. Finally I said, "Mush" to the lead dog, "Noodles," and we left Bert behind talking to himself and waving his arms.

My first concern was to get Mrs. Spillman to Edith as soon as possible, to check for complications. The three miles to the top was very slow but, when we started down the other side, those dogs went like the wind, "heading for camp with a downhill pull." Mrs. Spillman put a scarf over her face in order to breathe, with fine snow sifting in the air. Around noon we arrived back at the mine, and found everything going fine. After talking with Edith, Mrs. Spillman said there wasn't any complications.

I gave each dog one of the caretaker's hotcakes and then started back to get Bert. Believe me, those dogs hated to move again. After about five miles, we met our man and coming back was made in good time. I stayed over the next day, to be sure everything would be all right and after that went home to my wife. I always felt proud to have played a part in this blessed event. Therein happiness lies. Harold Vassar, in later years, became an inter-Regional fire dispatcher. His record was highlighted by numerous commendations for performance. Harold died in 1966 but Edith is still living in Boise, Idaho. Their son Robert grew up to be strong, healthy and very successful.

## CHAPTER 8

### Driving Tunnel on the Scotty Vein, and Other Happenings

In 1933 my brother John built a log cabin on Smith Creek. The purpose of the cabin was to have a place for our wives to live while we drove tunnel on our quartz vein (The Little Scotty) nearby. Brother Emmit and I joined him later, when our job with the Forest Service was over for the summer season. We had to stay at another cabin one and one-half mile up a steep mountain from where our families were, while we drove tunnel. To go back and forth each day wasn't possible.

I never shall forget that winter. The upper cabin was about ten by ten feet, with a woodshed in the front. Our heat came from a wood cookstove that had a flat top and small oven for baking. The floor was made from split poles, flat side up. Lots of fresh air came in from underneath. The logs were chinked with small poles, but John didn't have much time to mud up the cracks, consequently when an all night blizzard came, and that was almost every night, our beds and the floor of the cabin would have from two to six inches of snow by morning. The water bucket would be frozen solid and you can rest assured that we never let our ears be exposed while sleeping! We always drew straws the night before, to see who would have to build the morning fire; seemed to me I lost most of the time. Maybe being the kid brother had something to do with it.

From the upper cabin we had a quarter mile to climb to the tunnel. The trail would switch back and forth through heavy snowdrifts on a steep hillside. Our tunnel was just wide enough to let a wheelbarrow pass and you had to hump over in several places to protect your dome. We followed the vein which twisted and turned like a snake. It was two hundred feet from the portal to the face to start with. Every evening we would blast the face, and each morning there was a big pile of muck to move. My two brothers would do all the shoveling and I would run the wheelbarrow. I used a rope over my shoulder and had loops over the handles of the barrow. I wore mittens to protect from getting broken knuckles along the way. The wheelbarrow had an iron wheel. We drove about sixty feet of tunnel, and then ran out of dynamite. This shut down the operation.

The Scotty vein is a fissure, cutting the formation at an angle and dipping to the southeast about thirty degrees. The wall rocks consist of mica schist, with several dark colored tertiary dikes nearby. The formation is known as the Yellowjacket. Some quartzite and schistose argillite are in the vicinity. The ore consists of chalcopyrite, gold and silver. Assays made every fifteen feet from portal to face (around 215 feet) averaged 1 oz. of gold and 15 oz. silver. Wasn't assayed for copper. The vein is narrow, from 2 feet to 6 inches wide, but very strong with a slick hanging wall. There is over two hundred feet depth at the face. The first prospector to find this showing was Clarence Scott. He always figured the Scotty was a spur off from a big North and South system. Scott worked the vein for several years, with a one stamp mill and made his bacon and beans with S20 an ounce gold. The Routsons still hold this showing.

### Left To Die

I was fire dispatcher at Big Creek. We invited my father to come down for the Fourth of July, to have a get-together picnic. When Dad passed the Scott cabin he could hear groaning coming from inside. Upon further investigation there lying in the corner was a man all crumpled up and unconscious: his face a bloody mass beyond recognition. Dad

lifted him up on the old bunk, then hurriedly started for help at Big Creek. On arrival Dad told us the story. We gathered up first aid, medicines and blankets. My sister Edna was at Big Creek visiting and she volunteered to help. I couldn't leave the phone and radio for very long, however I managed to drive Dad and my sister to the cabin, and later helped them with their vigil. The man was still unconscious and running a very high temperature. After cleaning up the patient, and doctoring his many cuts and bruises they started trying to lower the fever. There was a cold spring near the cabin, which served to make cold packs. To administer enemas and physic to an unconscious man under these circumstances was hard to do. They kept on working feverishly but had very poor results. The patient became weaker. All the color had left his face and he started breaking out with red spots, especially on his chest. Right away Dad knew it was spotted fever, caused from a tick bite, and that there wasn't much chance to save his life.

I had notified the doctor (Ward) at Cascade, Idaho, right at first, but he couldn't make it in time. Soon the man became rational and this is his story. About three weeks before, according to the date he remembered, he and his partner camped in the cabin and started prospecting the immediate vicinity. In about a week the patient noticed a tick, stuck on his head, then after a week or so he started feeling weak and sick. His partner must have left about this time. The two men had come in from Montana. My sister asked him if there was any relatives left, but apparently not. The patient received the cuts and bruises after he became unconscious, by running into the cabin walls and windows, not knowing what he was doing. At that time, the doctor in Cascade would send me a big supply of tick serum and needles each spring. As the Forest Guards and employees come through Big Creek I would give them a total of 5 cc, in two different shots. All of the residents around the country would also get their shots, but we never knew there was two prospectors on Smith Creek.

#### Hardrock Elliott

Earnest (Hardrock) Elliott lived at the head of Coxy Creek, on a high ridge called the Mile High ranch. He trapped during the winter months and packed horses in the summer for the Forest Service. In June about 1934 my brother Emmit and Richard Cowman was building a lookout house on Acorn Butte. One afternoon Roy Elliott, a brother of Earnest, come over to where they were working and told them Earnest was sick and had a high fever, so Emmit and Dick volunteered to help. It only took a couple of hours to make the trip to the Mile High ranch. They found Earnest (Hardrock) in bad shape, in bed weak and with a lot of fever. Earnest was rational and didn't know what was wrong. He thought it might be food poisoning.

They started trying to reduce the fever with aspirin and cold packs, but this never seemed to help. Earnest was rugged, and tougher than a pine squirrel, but this was something he couldn't handle. By midnight he got weaker and pale as a ghost. He only lived until about 2 a.m. After Earnest died, there was red splotches all over his chest and body. They all thought it was spotted fever. Getting a doctor there was out of the question. Earnest had his partner, Horace Younce, with him at the time, so Emmit, Dick Cowman, Roy Elliott and Younce dug the grave, the next day and buried Earnest there, at the Mile High Ranch.

## CHAPTER 9

### A. Losing Fight and Other Adventures

In 1937 I was caretaker for the Forest Service at Big Creek. Close by Richard Cowman had a store and hotel. This was March. One afternoon I got a call from Miles Howard at the Smith Creek Placer Camp, two and a half miles north of Headquarters. Miles said "Noel, George De Shanko is hurt badly. We will need a dog team to move him to the camp here." I asked if I should call Doctor Ward in Cascade, Idaho. Miles said "Yes, he will be needed." I had my wife call for the doctor while I gathered up five mongrel sled dogs. I had two, and there was three more at the Cowman hotel. Buster McCoy at the hotel volunteered to come with me. At the Placer Camp Miles Howard directed us where to find Shanko. When we got to him he was in very bad shape, suffering from shock and just half coherent.

This is what happened. Two young men around eighteen years old, George De Shanko and Salty Perkins, had come out from Kansas the summer before and decided to spend the winter with Miles Howard at the Placer Camp. According to the story I heard, these boys were not accustomed to mountain ways and had spent most of their lives in the farming country of the middle west. On this fateful day they had decided to fall a big Yellowpine and make some cross-country skis. After about an hour they had the tree ready to fall. The ground was covered with a foot or more of snow, and when the tree fell George lost his footing and ended up in the path of the big tree. The tree passed over his hips and legs, and he was carried about fifty feet down hill. Salty was safe on the upper side.

When Buster and I first saw George one of his legs was under the tree and we had a hard time to dig him loose in the frozen ground. After we got to the Placer Camp we made an examination. It was plain to see that there wasn't any hope and only a miracle could save his life. His hips were ground to a pulp and lower bowels severed. One leg was holding by the main cord, all bones ground up from the knee down. There wasn't any bleeding to speak of by now, but the pain in his stomach was terrible. We gave what first aid was possible to ease the pain. There was only bandages and aspirin at the camp. Outside the weather had turned to a blizzard and you couldn't see over two hundred feet. There was no chance for the doctor to fly from Cascade. This turned out to be the worst storm of the winter, for two days and nights. We thought more medical supplies would help, so the Golden Hand mine had been notified. The Hand mine was twenty miles north of us, over 7500 ft. Pueblo Summit. The foreman got his dog team ready and started right away. My brother John, "blacksmith at the Hand," come along also to break trail. By twelve o'clock that night they arrived at the Placer Camp. They had better pain killers than the aspirin so this made it easier for George. That night dragged by, also the next day, and about midnight of the second day George died. He had been unconscious most of the second day. It was a sad day for all of us, to see him lose his life. The next day we hauled his body to Big Creek and the doctor had just arrived.

I often wondered about a happening. My mother called on the phone, about twenty minutes before George died. She said "The boy must be dying because the dogs here are howling to the high heavens." Mom was five miles away to the north at the Werdenhoff. Afterwards, when we got back to Big Creek, my wife said a dog there had howled, at the same time. This was two and a half miles to the south of the Placer Camp. I think there's a lot about the animals around us that we don't know about.

## Feathered Messenger

About 1935, after I had finished my summer season with the Forest Service, I started looking for a winter job. Work was scarce. there was relief rolls all over the country. I knew an old timer. James Hand, who had a good silver showing in the Chamberlain Basin country near Sheepeater Ridge. Mr. Hand told me he would like to get a mining outfit to develop the prospect. I knew a mining engineer in Boise, Idaho. I arranged a meeting between him and Mr. Hand, with the idea in mind of getting the silver showing opened up and creating a job for myself. After the meeting which was supported with ore samples, assays and technical information, an agreement was soon reached and preparations made to start exploration work.

Sheepeater Ridge was situated thirty miles north of Big Creek, by trail, at an elevation of about 8900 ft. The only means of travel in the winter was by snowshoes, and summer by horses. Hand had a cabin there stocked with enough supplies and dynamite to last for two or three months. I was hired, along with my friend Henry Schied, to complete a tunnel along the vein to tap a good showing on the surface. The tunnel had already been started so we were under cover. It was all hand drilling and I sharpened the steel. The rock was very hard (granite gneiss) so we used 60X dynamite. About the middle of December my partner and I landed by plane at Big Creek, and then started hiking with webs. We both had Backboards and about sixty pounds each. I had my dog (a big northern Husky) pulling forty pounds wrapped in a deer hide, pulling with the grain of the hair. It was getting late so we stayed with my Dad that night at the Werdenhoff.

We left the Werdenhoff the next morning and continued our trip to Sheepeater Ridge. As we progressed towards Mosquito Ridge Summit, the snow gradually got deeper and the going slower. It was impossible to bring the webs to the surface and our pace slowed down to a crawl. Darkness overtook us at the summit, twelve miles from the Werdenhoff. There we made a shelter under a big white fir tree by using boughs and limbs. We built a fire in front to reflect the heat. At daylight we started out and found the traveling to be somewhat better. It was like being in a winter wonderland; trees white with snow and sparkling like diamonds in the early morning sun. Standing there on top of the divide, looking out over that sea of beauty for miles, made us glad to be alive, and our only wish was to be able to share it with others.

By noon we reached the Hand cabin, our destination. The cabin was all covered with snow and only a steep slide led to the woodshed. There was about eight feet of snow. After opening up the stove pipe. we prepared a big feed of rice, bacon and biscuits, washed down with strong coffee. The cabin had two bunks and it didn't take us long to lie down for a much needed rest.

The first day was spent in breaking a good trail to the tunnel, shoveling out the portal. and sharpening up all the steel. For the next two weeks our progress was very satisfactory with an average of two feet per day. and then my partner had a very unfortunate accident. A piece of steel flew off the drill head and embedded in his eye, at the edge of the iris. We tried to get it loose with horse hair and a small magnet, but the steel was too deep and it was dangerous to tamper with. Consequently there was nothing left to do but hike out to the doctor in Cascade. This left me alone on the job, relying upon the Forest Service phone to keep in touch with the outside in order to replenish the supplies. It had been agreed that I would phone to Boise via Big Creek and let them know when I needed them. There was an old lake bed nearby where I was supposed to make a cross by using green tree boughs. This would serve as a marker for dumping chutes loaded with supplies from the plane.

## CHAPTER 10

### Homer, Alaska, and Prospecting

The winter of 1940 I moved my family to Homer, Alaska. At first we stayed at a hotel until I bought forty acres seven miles east of Homer and built a home there. The first summer I worked for the Highway department putting up a big machine shop and later helped to build the Homer grade and high school. We raised a fine vegetable garden and I got a big bull moose for meat. I fenced off five acres for a cow and calf we bought, and put up about twenty tons of red-top hay. (Red top is a wild grass that grows even to seven feet high). It was cut with a scythe, and put on stakes to dry. The hay can be used by leaving the round shocks right in the field. Two cross pieces at the bottom of the long stake keeps the hay from moulding by letting the air circulate. We put up a small warm barn and was all fixed for winter. School was about three miles from home and my two kids, Letty age 8 and Emmit age 6, walked. Sometimes I would have to break snow for them with webs.

In 1941 I got a job with the Civil Aeronautics building a headquarters for them in Homer. That November we had a boy, "John," born at Seldovia, Alaska, just across the Kachemek Bay. After we finished the CAA headquarters, I got a job at a government chromite mine at Red Mountain, fifteen miles southeast of Seldovia. The next spring the Fire Control Service (in the Department of the Interior) gave me a job as fire guard at Homer. Later that summer we got fifteen days of steady rain that put the damper on the fire season, and the Fire Control Service gave me a vacation for ten days. We decided to spend it across Rachebek Bay from Homer at Remote Bear Cove. There the country was beautiful; small coves, bays and lagoons, plenty of wild flowers and good fishing. Above timberline there was no words that could describe the beautiful glaciers, wild flowers and the view of the Bay and surrounding landscape. The peninsular mountains are a new geologic formation and the majestic peaks are very sharp and prominent.

In Homer I chartered a thirteen-foot dory with a ten horsepower Johnson motor and after several unsuccessful attempts finally got outside the breakers and headed for Bear Cove. I noticed white caps and some heavy ground swells, but the weather forecast had been favorable so we decided to go ahead as planned. Our party consisted of my wife Una, daughter Letty 9, boy Emmit 7, and boy John 8 months. From Homer it was about twelve miles southeast to Bear Cove on the south shore of Kachemek Bay. We started our trip about 2 p.m. The first three miles went fine – bright sunshine and some wind – but it seemed that from there on our progress was going from bad to worse. The wind grew stronger and the white caps started to tossing us around. Soon I turned the dory straight for shore, abandoning the shorter route to Bear Cove. This way we would be heading into the ground swells. My daughter and oldest son was kept busy bailing out the dory as I had my hands full steering. My wife sheltered the baby from the wind and cold ocean spray. It was only one quarter mile to shore, but it seemed twice that far. We were all too busy to get scared and that was probably a good thing. I headed the boat for a small opening that led to a sheltered lagoon, but about four hundred feet from this opening the waves got so high and strong we were forced to head straight for a high, steep bluff of rock. I jumped out and pulled the boat to the rock cliff and was glad to see a five foot level shelf extending out towards the water. This afforded a place for everyone to get out. Looking up the perpendicular bluff I saw there was level steps about every five feet, reaching twenty-five feet above us. I had cast the anchor and was helping to unload everyone but it wasn't long until the waves started moving the boat



I worked for about two months and just before I decided to order more powder and groceries, a big wind and snowstorm broke the telephone line and severed my communication with the outside. I decided to work on until everything was used up, then head for Big Creek and telephone from there. I had a radio that worked part of the time, so my form of entertainment during the long evenings was to try for some special programs and make an occasional batch of fudge. I felt very close to God, all alone in that cabin, which was just a big pile of snow on the landscape. Every evening I would read the Bible. I have often wished it would be possible to recapture the wonderful, strong feeling of love and happiness that was with me.

I made a trip over the telephone line to find the break, but it must have been near the Werdenhoff. My progress in the tunnel was slowed down, however I still made a foot every day. Early one morning, about the first of April, my sleep was disturbed by a noise, which to me in my half-awake condition seemed very unusual, but it wasn't enough to bring me completely to my senses. Consequently I soon dozed off. Again this noise came. This time I set up in bed, completely awake. What I saw was hard to believe. Across from my bunk, about ten feet away at the cabin's only window, was a blue grouse tapping at the window with its bill. When the grouse saw me moving it turned and half scrambled and half flew up a four foot snow chimney that led to the outside. The whole cabin was covered with snow and only a very small opening led to the window. For some unknown reason I jumped from the bed, dragged my clothes on and just as I opened the door I could hear the drone of a plane. I quickly moved out from the cabin and soon the plane was dropping white chutes, six in all. The night before it had snowed and the trees were all white. Consequently I would have lost some of them without knowing where they landed. The chutes were loaded with approximately one hundred and fifty pounds each - groceries and dynamite. Even a new radio battery that my wife had sent. I have often asked myself the question: What was the blue grouse doing at the cabin??? During the winter I had never seen one at that altitude, any place in the country. They winter in the fir trees around seven thousand feet except fool hens (another kind of grouse). Why did it tap on the window the second time, or even the first time? Was it only a coincidence? At least I will always remember the occurrence and be able to see it in my mind's eye, as if it happened this very day.

In June the geologist "Frank Kennedy" from Boise sent two men to take over the tunnel while I went back with the Forest Service as fire dispatcher at Big Creek. That summer the tunnel was completed, under the surface showing. It turned out to be better at that depth, but due to the price of silver, the property wasn't further developed. Some day it may reopen.

The geology at the Sheepsteer Ridge showing is very good. The formation was gneiss, along with a metamorphic granite, some porphyritic coarse and granular. About three quarters of a mile from our tunnel a tremendous dike of Idaho batholith shows up and can be traced along the ridge. Under the dike Jim Hand found free gold in the overburden just alongside of the Batholith. He always figured the gold come from the dike. This is a very interesting showing and should be further explored. Batholith is one of our oldest formations and could be responsible for all the mineral showings in this district. About three miles to the northwest, at Little Sheepsteer Mountain, Hand found another silver showing that was never explored but has merit.

and anchor out into deep water. I was forced to swim out about twenty feet in order to reach the anchor chain and then hurry back to where the water was shallow enough for sound footing. It soon became apparent that it would be a man-sized job to hold the boat. The family had climbed to the second shelf and there they huddled together under blankets.

Each hour the tide got higher (some tides here, with the aid of wind, rise over thirty feet) and by midnight we had reached the last shelf, with the water lapping at our feet. From here on up was a sheer bluff impossible to climb. Within a half hour the tide had crested and started to recede. To say we were thankful is putting it mildly. By now the water had started to get more calm, and we were able to reload the boat and make it to a sheltered lagoon where the water was smooth as glass and afforded a beautiful camp site. At our camp the butter clams were plentiful so it wasn't long before we had a feast. Later that day I caught a big mess of trout in a side stream and the family found some morel mushrooms. This was living like a king. We stayed here about three days and I done a lot of scouting around, especially above timberline on the glaciers. One place below a big glacier, the formation was exposed over a large area. I found a big porphyry dike running in a north-south direction for a mile or more, and going out at right angles, several small quartz veins. One especially that I sampled was about six or eight inches wide and after panning it, the pail turned yellow with gold. The vein itself was too small, but the whole area should be thoroughly prospected. The porphyry dike looked like quality quartz latic, but should be studied under a microscope to determine for sure. Another vein I noticed was running north to south and could be seen for one half mile, coming down through solid formation. This with the naked eye. I never got over to it. A Homer fisherman told me he had saw a larger vein, higher up, above the glacier, that was highly mineralized, but he never got any of the quartz.

During my exploring I found a big glacier bowl on top, draining at least one quarter mile, with a funnel leading to the bottom which was probably two thousand feet below. To slip here would be "all she wrote." A glacier river come out underneath. The fisherman "Pete Neilsen" told me that the main body of ice had receded about one half mile since they moved to Homer twenty years before. During my hiking here, I saw several small bands of white Dahl sheep and a few black bear, also ptarmigan and bald eagles. On our way back home, the bay was smooth as glass and we had a very enjoyable trip.

## CHAPTER 11

### "The Golden Poker Chip" and Prospecting

In 1942 the Fire Control Service transferred us to Tanacross, Alaska to patrol the Alaska highway which was being built at that time. It was expected that there might be numerous fires during the construction of this road. I had spent sixteen years (mostly summers) with the Idaho National Forest, in Idaho's Wilderness near McCall, and owing to my experience on a fire forest I was promoted to District Ranger. On the 28th of February we left Anchorage with six trucks and four pickups, driven separately. The break-up had not started so the trip to Copper Center was made without mishap. There we spent the night. After dinner someone started a poker game to pass the time and it turned out to be quite an experience for me. The game wound up between an old Swede, Ole Hansen, and myself. On the last pot Ole ran out of money and put up a gold nugget to cover his bet. The nugget was the size of a large thumb and very rough, impregnated with quartz, a beautiful specimen. I won the pot and had the nugget for several years. Afterwards Ole told me where the gold come from.

This was his story. Several years previous, Ole and two ompanions were coming over the pass from the headwaters of Big Tok Creek and dropped into another watershed. They were prospecting for placer. Finally after several days' travel they made camp on a short tributary where it entered the main stream. After the work of setting up camp each went his separate way. One to pick berries, one to fish and Ole took pick, shovel and gold pan, and headed up the side creek. When the others returned and got dinner ready, Ole had not returned. Later on they heard Ole shouting and here he come, at a brisk walk, when he arrived in camp his partners knew that there was something big going on. In the gold pan you didn't need a glass to see half a dozen "clinker" gold nuggets. Soon all three was whooping it up. It was the middle of August, and the nights was getting cold. so they had to work feverishly, in order to set up a sluice box. One of them took their only horse and started for more supplies at the nearest trading post. The other two cut poles and got ready to start the placer operation.

It took ten days to start work and after that they only worked three weeks until cold nights and days stopped them. Ole said they sold \$7000.00 worth of gold at \$36.00 per ounce. The next spring they come back with a small "25" Cat and took out \$60,000 during that summer. Ole figured they had worked the claim out so they let it go back.

Later that same summer my boy Emmitt and I hiked to this claim. The main placer workings had probably been worked out but I believe there must be plenty of placer left, on the lower end. It was all virgin ground (not touched). Also my prospecting showed that there must be a rich vein at the head of this creek. I found a big porphyry dike (natural to produce gold) crossing the canyon just above where their workings stopped. Below the dike everything was covered with overburden. In their workings I found several chunks of beautiful mineralized quartz honeycombed with Vogs, where sulphides had leached. These pieces panned gold. Above the dike in one exposed place there was a small quartz stringer cutting at right angles. This rock turned my tailings yellow with gold in the pan. I have tried and dreamed of getting back to this prospect, ever since the day I looked it over, but never had enough finances. It would take a tunnel to open it up and prove, or even a backhoe. I never mentioned the names of creeks, etc., in case I might get back some day. The present price of gold makes it more appetizing. The area might be staked by now but that could be found out. The next day after the poker game we took our convoy of trucks and pickups on to Tanacross and Fairbanks without mishaps. For the next two years I was stationed at Tanacross and patrolled Alaska Highway.

## A Lightning Fire

One day while patrolling the Alaska Highway I spotted a lightning fire about sixteen miles north and close to the Alaska/Yukon border. Bill Wallace (another Ranger) was with me and we took off across country about two p.m. The days were long and you could see to walk all night. We traveled for six hours and finally reached the fire. The lightning had hit a white fir snag and was burning at the base, also it had burned about one fourth acre of grass. We cut the burning snag down, threw it in a creek close by and mixed the smouldering duff with mineral soil and water. then we had a much needed rest. At six a.m. the next day we started back to where our truck had been left. The country was rolling with low hills and occasionally we come out on a ridge or hill so we could see ahead for miles. By three p.m. we hit the Highway within three hundred feet of our pickup. Bill said "I didn't think you could do it, you must have a compass in the back of your head." What Bill didn't know was that I had marked a high point, just back of our truck, for a landmark when we first left for the fire.

A few years later, William Wallace created the "Mile Post Guide Book" that covered all of Alaska and the Alaska Highway. With starting points in the U.S.A. This venture proved to be very successful. Later he sold this business and started "The Ponderosa Art Studio" in Fort Bragg, California. Later that same summer we had a 200-acre man-caused fire on Tok River. We had to call on the Tanacross Air Force Base to help us put this fire out. The whole country was dry and had a very high fire hazard.

## Another Prospecting Trip

We had enough rain that same summer in August that Bill and I was able to take a week's leave. An old trapper, Ole Espland, had told us about finding silver ore on Ahtell Creek, about fifteen miles from Mentaska Lake. Ole went with us and the first day we camped at the head of Porcupine Creek. There was a lake there that later was called "Lake Noel" on the Fire Control map. This lake was about one mile long. At the upper end there was a rim of volcanic rock all around and the water was a greenish color. We figured it must be an old volcano chimney. The fishing was good so Bill decided to stay there while Ole and I went on to his silver find. The next morning Ole and I hiked about seven miles and arrived at his discovery. The formation was granodiorite with bands of quartzite and dolomite lime. The ore had one wall of granodiorite. The vein was about from six to ten inches wide and in some places solid galena, running high to lead. Later, assays went 157 lead and 10 oz. silver. Nearby was another vein about two feet wide that panned free gold, where it was oxidized. The area needed more prospecting, but our time was limited. We stayed that night at an old trapper's cabin and the next day picked up Bill at the lake and went on back to Tanacross.

Later I found a good showing on Little Tok of antimony, but figured it was too far back at that time. The next summer, later in the fall, we moved to Windermere, British Columbia. My son John wasn't doing very good. He was anemic and had rickets (his rib cage wasn't developing right). The doctor said he would be better off further south where the sun had more kick. The Fire Control Service wanted me to stay, but naturally we figured his health was the only thing that mattered.

## CHAPTER 12

### The Bald Eagle and Other Adventures

In 1944 we moved to Windermere, B.C., and I bought a ranch for our home. There was about ten acres, and we got four head of cattle and four pigs with the deal. I soon got a job as carpenter, building houses and remodeling. Towards spring in February I heard about a silver property on Boulder Creek. The owner had died the year before and my informant, Sinclair Craig, thought the property would be open for location. Mr. Craig was eighty years old and crippled with rheumatism. The claim was called the Bald Eagle and the former owner was John Burman. My first step was to get a free miner's certificate for \$5.00 which gave an American the same prospecting rights as Canadian citizens. I also inquired about the Bald Eagle Claim. After a week the mining recorder at Golden, B.C., wrote saying that according to their records the claim had lapsed.

Mr. Craig told me how to get to the claim. I borrowed a pair of webs, fixed my back pack with supplies, got a sharp ax and a pair of metal tags (one tag is nailed to the initial post and one to the final post to give the claim a number for record). Each claim had over fifty acres, 1500 ft x 1500 ft on the strike of the vein or fault you could claim 100 ft to left or any part of the 1500 ft. to protect the dip of the fault.

The next day I started my trip. The route went up Toby Creek nine miles then started climbing up Spring Creek for another seven miles, to the Paradise Mine, from there about one mile to the top of 8900-ft ridge and down the other side about three miles to the claim, at an elevation of approximately 7000 feet.

The first nine miles up Toby was fast walking, on a well packed game trail; but when I started towards the Paradise mine traveling got slower and slower as I gained altitude. Here I had to wear the snowshoes, and by the time I reached the mine buildings I was breaking eighteen inches of new snow, on top of about six feet of old snow. By now it was dark, and the only shelter I could find was a cellar under the bunk house. The mine had been abandoned for a couple of years and the main buildings were locked. I stayed all night in the cellar and felt lucky to be out of the weather.

The next morning I ate a cold sandwich and then continued on my trip. In about an hour I topped out on the main divide. On the other side I started down a long ridge into Boulder Creek, I thought to myself, "Hope I'm on target" as to get on the wrong ridge would take hours of dangerous snow slide travel to right myself. I went down the ridge about two miles and there surrounded by a small patch of timber was a large hump of snow. When I got closer this proved to be the old Burman cabin.

According to Craig's description the mine was below the cabin in some steep bluffs. When I got down there the snow had almost gone, because of lower elevation. I soon located the tunnel portal and by squeezing by glacier ice I was able to explore the drift. Forty feet from the portal a short cross-cut exposed about four feet of beautiful galena ore. The main drift exposed a vein which varied from eight inches to two feet wide. Some sloping had been done in different places. This ore was mostly tetrahedrite "grey copper" alongside of dolomite lime on one side and argillite on the foot wall side. The four feet of ore in the side cross-cut was a replacement in dolomite from off the main vein. Later I got some assays of 2000 ounces silver in the grey copper and the four foot showing went lead, zinc and 90 oz. silver. There also was several beds of quartzite nearby. I located one claim and then started back to Wilderness. It was noon and I never stopped until I reached home. The going was good with a broke trail and a downhill pull. That spring in June, my son Emmet and I drove a cart to the Paradise mine, then hiked to our claim. This made an easy trip to the property.

We first dug our location hole and then I started prospecting the immediate area. A large fault passed approximately four hundred feet north of the Bald Eagle, which I took to be the continuation of the Paradise mine. It showed gossan and some copper stain. The Bald Eagle seemed to be a separate fault from the Paradise, but the formation was similar. Dolomite lime quartzite beds and argillite with some replacement.

One afternoon we were digging on a fault south of the cabin. About two p.m. I asked Emmitt to put on a pot of beans at the cabin. It took longer for them to cook at that altitude. About six p.m. I called it a day and went to the cabin. When I tried the door it was latched from within, I said "Emmitt, open up, it's Dad." He opened the door, but seemed to be really shook up. Emmitt said "Dad, I'm sure glad you're here." Then he told me what happened. After he started the fire and put the beans on, he heard footsteps in the woodshed, he opened the door but could see no one. Then latched the door from the inside. Soon the footsteps come again, and then the door was pushed. The latch made an indentation in a cardboard on the inside. He said "Look" and sure enough there was a deep mark in the cardboard. I opened the door and looked the trail over, and there was no sign of any tracks, except ours. The trail was dusty. We passed it off, and set down to dinner. Afterwards we washed the dishes and I laid down on the bunk to read an old magazine while Emmitt started drawing a panorama of the high ridge across Boulder Creek from us. He looked through a small window. Later on I said "Emmitt, put some wood on the fire." He went to the woodshed and got more wood and replenished the stove. When he set down again at his drawing he said, "Dad, did you make a couple of black marks on my drawing?" I said "No, I haven't been off the bunk since you started." He brought the drawing to me, and there on the paper was two dark marks down from the main saddle which showed on the picture. Emmitt was good, and very artistic, the mountains were all defined in perfect copy. The marks made no sense, because they could not be seen on the landscape, at that distance. We were both puzzled and couldn't find any plausible explanation. I said "Just for the fun of it we will go over there tomorrow, and see what is there."

Early the next morning we started from the cabin straight down to Boulder Creek, which was about 6000 ft. elevation, then climbed to 8900 ft. elevation in order to top out in the main saddle marked on Emmitt's sketch. Then we started working our way down and to the south. (This was steep rugged country). After we had gone about three hundred yards I could see an old prospect hole. The dump was real black. Just below there was another hole showing black. This matched the sketch. made from one and one-half air miles away. I examined the formation very closely and found that the holes had been dug years before on a contact, between magnesium limestone and argillite. The black color come from the manganese.

The contact had a vein of quartz about two feet wide. showing grey copper and copper stain. Quartz was ground up and mixed with lime. Two samples I took assayed one and one-half oz. silver. Below these two showings about 300 ft. there had been a tunnel driven on a two and one-half foot vein of quartz. It was about twenty feet long. Assays from here run about the same. I never did get back to this showing even though it showed promise of being heavily mineralized at depth. By now both of us were scratching our heads and wondering what this all meant.

On the way back to the Bald Eagle claim, we stopped and sized up the lower tunnel which was about two hundred feet below the upper tunnel and, judging from the dump rock, should run far enough to tap the high grade silver ore above. This tunnel could have been at least four hundred feet long. There was about thirty sets of timber standing in place which acted as a snow protection in the winters. There wasn't any snow left at this time and everything was sound and dry. I told Emmitt "I will come down here in the morning with my carbide light and explore this tunnel."

The next morning I went back to the lower tunnel and stood there spellbound and dumb-founded. Every standing timber was laid flat and the tunnel opening was caved in, to where it was impossible to get underground. Why did this happen? This I had no answer for. John Burrman, the former owner, who had died two years before, was known to be a cranky old man. Anyone who come near his property was shot at and cursed, and everyone had given the Bald Eagle claim a wide by-pass. That summer one of the natives from Wilmer, B.C. (close by), a Mr. Hansen, informed me that he had this property located for several years. His stakes were freshly blazed and the mining recorder's records in Golden, B.C. now showed he was the owner. I was surprised because I had looked into the records before I located. However I knew it was dishonest, but never wanted to take it to court.

Over the years this property changed hands several times. I don't know if it is owned at this time or not, but it seems that something always happens to push owners away. I have never believed in spirits, etc. Perhaps what happened there could be explained as just a coincidence. However, it has left a question in my mind for all of these years. Why has not some one taken out the rich silver ore? Why is it that someone cannot own the property long enough to prove its worth?

### The Bunyan Mine

In 1946 I looked up the record on the old Bunyan Crown Grant claim. (Crown grant, in Canada, is the same as a Patented Mining Claim in the U.S.). This claim had become delinquent because of tax default. The claim, about fifty acres, was situated around five miles from Invermere, B.C. just off the valley floor. It consisted of barite and streaks of tetrahederite, all in argilliate. Above was a big band of dolomite lime, and just beyond and higher up the slope there was a big body of conglomerite. I took a sample of the streaks of grey copper and this assayed 15 oz. silver, about three feet wide. A sample of barite went 9 oz. The barite was beautiful white heavy crystals fifteen feet wide.

I paid the back taxes and got a deed for the claim. Soon afterwards an oil engineer from Calgary bought the Bunyan for cash. They used it for drilling oil, in the big Canadian oil fields near Edmonton. The barite is lowered to the bottom of the hole, below the drilling bit, and it helps to keep the hole clean and thus the mud is forced above. Barite has about the same gravity as lead.

### The Red Ledge Adventure

In 1947 there was a new mine opened up at the Mineral King, about 25 miles up Toby Creek from Invermere, B.C. I figured that the country across Toby Creek from the Mineral King had never been prospected. I waited until school was out, so my boy Ermit could go with me, and we took off. Across from the King there had been an old burn and the logs laid like match sticks in all directions. This was a losing route, to gain altitude, logs above our heads and thick brush. We back tracked and took a long steep ridge opposite, and across, Spring Creek. We traveled all day and finally topped out on a high divide at 9000 ft.

Directly across from us and in line with the King, about one and a half air miles away, we could see what looked like big piles of sawdust, like a sawmill might leave behind. We knew this wasn't possible because there wasn't a road on that side, so I figured it was red gossan, from a big fault, and probably the continuation of the Mineral King. We had to try and figure out just what route to take, because the other side was heavily timbered,

and we wanted to hit right on the beam. Our side was slow and dangerous at first, very steep, poor footing and glacier ice. Finally we reached the bottom and hit one of our markers (a big snowslide that had piled tons of logs at the bottom). From here we figured straight up. This turned out to be right. We hit a big gossan, right on the nose. From there about 100 feet there was a red spring in the same fault. By now it was starting to get dark, so we hurriedly built a shelter out of white fir limbs, and built a fire in front. We ate our lunch and laid down for the night.

It must have been about an hour later that I heard a loud "cat scream" real close. My boy raised up from the boughs and said "Dad, what in hell was that?" I said "It has to be a cougar. Throw that black moss on the hot coals so we can see." In the meantime I was looking for the only weapon we had, a double bladed hand ax. When the fire blazed up my boy said "Dad, look there." Just across the spring from us was a big she cougar, standing and watching us. About this time the fire must have scared her off. With one bound she was gone. The next morning there was the cougar tracks, in the mud. One big set and three kittens' tracks. I don't think the cougar would have attacked us, but it was real scary.

After an early sandwich, I went out and looked the fault over. The big red spot of oxidized gossan went four hundred feet downhill from where it originated. You could walk ankle-deep in iron oxide. The fault could easily be traced by a large swale, it was heading for the Mineral King mine. The formation was argilliate, slate, breccia just above the fault, and dolomite lime. I located a fifty-acre claim, got some gossan samples and then headed for Toby Creek. Named it the Red Ledge.

Later on I organized a party of three, and we drove tunnel the rest of the summer, a cross-cut for the fault. In about fifty feet we hit stringers of pure galena, heading at a cross angle for the fault. From then on, over the period of twenty years, we had a lot of bad luck. The reason was because of not enough money. The next summer water drove us out of the tunnel. The stream come in just below the fault, and we couldn't clear our drill holes from building up mud, and to stand in that water and drill would freeze anyone. Of course a jackhammer would work, but there again, it would also cost.

We had a cat road built from Toby Creek, and one fall diamond drilled above the red spring. At 180 feet down we hit the fault, but lost two bits. The fault assayed silver, but we had just started into it. In 1957 a geologist, (Mr. Webber), looked it over and was real excited, offered us one hundred thousand over a ten-year period. Webber was working for the Kimberley Sullivan Mine (the biggest lead, zinc mine in the world, at Kimberley, B.C.). Webber thought there would be at least 700 tons of ore a day, when it was opened up. Later a geologist from Vancouver looked the Red Ledge over (just before our deal) and he turned it down because 700 tons a day wouldn't be big enough for their operation. I stayed on until 1972 and then let the property go back. My partners had quit in about 1970. I have never checked to see if any outfit took it over, since I left, but I know some day it will make a mine.



## CHAPTER 13

### Tips on How to Find Metals and Precious Gems

I started prospecting with my father when I was seven years old, in central Idaho. Every summer during school vacation, we would spend all of our spare time looking for metals. Dad taught me what he had learned from experience and later I studied every book I could find.

After I married, each summer we would plan our vacation to take in a likely geological area and spend our time prospecting. So far I have found and sold several prospects in Idaho, British Columbia and Alaska. Most of my experience has been centered around base metals instead of precious gems. Following is information that helped me.

First, find the right kind of rock formations that are receptive to metals. Consult geological maps. Look for old workings and abandoned claims. Just because old claims were left behind doesn't mean that everything was found. Years ago some metals were valueless, but now are worth more than gold, silver and other ores. Also, mineral belts can be the home for a variety of metals. New methods of production, over the years, have made the recovery possible.

One example: the Golden Hand Mine in Central Idaho was found within five hundred feet of an old quartz mill and a long tunnel that had been worked and abandoned years before. The Golden Hand produced over one and a quarter million dollars in gold alone. The ore was exposed in a prominent bluff, sticking out like "a sore thumb." Some day, perhaps by diamond drill, there may be more bodies of ore opened up at greater depth there.

Huge bodies of granite, running for several miles, wide, are seldom productive to ore. The borders of such bodies, where the granite family changes to pegmatites, gneiss, etc., or contacts argillite, mica schist, slates, quartzite and other metamorphic formations and where the formations are broken up with gabbro, basalt, rhyolite porphyry, quartz latite and lamprophyre dike intrusions, are very likely locations. Limestone formations are a prime lead for some lead, zinc and silver ore bodies. Breccia alongside a fault sometimes affords a passageway for mineral fumes coming from a magma below. Quartzite makes a good wall in such cases to hold the metals in place. Look for signs of faults, quartz veins and stringers.

I have never in all of my prospecting experience found a fault showing rich metals, that was not backed up with heat rock, either on a parallel contact, cutting across the fault nearby or coming in from below. There is a reason for everything, ore minerals are no exception. Fumes and solutions from these heat rock magmas come up through the faults and deposit the ores. Again I stress the importance of finding heat rock where there is evidence of faults. Sometimes heat rock dykes stand out very prominently and they could lead you to uncover veins that may be obscured by over burden. The contact of two different formations often form a likely location for a fault, that could be worthwhile, also fissure veins, cutting the formation, are very likely openings to accommodate ores.

Pegmatite deposits should never be overlooked for a variety of precious gems. The extent is usually small, but often times very valuable. Gems can also be found in rhyolite, obsidian, basalt, gneiss and other basic rocks. Learn to identify all the main

formations associated with precious gems and base metals. To know them by sight in the field is very important. Also know the gems and base metals, at least enough to know whether to collect samples and specimens. List their location and have an expert identify them. This way you can learn by experience and not overlook something worthwhile.

When panning for gold, gems etc., as you move upstream watch for oxidized quartz and heat rocks, which may help to lead to the source. When panning keep your pan free from all grease. This can be done by heating pan over a camp fire, forge or stove, until the pan turns blue. Any quartz that is oxidized or not, be sure and roast it for three hours at a red heat, to free the minerals from the sulphides, especially gold. Sometimes gold is not freed from oxidized rock unless it is roasted. Tellurium and other minerals can hide the gold. If you are panning in a stream bed, don't be afraid to dig down. Always go deep enough to reach either false bedrock (clay or hardpan) or true bedrock, otherwise you're just wasting your time.

A simple effective way to pan for cinnabar (quicksilver) is: crush the rock very fine, concentrate heavy material by panning, then put concentrates in partially hollowed potato, turning open side over hot stove. Heat will cause the quicksilver to condense into potato. Afterwards dry potato (lower heat) powder and pan for specks of quicksilver. You can also buy a sniffer, which shows pure quicksilver in water by using heat.

#### List of supplies needed for field work:

- Pocket knife, to help identify rock and minerals by hardness and streak.
- Pocket compass, to take bearing, dip and strike of fault or formation (Brunton compass ideal)
- Knapsack, to carry maps, notebooks, notices, can to nail on, posts for locating claim.
- Prospecting pick, for breaking and obtaining specimens (metal handle is best)
- Mineral glass, at least 10 power
- Gold pan, even small quartz pan is suitable
- Hydrochloric acid, to test for lime. Always test all porphyry or other heat dikes near the faults. They can also contain valuable minerals and may give indications of what the faults contain.
- Magnet sometimes is useful for cleaning tailings in the pan, and identification of iron.
- Look for minerals in wall rocks of the faults. In some cases wallrock ores point to bodies, and paying mines to greater depths.
- Always have a fire assay, it is much more accurate for gold.
- Watch for mineral stains: copper, cobalt, nickel, silver, cinnabar, iron and many others. These stains in a gossan (oxidized vein material) may mean the minerals are deeper, or stains on a slope may have been moved by water down hill. Also stains may follow seams, stringers, soft decomposed rock, etc., from the main source. Explore them thoroughly. Some iron gossans may mean sulphides at depth, which could be lead, zinc, silver, copper etc. Always pan gossans: there may be free gold on the surface. Gold does not break down. Some of our largest mines have been found by exploring gossans.

## CHAPTER 14

### Help Save Our Heritage

I believe that all people on earth have something far greater than wealth of man-made materials to be proud of. It is something that words cannot describe. It is all around us all the time, and can be felt and enjoyed by everyone. It is simply "our heritage" that God gave each one of us, when we were born. Some people go through life and never see or feel this wonderful blessing. It does not take any special skill or secret formula to unveil these wonders. Just get away to the quiet countryside, the deserts, mountains, in fact anyplace where man has not destroyed the ecology.

At first, relax, soon you will feel the stillness and peace, broken only by nature's noises, as the song of a bird, the rustle of the wind, or the movement of nature's hosts. Even a blind man can feel the mystery, and wonders around him. Then look out and see, perhaps the majestic peaks and mountains, the valleys all still and peaceful, the landscape covered with beautiful flowers, grass and trees, or desert cover. In the wintertime, the beautiful cover of snow, each flake having its own pattern of beauty. See the sun shining on water, our beautiful lakes, streams and oceans. Think of all the life around us, and know that each and every thing has a purpose to fulfill, and a contribution towards our own living and happiness. After you have really discovered our own Garden of Eden, you will always be conscious of it, wherever you may be. I would like to ask some questions.

Why do we human animals keep on destroying all of these blessed gifts, that God so graciously bestowed upon us, out of love for us, to balance God's creation of nature, to make a paradise on earth? To name all of our trespasses would be almost impossible, but to name a few: How about our songbirds, we kill them in every conceivable way, with insecticides, guns and traps. We destroy their homes and habitats. Is there anything on earth more heavenly than a bluebird or robin? Doesn't your heart skip a beat when you see the first one, in the spring? Are there any words to describe their beauty?

This is just one very small example. How about all birds? Even those that prey on animals are just carrying out their session in life. Did you ever watch the great American Bald Eagle, or the majestic Golden Eagle? How graceful sailing to and fro; how loving to their kind! I could name all animals on earth and not one is spared from the human onslaught. Most are going down to oblivion and complete destruction.

How about our life-giving streams, lakes and even oceans that are being poisoned and contaminated, mostly in the lower reaches of streams where we use the water for human consumption? How about the pollution in the air we breath? How about the millions of tons of litter we carry and deposit along our beautiful beaches and stream banks, highways and countryside?

Will God finally stop this wanton waste or just let us destroy ourselves? It is the duty of every human to work, in their small way, to "keep our garden clean." If we do this the job will be made easy for everyone, and the joys we receive from just being a part of this great heritage will reward us a thousand-fold. This is our country; let us all work together so that no part of it will be taken from us.

I don't believe our wilderness ice boxes are the answer. Moneyed people are exploiting our game herds and fishing, by taking out and not putting back. Some drift down the River of No Return on a raft, half drunk, doped and stark-naked. These kind of people could care less about the wonders of beautiful Idaho. They talk about multiple use for minerals and timber, but at the same time hobble these resources to where it's nothing more than just empty words.

Mining and the lumber industry is one of Idaho's main crops, for our existence. Let us harvest these crops by using common sense and strict laws, educate people to use the right way.

At first, soon you will feel the silliness and peace, broken only by the... as the song of a bird, the taste of the wind, or the movement of water's flow. Even a blind man can feel the mystery, and wonders around him. Then look out and see perhaps the majestic peaks and mountains, the valleys all still and peaceful, the landscape covered with beautiful flowers, grass and trees, or desert cover. In the winters, the beautiful cover of snow, even like having its own pattern of beauty. See the sun shining on water, our beautiful lakes, streams and oceans. Think of all the life around us, and know that each and every thing has a purpose to fulfill, and a contribution towards our own living and happiness. After you have really discovered our own Garden of Eden, you will always be conscious of it, wherever you may be. I would like to ask some questions.

Why do we human animals keep on destroying all of these blessed gifts that God so graciously bestowed upon us, out of love for us, to please God's creation of nature, to make a paradise on earth? To name all of our resources would be almost impossible, but to name a few: How about our songbirds, we kill them in every conceivable way with insecticides, guns and traps. We destroy their homes and habitats. Is there anything on earth more heavenly than a bluebird or robin? Doesn't your heart skip a beat when you see the first one in the spring? Are there any words to describe their beauty?

This is just one very small example. How about all birds? Even those that prey on animals are just carrying out their mission in life. Did you ever watch the Great American Bald Eagle, or the majestic Golden Eagle? How graceful sailing to and fro; how loving to their kind! I could name all animals on earth and not one is spared from the human onslaught. Most are going down to oblivion and complete destruction.

How about our diving streams, lakes and even oceans that are being poisoned and contaminated, mostly in the lower reaches of streams where we use the water for human consumption? How about the pollution in the air we breathe? How about the millions of tons of litter we carry and deposit along our beautiful beaches and stream banks, highways and countryside?

Will God finally stop this wanton waste or just let us destroy ourselves? It is the duty of every human to work in their small way to "keep our garden clean". If we do this the job will be made easy for everyone, and the joys we receive from just being a part of this great heritage will reward us a thousand-fold. This is our country, let us all work together so that no part of it will be taken from us.

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