

COLEVILLE

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Civilian Public Service

When the draft was reinstated shortly before World War Two, the three peace denominations made an agreement with the government that was to the advantage of all concerned. Their men would be drafted but not into the military. Instead they would do work that really needed doing here, and the churches would cover the living expenses of those in service in this draft status. This arrangement was called Civilian Public Service or CPS. Since the Quakers gave their members a choice in their decisions, they accepted men of other denominations into their program.

This program would be at no cost to the government, which meant that the churches would pay the living expenses and the Forest Service would provide the jobs and everything needed to carry it out. This was run by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), with a budget of thirty dollars a month per man. Out of this, each man received two dollars and fifty cents to buy his necessities and he was also responsible for all his clothing. We were required to wear sturdy clothing and heavy boots for work in these rock mountains, so our finances were a real pinch.

Financial Help

We developed a number of creative ways for solving these problems. When I was at Wellington, Nevada, for two or three weeks, a local rancher needed a large number of post holes dug, as he was making a long extension of his fence. He stopped by our camp and asked if any of us wanted a job in our time off. Our Sundays were off. I tried once, but I was not in too good shape and the heat got to me. This gave an idea to a member of our group who had a number of skills. This man was an outstanding member of our group and a key leader. Try as I can, I can't remember his name, so I'll call him Mr. Fixit.

The center of the Mammoth Lakes community at the time, consisted of the Ranger Station with the ranger's home behind it. Across the short road to our camp, in the direction of the main highway, was the garbage dump. Across the main road was the filling station and Mammoth Lakes Inn, which was opposite the Ranger Station. There were probably four or five other homes on the main road from the highway, but none in that direction. Our biggest job that summer was digging a large hole for a bigger septic tank for Mammoth Inn. Digging there was a big problem, as we soon encountered a boulder so large several strong men could not lift it, and the hole was

right next to all the buildings there, so we had to dig around it and then clear it out so the tank could be poured.

The other source of extra income was the bottle business. When the campgrounds were open, two of us would always be assigned with a pickup, to collect all the garbage. There were always a large number of used glass milk and coke bottles in this collection. Most campers didn't bother to return them for the deposit. We would collect them and take them to a corner at our camp, where others would wash, sort and check them for chipped spots, and then figure out where we could return them for the deposit. Most local stores were wise to us. However, at the end of the season, when they were about to close down for the winter, they were happy to take what we had collected, because they needed to return most of them to their suppliers in the city.

Camp Mascot

Right after I got into CPS, I was at home and needed to get back to camp. We got in touch with Dwight, who had also just been assigned to Coleville. He had a Model A with a rumble seat. I was offered a ride on the left side of the rumble seat. He asked for a little kerosene to stretch out the gas in his five-gallon tank. He added the better part of a five-gallon tin. After midnight, when we happened to be in front of a closed gas station, I felt and heard a clunk, and the tire on my side walked out from under the fender. The axle had broken. We woke the man at the station, who said he had another out back and Dwight was free to install it the next day for a slight fee. The others of us knew there was a Methodist church in town, and they were usually helpful to COs. A minister drove the rest of us home and helped us out of our jam, and the director at camp figured out a way to cover for the driver.

This story is important because, a little later, I was a cook's helper at Wellington with my friend Bill Vanhoy, who had a little, young female dog called Manzanar. He had this dog because the second time Dwight had driven back to camp, when passing Manzanar he had spotted a puppy at the side of the road. He knew it had to be a puppy belonging to someone in that camp. He knew that he couldn't ask the guard at the gate to try to return it and, as there were no other buildings in the area, this puppy was in the same situation as if it had been dropped off in the sagebrush desert. So he took it back to camp. That is why it became the camp mascot named Manzanar.

To Coleville

The first time I heard of the Inland Stages Bus Company, was when I was told to report to the bus station at Fourth and Main Streets in Los Angeles, at six p.m. Monday night, to be drafted. My ticket would be there. I was glad that I had already finished all my exams, so I would get my Junior College degree. When I got there my ticket was ready, and I was on my way. There were two runs a day, and the same bus ran from Los Angeles all the way to Reno. This was the company's only route and the only public transportation to serve that area. The rail line on that route was for freight only.

By midnight we got to Bakersfield, where there was a one-hour layover while the bus went to be gassed up and maintained. Everyone had to get off while this was being done. There was only a short main street, and the only place open at that hour was a bar. There was not a soul on the street, so the only choice was to go into the crowded noisy bar. Since there was a large Marine advanced training base nearby, at that time of the day it was full of Marines. From time to time the Shore Patrol would come through to spot trouble, but they would only come in groups of four or more for the sake of their own safety. I stood in a far corner and tried to disappear into the woodwork. I never took that bus ride again. This experience made me realize that others probably had a strong prejudice against conscientious objectors, and I should keep a low profile when hitchhiking, and certainly not think of taking the bus again, even if I had the money for it.

As we went on through the night, the driver would stop briefly at small towns to drop off the L.A. papers, and sometimes a package or two, and make a comment to an agent. By early morning, while starting a climb towards Sherwin Grade, he stopped at a small road in the sagebrush where a dog was waiting for him. The driver opened the door, the dog climbed in, got a paper and a pat on the head, and went trotting off to a distant house.

Late the next afternoon, we pulled into the small village of Coleville, where I got off, picked up my duffel bag, and went into the only open store. They phoned the camp, which was within sight on the other side of the valley, a couple of miles away. Soon a truck came down to pick me up. That was the start of my CPS experience. My experience at Bakersfield explains why I was not too interested in taking public transportation, even if I'd had the money.

Arrival at Coleville

Because of my experience right after my arrival in camp, I knew that Inyo Forest had extended up to the Oregon border and was in the process of being divided into two parts. All the area north of Mono Lake would become Mono National Forest, and the smaller area to the south remained as Inyo National Forest. Most of the men would be in Mono with its larger area, with the headquarters in Reno, while CPS 37's headquarters would remain at Coleville. There would be twenty men assigned to Inyo National Forest and located at Mammoth Lakes. Our ranger, Fred Meckel, had the job of working this transition out.

Dog Valley

Soon after I arrived at Coleville and received a week or two of orientation and training in fire line building, a couple of other newcomers and I were sent to Dog Valley. This was a temporary spike camp, up from Reno on the north side of the Donner Pass highway. It was a large Forest Service meadow, where we were starting to drain the lower part, which was swampy. This area could make a good future camping ground. After a couple of weeks, we were switched to digging and laying the foundations for a flush toilet near the entrance road to the meadow. We were told that this would be the center of this campsite, which would grow out from there.

Flying Squadron

The idea was that, at whatever ranger station where CPS men were located, there would be a small cohesive group of six to eight men. They would be highly trained men who could function independently. Each would have its own truck, and if there was a fire which was too big for local men to take care of, the Flying Squadron would be called out and form an effective first striking force to stop the fire in its tracks. For training purposes, we were called out in the crew truck there on practice runs a few times. Most of them were at night. The crew truck there was a stake side, with canvas covered hoops, a unit of slide-in benches, and a toolbox against the back of the cab. We poked fun at our new title, that we were a “Flying Squadron,” as all the trucks had speed controls on their engines to keep the trucks from going faster than thirty-five miles an hour.

Getting to Distant Fires

The fires would usually start or flare up in the heat of the afternoon. They might be noticed before dark and attacked by small local crews. It would be later that night when the decision was made that this fire was probably going to be big, and other crews should be called in. Therefore it was usually about bedtime, ten o'clock, as most of us listened to the radio or would socialize till then, when the call would go up and down the line, wherever our crews were located at the time.

Our crew had become a very good team when things were working right. The lead man had to know where the line was going, and was often a Forest Service foreman, unless it was obvious where the line would go, because we were just widening a line already there. The rest of us were evenly spaced behind. Each of us, including the leader, had different tools and would take one swipe and take a step forward.

We would get blankets and jackets and get into the back of the truck, and if a foreman was going with us, he would get in front with Wally. I believe the rules were that there should be a set of benches in the back for a fire crew truck, and there should be a canvas covering over the back. I believe when we went on a simulated fire while we were at Dog Valley that first summer, we did have that. What I am sure of, was that the tools were all supposed to be safely stored in a strong box, secured behind the cab, as the foremen occasionally mentioned this; but for the first couple of years, at least, our truck did not have this, so they would have been free to fly back and hit us.

When we arrived at the fire basecamp the next morning to get our assignment, we would wave at our friends if we spotted other Coleville trucks pulling in. It was sort of like a reunion. After getting an assignment and some rations, we would set off to our section of the fireline. We were considered a fresh crew: good for up to twenty-four hours on the line.

Food at Distant Fires

If we were on the line long, a runner would come down the line handing out K rations. All the major fires we went on were in the area north of Reno, or not far south of there. Further south, the area was too high and humid to support much of a fire. I was on one fire where we went straight up to the fireline when we arrived, but when we came back to the fire camp, after a long shift on the fireline, we discovered that the main Forest Service warehouse had brought out a base camp kitchen and crew, and we sat down at tables to a steak dinner. They wanted to give us a real break. I felt just a bit guilty, as they didn't send us back on the line that time.

Grazing Service Food

One time when we arrived, we were told that during the night the wind had died down, and the men already on the line were more than adequate to monitor the burn, so we were not needed.

Usually with Grazing Service fires, we wouldn't be on them too long, so we would get by with the food we brought with us. However, one time we were on one of their fires for a couple of days. The next morning a Grazing Service employee found us and gave each of us a cheap, cotton drawstring bag that read "Grazing Service, One Man One Day." It contained a number of cans of various kinds of food, supplied with openers. No hardtack biscuits or chewing gum. I thought that was really neat and kept that bag as a souvenir.

Back from Dog Valley

The day we were driven back to Coleville, when all of us were pulled out of Dog Valley, we knew that the next day twenty men were to be assigned to the Inyo National Forest, and be located at Mammoth Lakes. The Quaker camp director was allowed, by the Civilian Public Service rules, to be in charge of the selection, which could be done in a Quaker way. Those of us who came from the Los Angeles area all wanted to be in that group, as it was much closer to southern California. It was a long meeting that night, and I was glad I was included, for which I was very grateful. I'm afraid my friend Dwight didn't make the cut.

We were told that we were to take the most reliable of the four stake-side trucks at Coleville. There was a Forest Service mechanic at the garage there to keep them repaired, but this service would not be available for the Inyo unit. Our truck was specifically assigned to Wallace Dunn, who would be its only driver, and he would need to keep it repaired on his own. It was his truck. He was a farm boy from the Kansas wheat belt where, with his family, he had been involved in the care and use of farm equipment up to and including large combines. For a year or so, we continued to have a food supply truck come down from the main camp, but only every other week rather than weekly.

The First Fall at Mammoth Lakes

After we arrived at Mammoth Lakes, the main project, was the building of a fire tower, which in this case was a cabin on a bare knoll, as the location chosen already had a clear view in all directions. This was a wooden cabin for living quarters for the lookout man, with a chest high cupola on the southern end with clear view in all directions, and the triangulation table. When we arrived, this project was nearly completed, but a couple of men went up there for a week or two to help with the finishing touches. Mr. Fixit was a key member of this small group because of his carpentry skills. When it was finished except for adding the lightning rods, a thunderstorm came up and it was burned to the ground. The next year, when we rebuilt it, the lightning rods went on as soon as the frame was up.

The Fire that Wasn't There

Most of the local fires were away from the high sierras, on the other side of the highway in the high country there. We now had radio contact with a firetower on the top of a bare knoll, a cabin not standing on top of a tower, but sitting on the ground, which was the highest spot on that side of the highway. The road to the tower was through the tall woods to the north, and there was sagebrush in the other direction.

Our lookout was an elderly man new to the job. We had climbed into our truck, with a fireguard as our foreman sitting in the cab with Wally. The lookout had told us that he had seen smoke rising into the air from the open high sagebrush country to his south. As the trail we were on had only been used by pickups, and our truck had dual tires, it was a very bumpy ride. There were rocks along the road we had to bump over. We looked all over and saw no sign of a fire, so we headed for home. The lookout had spotted the dust from a large herd of sheep. The lookout was told to look more carefully.

Evenings at Mammoth

The first fall when I was at Mammoth, I spent much of my free time in the evenings getting acquainted with some interesting people. One was Gordon Hayes, an actor who had been on stage in Los Angeles. His recent one was *Three in a Bed* about two men and a woman. He told me that one night, at a point in the play when he was on stage alone, straightening up with his back to the audience, they broke out laughing. He looked to see why, and a large rat from backstage had come out center stage and stood up. To get back the audience he went backstage, got a huge rat trap and said, "I guess that will fix him." One person, when leaving the theater afterwards, had said that she wondered how they had trained that rat.

An older man told me that he and his wife were a team of script writers for a popular Saturday evening radio show from Los Angeles. He was able to keep working, as he could discuss ideas with her over the phone. I watched him listen to the show over the radio Saturday night, and he was always tense and anxious when listening to the reaction of the audience when one of his

jokes was used. What was fun for me was work for him. I assume that these men found some way to get discharged, because I never heard of them after that time.

Just four years before, I had been living in a dorm in a school in Kobe, Japan, where I could see the Japanese fleet in the bay from my window. I admit I followed the progress of the war in the Pacific in detail. But though I was involved as a pacifist, I also felt guilty about it.

Meckel and Me

Fred Meckel was the ranger in charge of the Inyo National Forest. I got a feeling that he realized that I didn't have many skills, because a couple of times when he was assigning jobs for us to do when we reported for work in the morning, I was the last to be assigned and it was something that was easy for me to understand and do. However, that feeling didn't last long, and he was always very appreciative and supportive of all of us. This gave him a very loyal crew.

Those of us, except for the two or three taking part in the fire tower project, were given a number of different projects by Fred Meckel. Two men were assigned to campground maintenance, while the rest of us filled in whenever needed. Most of this involved developing or improving existing campgrounds.

Protecting Main Camp

The first winter I was at Coleville, the camp ranger got the idea that we should all have training and be organized to fight a fire, in case one of the buildings in camp should catch on fire at night when the administration was away. He also thought that we should use water from rain barrels in front of each barrack, in case the power was out, and bring water by bucket chain to the fire. He chose one of the men, who was a bit bossy and not too popular, as fire chief.

One night this man called a drill by beating on a gong just before we went to bed. He chose the ranger's barrack and its roof. We formed a chain, with two men passing them up the ladder and the last man dumping it on the roof. After a short time, the leader, who was standing by the foot of the ladder, said "OK, you can empty your buckets," and the man on the roof emptied his bucket on the man speaking. That was the last time I was aware of this training being used.

The Sawmill

The main project at Coleville was the sawmill. This mill had been there before the Civilian Public Service camp opened. The Forest Service used it to provide cut and dried lumber for their own building projects. It had a large six-foot circular blade to handle the large logs which they were using. Donald Warrington had been the first sawyer when the camp opened, as he was quite intelligent, and the Forest Service felt he was very careful when using the blade. When cutting such large logs, the blade would quickly start to heat up and warp just a bit, stalling the saw.

Then work had to stop for some time while the blade cooled. To make the sawing more productive, from time to time the current sawyer would lean down and feel the blade with his left hand, to judge if it was starting to get too hot. He was extremely cautious when doing this because of the experience of a former CPS sawyer.

Donald Warrington had arrived at Coleville soon after it opened. He and a Friend from the Philadelphia area, Sam Snipes, were assigned as sawyers. One day when he was checking the blade, his hand slipped and just like that he lost all the fingers on that hand. He was immediately given a disability discharge. Also, Sam Snipes had left for another assignment back east, so the sawyer I worked with very briefly was another man. The camp doctor, Darwin Nelson, stitched up his stumps before he left on his disability discharge. Although I had never met the man who was injured, I was very impressed by this story.

When we returned to the main camp for the first winter, I was again assigned to a number of different jobs. I was assigned to the sawmill for a couple of weeks. When I started, I was out in the yard sorting lumber and cribbing it, which involved sorting by size and then stacking and restacking similar dimensions, so that as they dried out in the open, they would dry true and straight.

The logs being cut for the sawmill came from an area up towards Bridgeport. It was on the other side of Highway 395, but not too far from the road, where there was tall timber and a lot of snow. I have a very limited memory of the couple of days I worked there. We helped wrap a chain around the front of a large log at the top of the steep chute. We then attached the cable to the back of a forest service bulldozer, which dragged it down to the foot of the sluice and across a short flat stretch to a small pile at the highway, ready to be transported to the sawmill. I was not told how that was done, but I am sure they had to hire a trucker to get the logs to our sawmill. One time, the log almost rolled onto me, and I had to jump quickly aside to avoid being crushed. I just remember running alongside the front end of a log, and realizing that this could be dangerous, as the very heavy log could roll unpredictably.

Uses of the Lumber

The Forest Service used this lumber for any building projects they needed to do. The big project we were aware of was for a bridge across the river, for a stock trail they were building. In order to drive sheep up into the high country around Bridgeport for summer grazing, they were being driven on the highway, because part of the way there was no alternative. A stock trail was their answer.

The couple of days I spent on this project, the road to the bridge had already been roughed in, and most of the crew were set to work completing the planking on the bridge. But the three or four of us newcomers were given tools and sent to clear the bushes and small trees on the other side, so that when the bridge was completed, the bulldozer would bulldoze the trail around the side of the hill.

I was with another youth who was on his first day on the job, after being drafted and assigned to Coleville. He and I went along the top edge of the ground where the bulldozer would be working. The man with me had taken a double-bit felling axe and was wearing gloves because it was so cold. I told him that if you were using an axe in the snow, it was essential that at least your right hand should be bare, so as to maintain control. He did not listen to me, and to show how strong he was, he took energetic blows on the small pine he had chosen. Before long he got some ice on his gloves, and on the next stroke the axe flew out of his hand and spun in a flat trajectory down the slope, at about five feet off the ground. By sheer luck, the handle of this flat spinning axe just brushed the head of my friend working down below. I had nightmares about what could have happened.

Dr. Nelson

That first winter I got acquainted with Dr. Nelson, the camp doctor who had stitched up the injured sawyer. In addition, there was also a male nurse who had been drafted and was working with him. I'm sure that the AFSC was pleased that these two men were drafted and could provide medical services in this camp. I was told that when he gave a routine physical to Walt James, a young Friend from Berkeley who was at least six feet four inches tall, he had gotten enthusiastic and suggested stretching exercises. If this man was proved to be two inches taller, that would be grounds for discharge, as the Services limited the sizes of their mass-produced uniforms. Whether it made sense or not in our case, the same rules that applied for the army also applied to us. I also heard that, though this doctor wasn't a veterinarian, he spayed a female cat that was living at the camp, which gave him a chance to be useful.

Wellington

Later that winter, I was sent to a small, temporary camp in Wellington, Nevada, as a cook's helper. This was because, at the time, they happened to have more men available than they needed for meaningful jobs at the main camp, and the cook there was having a hard time keeping up with his work. My job involved getting up early, starting a fire in the kitchen range, and making a lot of sandwiches for the men to take out for their day's work, while the cook was making breakfast. I also had to clean out the men's barracks in the morning. Then in the evening, I washed the dishes and cleaned up the kitchen. I also would help a bit with the dinner. This gave me a lot of free time in the afternoon.

Timber Cruising

This camp was temporary because a Timber Cruising program was being started, which would survey all the Forest Service areas on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada mountains south of Reno. Since they had a lot of Quaker draftees from the Philadelphia area, who all had at least some college education and would be quick learners, the Forest Service must have felt that this

was a great opportunity to get all this area surveyed. Because they were starting this program in the winter and they wanted to get the team trained, this low-lying, dry, semi-arid location was chosen. The areas they were interested in were, at the time, deep in snow.

The outstanding tree in this countryside was the Pinyon Pine. This is a slow-growing solitary tree, never more than twenty feet high, known for its very savory pine nuts. This formed the staple food for the local tribes who had lived in the area for many generations, and continues to be a major source of their income. A very old tree can have a trunk up to a bit more than two feet in diameter, but is not always straight, and soon branches out and breaks down to a cluster of slender branches. Its only local “lumber” use is that these slender side branches make excellent fence posts for the ranchers.

However, the men were able to get their training, and before they had finished they cut a couple of two-foot to four-foot logs, which were taken to the sawmill for research into the characteristics of the wood, to see if there were any possible uses for it. One time when I was stacking lumber at the sawmill, I picked up a splinter of this wood and kept it as a souvenir.

The same ranger was always in charge of the timber cruising program for the whole area south of Reno. This was because the team needed to be able to travel around to survey all timber areas, regardless of what forest they were working in. Also, they had their own truck, which was a butcher wagon, a heavy, narrow, long-bed pickup which could get into fairly rugged terrain. It was in somewhat better condition than our stake-side at Mammoth Lakes. I think that Wellington might have been in an area assigned to the National Grazing Service.

I remember going into the ranger’s office one day, and he showed me how he laid out quadrants on the map, by establishing base lines ten miles apart, both east and west, and north and south. These quadrants were laid out starting at a known point, a benchmark entered in the ground. At a point on an east-west line, he would assign one of his three-man crews, and another ten miles to the west. One man, with an accurate compass, would start them walking due north, and the others would have to help clear the way where necessary, so that they could maintain as close to a straight line as possible. When a tree large enough to be useful for lumber was spotted within ten feet on either side of this established line, the team would stop to measure it. They had a simple hand-held triangulation device to give them its height, and then they would measure its diameter. With these two figures, they could look up in their code book, which would give them an estimate of its available board feet.

The other thing I was interested in doing in my afternoons, was to learn more about the nature of the Pinyon Pine tree. There was one of them just back of the cook’s barrack. When I checked it out, I discovered that winter was just the time of year when the tight cones open out, revealing the nuts. I decided I wanted to see what these pine nuts tasted like, so I gathered a lot of the loose cones and spent a couple of afternoons extracting the nuts. I ended up with only a handful of nuts and decided I would give the local Native Americans no competition. However, the nuts I had gathered did taste very good.

The Fence Post Job

While we were at Wellington, a local rancher who needed some help in building a fence had contacted one of the men, to see if some of us might want a job digging fence post holes for him when we were free. Some of us went on a Sunday afternoon to help him. As the rancher was busy, he sent his son in the ranch pickup to get us. This nine-year-old was so short that he could not see out the windshield while reaching the pedals. The ten-mile gravel county road was a straight run to the gate of the ranch, with no other traffic, so there was no chance of his being pulled over for driving without a license. I dug a few holes that day, but wasn't very successful, and by late morning it got so hot that I got dehydrated and collapsed with heat exhaustion and had to quit.

Mr. Fixit got the idea of finding part-time work to help with our finances from this experience. If we were in an area where there was a small local community of summer cottages, he would find someone who needed a small job done, and would arrange for two or three of us to go with him for a few hours on our time off. He was a man of many skills and would plan to get a small job done quickly. If my memory is correct, he sometimes held out for a dollar an hour, at least for himself. If we could get a few jobs during the summer, it really helped those of us who had no other financial resources. Since one of the major products of that area of Nevada is silver, and silver dollars are stackable and can be used like chips in the Reno casinos, I remember that at that time I only had money you could bite. My total cash reserve at that time was a stack of twenty silver dollars on the crossbeam behind my cot. It was a blessing to be free from the cash economy for a time.

Since this timber cruising crew needed to be an isolated, stable group of young Friends, it ended up being a training school for the next generation of the leaders of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. That made it a unique religious seminary.

Lucinda

Barbara Taylor, a young Quaker student at Swarthmore College, had bought a Model A Philadelphia bread truck which was no longer in use. She could buy it for a few dollars and gas was still available, so it was an easy way to get out west to visit the young Friends from their area who had been drafted and were working in the Forest Service. Her roommate, Ellen Bailey, and another girl from Swarthmore were glad to go with her.

Barbara had come to see Sam Snips, her boyfriend, and they all took a few days to drive up the west coast together. During the summer, Sam and Barbara had broken up and he became engaged to Ellen. However, by the end of the summer he was back engaged to Barbara again. At the end of the summer, when it was time for the girls to return for the fall semester, the girls decided to go back by train, as gas rationing was looming, so Art James bought the truck. She was called *Lucinda*, which they thought must have been Barbara's middle name. By that time, Ellen Bailey was engaged to another of Sam's friends, Charles Brown, whom she later married.

Art was a member of a very large Quaker family, living in Van Nuys California. He needed to get home as often as he could, because one of his younger brothers had a severe case of Down's Syndrome, then called Mongolism. He had never learned to talk. At that time, most families would have solved the problem by placing him in an institution, but they were determined to keep him at home. He was eight or nine years old and was getting to be stronger and harder to manage. Art was the best at controlling him, as he looked up to his older brother.

Therefore, Art needed to get home as often as possible, but he also didn't want to break the law. His answer was to do some research. The Selective Service regulations required that our assignment be at least 250 miles from home, so that we would not be in easy commuting distance on weekends and have an advantage over those in the service. Some men got a few more miles out of their "A" sticker gasoline rations of five gallons, by adding some kerosene to their gas. This didn't add many miles of travel and was also illegal, as the kerosene was not for vehicle use and had no road tax added.

In his research, he found that diesel fuel was not rationed, as it was mostly used for farm tractors, which were important for food production. It was legal for trucks to use it on the road, as long as they registered their truck with the California Department of Motor Vehicles, reported their mileage monthly and included the required road tax. This left it up to Art and *Lucinda*. She was listed as a truck, even though her use was for passenger travel.

His task was to teach *Lucinda* how to function on a very different diet. This is how he figured it out. The Model A engine was very simply constructed and could function even if a good deal of unrationed kerosene was added to the fuel mixture. He discovered that diesel fuel works well in an engine, but only at high temperature, which is why commercial trucks and buses keep their engines running as long as they are in service during the day's run.

The Model A's bearings are lubricated by a little dipper on the bottom of its four pistons. The lubricating oil is pooled in the bottom of the crankcase. As the engine runs, these dippers splash the oil up to lubricate the piston and main bearings. With gasoline, when the engine starts, all the mixture in the piston chambers is in the form of a gas, which combusts and powers the motor. But diesel is heavier, so some of the fuel is still in liquid form. The engine will run briefly, but this extra fuel will run down into the crankcase. Before long, the crankcase oil will become too diluted to do its job. Soon, some of the bearings will start burning out. The piston bearings are affected first.

The Model A has a five-gallon gas tank over the back end of the engine, just behind the dashboard. He used that just for his gasoline. Then he added a ten-gallon, flat gas tank under the front seat. He then drilled small holes in the back and front of his exhaust manifold, and ran his copper fuel line through these openings, packing a great deal of asbestos around this line for the short distance to the carburetor.

To use this system, you reached under the dashboard and opened the little cock which connected the gasoline tank with the carburetor, then started the engine. Once it got really hot, you switched it over to the diesel. Every time the truck was stopped, for even a minute or two, it had to be

switched back to gasoline. To avoid this bother, Art would gun the engine during a very short stop. That caused clouds of thick, black smoke to come billowing out.

At Mammoth, his workplace was under a tree, across an open space in front of our barracks. This tree had a handy limb, to which he could attach his hoist when he needed to lift out the engine block. He kept his tools in the back of his truck.

After pulling the block and taking the engine apart, he would check the piston and main bearings. If any showed a damaged surface, he would heat it and carefully pour out and save the lead from that bearing. He had some equipment which let him melt and pour a bearing, so it was good as new. It was because he wanted to keep them all in good shape, to avoid the problem of a burned out bearing on the road.

The Pack Train Fire

One summer when we were at Mammoth Lakes, there was a big fire in the back country above Reds Meadows, on the other side of the Sierra Nevada range. Fred Meckel decided he ought to attack it by going in by pack train. I was one of a small crew of men who assembled the next morning at the Lake Mary pack station. Most of us had not ridden before, but that was the business of the packer. He sized us up and assigned us horses he felt we could control after a little instruction. My friend, Jimmy Nice, was a small, older man who seemed unsure, so he was given an old mare that looked very tired. The train included two pack horses loaded with tools and gear. Fred led the train and we followed, with the pack horses and packer following in the rear. I was right behind Jimmy as we went up a number of short switchbacks. On the steep climb, his horse drooped its head so low it seemed it was looking for a place to lie down and die. The trail from that corral led up to a high country lake we would use as a camping base, just above the treeline. This gave access to that area of the high country.

By the time we reached the lake campsite, we were pretty strung out. We waited there until all in the train had arrived. Then Fred led us over the relatively flat tableland and through a stretch of woods, to the slope down to the area near the fire location. The ranger went back and forth along that edge, trying to find a trace of the trail down the slope, which should have been in that area. When he could not find it, he spotted a less sheer place, told us to dismount and take our horses on a very short leash, and start down. Every step I took, the loose gravel let me slide four or five feet further down the slope, with the horse sliding right at my heels. When it got a little less steep, we remounted and worked our way down to the bottom.

The woods were thick enough that it was hard to see very far, so I was following the ranger closely as he tried to find his way. The others had disappeared. Some may have hesitated before starting down. We had crossed over a ford to the other side of the river and worked our way down. We came on to the river again, further down where it was much narrower, deeper, and faster flowing. The ranger said, "come on" and urged his horse into the river to swim across. I didn't want to get my boots wet, as that would cause problems later on. I urged my horse into the

river and pulled my feet out of the stirrups as the water rose. I put them on the horse's back, holding on to the pommel of the saddle, and left it up to the horse to get us across.

When everyone arrived at the fire, and we had unloaded our tools, the ranger put us to work building a secure fire line on the near side of the fire. When we had finished the line on that side, we took a break while Fred looked over the situation. Since there was only a short stretch of brush above the fire, before reaching the rock wall of the canyon, he did not worry about that side. There was a rock wall which jutted out just a little bit beyond the other side of the fire, so that side was not a problem. The river and damp, humid woods were across the bottom.

The packer had already taken his string back to the corral for the night, so the ranger told us to finish securing the line on that side of the fire and the packer would come back to pick us up in the morning. Then he rode off to take care of other business. In the morning, when the packer came back with the string, we discovered that he had brought one less horse than before. One of the men said that that was no problem, as two or three of us could take turns walking. I said that if they took care of packing up, I could walk out to the corral and get there first.

I took off before they could object. I had never hiked in that part of the mountains before, but I knew there should be a foot trail that took off on a shorter route back over the pass to the corral. When I got there, I had to wait a couple of hours before they showed up. After this experience, Meckel decided that it wasn't worth the expense to use this method to fight backcountry fires.

Building a Phone Line to Reds Meadows

In the summer of the first year I was at Mammoth, the big project the four or five other men and I were involved in was building a phone line to Reds Meadows. The Forest Service had installed shortwave emergency radio connections between their key sites, such as ranger and guard stations and the lookout tower. This was for fire control purposes. However, this did not work for contact with the Reds Meadows guard station. The technology of radio signals at that time could not reach the area tucked behind the mountains.

They decided to install an emergency tree line to reach there. By a tree line, they meant stringing bare wire with insulators from trees, with ground return. They had recently hired a new, older employee, who very much gave you the impression that he was a cowboy. He always wore cowboy boots, which weren't too efficient for walking around, and he walked with a bit of a slouch. He also smoked roll-your-owns when he was at his home in a small, private campsite in the woods, just west of the small village of Mammoth Lakes. The town at that time consisted of the ranger station, inn, service station and a few private homes. He was assigned the task of building this line, working with a team of three or four of us.

To start, he taught us the professional lineman's splice, to join two wires together with a really good connection. Since the wire came in quarter-mile spools, he designed a two-man wooden stretcher to hold a spool. Once the free end was securely spliced into the line, the two men would walk along the side of the road, playing out the wire. Then the other two men would follow. One would carry a wooden ladder and the other would carry tools, some wire and insulators. They

would pick out a medium sized tree at a suitable distance on the same side of the road, and one man would climb the ladder and attach a short stub of wire to the tree. He would attach the round insulator to the tree, and then the other man would hand up the telephone wire and he would clip the insulator around it.

A little past the ranger station, there was a dirt road that was just wide enough so that, if one car pulled halfway off the road, the car going the other way could pass. The road climbed gradually through a forest, until it came to an earthquake fault. Here the road made a sharp left, up a short steep rise of about fifteen feet, and a turn back. At this point, to the right of the road was the open earthquake fault. It was open for about fifty feet, and you could climb down into it from the far end. The sides of the rock walls on each side of the fault were four to eight feet apart, and at the end of the summer season you could climb down a good twenty feet, to where there was still unmelted, icy snow.

As you went on towards Minaret Summit, there was a small spring, set back twenty feet from the road on the left. Our foreman would pick us up every morning and we would ride in the back of his pickup to where we were working. It was already getting pretty cold, and when he learned our lunch consisted of cold sandwiches and water, he felt that it would never do. He was the kind of cowboy who believed a meal on the trail demanded an open fire and lots of ground coffee, boiled in an open pot until it was almost strong enough to dissolve metal. He told me that I should leave work early, go back to this spring, get a fire burning and have the water boiling before the others came back on their noon break.

To set this up, he found a Forest Service storage box made of three-quarter inch plywood, which was about 2x2x4 feet and was closed with a Forest Service padlock. In it, he stored a pot or two, some tin cups, a large tin serving spoon, a large tin can of hand ground coffee beans and some cans of condensed milk. One time, when we got to that campsite after a weekend, we discovered that a corner of the box had been badly chewed, but not broken into. A week later when we got there, we found that the box had been broken open and the contents thoroughly trashed; the bear had come back to finish the job. That ended our coffee breaks.

The road and phone line went on up through the woods, until it got near the more level area on the backside of the cinder cone of Mammoth Mountain, where it was a lot more open. There must have been enough smaller trees to use for the phone line, as I have no recollection of needing to put in any posts for the line.

One day at our lunch break, we had reached the crest of Minaret Summit and were resting while eating our sandwiches and looking at the expansive view. From there, the narrow gravel road started over the steep drop off, heading north in one long reach, almost to the end of the steepest part of the mountain. Then it turned almost straight back towards the Reds Meadows ranger station, still above the meadows. At the turn there was a very small primitive campground, with no pit toilet or trash pickup, but with a fire pit and some open spots.

It had been suggested that the line from the summit go straight down the steep hillside the quarter mile to the road below, since there were few trees along the road. It was cut into the

hillside in one long switchback to the north and then back to Reds Meadows. There was a clear view along this line from the top, so any problems could be easily spotted.

I had finished my lunch early and decided to show off by running down to the bottom by myself, leaving the others to follow and hang the wire from some trees. This hillside was just steep enough that I could carry the front end of the stretcher, and the back could drag on the ground behind me and still be level, so the line could play out easily. When I got halfway down, I found I had a problem. There was a large downed tree directly across my route. To climb over the top of this obstacle required an almost five-foot scramble. I quickly checked out the situation and found that there was almost two feet of clearance underneath, so that solved my problem; I took the wire down to the bottom and the end of my quarter mile of wire, then waited for the others to hang the wire and come down to join me. I got a lot of ribbing, as a brand-new stretch had to have a splice in its center as it ran under the tree.

Phone Lineman

We had completed the line, and later in the fall the ranger decided that it might be wise to protect the line from storm damage. So we were told we should work back from Minaret Summit and cut out any branches which might fall on the line in a storm. There were only three of us on this job, and we would be driven up in the morning and picked up at the end of the day. The three of us would carry a tall wooden ladder and the other tools.

But our foreman, the cowboy, had a bright idea. He had gotten a set of telephone lineman's climbing spurs and a belt. Because the bark of the more slender fir trees I would be climbing was thick, and I would need to kick the spurs through the bark to the wood, he brazed a two-inch extension to each of the spurs. He took me to his home near the village one evening and showed me how it worked. I tried it out on a tree by his campfire. He had me attach a hatchet, a limbing saw and some pliers to the belt.

We had gotten two-thirds of the way down to the Ranger Station, but were still pretty far back in the woods, when the first day of deer season arrived. Since we knew that some of the hunters who came up from the city and stayed the night at the inn often drank a lot the night before, we were worried about our safety. Would they shoot at anything that moved?

Because I needed to pick and choose the trees I could handle, I had gotten quite a bit ahead of the others and they were nowhere in sight. I was about ten feet up a tree, catching my breath before sawing on a limb, when a couple of hunters came up and stopped a short distance away. They were saying that they were supposed to meet the others at such and such a spot, and wondered where it was. I knew the answer and wanted to be helpful, so I yelled, "Hey!" to get their attention. They looked around and didn't see anyone, but thought the voice had come from nearby. So I said, "I'm up here," and they spotted me. I laughed later when telling the fellows that they might have shot me for a bear, even though it was buck season, not bear season.

Felling a Snag

After we had finished the line to Reds Meadows, the Forest Service decided that three of us should be assigned to cutting down a snag (or dead tree), so that it wouldn't be blown down in a windstorm and damage a usable large timber tree below it. This was an eight-and-a-half-foot tree, as measured through its diameter. The narrow two-man felling saw we were using was nine feet long, so it was quite a tree.

After we got to the tree with our equipment, we made a plan to pace ourselves. We would work on half hour shifts; two on the ends of the saw, and the third man taking the felling axe to work on chopping out the large notch we would need to direct the fall of the tree. For safety reasons, he would only use his axe when those sawing took a five-minute break. We would rotate through these three positions.

We discussed several times whether we thought the notch was aimed properly. By the time we had taken our lunch break, the undercut and notch had been completed. The man using the axe had also been using the sledgehammer to drive in the long felling wedges on the back side, to take the pressure off the felling saw. We needed to pull the saw at least about a couple of feet to get any cutting done, so as we got to the wider part of the trunk we were cutting at more of an angle on one side or the other. We realized that when the tree started to fall, we would be counting on the remaining wood back of the notch to act as a hinge. If one side of this hinge was weaker than the other, this could affect the direction of fall as much as the notch. It was also important to pay attention to making the angled cuts on both sides equal, which was hard because we couldn't see both sides at the same time.

We had heard that often when a large tree was felled, the butt end could come springing back, so it wasn't safe to be standing behind a tree. At that point we placed our unneeded tools behind a nearby large tree, and while two of us were sawing, the third lay down on the ground, watching the top of our snag to see if it was starting to move. That way, it would give us more advanced warning. When I saw it start to move, I yelled, "TIMBER!" and we picked up our tools and all rushed behind the other big tree. We were being overly cautious.

Closing Down Reds Meadows

In the fall, a few weeks after everyone had moved out of Reds Meadows for the winter, the fire guard there decided he should make one last trip there, to see if everything was shut down properly for the winter. He also had a quarter ton of dynamite stored there, and if it got too cold, the nitroglycerin would drain out and it would become very dangerous. He decided to take me along to help pick it up. The dynamite was loaded in the back of the pickup and covered with a small tarp.

On the way back out, we discovered there was an elderly couple with a large car, still at the campground at the curve of the road. They were packed up, but just sitting in their car. The ranger asked them what was up, and told them that if they didn't leave that day, they would be

snowed in for the winter, as a storm was on its way. The man said that driving down there on that narrow road had been so frightening that he did not have the nerve to drive back up to the summit. He finally agreed to drive up slowly, if the ranger followed him and took his wife in the Forest Service pickup. When we got three quarters of the way up, he stopped, got out of his car, and said that he had to take a break to get his nerve back. In the casual conversation that followed, he said that it was a good thing that there wasn't another danger around, such as a stick of dynamite. The ranger had to admit that he had a quarter ton of it in the back of his pickup. The man grabbed his wife and took off so fast it was amazing!

The Smallest Fire

Our ranger decided that when a lightning fire was under control, it would be a good idea to leave one person on duty without a pickup, because there were so few of them. I was the one chosen for this job. As it was a calm night, I decided to take my sleeping bag to nap, and only look around from time to time to spot trouble. I also decided to take my dog, as when I was alone at night, the coyotes' yelps were scary. The sound bounced off the mountains on both sides, so you couldn't tell where it was coming from. A dog could pick up their smell if they were close.

The lightning had hit a tall tree, four feet in diameter, and was burning in an owl's nest twenty feet up. The top part of the tree had broken off, leaving a short section above the owl hole, which had a large opening which was where the fire was. Since we didn't have access to a fire hose which could spray a stream of water to that height, and also no way of climbing up that high to get at the fire, although it was the smallest fire we had ever seen, a different approach was necessary. First, what was left of the tree would have to be felled. Since it was already quite dark, it would be best to start this the next day. That is why they came back to camp to get me.

After I had carefully checked everything around the area, so that I could move around easily in the dark, I prepared a spot near the tree for my sleeping bag, and got into it with my dog at my side. After all the noises in the surrounding area had quieted down, later the night, out of the silence the coyotes' yelps started. At that point, my dog forced his way into my sleeping bag and lay next to me, shaking and shivering. My dog was a complete failure.

The next night I didn't take my sleeping bag or my dog. They had felled the tree and had doused the fire with a back-pack five gallon pump, but in the bottom of the owl nest there might be still some hot spots; so it was safest for them to cut off the tree above the nest and then cut off a slender slice of this bottom, and get it sitting upright on the ground and fill this hollow with water. We wanted to be very sure that we didn't need to come back again. Two men would come back the next day to take care of it.

There was really very little for me to do except to be there. Although I was taking catnaps, the night seemed really long, and I wondered if I could do something useful. Since the men had left their felling-saw there, I decided I would try to see if I could figure out how to use it to do some cutting through the log.

A one-man saw is wider and makes a wider cut. It is used for logs that are horizontal and not too far off the ground. When sawing you are cutting into your side; the trick is to reverse your movement, so that you are cutting at the other side. But when pulling the saw toward you, the other end twangs back and forth and blocks itself. I found that I was able to make some progress in their cut during the night, but I discovered that to have any chance to make this work, I was stretching up as high as I could on the cutting stroke, and leaning down during the return. This is the opposite of the usual sawing, but in this case this movement is scarcely noticeable.

The logging company used a heavy electric chainsaw. The power was supplied by a power truck which powered two teams, with heavy protective cables, making the connection. In any logging company, the most valuable man is the one who can do a really good job of sharpening the blades.

My Narrowest Escape

Soon after the fire in the owl's nest, I was sent out again to watch a fire overnight. This one was in an area with only a few scarred, tall trees. The one which had been struck, was a tree which had lost its top in an earlier fire, within the last year or two. The earlier top must have been removed for logs and firewood. Since it was standing in the middle of an old burn which had been reburned, there was no danger at all from the surrounding reburned area. Therefore, the crew didn't come to relieve me until late in the morning. They just needed to finish the job that day.

Since I felt guilty about just standing around, I wondered what I could do to be helpful. I knew that there was no way I could think about starting a cut on a standing tree, but there was a felling axe there. I could at least chop off most of the six inches of bark. That might help a little. I started working my way around the tree, chopping at the level where they would be cutting. When I got around to the side towards which it had a slight lean, I heard a loud cracking and I just jumped back. The top had flipped, and came crashing down where I had just been standing. I broke out in laughter as a release of tension. The owl's nest had been large and had weakened the trunk.

Backcountry Hut

After the pack train fire, the ranger decided it would be helpful to have a small backcountry hut as a shelter, when he did his two-day February swing on his skis for his annual snow survey. So we were told that two men would be assigned to spend two weeks in the back country, to build a small stone hut.

The idea was that two of our men would go up to a high point in a trail and construct the walls of the hut, using the rocks of a certain size which they could select from a rock pile about a half mile further up that trail. The pack train station would loan them two pack mules to carry the

rocks down to the construction site. The rocks could just be wedged together. Other staff could add some kind of roof and a door at some time before winter.

The packer took the two men and their supplies up and left the two mules. Their work went pretty well for the first couple of days. Then one morning, one of the men found a rock that was too big, but could be split by slamming it down. This unexpected noise caused one of the mules to bolt for home. It went down the trail a piece, and then stopped to see what would happen next.

This man thought he could catch the mule, so he got on the packsaddle of the other mule and started after it. A packsaddle has a front and back wooden frame, with cross braces at the top and bottom to which containers would be attached. This made for a very uncomfortable ride. When he got close to the other mule, it turned and trotted a short distance down the trail and stopped. This cat and mouse game continued till early afternoon, when they reached the pack station. The packer refused to let him have the mules, as they had been mistreated, so this very sore man had to spend the rest of the day walking back to the work site.

This lost day put the men well behind schedule, but by putting in very long, hard days carrying the rocks down to the site, they were able to finish the job when the packer came back to take them home.

Stocking a Lake with Trout

One time, soon after the men had worked on that backcountry hut, I spent part of an afternoon stocking an upper-country lake with small rainbow trout. It may have been a lake that had never had trout, or it may have had none for some other reason.

The job was simple. A truck with a tank holding a large number of fingerlings from a fish hatchery was at the trailhead, and I was to carry a five-gallon fire-fighting backpack filled with them up the long trail to this lake and dump them, under the supervision of the man from the hatchery. I remember doing this, but there may have been a number of other men also involved. It made for a very wet and chilly afternoon with the water sloshing down my back.

June Lake Water Tank Construction

In the fall of nineteen forty-five, the Forest Service had decided to increase the size of the small village at June Lake. To prepare for this, they needed to increase the storage capacity of the water tank just above the village, which supplied its water system. A small Forest Service crew had started the job, but it was getting late in the fall, and they decided it would be good to call in most of us from Mammoth Lakes. Fred Binford was left to maintain the campgrounds there, and the rest would be at June Lake for a few weeks.

When we arrived, the back hillside had been dug out, all of the tank, except for its circular floor, had been removed, the surrounding ground had been dug out and replaced with a deep bed of gravel, and the first layer of concrete had been poured for the bottom of the enlarged tank. The

other crew was busy wiring together the steel rods to form the reinforcing mat for the tank's floor. Our job was to haul wheelbarrows of fresh concrete over planking, to the exact site where it was needed. As the sides went up, we had to navigate some fairly narrow catwalks with heavily loaded wheelbarrows, which felt really dangerous.

Also, Fred planned to put in two flush toilets at the main campground nearby, as the centerpiece of the start of a greatly expanded series of campgrounds around the back side of Reverse Peak. These would start from the present June Lake, along Reverse Creek. The tank had nearly gotten to the point of finishing off its top, when a number of us were pulled off to start work on the basic ground structure of the two modern toilet buildings.

While this Forest Service construction was going on, the Italian man who owned the general store in the village, on the lake side of the road, quite near the western end of the lake, had decided that he should expand his store to be ready for the increase in business. Since he and his wife were the only ones available to do the job, he offered those of us he could persuade, work for two or more hours after supper and long hours on Sunday. He offered us twenty-five cents an hour, as he really wanted to get as much done as he could before snowfall. He had a crazy plan of keeping the store functioning during the construction, as well as living in it, doing much of the work and being his own architect. He would build a much larger arched-roof structure over the existing store, and then tear down what was there before. Needless to say, there were not yet any building codes involved. The extra spending money for those hard two or three weeks helped us all a lot.

First, he had us clear the ground on both sides of the store and had us help him build new foundations there. Meanwhile, he and his wife continued to live there while she ran it. Then he built the shell of a new and larger store over the old one. I never saw the completed store, as we were moved back to Mammoth Lakes when the water tank project was completed.

When we got back to Mammoth Lakes, we found that Fred Binford had converted the small common room at the back of our barrack into a cozy little sitting room. He had a rug on the floor, a desk, some wall hangings and an easy chair, all of which he had found at the dump on his days off, and cleaned and repaired or improvised to make them usable.

The Northern Palisades Rescue

This rescue took place in the middle of the last summer we were at Mammoth Lakes. The North Palisades rock wall is the most challenging rock climb in the southern part of the Sierra Nevada range. It towers three thousand feet above the southernmost glacier in the United States. In this area there was a mountain man who made his living as a guide, to help climbers conquer the challenges of this climb. He was so good that it was no problem for him to climb the worst face by himself, using tiny toe and finger holds with no attached safety harness. They even claimed he could jump across a gap and land on a tiny pinnacle.

Two rock climbers from Pasadena had come up and hired him to lead them on this climb. They had fooled around and gotten started later than they had planned, so by the time they got to about

five hundred feet below the summit, some ice had started to melt, letting rocks come loose and bounce down the cliff. One rock hit one of the men in the leg, breaking it. Because of this injury, the guide lashed the two men to a two-by-six-foot ledge he found nearby, and went down for help. He might have had a slight head injury on the way down, as when he got to the small lodge not far from the glacier, he had forgotten why he was there. Early that evening he suddenly remembered why he had come, and they phoned the Mammoth Lakes Ranger Station for help.

Fred Meckel started to put a small team together. He was quite a good rock climber and chose one of us who had some rock climbing experience, this was Mr. Fixit. He also took four of the best other men to help at the base of the cliff, including Phil Toth, who had had extensive first aid training. Word had also been sent to the Seattle area, to contact the crack mountain rescue team on the west coast. They had developed their skills by carrying out several difficult rescues in the Mount Hood and the Northern Cascades region.

The team left that night in Fred's pickup. They parked the pickup at the mountain lodge by very early the next morning and were on the glacier ready to start the climb. The mountain guide, Fred, and our climber were working their way up the face to attempt the rescue, while the other four men waited with a stretcher, to carry the injured man down to the road if they were successful. They also had blankets and splints, and Philip had some morphine shots for the man's pain.

When the climbers got to the stranded men, the guide settled down to wait. He said he was waiting for the professional rescue team from Seattle to come and help, or for the injured man to die of exposure so his body could be easily retrieved. Fred pointed out that there was no way anyone else could find space to be of help there on that cliff, and that the injured man was conscious and could help.

An inflatable splint had been placed around the injured man's broken leg to stabilize it, and the two climbers were lashed side by side. A small piece of canvas, which had been their shelter while waiting for rescue, was placed behind the injured man's back, to protect it from the sharp edges of rock they had to slide him past. Although he was in extreme pain, he used his free arm to help push himself off of rocks he swung against. One of the three other rescuers was lashed below the two men, to help to protect the injured leg, while the other two were above, using plenty of secured pitons and rope to gradually belay these three down the cliff face to the glacier below. By the time they got down, the small piece of canvas was in tatters and the injured man's back was badly torn up. Phil Toth administered the morphine and applied the proper splints. Then the injured climber was placed in the wire stretcher and warmly wrapped, so that the four men could carry him down to the waiting ambulance. Soon after this, Phil Toth was transferred to the Smoke Jumpers, where I am sure his medical skills were much appreciated.

The four men who waited on the glacier for the rescuers to come down, had their faces so badly charred that a series of cracks appeared, with pink underskin showing through. The whole crew involved were quite the local heroes, with a write-up in the Bishop paper. Fred gave the men involved a couple of extra days off, without reporting it to Selective Service, and implied that

they were free to go to the L.A. area to visit family if they wanted to. He felt they had richly deserved these unofficial days off.

Most of the five men just used the extra free time to rest up. But my friend Tony Randles, the oldest man in the group, who was married and really missed his family, started shaving as soon as he heard this announcement, so that he could catch the daily bus to Los Angeles. I remember that I saw him shaving off the charred skin on his face, with embedded heavy black stubble, leaving tender, pink new skin underneath. It must have been very painful.

Mr. Fixit confided to me later, that he had been able to obtain a small building site, south of the Mammoth Lakes village, and in his free time had started to clear a small area and collect stones for the foundation of a small cabin. We had been given the impression by the local community that they would be happy to see us leave, so returning local service men could get the opening jobs. Most of us had no problem with that. Although many of us had enjoyed the mountains, most of us had other interests waiting. This man was also the one who had been most helpful with the carpenter when we were rebuilding the lookout tower, and had found odd jobs for us in the summer. He was a jack of all trades. Fred must have felt that these skills would be a real asset to the community, and he would be available if a mountain rescue was needed again. Maybe Fred had helped to arrange that Mr. Fixit got this building site, and could become part of the Mammoth community.

A few weeks later, when I was home for a Sunday, my sister, who was a nurse at a large Pasadena hospital, said that she was treating a Pasadena man with a broken leg and a badly cut up back, who had been injured while rock climbing in the High Sierras.

One evening when the timber cruisers were working from June Lake, six of us climbed into *Lucinda* after work, took food along, and went there to have supper together and play five-man touch football on a small improvised field. Art, who was our running back, was quick and shifty. On one play, he ran through all the other team and scored the only touchdown of our short game.

I went with him on a lot of his trips home, because I wanted to keep in touch with my family and Meeting. As I would only be able to doze while riding all night twice in a weekend, it was very hard to stay awake during the long silent periods during Meeting. When I started to doze, I would close my eyes and prop up my head on my elbow to give the impression I was in prayer. It was good that I never fell deeply asleep, as I might have snored. However, the Meeting was well aware of my situation and were glad to have me back so often.

We were looking forward to one weekend in late fall because there was a Monday holiday, so we had two days for the trip. However, in going down Sherwin Grade, Art did not bother to switch over to gasoline. The weather had gotten a lot colder. Because Art had forgotten to switch back to gasoline while going down the long grade past Sherwin summit, the engine had cooled down, and when we got well out into open country past Big Pine, we burned out a piston bearing. We pushed the car off the road. When daylight came, Art jacked up the front end. Getting underneath, he was able to drop the crankcase pan, and a lot of the oil spilled out on the ground. We managed to rotate the motor enough so that he was able to drop out that piston. After putting

the bottom back together, pulling the lead from the spark plug of the opposing piston and adding fresh oil, we slowly started limping back to Mammoth.

Progress was very slow, as we could only make five or six miles an hour. When we got to Sherwin Grade, we had a real problem. I don't remember how we made it up, though I'm pretty sure that one of us got out to push. Finally, in desperation he reconnected the third spark plug, and we made it up the grade with a thoroughly unbalanced three-cylinder engine, nearly shaking the car apart.

One time, after passing Mohave on the way south, we spotted a marine thumbing a ride out in the middle of the desert. As we knew how hard it was to get a ride in the desert, rather than at the edge of a town, Art stopped for him, but gunned his engine for this quick stop. When this man saw the black smoke billowing out, he ran away into the sagebrush as fast as he could. I wonder what he was thinking.

At a CPS reunion in the eighties, I learned that *Lucinda*, that lovely feminine name, was short for her full name, *Lou-cin-da-joints*. I also learned at a CPS reunion in the late nineteen eighties, that she was owned by a Friend in the Philadelphia area, and had been restored and was in running shape, though I am sure it was not on a diesel diet.

He Learned a Lesson

There was one fire that was near the north end of the Inyo Forest, so it must have been just up from 395, on the steep terrain going up towards Yosemite. It was in the area between the two passes north of us, and was the only local fire we were on that was against the side of the high Sierras and to the west of the highway. Therefore, it didn't seem like a local fire. As Meckel was in charge of the fire, he drove up there in his pickup. The rest of us followed him in our truck with Wally.

We drove up to the fire on a fire lane which, after quite a distance, turned north and ended in a small area where we parked, before hiking in to start setting up our fire line. The ranger led us up and got us started, and then he went on ahead to scout out the area the fire had reached.

The wind had been blowing steadily from the south, when unexpectedly it switched and gusted, sending a wall of fire back towards us. We managed to duck out of its way, but Wally had only seconds to decide which of the two vehicles he should save. He decided on our truck, because he had signed it out and was responsible for it.

As it was, he had to push through a wall of fire to reach the place to turn down to the highway. This meant that Fred lost his truck, the one in the best shape we had, including all the tools it held. He had broken his rule to always leave a driver with each vehicle.

The Pinyon Pine Fire

Another time, later in my CPS experiences, we arrived at the fire camp and were told we were not needed, but since we had come such a long way, we might as well go over to the pinyon pine country, as there was a fire there with only one crew on it. Although it presented very little real danger because of its location, we might as well relieve them.

When we arrived there, I saw that the crew that was preparing to leave was from the prison camp to the north. We had been aware of them, and knew that they were also a crack team that was as well trained and effective as we were. The only difference was that they would never go out without an employee to direct them, because he was also their guard. The truth was that these prisoners were quite likely also conscientious objectors, who felt that they could not cooperate with the government at all, and were willing to go to prison for their beliefs.

I saw that, though the head of the fire was burning heavily, it was only twenty or thirty feet across, going slowly up the draw. This draw went up a V shaped valley with ridges going up both sides. The other crew, who were down by their truck, had finished the fire trail up the left side of the draw. So it was obvious that our job was to build the line on the other side.

One of us needed to take the lead. Wally was the obvious leader of our crew, but since the memory of the fire where our ranger had lost his pickup was still fresh in his mind, he decided he should stay with our truck. Who should take the lead? While the others were trying to work this out, I grabbed a shovel and started up the line. The others followed.

The head of the fire was contained in a dry wash only twenty or so feet across. It was burning slowly out toward the top of the V. I noticed that when a gust of wind pushed the fire ahead quickly, it would start up one side or the other and create a roaring blaze until it reached the ridge.

At that point I made a very bad decision. I knew that, with the help of one or two others, we could easily stop the fire in the narrow gorge, and it was too tempting to see if we could do it, so on impulse I slid down to the bottom with Bill at my elbow. We held it for a while, until a gust of wind sent a wall of flame up to where Jimmy was standing, wondering what I was doing. As the fire had gotten the best of us, the concern was our safety. I knew that close to the ground there was air to breath as flames were rising, so I pulled us to a nearby pile of rocks where Bill and I took a twenty-minute break.

Meanwhile Jimmy, up on the ridge, couldn't see where we were, and when the others came up and said, "Where's Sam?" he pointed down at the wall of fire. They were really relieved when we showed up. The fire stopped on its own when it reached the top of the ridge.

Lee Vining

In the very late fall of the last year of the war, I was sent for a time to Lee Vining, which was a ranger station on the border with Mono Forest. There wasn't much activity there, but the ranger was elderly and needed some help in straightening out his very small warehouse. I was to replace my friend Tony Randles. Since the ranger's son-in-law was not around, because of the war, his

daughter and ten-year-old granddaughter had just arrived. Besides the warehouse, I was to help in any way needed.

For our living quarters we had been given a small tent, complete with a miniature iron range vented by a stovepipe out one side. For a shower, he had put a fifty-gallon drum on the back side of the warehouse. He had attached a shower head to the drum and would fill it with water in the early morning. If the sun was shining, it would warm a bit. As it was behind the warehouse, he could not be seen. With the arrival of the granddaughter, this privacy became a real problem, because I caught her peeking around the corner.

The little iron range was small, but just big enough to heat a kettle on top or warm a small dish in the oven. I had no radio to listen to, and so in a long evening I figured out how to bake cookies, and made some and sent a few home to my family in Pasadena for Christmas.

There was a small, long, narrow pasture between the creek and the road behind the warehouse. This was where the ranger kept his horse. One of our jobs was to take care of his horse when he was away. One evening, when bringing it in from the top end, I tried riding it bareback without much success.

One morning when the ranger was away, I had to answer a phone call from Bishop. It said that he had ordered a new hose for his gasoline pump, as it was leaking a bit. They wanted to know the diameter of the connecting coupling and whether it was male or female. For some reason this sexual reference stumped me, so I went in and asked the ranger's daughter. She could not tell me, but thinking about it later, it was strange because she had a daughter!

One night when I was sleeping peacefully, because it seemed to be like other nights we were having, there was a sudden flash of bright light, with a loud crash right after it, and the lights went out. It startled me, and I thought that that one was right on top of us; the power company will check what happened to the power in the morning.

With daylight, I saw that one of the two huge poles that supported the crossbars, high overhead, from which the three cables were suspended, had hit the rock pile below, causing the explosion. This was the line which brought the power down from a small hydroelectric power plant, way up the road. The pole had been broken by a boulder that had rolled down the hill. Since there was nothing I could do to restore power, I let well enough alone.

But before long, the driver of a car coming down the road from Yosemite reported that he had seen quite a column of smoke coming out of the rockpile, under the dangling remains of the broken cable. This was something I needed to investigate. I took a shovel and went up to take a look. The leaves and debris that had filtered down between the rocks was burning. I obviously couldn't do anything with my shovel, so I went back to the station and found the fire-fighting water backpack, like the one I had used at Mammoth to stock the lake with trout.

I climbed down to the creek and filled the backpack with water, to take it up and hose down the fire. After a few trips, the smoke stopped. I sat down to rest from all this effort and, before long, a thin wisp of smoke started rising again. I went through the process of hauling up water to put on that spot again, until smoke stopped rising. Again, after a time, there was a little smoke

coming up. At that point, the ranger came back. He told me that a little bit of fire down in the bottom of that rock pile wasn't going anywhere, as it was down in the solid rock of the mountain. In checking over the top of that rock pile, I found a fist-size piece of black, glassy basaltic rock, which is produced by intense heat. I kept it as a souvenir, as I knew that that rock was made that morning.

To Yosemite

With the end of the war in early August of 1946, a number of things changed quickly. There was no longer a need to ration gasoline. All the men who had been conscripted were being released, starting with the older men and those with families. As far as I was concerned, the first change I saw was that, since there was no longer an emergency, we went back to a forty-eight-hour week, which meant we had Saturday afternoon off.

I was at June Lake, along with a small group of other CPS men from Mammoth, who were there to work on the new campgrounds along Reverse Creek. Since I knew that I was capable of strenuous hiking in the back trails up into the mountains, I thought it would be interesting to see Yosemite and all the activity there. It was famous for beautiful sites and a lot of activity and visitors. I thought, "Wouldn't it be great to hike over and take a look?" I started my plans. If I started Saturday after lunch, I could hike, in two or three hours, to the saddle at the head of the canyon, where it joins the John Muir Trail.

Art James was there with one of his younger brothers, who had wanted to see the mountains where his brother worked. His father had lent him the family's good car for the week, and he was willing to help with the project. The John Muir trail leads up to a pass at 11,300 feet, at the head of the Lyell Canyon in the south eastern edge of Yosemite. To continue down the canyon, to where it crosses the Tioga Pass road, would be shorter and easier, but I would miss the valley floor with the most impressive scenery and what was going on there. I felt I would not really be in Yosemite without reaching the valley floor.

I noticed on my map that after you make the deepest drop into the Lyell Canyon, there is a side trail leading up and out of this canyon over a 10,500 foot pass to the west, and then drops into the high country, which was the source of the Merced River. From there, you could follow down its right side and cross a foot bridge just above Merced Falls, and have less than four miles down to the valley floor.

Then, since the Tioga Pass highway went parallel to the valley floor, I looked for the shortest climb to the road and a spot where I could be picked up. That was a rugged climb alongside the slender, northernmost falls and to the trailhead at Porcupine Flat. I estimated that I might be able to make this hike in two and a half days. If I took a furlough day after that weekend, Art could pick me up around eight-thirty that night.

I would not have dared to try this hike alone, but during this planning stage I had persuaded a young camper, Thomas Johnson, to join me. I don't remember that he was around for very long, but we had a couple of deep discussions and a sharing of our beliefs, so we had a sense of close

friendship. When he heard my plan, he was willing to go along. He was the only African American I ever met in CPS.

We would travel light. I bought quite a lot of trail mix and some canned goods for a supply for a couple of days. I had a small trail kit that included a small saucepan, tin cup, etc. that all nested together in a compact package. We would get our water from backcountry streams. We could make cooking fires with matches, twigs and sticks we would find locally. Besides our denim jackets, we each had our cotton sleeping bag and an extra pair of socks. I had a small day knapsack, where we put all but the tightly rolled sleeping bags. During the trip we swapped off our loads.

As during our time off we were free to hike into the backcountry if we wanted to, we didn't feel it was necessary to tell the Forest Service about our plans. It was the first Saturday of September, which was on the late side to cross such a high pass, but the sky was clear.

We had our lunch, put on our light packs, and started up the trail at about one. By the middle of the afternoon, we joined the John Muir Trail and started up toward the pass into Yosemite. As darkness approached, I found that I was relying more on the footing than the blazes to guide me. As we got above the tree line, the trail was marked by occasional "ducks," or piles of stones, to mark the way, although I was still relying on infrequent grassy spots where my feet told me I was still on the trail.

Finally, in a fairly flat area I couldn't feel any sign of a trail, and decided it was too dangerous to go further. In the faint starlight, I realized there was no mountain above and that we were on the top of the pass. We decided we should stop for the night. As far as I could tell, it was about eleven. We searched around the immediate area and discovered a small grassy area, put our two cotton sleeping bags inside each other, took off just our boots and crawled in. That was a crowded cold night.

With the first pre-dawn light we discovered we were on the summit. We put on our boots and packed up and didn't loiter there, as we wanted to drop down into the upper part of Lyell Canyon to get out of the wind, and down where it wasn't so cold. I was really glad that we had left the summit, as that was the point that was riskiest, because at that elevation and time of year a snowstorm could start at any time without warning.

After dropping down the steepest part of the descent into Lyell Canyon, I spotted the marker to the trail up out of the canyon, over a 10,500-foot pass to the headwaters of the Merced River, we were looking for. The marker was in disrepair and I could have missed it. Going up the steep inclines on trails that often suddenly would take a zig or a zag, we walked slower and would sometimes stop to take a bit of trail mix or to drink from a spring.

Toward the middle of the day, we reached a really beautiful open-country tableland meadow, that was beautiful with lupines and many other high mountain flowers. It was very tempting to take a break and spend some time eating lunch and enjoying this beautiful spot. This alone would have made the hike worthwhile. I really wanted to take some time to drink in the beauty of the

sight, but I realized that we were totally dependent on connecting with Art James on the Tioga Pass Road, and we had to keep up with our schedule.

When we turned the corner at the pass, we had gorgeous views down into the branch of Yosemite Valley, from above the upper Merced River watershed. Although the trail was narrow in places, alongside a steep drop off as we started down, we kept up a dogtrot to make up for our slower pace in the previous climbs. It took us a while to get down below the tree line and into the deep woods.

In the early evening we came to a small lake, with one or two simple campsites alongside, and above the lake a small, single room ranger's cabin, which was locked for the winter. We decided that this campground would be a great place to spend the night. We gathered some wood and built a fire. Among the canned goods I had brought was a can of Campbell's tomato soup. That soup was the one thing we felt able to eat, because of our exhaustion. We heated it in the saucepan and split it, for our only meal of the hike. I have never had soup that tasted so good.

We slept comfortably beside the fire, each in our own sleeping bag on a bed of pine needles. The next morning, we had some trail mix for breakfast and started down the well-marked trail following the Merced River. It was easy going and we made good time. Part way down, we passed three or four hikers with large backpacks, heading into the high country. It was quite obvious that we knew what we were doing and belonged. When we got to the bridge just above the falls, there were a lot of day hikers around, and we slipped by them to head to the valley floor.

We spent a couple of hours on the valley floor, going short distances to see the most famous views. It was about one o'clock when we found a grassy spot on the bank of the river, took off our socks, and dangled our feet in the river to rub out their soreness. We ate a leisurely lunch of some fruit bars we had brought. After drying off our feet and putting on our clean socks, we headed for our climb out of the valley.

It was a rugged climb and harder than I had anticipated. This was one of the smaller falls and the trail was not that well developed. There were places where you were splashed with water, and others where you had to pull yourself up over a protrusion. At the top edge, there was a spot where I wasn't sure we were going to make it past an overhang. When we finally reached the top, and sat down to get ourselves together, it had taken more than three hours and it was getting near dusk.

I figured it was still no problem, as I was good at following the trail with my feet and could still spot some blazes. However, this trail wasn't as traveled as the John Muir Trail, where I had used this method before. I assumed that in this area of gradual rise, there would be no reason for any sudden turns. I was only looking for blazes ahead of me. Before long, I did not spot a blaze where I expected it, and I soon realized that I had lost the trail in thick woods.

Being lost in the woods, without a compass or flashlight, could get us into big trouble. So we stopped and did some planning. As long as we could keep going generally north, we would come out on the Tioga Pass Road at some point. However, we would not know where we were on the

road. Also, we would have to avoid thickets and swampy areas. I decided we would each take a separate role and stay close together. I would take the lead, finding my way around obstacles and swampy places. Thomas would take the role of navigator. Every time there was an opening in the trees where he could see the north star, he would use it to guide me. We would over-correct to our left, so that when we reached the road, we could be sure of which way we should go.

We put our plan into action, and spent several hours making slow progress. Suddenly, I came to a place where there was nothing but inky blackness ahead of me, and when I stepped out, found we were on the road. Then it was easy to follow the road to the left, and before long we saw the light of a campfire. It was Art and his younger brother. They were playing a game of chess while waiting for us. It was about eleven o'clock. They said that they were planning to wait for us till midnight, and then head back to June Lake. They decided to wait for a bit to finish their game and, since they were hungry, asked us to open a couple of cans we had brought, so they could have a snack. We were too exhausted to eat.

For those two and a half days, we were just two men alone in the mountains. When we got down where others saw us, we blended in with those around us, and were men who obviously knew what they were doing. We had not seen another person or sign of civilization for more than a day and a half. The only exception was a pack mule, coming towards us on the trail. When it spotted us, it took to the woods to circle us, like a wild animal might have. A packer must have turned it loose to find its way back to its corral. This was when we were in Lyell Canyon.

The only people who knew what we had done were our friends. If we had asked for permission and presented our plan, I'm sure it would never have been approved. They wouldn't have believed this kind of traveling light and fast was safe or possible. However, if I was planning to do it again under those circumstances, and had the choice, I would have taken a good flashlight and a compass. Also, today we could never depend on streams for water, and that would be a real problem.

Wrong Place

My last summer at Mammoth Lakes, John Hoyle, a forty-year-old camper, had been instructed in the operation of the Forest Service road grader. He had graded the gravel road leading up to the fishing lake on the next valley south of Mammoth Lakes. The road badly needed grading, and I was assigned as his swamper. This meant that I would walk along beside him with a shovel, and dig out and move aside any large rocks that his blade dug up. This access road was a fairly recent project.

When he had finished that job that afternoon, he started back up 395, and I followed in a pickup with its blinkers flashing. I'm afraid I was so impressed with protecting John and his grader, that I felt the need to keep close in this protection, and John had to call me up and remind me of the highway regulations stating the required distance between slow moving vehicles.

Late There

The next lightning fire was in a brushy area, with smaller trees and a much older burn area. We had worked on it a day or two and had it contained, and two of us were to finish this job. I and a man new to our team had the job. The other man was Allen Huffmire, a man who had just been transferred from the main camp at Coleville, who would assist me. They had decided that we should have a pickup at the fire, so when the day crew returned, I should drive us back right away. This would leave the fire unattended briefly, but we could take that chance.

We had been slow at supper and in getting our things together, so that gap was a little longer. The wind had picked up, and as we got near the fire it was aglow, and I knew we were in trouble. When we got there, I discovered that the fire had broken out on a very narrow front, only twenty or so feet wide, and since I felt guilty at our delay, I determined that we should do what we could to nip it in the bud.

I grabbed a shovel, but Allen refused to follow me. As moments were so important, I decided it didn't make sense to stand around talking. I wanted to catch it quickly, because it might fan out to a broader front at any time, but I judged it a little close, and I had just a narrow trace on the ground and a bit of the brush cut back. Then the flames hit my line; some of them were briefly across, licking the brush on the other side but did not light them. I was lucky that the line held.

Because the man on the tower spotted the glow of the flare-up, before long the rest of the crew arrived. Allen joined them in fighting it, but I was really beat, so I lay down in a hollow in the ashes to recuperate.

Early Snow

There was an unexpected early snowfall at this elevation, which would have left us snowbound if John had not taken out the grader and used it as a snowplow, going back and forth all night long out to the highway from Mammoth. He was in an enclosed but unheated cab, and the visibility was poor because of all the blowing snow. There must have been close to two feet of snow in that storm, which made it clear it was time to think about moving to Bishop. However, since the work at Bishop hadn't been completed yet, we stayed on for a time, and it was up to John to continue to maintain our access to the highway when needed. Fortunately, this unseasonable weather only lasted a few days, and well before the time the movers arrived to work with us on this move, all was back to normal for that time of year.

Moving a Barrack to Bishop

One morning in early fall, we were all gathered and told there was a change of plans. First, we would tear down the two or three other barracks that we didn't use, and which had fallen into disrepair. Then we would work with a contractor to move a forty-foot barrack down to Bishop. It

must have belonged to the director of the former small CCC campus. It had clapboard siding and was insulated.

We would work under the guidance of a professional moving contractor, and would start by dividing it into two twenty-foot sections. Any wiring or plumbing connections would be removed and then, with the guidance of a couple of professionals, one section at a time would be packed up, replaced by cribbing on the sides so a large flatbed trailer could be backed underneath.

When we began the move, we had to start early in the morning, as we had to go very slowly. One of us was always on the front end of the ridgepole, with a fending pole to make sure any low hanging electric lines were cleared. I took this job most of the time. The others acted as flagmen or checked clearances for passing traffic as needed. When we got to Bishop, we lowered the section onto its prepared foundation. The same procedure was followed with the second section.

Taking the Fire to the Water

At the end of the camping season of our last fall at Mammoth, we were closing down the small campground behind the ranger station for the winter. The family at the last campsite had wanted to do a really great job. The night before, they had hosed down their campfire really well, and before they left, they put all their leftover trash into a cardboard carton. Then to really make a really great job, they scraped up all the cold coals in the firepit and dumped them on top. The carton was sitting up on top of our loaded pickup, and as we drove the breeze fanned up the coals and set this top carton on fire.

I glanced back and saw what had happened. At the entrance to our camp there was a standpipe used by the logging company for their water truck. Their temporary logging roads were so dry, they had to water them down so they could see where they were going. Since this standpipe was halfway between that campground and the dump, it made sense to drive the pickup under the standpipe and turn on the water.

Collecting Limb Wood

Although we were to spend that winter living in this building, we did not move down right away, as local contractors had to make extensive modifications to make it into a useful dwelling. We would have a kitchen on the south end, with a partial wall between it and the living and dining area. The north end would be the bedroom. The center back would be the washroom, with toilet and sink, and the entrance would be directly opposite, facing the main parking lot. The end toward the warehouse was the kitchen, with a back entrance next to the woodpile, which gave easy access to the firewood for the stove. With water and sewer connections it would be very convenient.

The logging company had a sprinkler truck to wet down the loose dirt on their logging roads. To give this truck access to the water standpipe next to our entrance, they had made a dirt road coming down to our camp from due north. We had used it a couple of times when returning to camp from that direction. We had to be careful not to be on one of their logging roads when one of their three logging trucks was on it, as it filled up the road.

During available work time, Art James and I would go to the woods behind the camp to collect firewood. When they were logging the area, I saw that the lumber company had a power truck with enough power to operate two ten-foot electric felling saws, each used by a three-man crew. Each crew worked on one side of the chute. This left a pretty deep trench, into which tree limbs would fall. We used the stake-side, and needed to cut the discarded limb wood, which was a foot or more in diameter, into lengths which would fit in the truck. We later took all the limbs we had collected down to Bishop to keep us warm that winter.

Finding the Cause

We were called out to a fire across the highway, in an area where the logging company had been working that spring. By the time we had our line around it, the fire was big enough so that it took about an hour to walk around it. Since it wouldn't take that long to return to our barracks, it was decided that all but three of us would go back. I was one of the three of that group.

The three of us cleared a spot in the ashes inside the line and dug a slight pit, where we gathered some glowing coals to make a small campfire. We should have brought some marshmallows. Since the fire was now very quiet, and all we could see were piles of glowing coals here and there, we decided that there was no point for all of us to be patrolling the fireline, as long as one of us spent his time walking the line to spot any trouble. If the wind came up, we would all get busy. I took the first turn.

The access road and where we were, was just below the top right-hand side of the fire. Our ranger had brought his horse, as there had been no lightning for days and that was the usual cause of our local fires. He wanted to search the surrounding area quickly, looking for clues as to the start of the fire. The horse was at the far end of the top of the fireline, so that it would not disturb us. It was standing haltered next to its feed. He had taken its saddle, and the reins were dropped to the ground. It had been well trained to wait for the return of its master when left like that.

When I started my circle of the line and saw the horse, I'm afraid the temptation was too great. Could I ride the bridled horse on just its saddle-blanket? Besides, if I were higher up on its back, I could spot problems in the middle of the fire more easily. That led to an interesting struggle between the horse and me. It would not cause problems for any rider on its back, but it also needed to stay next to its feed to wait for its master. The horse's solution was interesting.

It started down the trail, although not willingly. But after going a ways, it turned to return to its feed. I pulled the reins to force it back to the trail. The result was that we ended up taking a

number of turns, until we ended up back where we had started. So I left it, and finished my circuit on foot.

The next day, Fred Meckel searched the area around the fire and found nothing. But then he remembered he had issued a permit to a local man, to collect fallen limbs as firewood anywhere in the logging area. When he checked the man's truck, he found it had a faulty muffler. This man was in a lot of trouble.

Life in Bishop

After we moved to Bishop, I got the feeling that the Forest Service still felt some responsibility for providing us with meaningful work, and made an effort to go through the motions while we were waiting for our discharge times. The older men and men with families were discharged first, and the rest of us were waiting for our turn to be discharged. The government's focus was on finding decent jobs for returning servicemen, and they didn't want us to be on the ground floor to take local jobs.

Most of the Forest Service jobs for active, energetic young men starting out with them, were in the mountains. So we were kept in town, where we wouldn't be competing for jobs. Although many of us loved the mountains, most of us were focused on continuing our disrupted college education. John Hoyle was the only one who had a meaningful job, for a short time, after we were living in Bishop. The Forest Service needed to have a dirt road graded, high in the White Mountains, so he went up there for a couple of weeks to do that job. Then, as the oldest of us, he was discharged. I remember him telling me that it was so cold up there, that he had to build a fire under the grader's diesel engine in order to get it started.

A couple of us were assigned to cut up and split the huge pile of limbwood we had brought down from Mammoth Lakes. That was for our use that winter, and the remainder for the use of the Forest Service staff who would take over our building. Another man helped at the Inyo Forest main warehouse, sorting and organizing the Forest Service's equipment and supplies, and another cooked for the five or six of us, which gave him a lot of free time when he didn't have to look busy. On my part, for quite a part of the winter I was assigned the job of making the maximum use of every drop of water, to make small ditches to irrigate a five acre pasture behind where we lived, which was the winter pasture for Fred Meckel's horse.

Christmas Trees

The Forest Service required permits for anyone cutting a Christmas tree on their land. However, too many people would cut a tree and then find one they liked better, abandon the first, and cut another. There was no way of knowing who was doing this, so their solution was to involve the Boy Scouts, who cut the trees and held an annual Christmas Sale of the trees in Bishop. As this became the Boy Scouts' annual fundraiser, everyone approved.

However, because of his growing interest in developing a sustainable, controlled timber industry, Fred Meckel decided that he would personally cut the trees, so that the remaining trees were the ones most likely to grow into usable timber. Our job was to drag them down to the highway, to load on our truck. This was the winter after we had moved down to Bishop.

As there was two feet of snow on the hillside above Sherwin Grade, where he planned to cut the trees, we were all provided with snowshoes. The trees were on a steep hillside, above a wide flat stretch to the highway. A couple of us went up with Fred, packing down a chute as we went. As he cut the trees, these men would drag them to the chute and let them slide down. Another man at the bottom pulled them aside, into piles. The rest of us dragged them across the flat to the truck. Then we loaded and packed them down on the truck as tightly as possible. Wally took down three loads. These trees were six to eight feet tall.

Towards the end of the day, Fred decided we needed a town tree, so he cut down a good looking forty-foot tree. We managed to load it onto his pickup, with the butt end sticking out over the hood and the tip out behind, not quite dragging on the pavement. I rode in the cab with Fred, and I peered out through the branches to be sure that we stayed on the road. We really took our time driving back to Bishop.

Extra Money at Bishop

During the war, Mr. Fixit had found some brief, local part-time jobs for us during our free time, which not only gave us a bit of extra spending money, but was appreciated by the local community, because some small, needed jobs got done. With the end of the war, that ended.

However, in the beginning of winter in 1945, when there were only five or six of us and we were at Bishop, a chance to earn some cash came knocking at our door. It was a man who said that he was the owner of a successful mine up in the White Mountains, east of the road to Tonopah. He and his partner had hauled their production of the past year down to their three bins on the highway. This ore was very valuable, as it contained a mixture of various minerals, all of which were necessary for some modern production materials.

The ore was waiting there for a buyer, and when they made a sale, the two of them planned to haul the ore down to the three waiting gondola cars at the Bishop Railway Station for delivery. Since it was into the Christmas season, his partner figured it was safe to take a couple of weeks off and was unavailable. Unexpectedly, he had gotten a sale. Since he couldn't contact the other owner, and he would lose the sale if he didn't act quickly, he was in a bind.

Under these circumstances, he offered us a per-hour rate which was double what most of us had gotten on other outside jobs, but he said he expected us to work really hard. To be sure that we worked hard enough to meet his expectations, we decided that none of us would work two nights in a row. Since he had a way of lighting the area, we could put in a couple of hours a night after work. Besides a small dump truck, he had a conveyor-belt type of movable machine. He had us use a scoop shovel to load the bottom of the belt, and he directed the flow into his truck.

Whenever we went with him to the station to dump a load into a gondola, there was no one else around and the station seemed abandoned. A siding near the station building held three large gondola cars. A wooden ramp led up to a platform over one of the cars, so that the driver could back his truck up onto the platform to dump his load.

The second evening I went with him to the station, he was frustrated. He needed to move the second car under the loading platform, using a small gasoline handcar to push it, but he couldn't get its motor started. That meant I had to go underneath and pull a pin out of the automatic coupler, to disconnect the loaded car. Then, using a six-foot-long steel crowbar, we both slowly levered that car out of the way. The two empty cars were much easier to move, as once we got them started, it did not take much to keep them moving. Then I set the brakes. After this job, our finances were not quite so tight.

Late Mammoth

In the early days of the next spring, when only the ranger station and the small campground behind it were accessible because of the deep snow at higher elevations, Fred was surprised that, so soon after the war, a few campers had shown up already. He felt he could make use of a few more places for a family to camp right away, so he decided to use a small island on the lowest of the lakes there, and put three of us to work for two weeks.

We started by building a bridge to the island, and only a short one was needed. To speed up the job, we decided to build two very narrow bridges, side by side, for the four wheels of a car. We then went on to start clearing campsites. Unfortunately, the first campers who arrived had a tag-along one-wheel trailer with all their gear. It was quite a job to rescue everything.

It was on one of our trips driving up the highway under Mammoth Mountain, that Fred was there on the snow-covered slope below the highway, with a small gasoline engine attached to a rope tow. There were several skiers around. I had seen the start of recreational skiing at Mammoth Lakes.

A Hitchhike After the War

After the war ended, I had no particular reason to visit my family, but with some available furlough time, and curiosity as to what was going on at the other CPS sites in Coleville, I decided to hitchhike north. I started Saturday after lunch, and got a ride that dropped me off at Bridgeport late that afternoon. There was a small camp of four or five men there. The ranger station was set back from the highway, behind an extensive meadow, and the men lived nearby. They told me that the ranger was married and had a young toddler who played in a small, enclosed grass-covered area near the house. One of their jobs was to protect him from the rattlesnakes which could slither up through the tall grass of the meadow. They invited me for supper and to stay the night. I remember this because we had rattlesnake steaks for supper, which came from two of the snakes they had killed that day. It tasted pretty good.

The next day I got a ride which took me all the way to Carson City. My friend Tony Randles was there, running the Carson City Fire Department. He was the older, married man whom I had replaced, when I was sent to work for the older ranger at Lee Vining at the start of the last wartime winter. He was also the man who had shaved off his charred beard to visit his family after the Palisades Rescue. Since the position included housing over the engine room, and his wife and four-year-old son who were visiting could live with him, he had been sent there. The boy was very proud of his dad, as he loved to watch him drive the red fire engine.

In my view, as a man in CPS who was assigned to work with the Forest Service, it looks like some Forest Service official had decided to loan him to this local fire department, which was temporarily short staffed. This was against the rules, but at that stage, with everything winding down, who would check on this. Also, it was a big help to everyone involved.

After a short visit, during which I learned that none of the men we had known were still around at the main camp and no CPS man was now at the Reno warehouse, I decided to start back and drop in at the main camp at Coleville, to see what that was now like. However, the man who picked me up was still in the Air Force and was on a tight schedule to get back to his base in Arizona. We really flew. When we got near Coleville, I decided not to bother to take the chance of not being able to catch a ride the next day, and because he was going right past Mammoth Lakes, I decided to say nothing and go on back. All I had to do was walk in from the highway. It was a real change from wartime travel to go that far so fast. The pilot was hitting close to ninety miles an hour at times.

The Quakers Money Problem

Although we were not aware of it at the time, as soon as the war ended, the American Friends Service Committee realized that they now needed to shift their program and financing to relief work in war-torn Europe. I believe this transition period was complicated for the organizations involved. I was most aware of that for the Forest Service. Neither Selective Service nor the Forest Service wanted us to be discharged before men in the armed forces, which might give us first choice on available jobs. The Forest Service had a responsibility to provide us with work of national importance. They didn't want to give us meaningless work, so it had to be simple day to day jobs.

The American Friends Service Committee had a tougher situation. The Mennonites and Brethren expected all their young men to be in CPS, so they had no problem in raising funds to support their boys. However, with the Quaker youth, it was a matter of personal choice as to what stand to take during the war. CPS was a middle-of-the-road stand for us. They also had a policy of accepting men of other denominations, so young men who were Friends were much less than half of the men they were supporting. Therefore, the Friends terminated their program as of the beginning of March and turned the camps over to the government. On March first Coleville officially ceased to exist.

Government Camp

The government consolidated what was left of the Friends camps to Glendora, the Friends camp closest to Los Angeles, as our distance from home was no longer an issue. We were not moved there, it was simply a matter of paperwork, and it was still up to the local agencies we were working for to manage us. The Friends no longer had any say.

We at Bishop experienced a small, humorous result during this change. On March third, when we went to work, suddenly we were all given small, but different, interesting jobs. It seems that on that Monday morning, some or all of the men at Glendora had gone on strike in a reaction to this change. Inyo didn't want us to strike. We hadn't even known about this until the next day. Anyway, our loyalty was to the Inyo National Forest.

Government camps provided clothing for their men, and the army had sent a lot of well-used surplus army uniforms to Glendora, with all their army insignia removed. Someone from the main camp phoned us and invited us to come down and pick up what we wanted, if we were interested. We drove down one day, picked up some clothes, and had lunch and visited with the men there. That was my only direct contact with Glendora.

The Inyo National Forest must have planned to use the building we had moved down, to provide living quarters for one of their employees, by June. The others of us would be discharged by the end of May. I was the youngest and would not be released until July third. I was told that I was to help the ranger at Big Pine. He had a very small warehouse behind his home, and I would live in a room in his home and do a bit at the warehouse, or anything else he wanted me to do. I did get to see some sage hens, a brood of which came up to his back door. Soon I was moved to Independence, the Inyo County seat, and was joined by two other young men, probably from the former main camp. We were there while we waited for our official discharge.

Soon after I got there, one of the two young men learned that a Forest Service employee had a baby Austin convertible, a two-seater with no top, which he was willing to sell at a reasonable price. This young man bought it on the spot, and since he didn't have a valid driver's license, I drove it back. We planned that he would get his license at the county seat the next day. Since there was only one policeman in the area at that time, he was tempted to take it out for a spin after supper that evening. I was with him, and we drove two or three miles on the side road leading east out of town. There was no other traffic, so we felt safe, but as we came over a slight rise, we passed the police car heading back to town.

The next day, when I drove him to the police station on the ground floor of the county building to get his driver's license, the officer gave him a strange look when he was told that my friend had no license. He had applied for one back east, but had failed the test. However, the officer gave my friend a license on the spot. As another man passed by, he was told, "My car had pups," as our Austin was sitting right behind the police car.

There was once when all three of us needed to return to the city and needed to crowd into this two-passenger convertible, and were piled on top of each other. We had started after supper and had reached Bakersfield when we needed to gas up. At that time of night, the town was so rowdy

that we didn't stop, but planned to get our gas at the station further down the highway. When we got there, we found that it was closed with no one around. This left us no choice but to see how far the gas we had would take us. We had reached Foothill Boulevard and I knew there was a station halfway across it which stayed open until midnight.

Finally the engine sputtered and died. Since we had no baggage and the car was so light, we solved the problem by having the owner, who was the slightest of us, sit in the car to steer. I and the other man ran behind pushing the car. The road was a bit rolling over the extensions of the foothills. On the uphills we slowed to a walk, and on the downhills we both jumped on the back bumper, and our weight added to the downhill momentum. It didn't take us that long to cover those four miles. The gas station attendant was surprised to see us, as he had heard nothing, and here were three grown men almost hiding the baby Austin.

Years Later

The Injured Sawyer

For years, from the late sixties, my family and I were involved members of Southampton Meeting, in the lower part of Bucks County. In the nineteen-eighties a new family joined our Meeting. Although I had never met him, from the instant I saw him, I knew who he was. He had no fingers on his right hand. It was Donald Warrington.

He told us that that accident was the best thing that had ever happened to him. At that time, the Friends in their CPS program had organized a China Unit, where a small group of men would be flown over the Hump to Nationalist China, to work on projects to be helpful to those troubled people. The first group had gotten as far as Cape Town, before Congress heard about it and passed a ruling that all CPS programs had to be in the continental United States.

Since Donald had gotten a 4F draft status, he was able to go on that program and spend more than a year traveling around China, servicing and repairing electrical equipment in hospitals. While there, he met a young woman who was there with the YWCA, working with orphanages. They were later married. As a result, he had a very productive career with the YWCA. He was assigned to Brazil, where he rose through the ranks to be in charge of their total Brazilian program.

He had been working for years to get the YWCA into Colombia. But as a strongly Catholic country, there was strong pressure to keep all Protestant organizations out. He finally persuaded that country that the YWCA was strictly a service organization, whose only goal was to provide safe housing to single, professional young women when they first moved into a major city. He was there for two years to get this program started. He was then near retirement age, but moved to the Philadelphia area because, at the time, the local Y had financial problems, which he was able to correct. Donald was a Friend, originally from the Philadelphia area, and he and his family were active members of Southampton Meeting for a number of years.

Bill Vanhoy

After the war, Bill became a respected teacher in Charleston, South Carolina. After he retired, he organized a number of CPS reunions. Bill's house was underneath the main highway and next to the entrance to his small development. He had a row of trees underneath the highway which deadened the sound. He was very proud of how many vegetables he could grow for his table in a small space to the left of his driveway. The other side of the driveway was in grass and some fruit bearing bushes.

When we came to his reunions, we always stayed with him. Peg enjoyed visiting with his wife, the daughter of a couple of apple farmers from the hill country. Peg was interested in learning about the history of her family, and how they had done so much work to get the Law of the Seas treaty recognized by the United Nations.

This woman had an amazing hobby. She was interested in learning about cooking and different ways of doing it. So for years she had collected cookbooks, and had ended up with a small room in their house so crammed with these books, that there was not room for anything else. Bill had to do a strenuous job of moving things around, to make room for us in this guestroom.

On our first visit, when we arrived, he took us down to the pottery producing area to the south, because he knew of my interest in pottery. We stopped for an hour or two with a traditional potter, whose family had been in this business for generations. I watched him throw a jug or two and had a good time talking shop. Then he took us back up to the north, to visit the North Carolina State Zoo. It covered a large area and, at the time, was out in open country.

What I remember most about the circuit we took through this zoo, was that we entered an elevated building where there was an observation window, where you looked down across a vast savannah with three or four different animals, which would normally prey on each other, but were peacefully going about their business. I remember there were elephants, antelope, and one or two other animals. There was an explanation, saying that the four areas were divided by deep ditches, which could not be seen at this distance.

On the Friday before the reunion weekend, the women would start preparing the meal for the reunion. Every time I remember going there, the weather was fine, so the gathering was always held at a nearby park. Most of the other attendees had only been to Gatlinburg, the nearby Friends camp, so I did not know them, but it was good sharing experiences with them. They told me that the only project they were working on at that camp, was to break any big boulders they found in a continuing stretch near the top of the ridge, into fist-sized rocks. At the time, this work didn't seem too important, and it seemed to them that this wasn't much different from prisoners working on a rockpile, making big ones into little ones. But they had enjoyed the comradeship and the mountains were beautiful. One of the men at this reunion said that, while recently driving on the Skyline Drive, he recognized some of the trees he was passing, and realized they had been working on the foundation stones for this highway. This highway serves as the foundation for Shenandoah National Park.

Because I wanted to share his life with my longtime friend, I said I would go with him to his Sunday services. He attended and was a member of The First Friends Church of that city. The Service was good, but afterwards I pointed out to Bill that the ten minutes given to meditation and sharing after the sermon gave much to be desired, as there was so little time for silence. Bill agreed with me, but said that since this was the Friends Church where all his students attended, he felt that this was the right thing to do. All the others attending the reunions were members of Friends Meetings. I'm afraid that this was the only time I attended his church.

The next time I went to the reunion with Peg, Bill's wife had passed away. Bill made a real effort to remain as active as possible, but there were no more reunions. The members of the community gave him support so he was able to stay in his home to the last, and this last time I visited him, since I was the stronger and he knew his life was almost over, he told me it was now up to me to keep these memories alive.

Samuel O. Nicholson

edited by his son Peter Nicholson