



Interview

# Raymond Ranger

Head, Land Use Department, Weldwood

Interviewed by  
Peter J. Murphy  
Robert E. Stevenson



Part of the Forest History Program Interview Series

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## About the Forest History Program at fRI Research

fRI Research, originally the Foothills Model Forest, has been conducting research in sustainable land and forest management in Alberta since 1992. The positive impacts from the application of this research (e.g. Grizzly bears, watershed, forest history) to improving forest management and resource sustainability can be seen across Western Canada and beyond. The Forest History Program began in 1996 when Pete Murphy, Bob Stevenson and Bob Udell began a project to record the natural and management history of its Hinton Forest. This project soon expanded to add more reports and to encompass the entire model-forest land base. The program has produced a series of seven books and e-books including an Ecotour, an Ecotour App for west central Alberta, one DVD project and a series of reports about the evolution of adaptive forest management in the West Central region of Alberta.

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## The Forest History Program Interview Series

Between 1997 and 2000, the Forest History Program conducted 33 interviews with various people who played important roles in, or were connected otherwise with the development of the remarkable forest management operation at the Hinton Forest of Weldwood of Canada. These were background information that would be used in a series of books and reports that would follow, all initiated by one book project linked to Weldwood's 40th anniversary celebrations in Hinton in 1997. Some of these interviews are posted to the fRI Research website for general reading, others are available only with permission for research purposes. All interviews were professionally edited to retain content but improve clarity but preserve content.

## Dr. Peter Murphy—Interviewer

Interviewer Dr. Peter Murphy is Professor Emeritus in Forestry at the University of Alberta, where he taught and conducted research in forest policy and forest fire management from 1973 to 1995, during which time he also held positions of Chair of Forest Science and Associate Dean for Forestry in the Faculty of Agriculture & Forestry. During his time at the University he was active in promoting the study of forest history and its importance as guidance for the advancement of forest science today. As part of this he initiated and conducted a number of important interviews with key players in Alberta's forest history, most notably Des Crossley—Hinton's first Chief Forester—and his counterpart in the Alberta Forest Service, Reg Loomis who together established the foundation of Alberta's forest management agreement system. Dr. Murphy is the Chair of the Forest History Association of Alberta, and has been a member of the Forest History Program team at fRI Research since the program began in 1996, where he has authored and co-authored a number of books and reports.

Interview Date: May 20, 1998



## INTERVIEW

May 20, 1998

**Murphy**

This is an interview with Ray Ranger at his home in Marshall, Saskatchewan on Wednesday the 20th of May 1998. Ray thanks very much for making yourself available. To start with, I have found it is usually most helpful to get some background. Could you please begin by talking about where you were raised, where you went to school, the kinds of activities and hobbies you did, any particular mentors you had, and what got you into forestry.

**Ranger**

Well, I was born right in Lloydminster, and I would spend a lot of my free time, weekends and holidays, probably all the holidays, right here on the farm where we are now. Prior to my birth, my dad and mother lived on the next quarter over here, and that was their home. My older brothers and sisters were raised there. I myself was raised in Lloydminster but spent considerable time out here until my late teens. I finished high school in Lloydminster in the spring of 1956. At that time, the economy was very depressed. The Lloydminster area is basically a farming area and was established in 1903 when the Barr Colonists came here from England. Subsequently, oil activity started in the early 1940s (heavy crude). Its history, I think, especially in this area, is one of either boom or bust. The price or the demand for crude oil increases, and there is a great flurry of activity for a number of years, and then, just as suddenly, it drops off again. In the early 1950s, it was at a low point, and there was just absolutely no work here. Farms at that time were kind of a family business. There were always enough children coming along to inherit the farms and provide the help that was needed, so there were a limited number of employment opportunities. And so as our graduation neared, we were always looking for employment opportunities.

**Murphy**

Before you go on – you had mentioned earlier that even in high school you thought about being a forest ranger. How did you ever come to that point of view?

**Ranger**

As a youngster, I had the good fortune to be able to come back and forth from town to the farm here. Being on the farm, there weren't many children to play with. Being a kind of an outsider, I didn't even have the benefit of the neighbouring children to play with. There was a couple of lads not too far away, but it was quite some distance, and, in those days, you just didn't get around unless you had a saddle pony. We didn't have saddle ponies per se but just used the farm animals that were here. In those days, if you worked the horses all day, it was not the thing to do to saddle them up and ride them all over the country half the night. That was kind of frowned on. On Sundays or weekends when the horses were not being used under harness, you might get to saddle them, but you generally did not use them for riding. So you were limited in activities that you could do. As a result, I used to wander around hunting in the fields and woods and the countryside. To a young person, that was "wilderness", and so I had an early exposure to the solitude and peacefulness that the outdoors provided.



**Murphy** Returning to the approach of your graduation year ...

**Ranger** In 1955, the year prior to my graduating, my brother Kenneth, in a quest for work, had heard about the new pulpmill going up at Hinton and how they would need labourers, construction workers, and so on. And there was a program in place to take an apprenticeship and learn a trade, as well, once the construction was finished. So my brother, his wife Roma, and another friend and his wife went to Hinton. They arrived at the main administration building looking for work, and their wives went in to enquire as to where to apply for a job. The boys were waiting and waiting and pretty soon an hour went by and still the girls hadn't returned. The boys thought they had better go and check on this in case something was amiss. So they went in and the girls were busy sitting at the desk typing away, and the boys said, "What is going on?" The girls replied, "We can't talk to you now. We are working." The boys said, "What do you mean you are working?" The girls replied, "Well, we have been hired. We have to finish the day out." "Oh," they said, "is that right?"

So that is how my sister-in-law and her friend, Betty Franklin started in. Tom Lewko was the Office Manager at that time and help was pretty scarce. When these two girls came in and said they were looking for work with their husbands, Tom told them they were hiring over at the mill and the boys should go there the next day kind of thing, but could they type? Well, certainly they could type. "Well, let's see, sit down at the desk here. Here is a letter you can type," and so they typed that, and, as their work was satisfactory, they were instructed to "Just keep right on and finish those letters. You are hired." So they never even had the time to go out and explain to the gentlemen what was going on.

**Ranger** The reason I explained that is to give you an idea of how hectic things were in those days in the early start-up. Subsequent to that when my brother was back in Lloydminster on several occasions, he mentioned that the work in Hinton was plentiful and ongoing. So when I finished school (interestingly enough I had been leaning toward being a forest ranger), I thought that a trip there would give me a chance to get out and get some money ahead, look the country over, and see if there would possibly be employment in the Forest Service.

So we went to Hinton a day or two after. I think it was getting on towards the end of June or the first of July. A friend of mine went with me. We slept in a pup tent next to my brother's little trailer, and they in turn were camped right next to the Forestry Office and the Des Crossley home (Des Crossley was the Chief Forester). It was located on the old Vic Webb ranch which is now part of the Hardisty subdivision. They had a little trailer that they had purchased, and so we pitched our tent outside that little trailer and each morning we would go to the mill and stand in the work line.

They had two gates. They had the main gate where basically it is now, but that wasn't used for hiring. Further west of that, down about where the water tower was, they had a construction gate, and there would be probably 50 to 100 men standing around there each morning. As they needed people, the foreman would come out and ask "Are there any brick layers here?" or "Any electricians



here?" or "We need some labourers." Of course, my friend and I were spit and polished and had clean fingernails and no experience. So we were overlooked for several days hand running. They would come and say, "Who is a brick layer?" or "We need a carpenter," and some great big guy would shuffle up with weather-beaten hands. That was just what they were looking for. They would be taken in.

So we stood around there for the best part of a week and weren't getting anywhere. My sister-in-law said one night, "How is it going down there?" I said, "Not too good. We don't seem to be getting anywhere because we don't have the trades or experience." She said, "Well, I tell you what. I have been transferred upstairs now. My new boss is Des Crossley, and he is in charge of the Forestry Department. Maybe he will have some work for you. It may not be now because all the summer students and all our hiring is done, but it might set you up for something in the future." So I was very pleased, and she arranged for an interview with Des, and I went in to talk with him. "Oh, you are from Lloydminster." "Yes, I am." "Well, who is your dad and who is your granddad?" And as we visited along, he said, "I am from Lloydminster, too." It took me by surprise. He said, "Did you ever hear of my dad, Ivan Crossley?" "Well, yes I had." Ivan Crossley had owned a livery stable in Lloydminster at one time and had freighted supplies from Saskatoon to Lloydminster with my grandfather. But I hadn't known Des at all. So we visited long and he said, "Yes. There could be work here come fall when the summer students all go. We have none at the moment." However, he said, "If you are interested in a career in forestry, you should really get as much experience in that line of work as is possible." I said, "That would be just fine, but how do I go about that?" He replied, "We have got several big fires on the go right now." He said, "Most of my crews are down on the Gregg fire. However, there is one on the Berland River that is north of town. We have no people on that, but the Forest Service are sending people up, and I understand that there is a supply plane coming in this afternoon." He said, "Have you got a sleeping bag?" I said, "Well, yes." He said, "Well, you get your sleeping bag and your clothes, and you get over here and we will see that you get on that fire crew."

So I arrived an hour or so later and sure enough right where the company greenhouse is now (and the town hall), there was a field and they flew in a Cessna 180. I went in there and loaded up a bunch of stuff and myself on the airplane and away we went. We went over to the Berland tower and swooped in there. I was a greenhorn. I didn't know anything. "Where are we going?" I asked. The pilot said, "There will be some guys along in a minute. Don't get excited. Just give me a hand unloading this plane." So we started to unload stuff on the side of the runway and pretty soon came a little tractor with a sloop behind it. Driving the tractor was Bob Lewis, who I became good friends with years later. He was the ranger in charge of this fire crew that had just arrived at the tower, and they were quite a crew, too. Most of us slept in the little tower cabin. We were sleeping on tables and under the tables.

**Murphy**

At the Berland tower?



**Ranger**

At the Berland tower. Under the tower itself, they had put some plywood around the base of the tower to make a kind of living quarters. We were there a day and a half and had not had a chance to bring in many supplies when it started to rain. It rained steady for a week, and it was just a sea of mud. Luckily for us, it helped put the fire out because we had run out of food. There was an Indian fellow that was supposedly a good hunter, and Bob had given him a rifle and he had gone and shot a moose. We didn't have any proper cooking utensils, so we gathered some old seismic drums that were scattered around and cleaned them out. We all ate moose meat and potatoes and that was our fare for a week.

So I wasn't overly impressed with forestry per se, but it was a great experience for a young fellow, and I quite often think back on that. What a dramatic thing it was, that first flight over this immense beautiful country. Previously, I had only seen the country from the highway between Edson and Hinton. The view from the road in itself was misleading because there was a lot of poplar and aspen and little fields and stuff like that around Edson. You could look out a little bit when you got closer to Hinton and see a bit of the expanse of the forest, but to take off from Hinton and head straight north over that great landscape among unbroken evergreens was something. And then to be dropped in the middle of it. Plunk! There you are, kind of thing! And there was a forest fire over the hill with the smoke and everything. It was quite dramatic to a young fellow, and I guess it hooked me right there.

**Murphy**

Did the Berland fire get rained out? What happened? Were you driven back?

**Ranger**

They flew us in and out of that fire. The cook was the first to be flown out. How they got the cook I don't know, but it turned out that he was just recently out of a mental facility. He became quite paranoid about Bob Sandy (a little fellow who was the towerman), and I being in the towerman's bedroom with the door closed (we used the bedroom for sending and receiving messages via a little battery-operated radio and closed the door for privacy of communications). Bob was quite protective of this radio because even though a lot of the time it worked, a good part of the time it didn't. We were sitting in the radio/bedroom one night, and the fire crew, as they do, got to talking and, realizing that the cook was bothered by our "secrecy", told him that there was a conspiracy afoot, and we were plotting against him. And to make a long story short, one night while we were in the bedroom and Bob was operating the radio trying to get through to Fire Headquarters the door flew open and "whoosh". We all got drenched with a bucket of water. Radio and all. This was cook's retaliation. Needless to say, the next time that airplane came in, the cook was on it on the way out. We soon had somebody else pressed into working service. Yes, at the termination of that fire, three or four of the lads kept on for mop-up, as well as Sandy.

**Murphy**

Was it Sandy McDonald? He went on to be a ranger later on.

**Ranger**

Yes. I believe he did. So that was my first encounter with Sandy, too. But, at any rate, there were three or four left on for mop-up purposes, and the rest of us were taken off back to Hinton. When I



came back to Hinton, of course, I was immediately unemployed again, but I had a few dollars in my pocket. It wasn't very much by the time you paid for your tobacco, and I think I wrecked a pair of boots. But, at any rate, I had new footwear and a couple of dollars, and I was looking for work again. The same Tom Lewko who had hired my sister-in-law was a friend of or had made a friendship with the fellow that was running Canada Catering (Canada Catering were the contractors that were housing and feeding the construction workers). They had quite a large complex to the west side of the mill yard. In fact, that first summer when I was there, they had great big circus bell tents right where the front lawn of the mill is now. So it would be on the front lawn and where the original swimming pool was located. Anyway, Tom suggested that he would phone this gentleman and see if there was work over there. To make a long story short, within four or five hours, I was over there and hired.



*Pulpmill and new Studmill, ca 1972. "Canada Catering" buildings at mid-left of image*

My duties were to be a meal checker. At the construction camp, there was between 4,000 and 5,000 construction workers and at least a dozen different major contractors (Poole Construction Company Limited [PCL] was the major contractor. H.A. Simons from Vancouver was the general contractor, but Poole was the main construction sub-contractor). Then there were other specialty contractors (Custodis Chimneys for instance were putting up the main stack). I forget lots of the names, but, at any rate, all these contractors kept track of the meals you ate by issuing you a round coloured numbered badge with the name of the contractor (i.e. PCL) on it. You wore that at all times when



you came for meals. At the north end of the buildings, they had two great big double doors with steps leading up to them. Inside the doors and at the head of the stairs, stood a meal checker behind a pedestal who was flanked on each side by a Commissionaire (employee of the Corps of Commissionaires, a Canadian security firm) corps commissioner. On the pedestal was kept a listing of contractors, names, and numbers. The meal checker's job was to record each worker's number as he came for meals, as well as ensure that his general cleanliness met the health standards that were set out for coming here. Because a lot of the people that were working there were recent immigrants and spoke very little English, there was no time to discuss whether or not they were clean enough or they should go and wash their hands or whatever before coming for a meal. You had a Commissionaire standing one on each side of you, and you simply pointed your pencil at an unclean worker and that was the signal that they didn't gain entry. Quite often that resulted in them getting thrown down the stairs a time or two before they got the message. So it was quite rough and tumble.

**Murphy** What was the most typical reason for doing it?

**Ranger** They were dirty. There was a terrible lot of dysentery affecting us at that time, and their hands would be soiled or look terribly dirty, or they didn't smell so good. At that time in Hinton, there was a terrible outbreak of dysentery, and it could not be stopped. Subsequently, both the general contractors as well as Canada Catering were terribly concerned that the dysentery would continue to spread and everyone was trying various ways to control this outbreak. There were investigations on the go. Some days there would be no radishes served, the next day there would be very little salad, then they would cut something else out, and so on trying to determine what it was that could be lending itself to the spread of this dysentery. So that was what occurred. Meals took up most of the day. For instance, the dinner meal would start at 10:30 in the morning and go right through to about 1:00, so that your dinner hour was elongated. It was the same with your breakfast and your evening meal. So if you worked for Custodis Chimneys, you might be slotted for an hour beginning at 10:30 for a dinner. They would come all the way from the mill and form a single line all the way down, and you would see that great big snake of a line going right back to the mill gates.

**Murphy** Isn't that interesting!

**Ranger** Yes. A good lot of the sub-trades worked, during construction, all over the mill. It was a honeycomb of activity. It was four or five floors deep, with cement and rebar guys here and there. A real beehive of activity. As well as checking meals three times a day, a meal checker was also to aid the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) by looking out for the criminal element. These construction sites sort of were a gathering place for gamblers and people that were trying to hide themselves, but who still needed employment and still needed the dollar. Because the meal checkers were in contact with each construction worker three times a day, day in and day out, the RCMP realized that we were the obvious fellows to view their "mug shots" of the current "most wanted" citizens and





indicate if they were present in camp. So once a week, we would review mug shots of all these different guys to see if they were recognizable.

**Murphy** Did you identify any of them?

**Ranger** Yes. What they had done, or what they were up to, I don't know, but I would say, "Yes, we had seen this guy." Then the RCMP would look after it from that point. Whether you were meal checking on the west end or the east end didn't matter, as the undercover RCMP would also be there somewhere watching. The other thing that we did in the evenings was to do a shift in the gambling area. Because you could legally gamble in the construction camps in those days, they wanted to keep control on that, too. So they had a bunk house set up there. It would just be north of where the main eating facility was, and it had a little commissary in it. You sold tobacco and cigarettes and pop and so on, and it had a juke box, a brand new juke box. For a young fellow, I will always remember that. They had gaming tables, and they had \$1 and \$5 tables and the highest was \$10 tables. Again from time to time, the RCMP undercover guys would come and they would say, "Well, here is what you want to watch for. If you see any sort of this stuff going on, you let us know." So we would.

We would be around playing the juke box or watching the commissary. That was all part of Canada Catering. You took your shift there, and I think it was an hour, or two hours sometimes, and you saw these guys that came in and really didn't look like labourers. Their hands were all in fairly good shape, not weather-beaten or callused, and they always followed much the same pattern. They would come in and be there for a day or two and they would be losing, not a great lot, but they would be losing. Then they would come in on a night, and they couldn't lose. They would graduate from the \$1 tables up to the \$10 tables. People would get to know them and that they didn't know how to play cards very well, and, all of a sudden, bang, they would clean up. So you would identify them, or the other police undercover guys would be there, and quietly they would be gone. So that was all part of the business. I worked at Canada Catering until the summer students had left in early fall. In fact, they hadn't all gone yet when there became a vacancy available, and Des called me and I started with Northwestern Pulp and Power, Limited (NWP&P) on August 16, 1956.

**Stevenson** Ray, do you know who your immediate supervisor was then?

**Ranger** Yes. I started on the continuous forest inventory crew, and Phil Appleby was a young graduate forester at that time in charge of the crew. The first place we worked, I believe – and I have a picture and I can verify that by looking at that picture – was on the Grande Prairie Trail. Interestingly enough, in those days, they wanted somebody to be in charge of the vehicle because most of the lads were summer students, and they wanted a permanent employee to be in charge of the vehicle that could drive and do maintenance. We had at that time mostly Land Rovers, and, when I started on the forest inventory crew, we had three vehicles. We had Number 9, Number 10, and Number 12. And I remember I got Number 12. Vern Truxler would already have been hired in 1955. He was driving Number 9 I believe, and Ed Weideman was driving vehicle Number 10. So we were the three



designated drivers. The various drivers and vehicles came and went, and we all shifted around from time to time, but by-and-large for that first couple of years, I was on forest inventory. Number 12 stayed with me. Vern, on the other hand, was back and forth on cut layout, with Bob MacKellar and lads like that. Ed Weideman was doing cut layout a lot of the time, so he was away a lot. But they all worked on forest inventory that first summer, then again for a period of time the next summer, and then they were back and forth all over. I would have to go through their employment records, but that was the core group then. That summer a lot of the fellows that went on to become superintendents and foremen and one thing or another in the Woodlands Division were there working on continuous forest inventory. There was Bob MacKellar, Ozzie Hanson, and Lorne Dell, to name just a few.

**Murphy** What was the nature of your job, then? You were responsible for the vehicle, but was that just incidental to your job?

**Ranger** That was incidental. I was hired as a compassman and worked with cruisers to lay out these forest inventory plots. In addition to doing that, you had to drive and care for the vehicle. If you left on a Monday morning, you were up at the crack of dawn because the groceries and everything had to be rounded up and loaded and the vehicle had to be serviced. Then you had to pick up your crews and come out to camp, and you were responsible for getting them there and getting them home again. So you went out to work every day, but then when it came time to come in again, you brought the crews in. But your responsibilities didn't stop there. You had to get that vehicle over and get it serviced at the Woodlands garage or at an alternate garage.

**Murphy** So when you went, then, did you camp out?

**Ranger** Yes. We were out and these are pictures of our camp set-up. At that time, we didn't have anything too fancy. There were big old green forestry tents and then 9 x 9 tourist tents. In addition, we had the big regular white canvas wall tents. In the early days, most of the men slept in the tourist tents, and we used the big wall tents for cook tents or office tents.

**Murphy** One of the tourist tents?

**Ranger** Yes and we would have a set-up like you see here in this photograph. This would be your office tent. Here is where your party manager would sleep in the one end and the cook on the other end. This would be the office here because the cook was never in his tent anyway. You would have a bit of a homemade table in there, and you could sit down at that to do office work.

**Murphy** Was that in a tent or just under a fly?

**Ranger** That was a tent. A terrible place to work in. Hotter than a devil. Here, you see, they had a fly next to the cook tent. We are making one here, as a matter of fact. You see here is your old stove and a



board, and then the rest of the tents were just scattered around. I have a better picture somewhere later on.

**Murphy** How long would you be out at a time?

**Ranger** We would be out 11 days at a time regular and then in for three. As I say, getting your vehicle to the garage and picking up groceries cut into some of that time, so you didn't have that much time. I kind of estimated for the first four or five years that I worked there, we would actually be out of the woods 72 days of the year. The rest of the time we would be in the woods.

**Murphy** So you were in the bush every day except for 72 days?

**Ranger** Yes.

**Murphy** That was quite a lot of time out.

**Ranger** Yes. In fact, after I had been working there for five years, I came in one day and I had grown a bit of a long beard, I will grant you. And of course, living out in the woods, you didn't look all that well dressed at times, either.) I came in one day to the Forestry Department (it was upstairs), and they had the telephone operator right at the base of the stairs. Lynn Mosley was the operator at the time. I remember she said, "Yes. Can I help you?" And I said, "Not really. I was just going upstairs to the Forestry Department." She said, "Do you know anybody up there?" I said, "Well, I have been working here for five years. I should know a few people." And she apologized. She hadn't recognized me. So that was a good indication of just how many times we would be around the office.

In the early years – we were mostly young fellows away from home, some of us married – when we hit town, we had other things to do than hang around the office, so a lot of them never even went to the office. You would pick them up at home or wherever they were staying. We had, in the early days when the early construction was over, what they called an "annex" to stay in while in town. It was located behind Canada Catering, and we stayed there on days off. These annexes eventually went to all the camps and became the buildings for Camp 1 and so on. They assigned one of those to us, and that is where the forest inventory crew stayed when we were there. You simply were dropped off there and were picked up there. You didn't really have any reason to go to the office much. So it was no wonder they didn't know us very much.

**Murphy** At that time, you were just setting up the plot system in the first place – these permanent plots – so if you were out for 11 days, how many plots would you do, for example?

**Ranger** We would try to do one half a plot per day per man.

**Murphy** One half a plot per day per man!

**Ranger** Fifth acre plot.



**Murphy** Wow. That means locating them and measuring and marking the trees.

**Ranger** Yes.

**Murphy** And you did it?

**Ranger** Well, I couldn't speak for those early days, as I didn't keep the records, but we could certainly take a minute and find out what the production was while I was there. It was at the appropriate level whatever their requirement was for that. Getting into the area and laying out the plots was the difficult part. Once you got there, a cruiser and compassman could do two plots a day easy enough. That was no problem. What we did when we first got in is we would lay the plots out together. Then we would split up and everybody would tag the plots up, and then we would join back together and you would have the compassman record and the cruiser cruise. Usually, you tried to work two crews together. It depended on how many trees you anticipated in the plots. You could locate them on a photograph to start with, so you had a pretty good idea how many stems per acre were there from the typing on the aerial photograph. So if it was a light set of plots, two guys would go to them. If it was a real heavy set, you might send two crews in there, or you might send one crew in, and, on the second day, they would finish early and then go and lay some other plots out. It was always the party manager's job to kind of assess that.

**Murphy** And that was Phil Appleby's job?

**Ranger** Yes. The head fellow that was in charge of the forest inventory was John Miller at that time. He was a forester from St. Regis Paper Company in the States that was sent up. John initiated the Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) program.

**Murphy** One other thing I was going to ask was the cooking arrangement. You said you had a cook when you had the crew.

**Ranger** When we had big crews during the summer. In the early years, we had a cook as a rule.

**Murphy** How large a crew would that be?

**Ranger** The odd time it was a double crew. A crew is normally 10 or 11 fellows, and the odd number was because one usually had to stay in and cook when we didn't have a cook, or if we did have a cook, the odd number was the cook. That first summer we had Jerry Sassville. I remember his name now. He was an older French Canadian lad, a real good cook, very eccentric, but prone to the bottle. Whenever you would get him to town, he would get in the bar and probably get zipped up, and you would forcibly have to get him out of there and back to camp. Then he would be terribly unpleasant for a day or two, and then he would be back in the saddle again. But he put up with a lot, too.

I remember we had been working in the Crown Hill area north of Edson, and just at the base of the hill there was a trapper's cabin. There was an old lumber camp in there at one time, and we had



moved in there in 1956 and did some inventory work. Along about 1958 I believe it was, we had occasion to go up there again, Hank Sommers and myself, to do some work. Hank was the cruiser. On our second trip, we found a trapper in there. He had done some work fixing up a couple of the buildings, and he was using one of the bigger cabins that we had been staying in previously as his main cabin. He had passed away in his sleep and was still there frozen. So as a young fellow, I was quite upset about that. I thought, "Well, that is the finish of that" and assumed that we would go someplace else. Hank said, "No. We are not going to hurt anything and neither will the trapper. We will just go put him out here in the snow, and we will simply use his bed because there is no place else to sleep." So needless to say I didn't get much sleep that night. We got a hold of the Forest Service the next day, and Bob Lewis and the RCMP came up from Edson and took control of the situation. In the meantime, Hank busied himself reading the old fellow's letters. He turned out to be some kind of remittance man from England, and he had been over in this country for quite some time and was still corresponding with people in England.

We pulled in there at a later date with a forest inventory crew, and we had Jerry Sassville. He had one little cabin that was in good shape that he used for a cookhouse, and the bigger cabin was where we were sleeping. In the cabin we used for sleeping, there was a trap door in the centre of the floor with a bit of a dug out basement under it, if you could call it that. It was more like a fox hole, but it was a place where they kept stuff. Two school friends of mine, at that time, Ray Lightfoot and Ed Latchuk, joined up. They were body builders. It was quite a thing. We would have limited space to carry groceries and stuff, but we had to pack all this weight-lifting equipment. And, of course, they only had one set because there was limited space, but they would take turns. I remember one night, Jerry had been up quite early in the morning to do his cooking and had done a fair day's work, and it was probably 7:00 at night, which is early enough, I guess, but he was going to bed. In the meantime, we were all sitting there playing cards or doing whatever you do, and here he is laid out. He was quite a portly fellow with a big stomach. He is laying there in his sleeping bag right alongside this trap door. Our junk was all scattered around the cabin floor, and there is no room for anything, and these boys wanted to lift weights. So the only spare area, or area big enough for them to do this, was out on this trap door. So they were standing on this trap door and lifting these weights, and Jerry he is just laying to the one side there. I remember they were getting these weights up and kind of having a bit of a contest. I can't remember the figure, but I suspect they were up to 150 lbs. or something like that on these bar bells. I remember Ray Lightfoot got them about to shoulder height, and all of a sudden the trap door gave way and down he went.

And, of course, the end of the weights hit old Jerry right on his belly on the way down. Bang! Well, Jerry he came out of there, and I mean he was mad as a grizzly. He was looking to kick and hit whatever had hit him, and here was old Ray pinned down there with these weights across him, and he is a real good target. Just his head sticking out. Well, he took one hit before the rest of us collected ourselves and grabbed old Jerry, or he would have got quite a few more. Ray was mad at old Jerry



because it was an accident in his eyes. Jerry wasn't too convinced that it was. So the next morning Jerry is up cooking away, and the guys are waiting to be called for breakfast. Then we hear a lot of French language going on over there. What some of the boys had done is to take a piece of cardboard and rock, and they stuck them on top of his stove pipe, so when he got his campfire going, Jerry is smoked out. We got there and the door was open, and Jerry has got a big knife in his hand and he is looking to do somebody in. Those are the kinds of things that went on from time to time.

**Murphy** Was Ray's nickname Blondie?

**Ranger** Blondie. Yes, that was Ray Lightfoot.

**Murphy** Because we have had several people that have never heard of him.

**Ranger** Yes. For the record, Blondie lives right here in Lloydminster.

**Murphy** The bunk house on the United Church site was that ...

**Ranger** That ties in with Jerry. As I related earlier, most of the time on weekends when we were in town, we would disperse to wherever. People would go visiting or up to Jasper or down to Edson or whatever. Especially in the early days, there were no liquor facilities in Hinton, so the boys would have to go to Edson or Jasper to get a bottle or a box of beer. As time went on, there was more and more need to have a base of sorts, and, at the start, it was at Canada Catering. As there was a need to develop the wood yard further, it became necessary to move our annex building down into the Hardisty subdivision where the United Church is located now. That, in fact, was our home away from home. In the early years, we had three crews working. This was still in 1956 and 1957. There were the forest inventory ("CFI Boys" we used to call them), the operational cruisers (doing detailed inventory for the lumber camps), and a group of lads doing stem analysis work for Vidar Nordin of the Federal Agriculture Department. Larry Kennedy was in charge of that crew.

**Murphy** Vidar Nordin. Yes, he was head of the Forest Pathology Laboratory in Calgary.

**Ranger** They were physically going around and doing stem analysis by age class. At any rate, each crew would be gone for two weeks, then in for a few days, and then gone again. So instead of doubling up sleeping facilities, they simply staggered the weekends in which the crews would come to town and housed them all in the same bunkhouse. There were no partitions. But you would come as a crew, and there were your beds and everything, and you would set up shop and sleep there. Then you would go back in the woods after your three days. The other crew would come in on the weekend that you were out. They would sleep in your beds. By this time, their clothes were maybe not in very good shape, so they would look around and find something that fit from yours, and they would wear your coat, your trousers, or your shoes. When they were done with it, it would all go to the cleaners, and it would come back before you would get there. If you got back and it hadn't come



in, you simply sorted around through their stuff and found something that fit and carried on. So it was kind of a community set up.

Along with the coming in, we had to eat, too. Normally, you would fend for yourselves. The cook came along and, of course, it was natural for him to bring some supplies with him, so he had a little stove in the corner and he wound up cooking for the boys. That wasn't such a bad deal at first, but that soon fell apart because we would all go our own way. We weren't really in mind to visit with the cook all the time, so he had to make his own friends. We would come back to the bunkhouse, and here he would have a bunch of hobos off the railroad with him and he would be cooking. Of course, he was a hero to them because he had food and drink. Your bed would be full of sleeping hobos and stuff like this, so there was quite a little friction over it all, and we had to put a stop to that. And, of course, when the word got out that there was free groceries over there, that wasn't the purpose of it all either, so they put a curb to that. But that was the way we kind of lived in those early days, and it was quite frontier-like and quite humorous.

**Murphy**

The other one that comes to mind is Charlie Miles.

**Ranger**

Charlie was a story in himself. In the early stages of development, we had all these programs ongoing at the same time, and one of them was to type and age class the forest. So as fast as our draftsmen and photo interpreters could draw preliminary maps and do photo interpretation, they had a ground crew going out and verifying all the timber typing (species identification and heights) and doing preliminary age class work. That work fell to Charlie Miles. Now, like the rest of us, he took his turn at forest inventory and operational cruising and stuff like that. But very quickly he kind of got pigeon-holed into the age classing business. That was right up Charlie's alley, and I think he worked with Ed Latchuk for quite some time, Ed as his compass man. They would go away and disappear, and we wouldn't see him for two or three weeks at a time. Then he would show up, and he would have an armful of these maps verified and age classed. He had very little supervision as far as I could tell. That just suited Charlie because you would hear wild stories about him showing up in Edmonton or Jasper in the middle of the week doing various things. I talked to him in later years, and he did in fact do those sorts of things.

But in all fairness to Charlie, he would set a quota for himself, and instead of working for eight or ten hours and sitting on his behind in the middle of nowhere, he would work from daylight to dark and get his quota done up sort of in advance. Then he would take off and have three- or four-day weekends and a little extra than he was supposed to. But his work was done, and it was done well.

He was a very colourful man. He would do all kinds of things. He had people so terrified of him. You never knew whether he was sane or insane, or just putting it on or what. I will give you a few examples. I had a little trailer in later years. Well, it was the one that I spoke of earlier that my brother and sister-in-law lived in. I think the second year they were there, they moved into one of Vic Webb's cabins. There was a series of little houses on this dude ranch that Vic Webb had prior to



the mill starting, and Des' office and home was in the main ranch building. Then there were half a dozen other cabins, and Bob MacKellar was in one and Jimmy Clark in another one. When one of these cabins became available, my brother Ken and wife Roma moved in, and I subsequently bought the trailer off of them. So Al Hollington, another colourful compass man, and myself ended up in this trailer, and we started to renovate the inside and fix it up. There were some more trailers to the south of us. Some Poole Construction foremen and contractors stayed in them. They were not too impressed with us because they worked long hours, and they would want to sleep at night; whereas, we would come in, and for the three days that we were in, it was a non-stop building or boozing binge, as time didn't mean too much to us. We would be pounding nails at 2:00 in the morning, and, of course, there would be a few irate voices telling us that we should probably go to bed.

One night, Charlie, Al, and I are there. It was the wee hours of the morning. Al he was a great guy. He used to like to read books all the time. He would always have a book in front of him and good music. He used to buy lots of nice records, and I like music, so we would have the record player going. That was about the first thing we had operable in there. We would have the music on, and he would be reading and he would look up every once in a while and I would be sawing or pounding boards, and he would see that my drink was down so he would pour another drink. It was kind of like routine. Well, that night, a knock came to the door, and it was a "Who is there?" kind of thing. I thought it was maybe one of the neighbours looking to hang a licking on us for making so much noise. It was Charlie. Well, that was it. We knew we dare not let Charlie in at 3:00 in the morning. "What do you want, Charlie?" "Boys, I need some help. Let me in." "No. We are just going to bed." "No," he said, "I need some help. You guys are up. I see your lights are on. It will only take a few minutes." "What is your problem, Charlie?" "Well," he said, "I have been down to the Hudson's Bay store, and I got it all cased out. I got all the stuff we need piled up in a big pile right under the sky light. All I need is somebody else up on the roof, so I can hand it to them, and we can get it out of there." "Ah, Charlie. Go home. You are drunk again." "No, I am not drunk. I am as sober as anything. You better come up and give me a hand." "Nope Charlie. You are drunk. Go on home." So grumble! Mumble! After a while, he is gone. I go back to work on the Monday morning, and the big news around the office is that somebody tried to break into the Hudson's Bay store and got in through a sky light and all the stuff is piled up but there is nothing missing. So we don't know whether Charlie really meant to take that stuff, if he just did it on a lark, or if he might even have heard from somebody that this had happened. It makes you wonder.

**Murphy**

And he was never connected with it?

**Ranger**

Never connected with it. No. There was another time I remember Charlie. The boys had an apartment building. It was the first apartment buildings over there. They would be east and south of the Hudson's Bay store up on the hill. I forget the name of them. Two-story apartment buildings, anyway. The forest inventory crew and the cut layout crew ended up in there. They had no furniture. They had a couple of apple boxes for a table, and they would just bring their cots and sleeping bags





in on the weekend, because they were only there three days. Tis when we didn't have a bunkhouse anymore, and we had to kind of fend on our own, so there was a bunch of them up there. It was quite late at night. The boys were all in from various parties going on and in come Charlie. Of course, he is stumbling around walking over everybody in their sleeping bags, and they are all kind of upset with him. Anyway, he gets into bed. They have no curtains on the windows. Just outside, 100 yards away, there is this big street light, and it is just about level with the windows. Charlie says, "Boys. Somebody get up and turn the lights out." "Charlie, the lights are out. It is a street light. Go to bed." That of course was not good enough for Charlie, he wanted to argue, so again he demands that somebody, "Get up and turn them lights out." And he was a big man with a big heavy voice and hook nose, and he looked quite fierce at times and quite authoritative. "Get up and close them lights off." "No, Charlie. Go back to bed. You are drunk." This went on for the best part of an hour. Finally, the game was wearing off and all of a sudden Charlie gets up and stumble, stumble in the dark. Bang! Here Charlie had gotten his rifle and stuck it out the window and blew the street light out. Well, the guys dare not turn the lights on then. They get Charlie down out of the window, and, of course, the lights are going on all over the place seeing what all the shooting was about. Nothing more was said, but Charlie would do those kind of things.

Another time, I remember Dick Smith, who was a foreman. Later on, he would be a successful contractor in Hinton. I think he was a strip boss at that time at Camp 6. How he and Charlie got together I don't know, but they were sharing a trailer on Highway 16 about where the Rainbow Trailer Court is. Charlie would get into so much devilment that nobody really wanted to be around him at times. I suspect this was always happening. Dick was seeing the girls or whatever, and he didn't want to be burdened with Charlie. He escaped on Charlie a time or two. Charlie would say, "Where are you going Dick?" or that kind of thing, and Dick would have some evasive answer and then slip away on him and do his thing. He was to go somewhere this night, and there was Charlie wanting to go with him. So he said, "No. No. I am just slipping out for a few minutes for a pack of cigarettes." But Charlie said, "OK. But make sure you come right back." So Dick went away for the evening, and he come back through the door in the wee hours of the morning, and here is Charlie got his rifle laying across the table and is sleeping there waiting on him. So Dick, of course, is a little alarmed, but he thinks this is all a joke. "What are you doing, Charlie?" Well, Charlie wakes up, and he grabs that rifle and he lines up on him. He says, "Back up a little bit. You are too close. I might miss." Well, Dick backed up right out the door and kept on going. At those times, you never knew whether old Charlie was just putting it on or whether he had a little too much to drink or what.

But you know, he could be humorous, too. We were going through Edson, and Norman Willmore, the provincial Minister of Lands and Forests had a clothing store (general merchant) there. He had it right on the corner, and he wasn't there, of course. He was in Edmonton doing his administrative business at that time, but he still owned the store. We were going through Edson, and, of course, in those days if you were missing a pair of gloves or needed a shirt, and you were working north of



Edson, you would stop in there on the way to work. So we stopped in there just at noon, and there was a young girl (I would say she couldn't have been more than 18 or 19). Now whether she was just working there over the noon-hour or whether she was just starting to work there, I don't know. Either way, the owner obviously wasn't there, as the manager wouldn't put up with what happened next.

They had a rifle or two there as well, and Charlie, of course, is over looking at them, and he is thinking about getting some ammunition. There was two or three other people in the store, dickering about this and that and asking this girl about the prices. She didn't seem to have the answers. Charlie was getting a little short with waiting around. First thing you know, old Charlie walks up to her in his big voice and says, "Now, that is not the way to sell anything. If you want to sell something, you better start doing it something like this." And he jumps right up on top of the counter top, and he starts to sell things like he was a barker at the midway or the fair. This was so and so, and he was giving you all this sales pitch. I mean the rest of us were thinking the police were going to come through the door any minute. This girl's mouth was open, and she was terrified of this guy. It was just like he went berserk, and he was waving this stuff around and when he saw everybody's reaction, that just egged him right on. He just went full-bore then. Then, of course, his timing was superb. Before she could get on the phone and get somebody over there, he wound down and was out of there before the authorities come.

Well, to give you a better example, we get down to the bar in Edson. We used to try and hit the bar and go in for supplies midweek on our trips there. It was always a chore because it was a balancing act trying to keep old Jerry Sassville out of the bar and still go down. Because he was the cook and he had the authority to say I need X-number of groceries, so it was often a losing cause. Anyway, we would get down there, and the boys would go to the bar for a few beers, and we would try to get Jerry out of there and get home. But here old Charlie Miles gets in there. As soon as he gets in the door, he introduces himself as Gordon McNab and that he is the Woodlands Manager from Hinton at the new pulpmill and he is hiring men Well, all these old rubbies and guys around there are wanting to get on in the worst way with the new mill. So over then they come to Charlie's table, and he soon has got a big mob of guys there, and is asking "Well, yes have you done any work? Well, this guy has worked in this pulp camp some time. "Well, yes, OK. That's fine. You look pretty good. What's your name?" And he writes it down and says, "You're hired. We will pay you so much." He does this for two or three guys, and he would say to them, "Seeing as you got a job now, maybe you should buy a round." Yes, they would buy a round. So the rest of the night he was getting beer on these guys and toward closing time he took stock of how many guys he had hired. Well, he would have had half a dozen guys or more hired, and he got arguing with them. "The hell with you," that kind of thing. And he up and fired this guy, and before the evening was over and after he had his fill of beer, he had fired all these guys again and we were out of there. And that is the kind of stuff old Charlie would do, and he got away with it, you know. Oh, man.



**Murphy** How long did he last with the outfit?

**Ranger** Well, you could probably put a better date on it than I. He stayed with us until they were putting that fire tower in at Moberly Creek, and then Charlie decided he wanted to go on his own and be a contractor. So he went up to Grande Cache or Susa Creek or Victor Lake. He hired all those natives up there, and he went down to the Hudson's Bay store and he got a big tent. There he was on the Moberly Creek Cabin Flats with a great big tent set up, and all these natives camped around him, and he was the chief. He went up there, and he cut that road, and he had all those natives doing it. I said to him, "Charlie, I have worked with natives down there in Saskatchewan country. How do you do it?" He said, "You only hired the ones you wanted to work. That is where you made your mistake." He says, "I hire the whole family, and then you always got enough on the job." He says, "If the guys are too hungover, the women folk will be out there or their cousins or their brothers or whomever." So he had a great mob of them, and he cut that road on contract for the Alberta Forest Service (AFS), and they put that tower in and he made enough money that he started buying skidders. From then on, he was on his own. He wound up in Prince George doing quite well, the last I heard of him.

**Murphy** Good for him. Just to clarify for me, Ray, could you explain the difference? You used the term forest inventory, age class, continuous forest inventory, and cut layout. I think some of them were different.

**Ranger** Yes. The CFI crew were doing continuous forest inventory. That basically was the program that did the original forest inventorying and is still ongoing today. Fifth acre plots were established in each section of land in clusters of four around a common section corner and all the trees in these plots measured. John Miller started the program, and Jack Wright continued the work for many years. They did that forest inventory work. At the same time, before we had sufficient data to be able to predict or know where we should be cutting, they had what they called an operational cruising crew that went out immediately because in 1955 they had basically no inventories to speak of. They would go out and do the old style operational cruise, where you would do cruise lines in an area. They just identified over-mature areas to start with in order to get a year's production of wood into the mill yard. When the pulpmill started up, they had to have a year's supply of wood ahead of time because it was strictly a winter operation at the start.

**Murphy** Was the plan to bring a year's supply into the wood yard?

**Ranger** Exactly. We had the largest stock pile of wood in the North American continent in June 1957 when the mill started up.

**Murphy** It must have been an impressive pile of wood.

**Ranger** Yes, it was at that time, and they publicly said that. I think the fire insurance premium alone on that wood was over a million dollars.



**Murphy** Yes. Let alone the capital investment.

**Ranger** Yes. It was a given at that time that if a fire had started in there, there would be no way that you could effectively put it out. You might be able to control it to some extent, but the monitor towers were simply for watering down a fire to try and control it. They weren't designed to force water in to such an extent that they could put it out. The operational cruising was strictly standard cruising. We had several camps that were started up that were just a year or two in duration. Camp 9, for instance, was a patch of over-mature timber east of Hinton.

**Murphy** Down along the river.

**Ranger** Down along the river. It was reasonably close to the mill. It should have been logged because of its age. We had no idea how it fit into the rest of the scheme of things, but it was operationally cruised and, bingo, it formed part of that first year's supply of wood. Subsequently, of course, it was identified that it was an isolated patch in a fourth cycle compartment. As a result, it was regenerated and nothing more went on there, and we moved out then. Most of the other areas where we started operational cutting were identified as first cycle, and our operations concentrated in them. Other camps down on the Robb Road fell into similar categories, some of them like little Camp 16 were just small operators that came in to help us get that initial supply of wood.

**Murphy** So you had small operators at that time as part of the gathering in of that initial volume of wood.

**Ranger** Yes, and they purchased lots of pulpwood at that time, too. In fact, they had a fellow that his full-time job was purchasing.

**Murphy** Was that Jack Janssen? I knew Jack in 1954 when he was head of Forest Protection for the Alberta Forest Service.

**Ranger** Yes. I was trying to think of his name, but, yes, you are quite right.

**Murphy** Then the third one was the cut layout crew?

**Ranger** Yes. Once the areas where you needed to have timber were identified, then you had to have a crew go out and physically lay those out – as per a predetermined pattern – on the ground. That is what the cut layout crew did. Now, you can appreciate in the early days, they mostly weren't company camps. They were a lot of small operators. The criteria for it was that we had taken a huge area, especially around Edson, where they were situated, and even close to the park gates. There were fellows in there, like Terrace and Garneau, that had been operating for some years. It wasn't right that we just uproot them. So arrangements were made to have them continue to log for a number of years, and then for them to be phased out. So some of them carried on with their traditional logging. The smaller stuff that they didn't normally utilize was brought to us for pulp or put off to one side, and we picked it up. But by-and-large they, instead of worrying about lumber contracts and all the rest of it, became independent operators for us.



So we had a transition period, in which the cut layout crews were not only laying out big cuts for our own company camps (Camp 1, 2, 6, etc.), but there was also Camp 54 and all those small operators north of Edson. We would find ourselves laying out cut for that. We would find a patch of suitable timber somewhere adjacent to their traditional area. We would go in the summertime because they were simply winter loggers. We would go in the middle of the summer and set up camp. Often they would accompany us and cook for us. We would go in first of all and do a little bit of a cruise, identify how much lumber was there, and make sure we laid out enough blocks to satisfy their needs for that particular and coming year. So that was what the cut layout boys did.

There was quite a lot of work to that cut layout because in the early days they had, and this is where I was telling you about King Albert of the Belgians. I don't know if I ever knew his proper name. Jack Wright would know his name. But he was brought up as a road location man, and I remember the first time I went to lay out some of his roads. How it would work is theoretically your road location expert would come out and he would ribbon the road centre line through the cutting areas. He would identify them on a map, and then your cut layout crew or Forestry Department would design the cuts and reduce them on paper to maps. Your cut layout boys would get the maps and the photographs, and they would go out and delineate them in the field.

What in fact would happen is that our road expert would disappear for two or three weeks with a bottle of rum and some raisins, and he would come back, and his roads were supposed to be located. You would then ask, "But where are they on the map?" and the road expert would reply, "They are basically here and there." So we would get a rough line sort of on the photograph or on the map, and sometimes they were reasonably close but more often than not they weren't. But the interesting thing is you would start along the ribbon where the ground was flat, and you could put a road anywhere and that was fine. But directly you would come to a hill, ravine, or swamp and the ribbons would simply stop. They would start again on the far side. That became your job to kind of join the two, and, of course, by this time you were kind of committed to a single route. Consequently, you quite often had to pull all your ribbons back out and back up for a mile and take off some other direction to get access through the swamp, down through a ravine, or whatever. So you spent a lot of time doing things that at first blush people didn't think you were doing.



*Eldon Kyle [l] and Ray Ranger [r] in first Forestry Skidoo ca 1963*

**Murphy**

Where did the age class part come in? Was that part of the CFI?

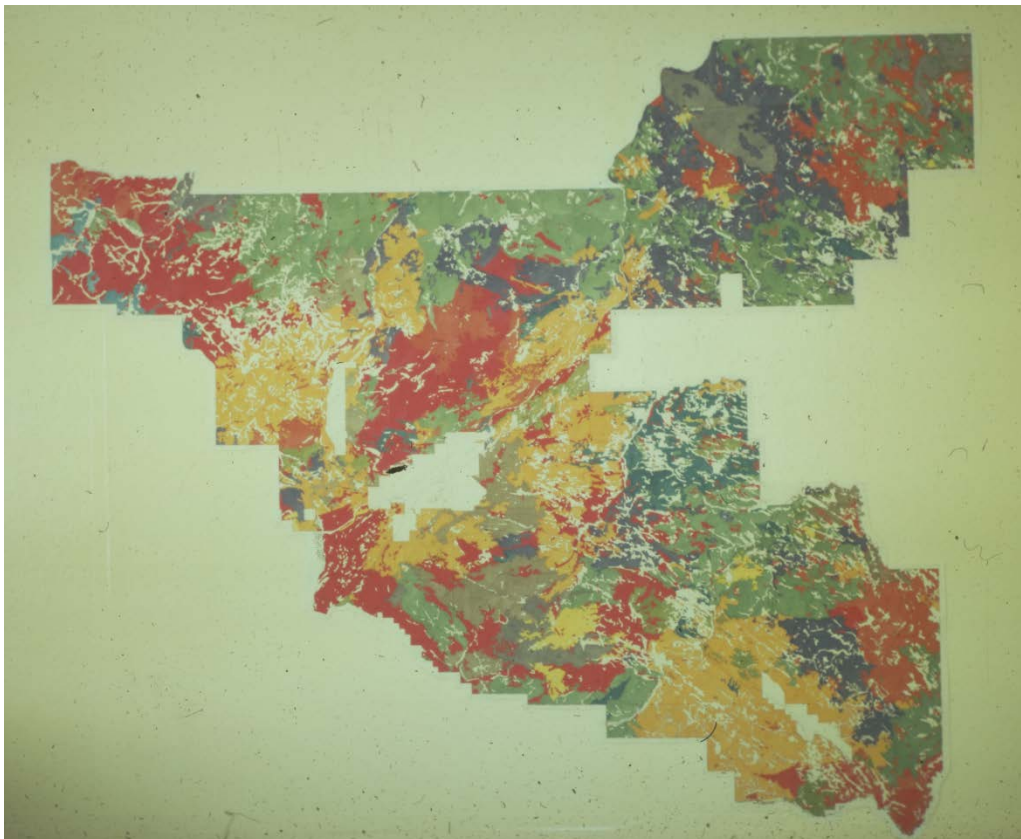
**Ranger**

It was to start with. Part of the inventory data they collected on CFI plots was the age of timber. However, ages were collected by using increment borers, and, as a result, a great many of the plots were showing age class spreads of three to ten years from the proper age. Once a pattern began to emerge that indicated that we were, in fact, looking at a limited amount of age classes, a more intensive program was undertaken to determine the exact age and boundaries of all of the types on the Forest Management Area (FMA). So we undertook that program, and we did age classing until we came up with an age class map which basically identified all the age classes on the Forest Management Area. Interestingly enough, there were four major fires that had been through the FMA, so basically we did not have an even distribution of age classes. We had areas affected by four major fires, with a scattering of over-mature that had escaped fire for the last 150 years.

Up until this time, the Alberta Forest Service had been calculating inventory volumes in the province using Von Mantel's formula, which kind of relies on an even distribution of age classes for volume



calculation. We took exception to that. We said no we have identified that there are in fact only four major age classes on our Forest Management Area, so why would we embrace a formula like that. We will instead use Hanzlik's formula, which is simply a projection of volume by age class. So that is what we embarked on, and it has proven over time to be correct. Our age classing efforts aided us in our expansion efforts, too. We could simply extend the boundaries of those age classes that were present and very quickly come up with some reasonably accurate volume projections as to what was available in the reserve areas and adjacent areas.



*Fire Origin (age class) Map of the FMA, 1969*

#### **Murphy**

Having got onto that topic, we will come back and pick it up chronologically, but that was one of the questions. I think we have got it clarified now in side discussions. What you were about to comment on now relates to what?

#### **Ranger**

The formation of the original Forest Management Area boundaries. As discussed earlier, the original plan that the pulpmill would be at the Tollerton properties, which was south and just a little bit west of Edson. In fact, they did some preliminary work there, which you can still see on the photographs: cut lines through the young pine where they proposed to lay out the streets, mill properties, etc. It was an excellent building site on the banks of the McLeod River – quite high, flat, solid gravel – which probably would have lent itself very well to the weight and the extent of the pulpmill construction.



However, early on in the game when the engineers from the St. Regis Paper Company come up, they realized immediately that during periods of low water there wouldn't be sufficient water in the McLeod River to sustain a pulpmill, as pulpmills are very water intensive. I suspect Norman Willmore, who was the minister at that time, naturally would have liked to have seen the development in Edson. However, a different location on the Athabasca having sufficient volume of water, even though it was quite removed from Edson, was chosen. Subsequently, the present site at Hinton was chosen, and, North Canadian Oils, one of the partners in the pulpmill venture, built a pipeline down the Athabasca River V corridor and supplied the mill and townsite with natural gas, which to this day is the primary energy source to run the mill. So it was determined that the water volumes were there, and it was centrally located and attractive land that could be available to us, instead of us having to operate more in areas where there was potential conflict with other operators south of Edson, Swedberg and all the rest of them. Instead, here was a patch of virgin timber basically up along the mountains that had few restrictions on it.

So it was determined that the mill would be put here. As a result, they drew a line on the map, a temporary proposed area that could be available, and that area would form the basis of the Forest Management Area, or the "lease area" as they called it at that time, subject to several things. One was the volume of timber that was there and the availability of that timber for logging. And you can appreciate they drew a line right up to the park boundary on the west. Nobody was quite sure what was entailed in the topography in there.

That reminds me of one of our first jobs, I believe it was in the summer of 1957. I remember I had some experience with a compass, cruising, and the way of the woods, but not all that much. I was taken one day by Ed Weideman and dropped off at Camp 2 and sent up that valley. He said, "Up that valley some 15 or 20 miles you will find our cruising crew. One of their gentlemen is sick, and they need a replacement. You carry on." I kind of looked at him as if he was joking. I thought somebody should show me the way in there, but he was quite serious. He had more confidence in me than I had. Anyway, off I went, and it proved not to be much of a task in the end at all, but having not been faced with it before, it was alarming.

Shortly after that, we undertook what we called our "merchantability studies". Basically, what we were doing was that we established a baseline down that first valley running parallel to the mountains back at Camp 2. Then, I believe it was every ten chains, we ran a line at right angles off that baseline up pretty well to the park boundary. We did a very light cruise. It wasn't an operational cruise by any sense of the word. We sort of said merchantable timber to this height and this species – that kind of thing. Basically, what we were doing was shooting the elevations and chaining all the way up those hills. And some of them were quite dramatic. You would be right up on the rock, and the wind would pretty near blow you off of there. But the idea was to be able to come back and give a comprehensive picture of what areas we should delineate because of the steepness. There could be pockets that we might access by small valleys or come around behind and actually log if possible.





So on that basis, the portion of the west boundary of the lease south of Highway 16 was drawn up. That was how our west boundary down that south side was established.

**Murphy** So it wasn't necessarily on the height of land? It could be mid-slope factor?

**Ranger** Exactly. The tentative figure that we had at that time was a 45 percent sustained slope. We didn't think we could operate successfully beyond that. There were other considerations, too – one being the proximity to the park – but once you hit 45 percent, there wasn't too much incentive to really search beyond that.

**Murphy** Just to go back to your career path, Ray, and pick up where we left off when we digressed. At this time, you were still with the CFI crew and probably in the north?

**Ranger** Yes. We were operating in the Marlboro Working Circle originally on the old Grande Prairie Trail. Then, along about October 1, both the CFI crew and the operational cruises were sent to cruise the Gregg burn. The Gregg River burn had cooled down and had subsequently been put out, now there was some movement under foot to find out the extent of the damage. So we did an operational cruise through the Gregg burn to see what there was left and what there wasn't.

**Murphy** That is an interesting comment. Why would you do an operational cruise on a burned area?

**Ranger** Because there were pockets of material that were useable. There was standing timber that only had bark scorched, versus got into the trunk of the wood. Because we thought the boundary of the Forest Management Area was more or less established, there was a desire that we shouldn't waste anything. On some of the timber, the bark was simply scorched, and it was believed the tree would die and in a year or two, that the bark would slough off and we could utilize those trees. We could make pulp. However, if they were charred deeply and you had that carbon into the stem, then that would render it useless for pulp purposes. So there was a possibility of using some of that wood. But before we embarked on any of that stuff, they really wanted to get a handle on what there was. That was a quick kind of a cruise. I remember we were doing it during the World Series, and we rigged up an old battery radio. We would be up early in the morning, and we didn't miss too much of the baseball by the time we got back.

**Murphy** Quite an incentive program.

**Ranger** That was one of the times the forest inventory and the operational cruising boys got together, and we centred at the Gregg Cabin. That is where we set up shop, right in the Gregg Cabin. I think they used the cabin itself for an office, and we had our tents pitched outside.

**Murphy** That made sense.

**Ranger** I think we just did that for the month of October, and then I went back to CFI until the following May. Then I went onto cut layout, laying out some of the operational cuts.



**Murphy** And during this time you had had no previous forestry experience essentially?

**Ranger** No.

**Murphy** You had been doing a lot of learning on the job.

**Ranger** Yes, learning on the job. Des called me in one day and he said, "You know, Ray." "The movement here is to keep ahead of the game and hire the best qualified people for the job. I think you have some potential. If you really plan on staying here, and there will always be work here for you, but I think it would be to your advantage to get some additional education." In fact, he said, "I have spoken to Wayne Sawyer, who was the Human Resources Manager, and we can give you a leave of absence to go away and go to school." This was in the fall of 1957. I thought about it for a while, and I said to him, "Des, I just don't have the money to go away for four years of university." And he said, "Yes, that is true." "But," he said, "I know some folks down in Ontario, an old friend of mine is down there working, and I think maybe we can get you set up with something." He said, "Leave me with it." After my next two-week trip to the bush, Des presented me with a prospectus from the BC Forest Ranger School at Green Timbers.

**Murphy** That was an in-service program.

**Ranger** Right. He said, "We could probably get you in here if you want, but there is also a facility at Fredericton, New Brunswick, the Maritime Forest Ranger School." Additionally, he said, "There is one in Ontario which is an in-service, and I can get you in there. That is no problem." And then he said, "I have looked it over, and I think the one in Ontario is the best. Would you consider going down there?" And I said, "Sure. Why not?" He said, "The reason I say that is you can get your full log scaling license. You may never do any scaling here, but it wouldn't hurt for you to know what is going on. Maybe you should think about going down there. I said, "Well, if you can get me in there, that is fine." "Well, you are on the way."

They had IQ tests that had to be written prior to entry. There were two or three tests, and Des sat them for me. I remember after one I said, "Des. I don't know. Two or three of these I guessed at and a couple of them I am not sure about the answers." He said, "I will review it, and I will let you know how you made out." So he kind of looked it over, and he come back to me. "Don't worry about it, Ray. That is one of those IQ things. You are not expected to get them all right. I think you did pretty well," he said. That is the last thing I heard about that. The next thing I know I was down in Ontario. I hit it kind of lucky, too, when I got there. They were mostly in-service guys. I was the poor cousin. I came from the west and wore a pair of riding boots, and they all looked at me. I told them I had a lot to learn, right off the bat. The first day of classes was kind of a familiarization and here all these guys were spit and polished with their uniforms, and here I was with a rumpled old cruiser vest on.

We bunked two to a room in the dormitories. My roommate was a hatchery manager. He had a year to go before he could retire, and the only reason he was there was to get a raise in classification. He



had to have this in order to get a higher pension. He was an old school teacher before he got into the hatchery business. He had a photographic mind. Smoked cigars. He kind of took me under his wing, and he knew almost all the guys that were there. Like there was quite a wide range in age at that school. I don't know whether that was policy or whether it just worked out that way. But there was a number of old core fellows that had been in service for a long time and were near retirement age, and yet there were some young fellows that had only been there two or three years, and they were much the same as I was. Most of the guys were there to get a better classification before they retired, or so they could get a promotion or whatever. It was a requirement.

These older guys were a world of knowledge, and, of course, when they found out I was from out west and wanted to learn everything I could from them, they took me under their wings and I learned a lot from them. The same with George Pennock who was one of the instructors. I remember him because his dad was the fellow that invented the Ontario Log Rule, and he had a thing for university students. Oh, boy. He couldn't abide them. George was a little the same. Prior to teaching at the school, George was with Canada Land Inventory (CLI) and had done considerable field work in his day and was a whiz with a transit. His hobby was to get the university students. The University of Toronto (U of T) students used the school for their spring camp, and George instructed them while they were there.

**Murphy**

They used to camp there?

**Ranger**

Yes. As part of their exercises George would require them to lay out a series of plots for inventory purposes. George would have them using hand compasses, and there would be more local attraction than you can believe. And, of course, these guys couldn't run a straight line to save their boots. But unknown to them, George and I would go out the month before they got there with the transit, and he would run all the lines and establish the plots, and he knew where they all were. So here the students would be stumbling around, and George would whip his compass out, and he would go right there, and there was a pin. They didn't know any of that, and so George would give them a bad time about their compassing skills! Soon after I arrived, George was looking for somebody to help him. And, of course, the other students were already on the government payroll, so they couldn't do it.

Now the instructor teaching us forest management was also in charge of the logging operations on the university forest, and he was a university graduate and George wouldn't give him a scaler's license. There was no way he was going to give him a scaler's license. He knew more about scaling than I ever did know, but George wouldn't give him a scaler's license. As a result, to get a scale on the wood logged as part of the university operations, he had to hire a scaler. The guys that were in-service couldn't hire on to scale, as they were already under contract, so George said to me as soon as I showed up, "You get your scaler's license first term, and you study hard and get that." Well, I



got it first term, a full license. Most of the lads didn't. They just got a pulp license. So that is how I came to be the university forestry scaler.

Well, I am taking classes and everything, and I start to get a little behind on my scaling. "No problem," George said. So he goes around and talks to a bunch of the older students that were scalers from northern Ontario and says "Ray needs a hand." So he would get a few boxes of beer, and the boys would all come with me on a Saturday, and we would scale everything up. It was 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon and bingo. No problem. So I learned a little bit about surveying and a little more than you would normally from George because I am tracking around with him and he is telling me all these things that they used to do. I learned a little more about scaling than you would because these old scalers were there.

Then there was the silviculture instructor. I can't remember his name, but I will think of it after a while. His boy was my age and going to the Haileybury School of Mines (HSM), and his boy and I got to be great friends. So I was over there a good deal of the time for Sunday lunch and so on, so I got to know him pretty good. He would fill me in on a lot of extra things, and there was a great deal of after-school interaction. The other students would take off on a long weekend because they had their own transportation, but I was stuck there. So the instructors would say, "Get the kid over and we will do so and so." They were a good bunch of men.

**Murphy** Could you just clarify? Your agreement with the mill was that they would give you leave but no pay?

**Ranger** No pay, but a leave of absence, which I think they subsequently did away with. In later years when I tell people I had a leave of absence, they just kind of look at me. That gave me a job when I came back, and they counted the time that I was away as part of my employment history, so my pension and everything is active right through that period.

**Murphy** Good for them.

**Ranger** Yes, it was very good. Des believed in a good education, and if you got along with him well and worked for him, he would do those things for you.

**Murphy** So I interrupted you when you were talking about your schooling – was it an eight- or nine-month program?

**Ranger** I was away 12 months. I was there for the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, and I was back here for the 1<sup>st</sup> of January. It was just a day or so prior to Christmas that I arrived back on the airplane. The other students had a spring and fall break, but I filled in those periods with additional classes. My breaks were all filled up. I took in my log scaling, log license, and things of that nature. I got to be very good friends with most of the staff and students there. And they were very good to me. I remember when it was time to leave just prior to Christmas, there was a terrible snowstorm and the staff were concerned that I would miss my flight home. The roads were terrible to Toronto, and a lot of them were blocked. The



students from the Toronto area formed a convoy of department trucks, and, with the aid of two-way radio communications, the boys got me right to Malton in time for my flight.

**Murphy** That was a good experience for you.

**Ranger** It was a real experience, and I was fortunate to have had the basics prior to that. You can imagine a young fellow being in the company of men like I was. There were a lot of professionals, like Des, Jack, John, and all the rest of them teaching you. I mean it was just like being at a university surrounded by ten professors, day in and day out. You have to have that stuff rub off on you very quickly. And then, of course, you have the other side of the fence – guys like Hank Sommers that aren't too backward about telling you that you are a little on the dense side if you don't get it right, so you learn pretty fast.

**Murphy** You were in the company of a remarkable group of individuals.

**Ranger** Des was a very demanding person, and I suspect that was due to his having being raised in Lloydminster, which was an English Barr Colony settlement. By-and-large, the population was well-educated, and the youth of the day were expected to work hard both academically and physically in order to better themselves. The trails of the hungry thirties further reinforced this philosophy. Forced to leave home to attend university in Toronto, he no sooner completes his forestry training than he finds himself immersed in the war effort. So the expectations certainly didn't lessen under those conditions. In the air force, Des was a navigational instructor, I understand, which in turn, brought additional responsibility. If he didn't teach these fellows their job right, they would in all probability become casualties. Being in the forces, there is a certain dictatorial relationship there. You don't question "why". You do basically what you are told and do not question. It is little wonder, then, that Des tended to function similar to that in later years.

**Murphy** That is a good point.

**Ranger** Following the war, Des spent some years at the Provincial Tree Nursery at Indian Head, then headed the Federal Forestry Program at Kananaskis. Both programs, having virtually no demand for public input, were very autocratic. Post-war dollars being scarce, I suspect Des not only had a hard time getting money for his projects, but also had to really skimp to make these dollars go a long way. This again carried over to his work at Hinton. When the opportunity came for Des to instigate a meaningful forest management program (the first in the province) on the east slopes of the Rockies, he jumped at it. So did St. Regis Paper Company, as Des was probably the most qualified person around to undertake such a program. His only short coming as far as experience went was how to effectively utilize his manpower in the woods, i.e. should men be living in tents in winter? How much work could they be expected to do in a day? How far could they effectively range on snowshoes, etc.? That was, I believe, a grey area for Des.

**Murphy** Interesting.



**Ranger** Yes, the primitive conditions we were called upon to live and work under, as well as the low rates of pay (as compared to mill workers or even Woodlands employees), was a great source of irritation to most of the Forestry Department staff and contributed (to a large extent) to the high turnover that we experienced in the early years. Year in and year out living in tents, often isolated for long periods of time, away from family, physically demanding and low pay – not just a regular job but a whole new way of life!

**Murphy** Yes, that is a helpful perspective.

**Ranger** And I know people were, and at times myself even, a little upset with Des and his programs, but by-and-large, he was a pretty good guy to work for. And then, of course, there got to be a rivalry. He and Jimmy Clark didn't hit it off.

**Murphy** Do you have any idea what happened to bring that about?

**Ranger** Well, I couldn't put my finger on it. It was kind of a subtle thing that came in over time. Des again was that kind of person that says, "This is it. I am in charge. I have got the green light. We do it this way, and we don't back up and start questioning it or taking short cuts." Jimmy came from the Forest Service, and he was a little more laid back. He was more of a people-person. Let's first interact with the guys, and we will get the work done later, but it may not be today. We might go fishing today or relax and do that work tomorrow, but it will get done. There was no time for fishing in Des's schedule. For instance, Des wanted to get the boys out of Hinton at 8:00 in the morning, and he didn't want to see them again for two weeks. Sometimes, we would be working down the road just 15 miles from town. We had to stay outside of town, and we were married and had families right in town, but we couldn't come in. Things like that. It was cut and dry. That is what you were hired for. That is what you agreed to. That was it. On the other hand, Jimmy would say, "That is stupid, you know. These guys want to get into town. Why not, as long as they are back on the job at 8:00 in the morning, who gives a damn?" These kind of things crept in.

For one reason or another, that widened, and it got to be quite a conflict in later years when Jimmy came back and was the Woodlands Manager. Jim was in charge of the cutting crews, and Des was in charge of the forestry, and there was always a working overlap with these two work forces. In the field, we had to work together with those guys, and yet we had this animosity between the two heads of the departments, so at times the guys would wrongly pick up on that. I know at times they would put roads right through regeneration and things like that. That would really upset Des. Sometimes it was unavoidable, but a lot of the time, with a little care, they could have lessened that. But there wasn't that willingness to meet halfway. It was "Well, let's show the old fellow." It made it hard for the rest of us because we were the guys that had to go out and sleep next to Jimmy's boys and get some work done. If I am going to sit at the same table and eat with them, I better be able to talk to them. So there was always that friction, but by-and-large, we did things together and got things done.



Des was also a perfectionist. Close enough wasn't good enough for Des. It had to be bang on or it was no good, and he ensured that all work done by his staff was done well! I tell you he had some funny ways of doing it, but they were effective ways. I will give you an example: in the old days, when you prepared a letter, you wrote it freehand and the secretary took it and typed it. No computers then! If mistakes were made or changes required, the whole letter was retyped, and Des would always review your letters. Your letters were never released, especially to a government official or public figure unless he perused them first and said "OK, fine, away with it." So your file of letters would be channelled into Des' office, and you would never know about it, but he would look it over and put it back in the basket and out it would go. On the other hand, if there was a mistake in it, the secretary would show up at your desk madder than a wet hen and there would be a big red X across the page in pen. She would be angry because now she knows she has got to do that whole damn page again.

The first time it happened I asked Des, "What the hell is this all about? Why didn't you just put a pencil line around the mistake, and I can change that?" Des sat back and looked at me and said, "Well, I could do that, but it would go in the one ear and out the other. You would make the same mistake next week." Then he said, "You take that back to your desk and figure out why that X is there, and you will not be so apt to make that same mistake next time." So that is what he would do, and, of course, those X pages got less and less through the years until they sort of stopped. I remember when he got that gold medal from the CIF (Canadian Institute of Forestry), he was writing his acceptance speech and by this time I had progressed to the point where I was doing the proofreading for Des. Mostly to proofread anything of Des's was just to read it over and pass it back, so I was quite surprised to find on one page a split infinitive. So I just took my red pen, and I put a big X on it and I passed it back. And old Des come boiling in there, and he was madder than a wet hen because now the entire page would have to be retyped. He said, "You S.O.B.!" And I just kind of grinned at him, and then he sat back and he smiled that little smile he has. "Well," he says, "I guess you have learned something over the years, haven't you?" And I said, "Yes, I have Des."

**Murphy**

That says a lot for him.

**Ranger**

Yes. But if he hadn't done that, I probably would have kept on making similar mistakes over a longer period of time. That was his way of doing it.

**Murphy**

So he had professional standards, as well as other performance standards?

**Ranger**

Yes.

**Murphy**

Our impression from outside is that he felt very keenly about forest management, and he was determined that your company would do the right thing. Was that your impression?



*Photo of Des Crossley ca 1970, with Aerial Photo of "Camp 1"*

- Ranger** Yes. That is my impression as well. He was totally committed. Forest management in Alberta, and Canada for that matter, had been practised in theory only. Here was his chance to put into practice all of the theories he had developed about managing and regenerating lodgepole pine. And, by-and-large, up until now, there were no other management programs going on elsewhere.
- Murphy** That is right.
- Ranger** Well, Des couldn't pass up an opportunity like that. I mean that was a chance of a lifetime, and so he committed himself to the challenge. As I say, he didn't want that to fail. None of us did.
- Murphy** You went to attend the Ontario Forest Ranger School in 1958, and you came back, according to your list, on the 6th of January 1959. Was it about that time that Sarah came into your life?
- Ranger** Well, actually Sarah and I were school sweethearts. Sarah lived at Frenchman Butte, which is 40 miles north of here (Marshall, Saskatchewan) just on the banks of the Saskatchewan River. Her people were into a ranching business up there, have been for years and still are. The rural schools at that time only offered schooling up mostly to Grade 8, although in her case there was schooling available to Grade 10. To get her Grade 11 and Grade 12, it became necessary for her to come to a bigger centre, so she boarded with her aunt in Lloydminster. Her uncle was a retired Royal Northwest Mounted Police man, as a matter of fact. So I met her in Grade 11 and Grade 12. In fact





in Grade 12, we both served on the student representative council. She was in charge of girls' sports, and I with boys' sports interestingly enough. So we got to know each other quite well and got to be more than friends, I would say. Although I went to Hinton, I corresponded with her frequently, and, on long weekends and such, not very many, but two or three times a year, I would get back to Lloydminster and go and visit. So it was that when I decided to go to Ontario, we had grown quite serious about the future – talk of marriage and so on – and we decided that to further my education in Ontario would be in our best interest in the long-term. I know her Dad was with her at the time on one of those discussions, and he was quite supportive.

So the first person I met when I got back, of course, was Sarah. I became a cruiser in January of 1959, which was a reasonable position at that time. It would be like a forest officer, I suppose. You knew enough that the company had confidence in you. You had a future, and so we made plans to be married in August of 1959. When it came time to be married, our CFI crew was camped north of the Wild Hay River, and it was the practice to take turns staying in camp on days off (to protect the camp). Somebody had to look after the camp, so I knew I was getting married and I didn't want to be heading back to the bush all that often for extended periods of time. So I made an informal deal that I would spend all of the weekends in there until I got married, and then I wouldn't have to take my turn for quite some time after that. Well, that was fine. So we did that. I spent the whole summer in there until it was time to go out and get married. "Well, goodbye. We will see you in two weeks," and away I went, walking out. It had rained for quite a little time before that, and the first river I come to, I didn't know whether I was going to be able to ford it or not. At any rate, I cut myself a big stick and used it for a wedge. I knew that when the water got to my crotch, I would be doing lots of skidding downstream, but I got across there alright, wet but alright.

**Murphy**

You were walking out?

**Ranger**

Yes. You had to walk everywhere in those days and pack your sleeping bag on your back. So I walked out and got cleaned up, made my way to Lloydminster, and got married. We went to California for two weeks and came back. Got back and our crew had all got mad, quit, and went home, so our informal deal was out the window. I wound up taking my turn at watching camp on days off, same as everyone when we got back. That is the way it went in those days. It was a demanding job, and there was a great turnover. If you look at our employment statistics for the Forestry Department there was a great turnover. It was a young man's game, and the old men weren't too interested in just getting home 72 days a year. They wanted to be in town with their families and having the odd beer (and by this time they had a beer parlour there). So it is a little wonder that there was a great turnover. And yet, there was a group of us that were stubborn, or I hate to use the word "dedicated" because when you are that age you don't really look at us being dedicated. You look at it as more of a challenge. I can do that and I like it, so away you go. There were a few of us like Jack Wright, Bob Udell, and John Hickey that stuck through all that business.



**Murphy** But it would have had something to do with the spirit of the group?

**Ranger** A great lot to do with the spirit of the group. As time went on, that was reinforced and strengthened. I mean you dare not let the other guy down. You knew darn well if you didn't do your job, he was going to have to pick up the slack. And as time went on, that group got smaller and better qualified at their jobs. In fact, we were cross-qualified and we made various moves at that time. It became a real challenge to out-perform the other guy in a way, informal as it was. I know I questioned everything at monthly meetings. There would be questions to Jack or Bob or any of the other staff members until we were sure that proposed programs would work. That was just because you were keenly interested in what was going on, and you were, in a way, playing devil's advocate. You wanted to find a flaw in their thinking, and they would do the same thing right back to you the next day and then laugh about it. I mean that is the way it was. It was very competitive.

**Murphy** An interesting choice of phrase. The "Devil's Advocate" was a nom-de-plume that Des adopted in *The Forestry Chronicle* for quite a while.

**Ranger** It was fun, and I think it was fostered and encouraged by himself. He wasn't backward about practising it. It didn't matter where it was, and you knew that and you better be prepared to justify what you were doing.

**Murphy** That's right. Ray that leads into the next topic to explore concerning the expansion commitment in 1968. When the lease was refined in 1955–56, it provided for your lease area plus a provisional reserve area. I think you were commenting previously that you were expected to have developed a firm boundary for that provisional reserve area to have it in place in the event you wanted to commit to expansion.

**Ranger** At the beginning, an area, or lease, was set aside that was large enough to sustain a mill designed to produce 300 tons/day of pulp. A provisional reserve of roughly the same size was also committed, which would allow us, as time went on, to better define our original boundaries, as well as provide some flexibility in case of expansion. It was part of the original agreement that the company would immediately undertake to do comprehensive inventories to more accurately define the volumes contained in the lease area and reserve area. Once these inventories were completed then the company and the government both would be in a better position to discuss possible expansion proposals. And so prior to our 1968 expansion agreement, we had to more clearly define how much we really needed in the lease and expanded area. Two things were going on. Our inventories were indicating it was possible to reduce our rotation age from 100 to 80 years, and our mill through-put was now approaching 450 tons a day.

An interesting point that probably nobody has brought up to you is that right in the middle of all this we nearly outsmarted ourselves. It occurred this way. We had used Hanzlik's formula. We had kind of proven it out. We had convinced the Alberta Forest Service that this was the formula to use



(instead of Von Mantel's), and so Des and Reg Loomis of the Alberta Forest Service quietly agreed with one another that our requirements could be met on a much smaller area. They sort of informally agreed to this. From a forester's point of view, it was the thing to do. However, when Harry Collinge, our Resident Manager heard about it, he was not too pleased in that it severely limited the potential landbase on which his future expansion plans were dependent. We were so focused on doing a good job forestry-wise that we didn't realize that we were working at cross-purposes with the company's long-term goals of acquiring even more timber reserves for future expansions. We really had left no room for error for ourselves; plus we had given the company little leeway.

**Murphy** That is an interesting comment – I had wondered about it. I gather that at the time you had got AFS agreement that the rotation could drop from 100 to 80 years. The timing of it seemed peculiar because you were on the verge of asking for additional area.

**Ranger** Exactly. That was it. You see, we were so convinced that we should be fine tuning our inventories and volume projections that we lost sight of possible long-term expansion strategies.

**Murphy** So it was technically correct but strategically questionable?

**Ranger** But by the same token, I don't think it did us any harm in the eyes of Reg Loomis. He was looking at it from a forester's standpoint: "Hey, these guys are up front. They are not trying to pull the wool over our eyes." But I can only imagine what those guys in New York were saying.

**Stevenson** With the company that is not the way to go.

**Ranger** I think those guys in New York were probably wondering, "Who are those hillbillies up there, doing things like that?"

**Murphy** That is interesting. I wanted to ask you about the 1972 cancellation as well.

**Ranger** We can touch on that.

**Murphy** What were your impressions of it?

**Ranger** I don't think there is any doubt about it. They struck a committee, and they opened it up for bids.

**Murphy** Your company made the commitment in 1968 to expand and it didn't.

**Ranger** It didn't occur because at the time the expansion was to occur the pulp market was really down. It just wasn't the time to be doing it. Basically what they wanted was to put the decision to expand on hold for a term of four or five years and then review it. They still intended to expand, but it just wasn't the time to do it at that point. Their plans were not only to expand, but to include in the expansion a finished fine papermill, which would have been a big boon to the printing industry in western Canada. Instead of simply being exporters of wood, we would have had a finished papermill



that was producing a finished product. But the timing wasn't right. The climate, I suspect, with the Alberta Forest Service was such that they wanted the timber resource utilized province-wide and on the go. They wanted to move. They didn't want this reserve area held back from possible development any longer. So they cancelled our reserve area. The company was a little upset, but not exceedingly so because this other stuff was all on the back burner. We thought, "OK, we will just submit our new expansion proposal at the right time and we will soon be back on track." The flaw then to our way of thinking came when they opened it up for public discussion and put it in the politicians' hands.

**Murphy**

This was the Berland Timber Development Area (TDA)?

**Ranger**

The Berland TDA, because what happened? One of the things that they wanted us to do was to establish a facility at Grande Cache, and I suspect that had to do with them just establishing a townsite and putting an Alberta Resources Railway (AAR) up there at no little expense. And with the coal market having a downturn and these guys kind of doing themselves in by having bad dealings with the Japanese, it looked pretty precarious after all this investment, and they really wanted to see somebody pick up the slack. From our perspective, that was the dumbest thing that ever came out of the woods because we had a pulpmill facility already in place, railroad, gas line, everything right in Hinton and centrally located in the Forest Management Area at a 3,000-foot elevation. They wanted us to haul all our stuff another 20 miles average haul distance to the northwestern limits and uphill to the top of a mountain, process it, and haul it all the way back down again. We simply told the politicians flat out that it was not workable. British Columbia Forest Products (BCFP), on the other hand, basically agreed to put a mill in that general area, and so then got the nod and we lost the chance to expand. BCFP installed a small sawmill near Grande Cache, and, after completing their studies, determined that they could not commit to completing a pulpmill, so they too, in turn, lost the Berland TDA

**Murphy**

Ray, perhaps the major reason we came here to see you concerned the land use aspect because you were noted for your involvement with that. There are a whole lot of different facets to it. I wonder if you could start by talking about when land use issues first arose and how they evolved – because that was an aspect of the FMA that was not fully considered in 1954.

**Ranger**

No, it certainly wasn't. When we first came here, a seismic line was a rarity. In fact, we kind of looked it as a godsend, actually. You can imagine, as I mentioned earlier on, to fly over the area, and it was just like an ant viewing a ten-mile patch of lawn grass. It was just beautiful green and unmarked. If you saw a clearing or something, it was a river or a little ice pocket or an alpine valley or something such as that. There was no substantial logging. Even the little operators could not be seen from the air. On the ground, there was a good deal of the area not even surveyed, and so all ground work entailed a lot of tough walking, chaining, and all the rest of it. It was slow going. So when the first seismic lines were encountered, here was this swath through the bush that you could walk down



and chain rapidly, and that, in the wintertime, you could get down with a vehicle, snow machine, or certainly on snowshoes. It was lot better than thumping through the bush and jumping off of deadfalls. When we were doing our original mapping, it was excellent because here was a seismic line that started from a known point and finished at a known point, and when you were doing your field work, it afforded you ground access and mapping control. Not only that but if you have walked 1,000 miles on snowshoes like I have, the chance to link up with a seismic crew and utilize their access was no small blessing. So for a time, we kind of tried to take advantage of their presence. If we knew there was a proposed seismic program in a certain area, we would reschedule our forest inventory plots measurements to take advantage of their access.

So at the start, there was this little bit of interaction going on, but limited. Along about the 1960s, that started to change because they discovered natural gas. The first area was in the Marlboro Working Circle and what they call the Pine Creek Field. And, of course, once they drilled a few wells and proved it up, it became obvious that there was going to be considerable activity (roads, well sites, pipe lines) and a certain amount of interruption to the timber resource. So Des took it on himself to go down and straighten the oil companies out. It was unfamiliar territory to Des. I explained earlier he had little contact, if any contact at all, with those oil companies because at the time he was in Saskatchewan, there was no activity. I doubt whether there was anything in the Kananaskis country at the time he was there, either.

**Murphy** No. There would not have been.

**Ranger** Now, all of a sudden, he is down in Calgary talking to these people, and he is on their turf. It is Des and the oil companies, and they are two of a kind. Des was the master of the forest up at Hinton. They were masters of the oil patch, and, until this point in time, they only talked to the government. The government, because they relied so heavily on the income from the oil patch, let them pretty well do what they wanted. I think, by-and-large, they catered to them. So, all of a sudden, here was this upstart from out of the north-country telling them they couldn't go cut these trees. Well, that went over like a lead balloon. So we had confrontation right off the bat.

**Stevenson** But just to clarify the point, the FMA allowed you rights to the wood?

**Ranger** Exactly.

**Stevenson** But it didn't give you title to the ground in which they had a mineral surface lease, so there was a conflict. Where did you see the government fitting into that? How did that resolve itself?

**Ranger** Where it resolved itself is that the government, when pressured, would say, "Yes, they have the right to the timber." It was in black and white. Not only that, but we had additional rights in that we had a lease. We now have a Forest Management Agreement, but originally we had a lease and that gives you some additional rights other than just the trees. What happened is that at the start there were five major oil companies: Amerada, Chevron, Hudson's Bay Oil and Gas, PanCanadian and Gulf.



Push came to shove, and they said, "We don't owe you anything. We have the rights to the gas. To get at that gas, we have to disturb the timber. We have always paid the government a royalty for that timber. We will continue to do that, but we don't recognize you as being lease holders, and we don't think that you in fact have rights to the timber."

In the first lease agreement, it wasn't all that clear. It was a little ambiguous. So at this point, the activity got such that Des just couldn't possibly handle it and carry on his day-to-day supervision of the department and all the other things that came with it. I was still in forest inventory, working for Jack, but now in the office a lot of the time. I had been interacting with the oil companies at the time as well, and our main interests were to protect our forest inventory plots and to coordinate the activity of our crews with the seismic people. Also it seemed to be a logical extension at that time to turn the rest of the oil activity over to me. I had also worked part-time as a student in the oil patch in Lloydminster and so was somewhat familiar with their routine. We had two major problems with the oil companies in our area. Firstly, they did not recognize that we had the rights to the timber, and, that if timber was destroyed due to their activities, we should be compensated. Secondly, so intensive and rapid was their development that they were unable to accurately document the areas of actual disturbance.

Eventually, we found it necessary to solicit the aid of Shtabsky and Tussman, a new young law firm in Edmonton, to represent us and to bring the matter to litigation. Following our statement of claim, it became quite clear at the discovery hearings that the oil company's records, vis-à-vis the actual area of damages, was not adequate, and I think that in itself played no small part in their decision to capitulate short of a formal court hearing. Herb Laycraft headed the litigation team for the oil companies, and I believe they were very capably represented as he later went on to become Justice Herb Laycraft. About the same time as this was taking place, another breakthrough of sorts took place. It occurred at a meeting of the Petroleum Association, which I attended. Prior to that meeting, no one at the Department of Lands and Forests had been too forceful about confirming the company's rights to the timber. It seemed that there was some reluctance to do so. However, at the meeting, Bill Kammermayer was asked what rights the pulp company had to the timber. Bill was unsure of the answer, so he sort of skirted the issue. The oil companies were not satisfied and pressured him again, "What rights to compensation do they have?" At this point, Bob Steele, who was the Deputy Minister, took the floor and in no uncertain terms confirmed that under the terms of our agreement Northwestern Pulp and Power Ltd. had the rights to the timber, and in turn compensation. In our subsequent agreements, two things happened: the word "lease" was changed to "agreement" and our rights to the timber were more clearly defined.

**Stevenson**

To reiterate: the company would receive money from the petroleum company for that timber, so that indeed there was a scale on the amount of wood that was essentially consumed in the cutline, the well sites, the roads, and so forth.



**Ranger** Yes. We worked very closely with Bill Kammermayer on that. That was before he went with the Petroleum Association. We were on the phone daily. Our cut-over records were the most accurate, and this created a problem. You see the oil companies would submit plans to special land use for delineations (because they all came out of the Forest Management Agreement Area), and the lands were always less than what was actually denuded of timber. So when we would bill them, Bill would say, "Well, what is going on here?" I forget the other lad's name, too. His boy is with the federal Forest Service now, doing legal with the CFI or the Canadian Institute of Forestry. Smart, Gordon Smart. Yes. So we were trying to reconcile these figures all the time. To do that, I would keep very accurate control of it, and then I would send a copy of the mapping in to Bill.

And then he would bring the oilmen up and show them and say, "Well, in fact you took a borrow pit or an extension to your well site, and this is what it should be." And they would say, "Oh yes. I forgot about that." Because they would apply for one thing, and there was such a lag between the time the paperwork got through on that land delineation, that in the meantime they had been in there and had to have an extension for a borrow pit or change in the road plan. They would be wanting to finalize it and get payment from us because we collected the dues for the royalties on behalf of the government, as well as our own. So that is why it had to be reconciled. I would be billing and sending money before they even had knowledge of the additional deletions. There was always that going on. But from our point of view that is when it was reconciled. In everybody's mind, yes, we had the rights to the timber. Now in everybody's mind except ...

**Murphy** The question was — do you recall the year in which this reconciliation and understanding was made? If you can't recall at the moment, we will just leave it at that on the tape, and we can fill it in later.

**Ranger** Yes. I can't remember, but it would be approximately the year that we finished our settlement with the five major oil companies and prior to the wording of our second agreement.

**Murphy** So it was somewhere between 1972 and 1988?

**Ranger** Yes.

**Murphy** OK. Was there ever a question, Ray, about the damage compensation going to the company and not to the government?

**Ranger** Yes. It was raised several times. The oil companies were of the opinion that we were Johnny-come-latelys. Here all of a sudden we were inheriting a windfall as it were. Heretofore, of course, there was only one seismic line, and nobody paid anything, except the Crown charged royalties for the timber that was destroyed, which was a negligible amount as far as that goes. But all of a sudden, with the heavy concentration of activity in our area, they realized that these fellows have quite a large portion of land, and, if we do intensive work over there, here is a large amount of dollars that is going to go their way for timber that they just got yesterday. That kind of thing. That was one of the arguments that they presented at their preliminary arguments in our court case. We in fact said,



"Well, quite simply, if you went into farming country and you went across the farmer's crop of wheat, you pull out your wallet and you pay him for it. You don't go into the history of whether he had inherited that for nothing from his great-grandfather, or whether he has only had it a short time. You just pay for it. So from our perspective that isn't a go."

**Stevenson**

Did this lead to an opportunity on your existing road structure that the oil company was paying you a royalty or a use fee for that road?

**Ranger**

Yes. That was one of the things that we did negotiate. They approached us first. They saw very readily that why should they build 20 miles of road if there is 20 miles of road already here. We said, "Yes, no problem at all." Not only that, but when we started building all-weather roads, we were building for 100-ton loads, which was something they were not used to. They were used to operating on lower class or winter roads, which, if they did run on it in the driest day of the year, there would be no road left. In our case, they did very little damage to the road. By the same token, they had lots of traffic on that road. So it gave us some hardship. But there was a mutual benefit there. It progressed to the point where we would sit down and go at it like real partners. They would phone with a proposed well site at this location, and I would get that phone call very early on. They had no idea where they were going to put the road. They had no location. We would get a call from Calgary. "We are going to put a well site in here, Ray. Is it going to be much of a problem?" And I would look on the map. "No. We got a road within 15 or 20 miles of it. You can go here and go there, but you better send your man out and we will fly it together." Then they would come back and say, "Well, yes, we would like to use that." I would say, "Well, yes except that this part isn't finished yet. We weren't going to really finish that." Or in some cases, "Two years from now we have got a road scheduled, and it will go right along where you were going to go. If you want to pay part of the costs of that road, we will build it this year instead of two years from now." "Hey, good deal!" They get their road for half the price they would normally pay for it, and we get our road two years sooner for half the cost.

**Murphy**

And located where it belonged.

**Ranger**

That is right. Where it belongs and not someplace else. With these sorts of things, once that original conflict was out of the way, we worked together very readily. The problem we had all through the years, and I suspect it has got worse but I haven't been back to check it, was starting to raise its head the last time they called me in. It was Doug Lyons in Special Land Use, and he was quite open about it. He never agreed with that decision. He would get up at the Petroleum Association meetings and say flat out "Well, it should be this way or that way, and you don't agree with that, Ray, do you?" And I would stand up and say, "No, I don't agree with that. That is our timber." So there was always that there. In fact the last time they called me in, it was when I was down here after I had heart surgery. It was rather disappointing to me, but Paul Folkmann had gone with Daishowa instead of staying in Hinton. And here was young John Renaud and Theron Hindeman who didn't know





anything about the history of it all. I was attending a Petroleum Association meeting in Rocky Mountain House, which Warren Kehr had asked me to accompany them to as he knew they would be on unfamiliar ground. At that meeting, Doug and I again came to loggerheads about our rights to the timber. And then I had to explain to John and Theron what that was all about. Of course, this had been going on for a number of years and most of those old timers had a big laugh over it. But you are always faced with those new land men that come along and say, "Well, here is a government official saying he doesn't agree with that." So maybe here we get our foot in the door again, so you are always faced with that.

**Murphy** It sounds peculiar that he would do that on that occasion.

**Ranger** Yes. And I don't know what the reason for that was, and I wasn't in very good health at the time or I would have taken him to task.

**Stevenson** But it seemed to me, just to add to that comment, that the person like Lyons should be reflecting the mood of the government, because Lyons answers to a Deputy and the Deputy to the Minister. It would seem that what you worked so hard to achieve earlier should be negated by somebody standing up and saying, "That is fine, but I don't agree with that." I don't think that in the terms of policy that it should go without a reasonable challenge.

**Ranger** Well, yes, and that is what I was hoping would have happened. But, as I say, I was just in the throes of recovering from heart surgery, and I wasn't about to get involved. What gave me the heart problem, anyway, I think was that confrontational attitude all the time.

**Stevenson** There is a follow-up to that Ray. If I could ask, what is the current situation? Is it still up in the air like this?

**Ranger** I don't know. From our discussions, I would hope that I could be advised what is going on. The last time I was back – what was that reunion they had a year or two back – the 40th. Back then, I had a moment to speak with John Renaud, and they don't have near the control, just from talking with him, that we used to have when we were there. So I think from that perspective, we are probably backsliding quite a bit. And I am a little concerned about that.

**Stevenson** It might be something, Peter, that we could pursue just to bring this component to a reasonable conclusion, as per the date today.

**Murphy** That is right.

**Ranger** Bob Udell should be able to effectively find out what is happening there because he is aware of things that have been happening. But the problem is that I was looking after forest protection and land use, as well as road engineering, and when I left, they all of a sudden realized this is too much work. So they split that all up now, and there are about four guys involved, where there was just one before.



**Murphy** That was a pretty heavy responsibility.

**Ranger** It was a logical extension in one way that I was negotiating with the right people, and they were negotiating with the right people as far as building roads in the Forest Management Area. When I said, "Yes, we will pay for half of that, that was fine. That was the finish of that."

**Murphy** Before we go on, could you talk more about some of the other land use issues? That was probably the predominant one, but there were others like grazing and recreation.

**Ranger** Yes, there were grazing and recreation problems. I tell you I don't think any of us foresaw the problems that we might have vis-à-vis land use. As I said earlier, when we first started out, there was minimal demand for recreational facilities on the east slope of the Rockies, and we as foresters were going to practice good forestry and grow the best timber and harvest it and put out a good product. So everything was geared for that. In our opinion, we had been given attractive land. That attractive land was probably not only the best from our perspective, but probably all we were going to get. That was our view. We had reduced our rotation from 100 years to 80 years and had given up the reserve area. We were now looking at a finite landbase that was shrinking fast. We were faced with rapidly expanding oil activity, and we could see terrible losses occurring there. Coupled with that was the resurgence of the coal mining activity, both in the coal branch area as well as southwest and northeast of Hinton. Further losses. Further intrusions. We had additional people coming to the area and with them additional single-use demands on the landbase. Initially, those demands were accommodated by the corridor lands located adjacent to Highway 16 east and west of town. But the demand soon outstripped the supply and additional lands, which must come from the FMA, were being looked at. To alleviate part of the demand for recreational lands, we agreed to the enlargement of Entrance Provincial Park. It had been centred around Jarvis Lake and was to double in size to include Gregg Lake and be known as Switzer Provincial Park. These lands were deleted from the FMA and became our major recreation area.

**Murphy** You just left it out?

**Ranger** Just took it out of the lease area. But now all of a sudden came the proposal that not only should it be a park, but that it should be treated as a wilderness area, and there should not be logging allowed within sight of the park! Well, that was kind of a chilling sort of thing, as from that particular area, you could see a huge tract of land, especially north of the valley that runs up to the Hay River. We, however, resisted that as we could not accept the additional loss of timber. As foresters, we saw nothing wrong with clear cutting, as long as we could regenerate the land and not silt up the streams. Everything that we had seen vis-à-vis the game up until that time had indicated our cutting methods were having a beneficial effect on game production. Not a maximizing effect, mind you, but a beneficial one. After all, we were in the business of producing timber. The spin off was an increase in game. Good, but we didn't feel we should be obligated to maximize the game potential to the detriment of our ability to harvest the timber. In the early days, we saw little recreational



potential in very small bodies of water and subsequently logged right up to them with no buffer zones. At Camp 1, there was that little pond there. Well, in the scheme of things in the province of Alberta that was just a little pond. That was nothing so we logged right up the boundaries. That was a mistake.

**Murphy**

Was that Wild Horse Lake?

**Ranger**

Yes. Wild Horse Lake. That was right off Highway 16, albeit Highway 16 wasn't much in those days. But people could get into there and soon the pressure was on to put some fish into that little pothole, so people could go out in the evening and fish. As soon as the word got around that there was fish in there, people came in droves and they didn't like what they saw. They saw an old lumber camp on one side of the lake, and all the brush and everything cut down at the other end. So we realized very quickly that logging in close proximity to water bodies was not only bad from the point of view of the water resource, but from a tourist potential it was a no-no.

So then we started looking at things. Simultaneously to that, interestingly enough, we had been looking at the blow sand area adjacent to Brule Lake, and it was soon realized that we shouldn't disturb that in any way, because it had only recently kind of halfway stabilized. And you could just look at it and see the railroad tracks buried in 20 feet of sand and know instinctively that an area as fragile as that is best left alone. So we left a big area or buffer zone around that – not delineated from the FMA but excluded from logging.

Another area of conflict and concern came with the resurgence of the coal mining in the FMA. The department's position concerning these lands was that once they had been mined and reclaimed, they would be added back to the FMA, and we would be obliged to once again grow timber on them. We were somewhat shocked at this proposal as our experience to date with mined-out areas was not very encouraging. Nor did we know of anywhere where trees had successfully been grown for any length of time on deep-pit mines. We realized that grass and forage crops had been grown on such lands (with generous applications of fertilizer) but not forests. Our main concern was the disruption to groundwater which occurs with excavations to a depth of 200–300 feet, and I am still not convinced that there will not be problems there. Subsequently, we submitted interventions at the Union Obed Coal Mine hearings and others to alert government and the general public to our concerns. We wanted to make sure in the minds of everyone that we weren't adverse to taking those lands back, but we wanted to make sure that they were in reasonable shape for the growing of trees. However, our concerns were not addressed, and we were obliged to accept these lands back into the FMA regardless.

**Stevenson**

If I could ask on the recreation aspect, and we know that we have Emerson Lake and some other areas coming. Has this been stimulated locally or is something coming from the parent company, say Weldwood in the current picture, to encourage you to be good stewards of the land, just part of reflecting the national image down to the local level?



**Ranger** I can't speak for Weldwood because I have had little contact with that company, although they had just taken over prior to our negotiating the last FMA. The development of the Emerson Lakes Recreation Area as well as the Wild Sculpture Trail in the Sundance Lake Valley, were both promoted very vigorously by Jack Wright and Bob Udell, then, of course, also had the backing of both the St. Regis/Champion head office and the Alberta Forest Service. But it was their proactive stance to development of recreational facilities that got those projects going. There was also some consideration being given, I believe, by the Forest Service to establishing a trout rearing facility at Emerson Lakes. But, in the end, it was jointly developed into a recreation area. Jack and Bob were very keen to have additional ski trails developed within the FMA at locations which would not only provide good cross-country skiing, but would also afford the company a chance to show the general public how our reforestation programs were progressing. As a result, a great many of our forestry staff would give up valuable "after-hours and days-off" time to brush and groom trails. Of course, we never really had proper funding for a lot of those projects, and so they met with limited success. I always felt that if the company became involved, they should either be involved all the way – do a top notch job with the funds and manpower to do it right – or leave it alone. In the end, I had to object to some of Jack's proposals and it hurt to do that because he meant well, but I just couldn't see us being involved in under-funded ski hill projects.

**Murphy** Was that the one up on the Robb Road?

**Ranger** No. The old Robb Road? That was Jack's baby ski hill and it worked well. But, no, that was kind of an interim thing. My own daughter learned to ski there. No, I am talking about the big one at the Athabasca Tower.

**Murphy** The Nordic Centre?

**Ranger** The Nordic Centre. I mean to do that right you have to spend some money and spend considerable time in there. You see, like those trails and all that stuff that Jack was doing, they were a good idea but there was no budget. Nobody properly funded that. That was something Jack spearheaded himself. You were to spend your weekends looking after these trails or brushing and so on. And I just said, "Jack, it is a fine idea, but the way we are going about it is no good. We just can't afford to have our men becoming disgruntled any more by doing these kinds of things on their own time. They are working hard enough now and can't even have their weekends off." You are expecting them to go out and all be volunteers. Of course, Jack would say, "They don't mind doing that." And maybe a lot of them didn't, but some of them did and I had to speak for them. So in the end when it came to a vote, I had to vote against it in terms of the company didn't put enough money into it. So in the end the company, along with donating the lands, became simply good corporate sponsors by way of their donations, as did the Alberta Forest Service, the mines, and other corporate identities. So Jack and I differed on that one – not to say that Jack didn't have good intentions, he does – but it is just a matter of how best to handle it.



**Murphy** Fair enough.

**Ranger** One of the more dangerous jobs we were called upon to do in the early years was year-end wood yard inventory. This was accomplished by running contour profiles of the log piles using 2.5 chain tapes and determining elevations by scaling the water monitor towers.

**Stevenson** They have numbers on them.

**Ranger** Yes, they are numbered. Each one was numbered, but they were basically just the tower.

**Murphy** How high were the towers?

**Ranger** Fifty feet.

**Stevenson** That gives you a guide, then.

**Ranger** And they each had one of those big heavy water guns to use in case of fire. So we had to do inventory towards the end of December. Well, you can imagine what the wood yard would be like in December. The wind down there and colder than all get out, and how are we going to do an inventory? Well, they came up with this idea that Forestry should inherit that responsibility because we were in the inventory business, so we came up with a plan where we would simply get guys up on top of the pile.



*Log yard, 1950s. Note the Water Towers, each 50 ft High.*

**Murphy** On top of the wood pile?

**Ranger** Yes. This photo gives you an example of what they look like.



**Murphy**

Holy smokes. That is pretty dangerous.

**Ranger**

And we would go along and chain them out, and, at every point on our chaining out, the guys on the coning towers would go up or down on the towers so that they could shoot a level and determine the height. They knew what height they were at. So then we would just get a profile of each pile. Well, we would get up and everything is going swimmingly for two or three days. Then we get on this one pile and the wind is blowing so bad. Jack Wright and Hank Sommers were operating levels on the coning towers, as well as a foreman from Camp 20, Dick Frowen. He was at Camp 2 at that time. Things were a little slow, and I think he was even doing some scaling for a while. He didn't work for the Forestry Department, but he was on loan to us for whatever. Dick and I would be on top of the piles chaining. So that is the way we did it.

And I got out on this particular pile, and, of course, there were cranes operating and trucks rolling in. So there was a lot of racket to start with, and the wind howling and the cold. I had every stick of clothing I owned, it was that cold. I had on a summer jacket, my parka on top of that, two pairs of pants, two sets of underwear, and a hard hat and liner. A lot of the times in the early days I did not wear a hard hat in the bush because I am prone to headaches. However, on this occasion, it was a prerequisite inside the mill in the wood yard and thank God I had it on! Jack and Hank began motioning, and I thought they meant they needed another level out there and, gee, it looked kind of shaky. Well, I didn't know why they couldn't estimate that, but, if that is what they want, that is what they want. So I started out and all of a sudden that pile just slid away from underneath me. Dick Frowen jumped. There was a log sticking out of the next pile and Dick grabbed that and was left hanging, but I was gone! I went down with the logs. And I will never forget. It was just as in slow motion. I couldn't do anything. The logs went out from underneath me, and I am dropping. I am this way and I am that way and I am upside down going down this log pile, and I looked up and here come this damn eight-foot bolt, end over end and I thought I will never get home now. And it was just the last day or two before I went home for Christmas. And both lights out, eh!

The next thing I knew, "There he is! There he is! He is not moving." I came around and I couldn't move. Jack and Hank are on top of the logs and they have got an 18foot pike pole, and they are digging around down there and looking for me. A log hit me right on the side of the head and just smashed the hard hat all to hell and knocked me out. I am covered with logs. My glasses are gone. And here old Hank and Jack are up there, and they have got the crane operator by this time and they are throwing logs like mad men. They get down to me, and they figure for sure I would be all busted up. I get up and I got nothing broken, but I just feel like somebody hung the worst licking on me you ever seen. Well, Jesus, they chased me right over to the clinic, and the doctors were all in that little clinic where the personnel office was. They stripped me off, and I was just beat all to hell but no broken bones. So Jack said to me, "Well, I don't think you better come back." Then he phoned me later in the day and said, "No. We have talked it over and the doctor said you go on home to Lloydminster for the holidays." That is where I landed.



- Murphy** That is astonishing.
- Ranger** Right at the bottom with all of that stuff on top. Of course, my brother was operating the crane, and he come thundering over when he heard about it. But they had got me out by this time.
- Murphy** Why had they waved? Could they see what was happening?
- Ranger** They could see that it was undermined like this, and they were saying, "Go back. Go back." But I couldn't understand. We had no prearranged signals set up.
- Murphy** Perhaps that was a catalyst for Phillip Gimbarzevsky to later apply his photogrammetric techniques to estimating wood volumes in the yard?
- Ranger** The best I could think of. Now you can get a better perspective of these towers here. In this picture, you can see it is right even. They were as high as 65 feet, which I think is the highest we got piled. They had the big cranes loading on that.
- Murphy** Were they unloading by slings?
- Ranger** Yes, slings. Those big slings you see here. But they were also unloading, too, with those little Cary Lifts and using them to clean up around the main piles by throwing everything that was left into the flume.
- Murphy** That is right.
- Ranger** And they would also in later years use these to take material up and throw it on the slasher deck. So there were a lot of them. My brother operated one of them for four or five years, and then he graduated to the bigger cranes. That was kind of the line of progression they had. This was the slasher deck here, you see, where it went up, and they had wood piled along it, too. And this is John Hickey, Ron White, Len Smith, and myself. This is in 1959. That is me down east in 1958.
- Murphy** You have got an Ontario uniform on?
- Ranger** Yes. On a big island on the lake where the ranger school was, there was a Jewish girls' camp which was off limits to us young fellows. Until one of the more industrious fellows said, "Well, if you really want to get on there, they can't put you off. There is some 66-foot free zone from the high water mark that belongs to the Crown." He said, "As long as you want to go over and stay on that area, there is no problem." So they all put their uniforms on, grabbed the school launch, went over, lit a bonfire, and had a wiener roast. Pretty soon the girls came down. So I am feeling pretty bad because I have got no uniform. One of the guys said, "Hell, I have got one here that would just about fit you. No problem at all." And that is how I ended up having my picture taken in uniform.
- In 1969, there was an abandoned lumber camp south of Mercoal, right on the curve before you hit the McLeod River. We stayed here, and actually cruised the south end of Camp 22 from there. We



would go and drive about two or three miles up from the corner here back in, and then we would walk ten miles in the morning, do our cruise line, and walk ten miles home at night. That is how we cruised the back end of Camp 22 south of Mercoal. So it was quite the thing. You see that then we graduated to trailers, and that is myself and Pete Dzwenko. And then we had first aid exercises, where we would return from work and then the guys would go out and have simulated injuries. They would have to be treated and removed to town. But these were just taken to kind of give an idea.

**Murphy** That is a good one.

**Ranger** There was my forest inventory crew, when I was Party Manager working for Jack. Here are the tape recorders we used to use. Helicopter. This is when we were doing those surveys up the Simonette. We were staying at Camp 23, north of Camp 10. That camp logged up Moon Creek. These are all just basically pictures we took of different activities.

**Stevenson** That is a living legacy publication.

**Ranger** We used to, for entertainment on Father's Day, go down and take a river trip from Jasper to Hinton, and some years Hinton to Whitecourt.

**Murphy** How was the trip through Jasper? Was it interesting?

**Ranger** Yes. They never wanted us. We had an awful time, like pulling teeth, to get permission to go south of the townsite to start. They were dumping raw sewage into the river at that point in time, and they didn't want anybody to be especially aware of that, so finally we up and told them, "We know you have been doing that for years. We aren't about to tell anybody about it, so no problem." We used to go up past the fish hatcheries and where they had the raft races up in there. We started out and came down. And then, of course, we hit Jasper Lake, and you could walk across it without getting your knees wet, and you wound up pushing your canoe halfway across there at times.

**Murphy** Going back to one of your remarks on that earlier picture – Jack Wright commented that in 1960 Des broke down and approved the purchase of two trailers for the CFI to give up tent camps and utilize the company's developing road system. How did Crossley come to be convinced to do that, do you think?

**Ranger** I don't know. I think it was a combination of things, really. It was a bit ludicrous when you looked at. It was generally accepted that the Forestry Department were lower paid than the Woodlands Department were, and Woodlands staff would always comment, "Are those guys still out freezing in tents and stuff?" Here Jim Clark's people were sleeping in good camps or at home every night, and we were trucking round, living in tents in old lumber camps. I know we were camped up on the Hay River one time, and we thought it was a luxury. We in fact went to an old lumber camp and got some slabs and stuff to build a wall for our tents, so that we had a floor in there. Then we went to





Canada Catering and scrounged an oil heater, but Des wouldn't even buy fuel for it. We had to buy the fuel ourselves and stuff like that. He was working on a strict budget. He had himself stretched to the limit to do these programs he believed in, and he felt his boys were tough and they could do anything. As I say, that was fine for a week or two weeks, but that wore thin after a while.

**Murphy**

Sure.



*Cruise Party and Tent, 1950s. L-R: Bob MacKellar, Ken Casey, John Miller, Ossie Hansen, Jim Clark*

**Ranger**

I think eventually it was generally accepted that, hey, we are getting a bad name when these guys are having to put up with this stuff. And Jack was very instrumental in doing that. He designed the trailers, and he pushed it through. I would give 90% of the credit to Jack's perseverance, and finally Des could see that it had to be and so it was.



*CFI Trailers and Land Cruiser, 1961*

**Murphy**

While we were walking around outside during our break, we were talking about the timber damage assessment aspects for the oil companies. You made two points that were quite interesting that would be good to get down here. They concerned utilization and the fact that you had to reach out and make a commitment.

**Ranger**

Yes, that was one of the bones of contention with the oil companies. I think it even showed up in the Forest Service regulations, in that originally there was very little salvage done. The oil companies simply paid the timber dues, and the timber was cut, left to the one side and bucked up, so it wouldn't be an undue fire hazard, and away they went. We thought that it probably should be utilized, and one of the oil companies' major arguments in the initial discussions, vis-à-vis compensation, was, "Are you really suffering any loss because we (the oil companies) go in and cut that timber and that timber lies there and you (NWP&P) don't utilize it anyway? So have you really lost anything? If you are not going to use it, have you lost it?" And that point of view had some merit. We felt bad that that timber couldn't be utilized. So we embarked initially on a program that, yes, anything that was within a reasonable distance of a road had to be utilized. Then we progressed another step further that anything in an operating compartment would be utilized, which was quite a major undertaking because you didn't always have a road. If you encountered a major swamp or ravine, how do you get that timber out? But at any rate, we went so far as to do that, and then we kind of limited our salvage at that level for a period of time. But as I mentioned to Jimmy Clark, and



I give him his due credit, he saw the contradiction in not utilizing that timber and decided that we should utilize that timber. And, of course, Jimmy did things in kind of a grandiose ways at times. He just flat out made a statement, "From now on, if there is any cutting on our Forest Management Area, it will be utilized." Well, that took a lot of us back, but we embraced that.

Of course, that opened up a whole lot of new areas of interaction between other users and ourselves on the FMA. A big pipeline project would come in with their tight timeline, and you had to go in, select, and log out additional areas for landings. You had to point them out and mark them out for the oil companies. They had to not only clear their pipeline, but they had to clear additional areas to pile all the timber off it. That, in turn, had to be approved by the Forest Service because now additional areas were being logged not covered under the original pipeline approval. In exchange, we made the commitment that we would salvage all that timber, and the pipeline company would pay no timber damages other than Crown royalties. So it swung right around from working at loggerheads to us now working very closely with the oil industry. Of course, these arrangements needed a certain amount of policing and a considerable amount of juggling, both equipment and manpower, in order to avoid conflict of activities on a restricted pipeline right-of-way. So there was additional inconvenience and expense on our part, but it was offset by the amount of timber being salvaged and other revenues coming in from other oil sites. But that was basically the way we eventually countered the oil companies' argument that it wasn't being utilized. From then on, they could see that we were serious. Anything of any magnitude that was cut was going to be utilized, and it was going to be at the company's expense, as well as their own.

**Murphy** Do you recall the year in which that decision was made?

**Ranger** Offhand I can't, but we can find that out if you leave it until later.

**Murphy** We were just looking at the historical timeline – it seems like there was a lot of activity and a lot of innovation from 1954–55, when things got started, right through to 1968, when you confirmed the expansion. Then on into 1972 when the reserve area was cancelled, you were put back to square one. And then it seemed like there is not really much that happened between 1972 and 1985. It was uncharacteristic of the spirit of the company, and what the obvious conclusion may have been is that after that trauma of losing the provisional reserve area and the opportunities for expansion, you went into more of a maintenance mode. I am sure you were managing the forest competently and making money for the company, but it seemed uncharacteristic that there weren't those same innovative things going on. I would like to get your observations, and I wonder if I missed some of the things that we should know about?

**Ranger** My interpretation is that when Harry Collinge died and Ivan Sutherland took over, during that period, it seemed that Ivan had his hands full just with the day-to-day running of the mill. There didn't seem to be any impetus to either move along and look at the expanded areas or do anything with them. There were other things also. The pulp market was depressed, but, to my way of thinking,



that shouldn't have precluded some pre-planning so that we could have taken advantage and done our expansion building while the market was depressed to catch the upswing of the market. But there was none of that. It was just a matter of carry on from day to day as we were. And I may be wrong, but my impression is that it wasn't Ivan's priority to look that far ahead or do anything. Ivan's priority seemed to centre on fine-tuning the mill and its processes and little emphasis was placed on future expansions. And, of course, Ivan and Allan Warrack, Minister of Lands and Forests, didn't hit it off, and we lost the reserve area, and a general malaise vis-à-vis expansion sort of set in. It was not until Ken Hall (who was an outstanding manager) came along and rekindled our optimism and sense of purpose that things again started to move along.

**Murphy**

The other night, you were talking about the arrival of Ken Hall. Ken Hall arrived in November of 1977. In an interview with Ken, it was clear that he thought the company had great prospects, but he was concerned that, if it did not expand, it might not remain competitive in the long run in the international markets. It is his belief that when he inquired of the government of the day about the possibility of its expansion that the very fact of this inquiry triggered the Berland TDA response – so that the area you formerly had now became one for which you had to compete with others. So the sequence of events were: first of all, you made a submission to the Berland TDA which was not successful, and then Ken Hall stood back and developed a strategic plan, I think in 1986, and got approval from St. Regis. I wonder if we could get your impressions about what was going on at that time and relating it especially to 1986–87 when Ken Hall gave Don Laishley the mandate to negotiate a new FMA. You were one of the two members that Don chose to be the negotiating team.

**Ranger**

Ken Hall was the right man at the right time! His background not only gave him excellent credentials to manage a pulpmill, but he also had extensive experience in evaluating timber resources domestically as well as in foreign countries and bringing pulpmill projects to fruition. Upon his arrival, he immediately saw the potential for expansion and was determined that it should happen. The technology to expand the pulpmill and to meet environmental concerns was mostly known. The only element that was rather elusive was the procurement of the additional landbase. As we already had lost the TDA once, Ken was determined not to let that resource slip through our fingers again. Subsequently, not only was the potential resource scrutinized in every detail, but also our existing FMA agreement and operating ground rules and a meticulous analysis made of those documents to see what changes would have to be made to convince ourselves and our investors that a viable expansion could and would flow from our proposals. At the same time, a similar analysis was being undertaken within the mill itself to determine the feasibility and costs of addressing new and demanding environmental concerns. Ken did not leave any stone unturned. As Jack Wright would soon be retiring, Ken brought in Don Laishley to head the newly formed Forest Resource Department and to head up the negotiating team for the expanded FMA. Don, in turn, chose Bob and myself because of our involvement through the years with management planning inventories and annual



operating plan preparations – all of these disciplines combined gave us a well-rounded working knowledge of what would be appropriate to have included in or excluded from our new FMA.

**Murphy**

I think the exciting part of the second expansion was Ken Hall's approach.<sup>1</sup> It involved a direct consultation with Don Getty, the Premier at that time, and arranging to get Champion International Vice-President of Pulp and Paper Whitey Heist – and I think Don Sparrow, MLA for West Yellowhead, was involved as well, negotiating up front or agreeing that they could negotiate an expansion of the area. As part of the requirements for the expansion of the mill, of course, was an expansion of the Forest Management Agreement Area. So as I understand, Don Laishley was given responsibility for that. Don selected you and Bob Udell to do work with him on that. It must have been a very exciting time. I wonder if you could comment on that experience – how you went about doing it as a team and some of the adventures along the way.

**Ranger**

It was extremely exciting but very taxing, too! You must remember we were at the same time coming to terms with our new departmental shuffle and to have the added responsibility of preparing for expansion negotiations was very demanding. Don, as a former consultant, had seen it all before and bore ahead with a lot of confidence and enthusiasm that was infectious, to say the least. I think one of the first things we did was to examine our existing agreements and determine with great accuracy what we could live with and what would have to be changed. Next, we had to be absolutely sure that the resource we sought was adequate and of proper quality. Lastly, we had to play devil's advocate and try to anticipate what counter-proposals may be put to us and what our reactions should be. Jack, although recently retired, was still living in town and was always available for consultation, which was very helpful. At the same time that this was going on, we were trying to devise ways to produce quality haul roads and still reduce our wood costs. To this end, Don contacted several of his consultant associates and different approaches to road and bridge building were examined and adopted or abandoned until we felt we had acceptable costs forecasted for our future road construction requirements. One of the major changes in our road building that came with the new agreement was the input of government monies into our proposed roads to the north of Hinton. The government realized that at some point in time they would be required to construct and maintain public roads from Hinton northward into the Berland Gas Field and beyond to Grande Prairie. Our management planning called for us to develop roads into the same areas, but immediately. To avoid waste and duplication, an agreement was struck for the company to build our roads to mostly our own standards, but to incorporate Department of Highways' standards for alignment and right-of-way width. The government, for their part, committed periodic cash

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's note. For a detailed discussion of the negotiations between the company and the provincial government over the expansion, please refer to Ken Hall's and Don Laishley's interviews in this same archive.



payments to lessen the cost of road construction on the understanding that, should it be required, the company would relinquish rights to those roads, in future, to the Department of Highways.

**Stevenson** If I could ask on the road question – based on the outcomes of the 1988 most recent FMA arrangement, who looks after that? The main haul roads are your responsibility?

**Ranger** Yes.

**Stevenson** Any numbered highway going through the lease would be the Department of Highways, then?

**Ranger** Yes.

**Stevenson** Only the private sector that contract through?

**Ranger** Right. And so at the moment (I talk of 1988 now), the only public roads are Highway 16, Highway 40 north to Grande Cache and south to Cadomin, and Highway 47 from Cadomin to Edson. The other three roads which were built and maintained at government expense were the Hay River Road, the Huckleberry Tower Road, and the Trunk Road running north from the Muskeg Flats.

**Stevenson** Yes.

**Ranger** The major oil company road north of Edson, which we utilize under agreement, is called the Hudson's Bay Oil and Gas Road and other roads are company roads including the road from Hinton to Robb, which is incorrectly shown on some government maps as the Forestry Trunk Road. I think the confusion on that road came about because the Department of Highways installed the original bridge over the McLeod River and maintained it for a number of years. However, this bridge has now been relocated and a new one built by the company, and government involvement is no longer.

**Murphy** Could you comment on some of the other issues? What were some of the things that the company really wanted to achieve, and what were some of the things that the government wanted changed or added that you may not have agreed with?

**Ranger** There were a few irritants that they wanted to change. Some of them did get changed. For instance, prior to the 1988 agreement, we had an open road policy and were building roads and allowing the public to use them and therefore we had some obligation to keep those roads in reasonable condition at all times. You can appreciate there would be times when we didn't use the Robb Road particularly for anything other than access and the haul would be someplace else, and so we quite easily could have done away with the gravelling or the day-to-day maintenance on it. However, we felt that because the public were travelling and commuting back and forth there was a need to have those roads gravelled all the time and in reasonable shape.

So recognizing that, we had been allowed to obtain our gravel dues free throughout the Forest Management Area. I think that concession became an irritant to the Forest Service in that oil companies and others were subject to the gravel permit requirement, and we were the exception.



On one hand, we were being awarded monies for road construction for eventual government usage of those roads, and, on the other hand, it would be by-and-large recovered over the ensuing 20 years by government gravel revenues. It was frustrating! We went back and forth on that for a time, and where it wound up is that we were not to be charged for insitu gravel; in other words, if we were to run along an esker or through a gravelled area, there would be no charge for that in situ gravel that was on the right-of-way. But if we developed a pit somewhere other than within the right-of-way, we would pay dues the same as anyone else.

**Murphy**

Did you get any compensating points?

**Ranger**

We asked for quite a few compensating things, but we weren't all that successful. One of the additional items Deputy Minister Fred McDougall's lawyers wanted to include in the agreement was a clause which would allow them to unilaterally change or amend the ground rules. Our position, of course, was that we could never accept a situation where one party could, on a whim, change the very procedures under which we operate without our input, let alone one that would leave us with no ability to defend our rights, be it through the politicians or, as a last resort, the courts. It left a bad taste in our mouths, that a government would request that we agree to such a thing. It made us ask, "What are they planning to do and why are they afraid to negotiate future changes?" At any rate, Fred was asked by his legal advisors to try and get that by us. Fred raised the issue several times, but I could tell that the proposal was troublesome to him also, and so, in the end, we would not accept that bureaucrats should be in a position to make arbitrary changes to our ground rules and not have to answer to either the politicians or to the courts.

**Murphy**

With possibly serious impacts on your business?

**Ranger**

And we have not even recourse to the courts to get around that. That is unacceptable altogether. The wording, in the end, is something to the effect that changes could be made at the discretion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which means that it would have to go through the legislature. So we could agree with that. In other sections, it calls for us to resolve the contentious matters through arbitration, and so we have the recourse to civil courts. It is just a basic right as far as I was concerned, and I think Fred knew that. And, in all fairness to Fred, he realized that nobody should have these basic rights taken from them. So that is why you will see in some areas it refers to "at the discretion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council", and in others it is "recourse to civil action".

**Stevenson**

But there is another element, too, and that comes this year of the government divesting itself of the responsibility, and it has now shifted over to the companies.

**Ranger**

Exactly.

**Stevenson**

So the stewardship of the land, although the government is, on behalf of the citizens of Alberta, responsible for it. A lot of the delegation of authority has gone from government to the company,



and we are seeing that in other things. I think it just fits from 1988 to the present that the onus is now on the company, even though the government is the so called watchdog.

**Ranger** Yes. And we accepted that but, here again I think, and I go back to this other business with the oil companies, about some folks in there who still don't agree with that. They still think they should be in the driver's seat, and they are very reluctant to give up that control. I don't know just why, but they probably have some reason.

**Murphy** Were there any other contentious issues that stick in your mind?

**Ranger** There were other issues, but they weren't near as contentious. One of the areas that was troublesome to us was loss of replacement lands. In the old agreement, when land was taken from the reserve, it was periodically replaced so that our landbase remained constant. The new agreement however allows the government to give away to other users some 2% of our landbase every 20 years without replacement! That amounts to some 29,000 acres every 20 years.

**Murphy** But in the new agreement, there is no provision for incremental land because there is no more land?

**Ranger** Very little replacement lands! Most of the lands are now under agreement with other resource users such as Daishowa, Weyerhaeuser, and the like, and so replacement lands are virtually non-existent or, at best, far removed from the point of processing. So by not replacing lands before they reach the 20,000 acre category, the government is forcing the company to find innovative ways to increase their growth capacity to make up for the shortfall in landbase. Another troublesome area brought about by the new agreement was the whole issue of chip direction. I must make it clear that it did not impact our company negatively (dollar-wise), but we are still somewhat puzzled that a free-enterprise government would embrace a program which, by-and-large, allowed government to dictate who you, as a company, would do business with, as well as how much business you would do.

**Stevenson** These strategic alliances were a waste of money and become valuable at the other depending on the nature of the operation.

**Ranger** Yes.

**Murphy** But I understand that the chip direction is either cancelled or about to be cancelled?

**Ranger** I am not surprised. I could never understand how they could make that fly. It was a good concept from the standpoint of better utilization of the resource, but the imposition of both volume and direction was very troublesome.

**Murphy** That was a strange one.

**Ranger** Yes.





**Murphy** But, on the other hand, the government, I think, felt it had to do something to ensure a wood supply.

**Ranger** I could understand that, and probably it would have worked if the chips, if not privately contracted, would have been required to be sold to a central agency, similar to the Wheat Board, and from there marketed to wherever. But to be told exactly who you will do business with, like it or not, was troublesome.

**Murphy** This is a hypothetical question, because I am basing it on a second-hand comment, but I understand the Deputy Minister of the day felt that the government had given away too much in this agreement, and I wondered how you would react to that – understanding that it is not necessarily a true statement.

**Ranger** I didn't think it was too much. I thought they did alright, actually. We, all of a sudden, were now responsible for the total timber utilization on that Forest Management Area. This includes deciduous timber, which was not under management prior to the new agreement. All of a sudden, we have made a commitment that deciduous timber is going to be utilized, and, if we can't get somebody else to utilize it, we are going to put something in to utilize it ourselves. That is a big commitment. Not only are you managing coniferous, but now you are managing for deciduous volume, too. You are being forced into utilizing a resource that even the government had not been able to bring under total management. You now have to change all your ways of handling the deciduous, albeit one tree or 10,000 trees in a cut block. There is sorting, putting it off to one side, and inviting other people to come in and use your roads to extract it. You give them access to your roads and your facilities. You have safety problems. You have scheduling problems. You have got union and non-union workers on the same ground. A whole matter of things open up. They have set a precedent – "total utilization of the resource on an FMA".

In addition, they are now receiving revenue from the gravel, which the company uses to maintain roads that are available to the public, and they have greatly lessened their responsibility to provide replacement lands! No, I can't really agree with Fred that they gave away too much. I think that is probably Fred in his negotiation mode saying, "Well, we did you guys a favour." He is always saying that. I don't think he has done anything other than what was required of him, given the time and circumstances. I think the public was well served by Fred being at the table.

**Stevenson** In the same breath, I think it is fair to say that the Hinton operation is a good example when you look at what has gone in other parts of Canada. Indeed, we can hold our head very high at Hinton. That is not without saying there are some problems, but, by-and-large, I think the operation, when you look at other ones, stands very good.

**Ranger** Bob, I look on the Hinton operation as probably the best in Canada, and a lot of credit has to go to the Alberta Forest Service for assessing problems experienced in other parts of the country, and, along with our company, being determined not to see those same mistakes repeated. As a result,



we are convinced we are in the lead when it comes to managing the resource, and we are determined to stay in the lead. I believe the company intends to be a leader in the industry for a long, long time to come.

**Murphy**

Just to go back to the land use issues briefly, Ray. One of the aspects was the developing need for grazing. While we were walking around the yard, we were talking about the history and how you worked with the Forest Service on the grazing question – that would be a good one to get on tape, as well.

**Ranger**

Yes. Jim Hereford was the chief ranger at the Hinton station at that time.

**Murphy**

It would have been the early 1960s?

**Ranger**

Yes. Jim was beginning to get requests for holding areas where horses could be kept close to town. We were personal friends, as well as associates in the business. At that time, we had virtually no facilities for grazing in the Forest Management Area. We had always assumed that the corridor running adjacent to Highway 16, which doesn't form part of our Forest Management Area, would be the logical place for a grazing reserve at that time. There weren't any horse owners originally, other than a few outfitters over at Brule and maybe two or three people in Hinton. There was really no demand for it, but, as time went on and more and more people came in, especially people from the mines, then there became a demand for it.

I know Jim had spoken to me about it, and I initially had sort of procrastinated. I thought it best be looked after by issuing lots along Highway 16. For a time, they did that. They used an area west of where the golf course is now, where the rodeo grounds were later developed. Other lands adjacent to Highway 16 were also utilized on a temporary basis, but there was nothing really set up for it. We both realized that the demand would not lessen, and that a proper area should be set aside for grazing, but where? Some of the areas of natural pasture land we considered were Tie Camp Flats, northeast of town adjacent to the Emerson Road; the Hay River Flats located some distance north of Hinton; and a few smaller areas between Entrance and Brule.

Most of the recreational riders were accommodated in small plots here and there, but the commercial operators were another matter. Historically, outfitters had centred their activities inside Jasper National Park or at its eastern gates near Brule. As the parks did not allow winter grazing, these herds of outfitters' horses would simply be taken to the eastern park gates and allowed to graze unhampered in what later became our Forest Management Area, and more specifically our cut-over areas of Camps 1, 2, and 33. To further complicate matters, outfitters were reluctant to designate the exact number of horses being deposited in the area because they were all subject to a grazing head tax. Through time, there came to be quite a number of herds of wild or feral horses, which were descendants of early mining horses or unclaimed outfitters' and settlers' horses roaming the areas. These horses, of course, preferred to centre in recent cut-over areas because of the



increase in forage and grasses afforded them there. At first, it was thought that such grazing would have little effect on regeneration, but this would not prove to be the case. We had occasion to recognize some of the extreme damage being done to regeneration at the time at Camp 33, and we documented that. Jack Wright and I think Hank Sommers got some excellent photographs, and, at an annual operating meeting, I presented them to Fred McDougall and he was concerned about it. Subsequently, the Forest Service instigated a program of feral horse roundups, which, after several years, alleviated the situation. However, it had not solved the problem of what to do with the legitimate commercial horses in the area.

**Murphy** Do you remember the year that you made the presentation to McDougall?

**Ranger** No, but I am sure the original documents are still there at work with the photographs and everything. There will be a date on the slides and the presentation will be in the minutes of the annual operating plan meetings, too.

**Murphy** What were the events that led to the big community pasture set up east of Brule along the north side of the road to Brule?

**Ranger** OK, once the feral horse question had been addressed, we still had to accommodate the non-feral horses, which were largely centred around Brule, and more specifically had concentrated in our recent cut-over areas at Camp 54. We, as a company, had made considerable effort to regenerate the areas and were reluctant to allow unregulated grazing to continue there and jeopardize the reforestation program. In the end, a compromise was reached where we gave up further attempts to regenerate the area, and the area was fenced by the Alberta Forest Service and a community pasture established.

**Stevenson** Do you have a year for that?

**Ranger** Here again, give me a half hour at the company records, and I can dig it up for you because it is in the annual operating plan meetings.

**Murphy** The other one I want to clarify, Ray, is when you talked about dealing with oil companies and getting the timber damage assessment, it sounded as if you were beginning to develop a rapport with the oil companies, so you could talk about things beforehand. But more recently, you made the comment about the stress you were feeling about negotiations. Was that with the oil companies? Were you having difficulties with the oil companies?

**Ranger** We were having difficulty on several fronts. The major hurdle with the oil companies had been overcome earlier on, but now the major litigation problems were with the coal companies.

**Murphy** With the coal companies – OK.



- Ranger** That was the latest go around and especially the Coal Branch area south of Edson, down around Lovett.
- Murphy** What were the issues there?
- Ranger** Largely, it was an issue of the coal company's refusal to acknowledge our right to the timber, or at times our very existence. It was commonplace for them to trespass, cut, and destroy forested land without our knowledge, or the knowledge of the Forest Service, either. But their permit man, Ken Crane, who used to work in Special Land Use, was very good at smoothing things over with the Forest Service. As a result, they did things pretty much when they wanted and how they wanted. And, of course, as mentioned earlier, we were not at all convinced that we would be able to reforest the mined-out area once they came back into our FMA
- Murphy** The third issue was the Alberta Resources Railway, which you mentioned in passing – that must have created some problems for you.
- Ranger** Yes, it did. The railroads did not even deal with us directly. They instead obtained permission for the proposed right-of-way directly from the government without input from us. So without benefit of any consultation or negotiation, we were informed that our operating FMA would be severed by a railroad running from Brule to Grande Cache. No allowance for crossing of the trackage to gain access to areas isolated by the right-of-way or anything. All crossings and costs associated with them would be, as they have always been, at our expense and at the sole discretion of the railroad. To add insult to injury, the government proposed to allow them to construct their right-of-way and register only a theoretical right-of-way of 132 feet, which in that near-mountainous terrain was unworkable. The severity of the terrain meant that often the right-of-way width was doubled, not to mention huge areas of borrow and access. No one else in the province would have been given this latitude, but the railroad managed to demand and get this concession. That is an indication to you how badly the province wanted to facilitate the development of the coal fields in Grande Cache.
- Stevenson** Another thing, if I can interject, was that the heavy rains in 1969 just rearranged the entire alignment of that tract and major dollars had to go back in to bring it up to operational standards.
- Ranger** Right. There were those floods, and the run-off in those valleys was tremendous, and it washed out great sections of them. The overburden and everything washed down, and it was just a real mess. If our company had done something like that, we would have probably been out of business. That is the way it goes. And the only two identities that could get away with that would be the Department of Highways or the railroad. As a result, there was very little we could do about it, but we did insist that the proper acreage be surveyed and that we should be compensated for the timber that was lost. Our agreement called for us to be compensated, and, if our losses exceeded a certain percentage of the Forest Management Area, then we would be looking at additional lands.



But that is where the hassle began. Nobody would agree to the acreage. They had survey plans of all the proposed areas, of course. Theoretical right-of-ways, and they were overlaid on photo mosaic prints, which indicated so many acres included in this gravel pit and so many acres because of the side hill cut. What they didn't realize is what the surveyors put out for a proposal and what actually happens in the field are two different things. But they had no requirement to go back after and verify what they had done. So the Technical Division accepted the original preliminary plans as gospel. There was no requirement to submit actual after-construction plans or for anyone to check what had occurred in the field. We spent ten years trying to resolve acreage figures and compensation claims – from July 5, 1965, when we first received our notice from Lawson of the Technical Division until February 7, 1975, when the ARR disclaimed any liability. To make a long story short, only one half of the acreage that was disturbed was even deleted from the FMA and only some 2200 cords of wood salvaged from the entire railroad right-of-way.

**Murphy** Did you ultimately get paid?

**Ranger** We submitted an invoice to the ARR for \$130,000.00.

**Stevenson** Ray, did the settlement come from the railroad?

**Ranger** No settlement came from the railroad. We were never paid.

**Murphy** This is a broadside type of concluding question. This really is a success story. What do you feel best about? What do you think were some of the highlights?

**Ranger** The thing that I always felt good about was the teamwork that we had working at Hinton. We recognized early on in the game amongst ourselves, amongst the Forestry Department staff, as well as other foresters throughout the province, that we were doing the right things. We, together with the Alberta Forest Service, had embraced new concepts, and we were going ahead with them. We were developing things that nobody had tried on such a large scale before, and they were time and again proven to be right. We soon were being looked at as leaders in good forest husbandry. It soon became evident that we knew our business. We were confident that we were doing the right things, and, as the years went on, our checks and balances proved that to be so. Our regeneration techniques proved to be successful. Our allowable cut calculations and volume computations proved, over time, to be accurate. There was a growing sense of pride in our ability to manage the forest. This was a sustainable operation. There would be as much timber here 150 years from now, as there is right today, and we knew in our hearts that we were leaving the country in as good of shape as when we came. We were leaving a legacy that would be carried on. We took a certain amount of professional pride in that. The teamwork and the hard times and the tough things we went through to get there were all worthwhile. And I especially felt comfortable working as a team player with the rest of the members of our staff and in our ability, no matter what the problem, to formulate a workable solution and to move on.



**Murphy** Those are very positive highlights.

**Ranger** I don't regret for one minute ever having done that. It is a shame that my health didn't hold out to let me do it longer, but, if I had to do it again, I would do it over again. No doubt about that.

**Murphy** You made a remarkable contribution while you there.

**Ranger** Well, I had some good teachers. Des and Jack were probably the hardest task-masters, and, as a result, I probably learned the most from those two, although there was considerable interaction with a great many others also, and so the learning process never stopped. I remember one time, in later years, when Des accompanied me on a helicopter trip to verify some age classing work we were doing in the reserve area. That day, Des had come into the office jingling the change in his pocket and had suggested that he would accompany me. I knew right away that he would spend the day playing devil's advocate and that I had better be on the ball. So, later in the day as we were on the ground, Des is resting on a stump. "Sit down a minute," he says. So I sat down. And he looks around and he says, "What happened here?" I kind of looked at him. "Well, we have three age classes of timber here. Firstly, we have an old over-mature stand," I said. "Then it burned over 86 years ago. And then by the look of the clean understory, and, as everything is clean and park-like with no deadfall, there must have been a second fire come along in pretty quick succession to clean it all up – and that would have been 74 years ago to be exact." He smiled then and said, "Well, I guess you have learned the things you were supposed to learn," to which I replied, "After 20 years of being surrounded with foresters, it would have been impossible not to learn."

**Murphy** That was great. Thank you very much, Ray.

**Stevenson** Thank you, Ray.

**End of interview.**



## DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC PHOTOGRAPHS ORIGINALLY INCLUDED WITH INTERVIEW

### Ranger

This was in January of 1957, as you can see. We were doing forest inventory plots in an area up in the very northeast corner of the Marlboro Working Circle and access was limited up there. We worked our way north of Edson on some old logging roads. At the end of the trail, there was an old lumber camp which had recently finished operating. There was a young man and his wife living in a single little cabin there at that time. They were kind of caretakers until they could get the last of the ties in. We came in there just about dark, so I suspect it would be about 3:30 or 4:00 in the afternoon. There was no room at all for us in this little cabin. Of course, it was the only one that was there in one piece. Fifty yards or so away, there was a part of an old cook shack, with no roof but a partial wall. And because it was dark and cold and we were played out, we decided we would just use this shack – it was just basically one wall with shelves on it – as sleeping quarters. So we put our sleeping bags out, and we crawled in there. It was dreadfully cold. I remember we had a fitful night. I was awake probably as much as I slept, although I know if you basically got tired enough, you could sleep. I remember being shook awake in the morning, and it was this fellow from the cabin. He had looked out in the morning, and there was nothing but just mounds of snow, and he thought we had all perished in the night. We had just pulled our sleeping bags over our heads, and we would wake up fitfully and drop back to sleep again. He was so upset when he saw no movement that he rushed out. When he found out we were still living, he said, "You fellows come in and warm up as soon as you can," and we went in. The wife was very pregnant, I remember that. Very pregnant. It looked like she shouldn't be doing anything. She had cooked up virtually every egg that they had in the place, and they had bacon and eggs for all of us, and we all crowded in there by the fire and had this big feed of bacon and eggs.

### Murphy

That would have been a memorable meal.

### Ranger

Yes, it was. They were from Saskatchewan, and being from Saskatchewan I said to the boys, "Now, there is hospitality for you." And they all agreed that that was just quite wonderful. Phil Appleby was the party chief at the time, and he told me that he would arrange for the company to send a letter to them. After breakfast, we worked our way further north and west and came upon another old abandoned lumber camp that contained a building with roof and walls still intact, which we spent the better part of a day repairing. After that, we gathered up an old 45 gallon drum stove, some stove pipes, and cut some old ties and stuff for fuel wood, and we used that for our base camp.

### Stevenson

If you could describe in this picture, the fellows left to right.



**Ranger** Yes. In the picture was Fred Pettice, myself, Leonard Smith and Vern Truxler. And this next picture was also taken at that camp. Again from left to right, Floyd Jones, Phil Appleby, Al Hollington, and myself.

**Stevenson** That would be these fellows in front of the land rover?

**Ranger** Yes. That is in front of the land rover.

**Stevenson** And left to right again, those would be?

**Ranger** Myself, Vern Truxler, Floyd Jones, Fred Pettice, Len Smith, and Al Hollington up on top. Phil Appleby is obviously taking the picture. This picture is of our supplies and tents hooked on to a toboggan for transportation. However, that proved to be not very successful in that we couldn't physically pull the weight in the toboggan, and so we offloaded everything into our Trapper Nelson packs and then on top of that put our "four in one" Holden sleeping bags. They were very heavy loads! Everything was canned food, plus your cooking utensils, metal survey stakes, blue paint – if you can imagine – for surveying our plots in, string, a bit of rope, tents, and various other pieces of equipment of that nature. Every two miles, we had a cluster of four plots, so we progressed to one set and then usually set up camp. Then we would split from there, and one crew would go one direction and one the other. Do maybe four clusters from there, and then move again. It was not so bad on the way out because we had used up all our food. But, on the way in, the packs were so heavy if you ever tipped over on your snowshoes, you simply laid there exhausted until the next bunch caught up to you. Then one on each side would physically lift you up and away you would go again.

And you never took off your equipment because it was too much of an effort. You see the boys crouched here between two trees like this. They are actually taking the weight off their backs and getting some form of rest. You can see he is just straightened up there. Another lad has fallen over. Notice the snowshoes. There was always a friendly rivalry about the snowshoes we wore. The boys from the east always liked the Fort George snowshoes, and we from the west preferred the Ojibway, the narrow pointed ones, which for trail use were fine. On the other hand, they proved to be a bit of an obstacle when you were in the woods, in that they were longer and to jump off dead fall or something you had to jump a little further otherwise you would snap the heels. So there were pros and cons, but to this day I still prefer the Ojibway.

**Stevenson** We are looking at about an 11" wide by 54" long shoe.

**Ranger** Eleven by 54 was the size I used. At that time, I weighed about 165 pounds, all muscle. Now I am 200 pounds and not too much muscle. Here you can see our tents. We would cut an old pole some place, break it off, put it between two branches, and secure our tents up with that.

**Stevenson** This would be the traditional tourist tent.





**Ranger** Yes, a traditional tourist tent and no centre pole. For a little bit of heat, we had little wires on which we would suspend a piece of cardboard – taken off of our supply boxes and probably a foot square – down a bit from the gable of the tent. Then we had candles that we would light and put on there. It worked fine and only on one occasion did the guys fall asleep and that candle burned down and set fire to their tent. They had to finish the trip with a hole in the tent at the top, but other than that it went along good.

**Stevenson** And this was being done in January and February?

**Ranger** January right through to March, as you can see on the dates on the photographs. January and then these later ones were in March when we finished up. We had a certain area to do there, and so we were doing it. That is a picture of Phil Appleby here, and this lad would have replaced Floyd Jones and was only with us for one trip. He in turn was replaced by Paul Gullickson.

**Stevenson** This would be a photograph, again, beside the Land Rover. It looks as though you just finished your work and back to the road.

**Ranger** Yes, and going out for another trip. You see we would go for two weeks at a time and come back. So we were back and forth. These were taken in March – the same roads as the ones in January – so were back and forth. What happened during one trip, to give you a bit of an idea of the hardships encountered, Paul Gullickson, this lad here, severely froze his feet and they cracked awful bad and turned kind of blackish looking. We were very concerned about gangrene, so he was pulled off and he eventually quit and became a tour guide and bus driver for Brewster in Jasper and Banff. On another trip, I remember everybody came down deathly ill with jaundice, and, for two or three days, everyone was pretty immobile. I was never out flat, although I had turned yellow in the eyes and all the rest of that stuff. I fed them soup and did what I could for them until they regained enough strength to trek out. The doctors from that point on would never take any of our blood, although we looked healthy enough.

This you can see is another pack trip in March. You see we are back in again. Here it snowed over night, and there is a couple of feet of fresh snow (you know those March snows), and we are looking for our cooking utensils. Our cooking area was usually down pretty close to a creek, where we didn't have to pack water too far. Obviously, it is open area where there is lots of snow, and so we are using our snowshoes for shovels digging for our cooking utensils. This picture is of the evening meal we are sitting around in the smoke here.

**Stevenson** Humped up.

**Ranger** Humped up and eating, and we are looking forward to crawling into that unheated tent and going to sleep in the snow banks. We didn't take our Safari cots either. It was warmer to just lay in the snow, so that you didn't have the air underneath you.



**Murphy** Yes, they were not good for cold weather.

**Ranger** Yes. Following those tenting trips in the snow, we managed to get lodging in one of the AFS ranger station buildings at Mercoal, as shown in this picture. Joe Passamare was the ranger there at that time. That was over the spring break-up in March 1957. Of course, this is a picture of the first cone drying sheds we had. We were doing a little cone collection.

**Murphy** When was that?

**Ranger** There is no date on that. I would have to find that out. Rod Rowley is shown back there. I am wearing a wedding ring, so it would be probably the summer of somewhere in 1960s. But that can be verified. It is on record when we put in those first cone drying sheds. The first I had seen of them, however, and I have pictures of them here, was down in Ontario when I was going to ranger school. I showed some of those pictures to Des and he said, "Oh, yes, we are going to have some of those eventually," and we in fact did. That is taken there in Ontario in 1958, and those cone sheds are very similar to what you see in Hinton. Our first cone sheds were old annexes or bunk houses from Canada Catering. The siding was taken off and replaced with wire and spruce cones were dried in trays inside.

Another bunkhouse was used as kind of a storage area, and that is where our good friend Andy Radvanyi, the "mouse man" as we called him, set up shop with his radioactive isotopes and carried on his rodent studies using the building to store his equipment. He had radioactive signs all over everything but no protective clothing. I remember one day John Hickey and Hank Summer were there and one of them, I suspect it would probably be John, sort of queried him, "Well, Andy you are not planning on having any more children, eh?" We all laughed at the time, but from then on we did treat Andy's supplies with a little more respect.

**Murphy** I have a note here that the first silviculturist, Gordon Jones, was there in 1961. Was it about that year that cone drying was done?

**Ranger** Yes. The first I met Gordon was when we were doing some forest inventory work up north of Camp 6, north of Peppers Lake. There was a dreadful pile of snow up there that year, and that probably would have been 1961 when he came in the spring. Does it say what date he came?

**Murphy** No. We will just write it down as 1960.

**Ranger** At any rate, we ran on to him in the middle of some large clear cuts, on the west side of Camp 29, near the rimrock. He was floundering around in this extremely deep snow with his coat wide open (he was rather on the portly side), and I thought for sure he would have a heart attack. But he had come a tremendous way without the benefit of snowshoes or anything. We sort of said to him, "Gosh. This is too hard of work for you. You know it is hard enough for us guys that are used to it. You should probably come back another time." He sort of felt disappointed that he couldn't go out



and do the task he was assigned, but he eventually agreed with us and went back to town. That is my first recollection of him, and he went on to do a lot of silviculture work for us. After him, of course, came Bob Carmen. Bob was very instrumental developing our container planting program. He got that off the ground. He sat across the office from me, and I can tell you once he had been there six months, he spent half his time on the telephone. There wasn't a minute went by that somebody wasn't calling him for something or he was calling them. So he had lots of contacts obviously down in eastern Canada, and he was touching base here and there on what was the latest. He wasn't backward about finding out what was going on. I remember that and that phone was always ringing for him.