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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Once again the season has turned, and leaves throughout the province are embracing gravity. In this issue of the newsletter, we shall embrace the life and times of BCFS Ranger Districts; our deep gratitude to Bill Dunbar and his wife, Marcella for their contribution. We shall also take a look at a new book on one of my favourite people: Vladimir Krajina. But first: it's AGM time again! Please join us for a BCFS-CFS look back into forest history.

One further thought. We have 5 more issues before we hit a centenary of our own. So put your thinking caps on, collect your stories, and send us your ideas of what to include in our 100th issue. In the meantime, enjoy #95.



THE FHABC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Date: November 24, 2012

Location: David Slater Room (2nd floor)
Pro Patria Branch, Royal Canadian Legion
411 Gorge Road East, Victoria
(Enter Parking Lot Via Dunedin St.)

Time: Doors open at 1:00 PM

Agenda: 1:30 – 2:30: AGM Reports and Election of Officers

2:30 – 5:00:

Program: "100 Years Of BC Forest Service – Canadian Forest Service Collaboration";
Presentations by representatives of each organisation, followed by 'Open Mic' for
reminiscences by attendees. Bring your sweat/tear-stained belongings as proof!

5:00 – 6:00: Socialising; Bar Open

6:00 – 7:30: Buffet dinner @ \$30/Plate, includes hot dishes, salad, dessert and coffee/tea

NOTE: Dinner Confirmation Needed By Nov. 16th for our commitment.

Confirm dinner orders via Mike Meagher at 250-727-7675 or Mikebirgitte@Shaw.Ca

Attendance Is Free. Memberships Available At Door



LIFE ON A RANGER STATION

by Bill Dunbar

(Editor's note: Bill's reminiscences were part of a BCFS 100 Lecture Series talk given in October. He took us on a wonderful personal tour of a Forest Service that no longer exists. He even wore the uniform of the times. What struck me most strongly during his talk was the sense of community that existed during those days. Bill, thanks so much for sharing your memories with us that night and for contributing to the newsletter. And thanks to Marcella for all the word-processing work! Note that all images are from Bill's talk.)



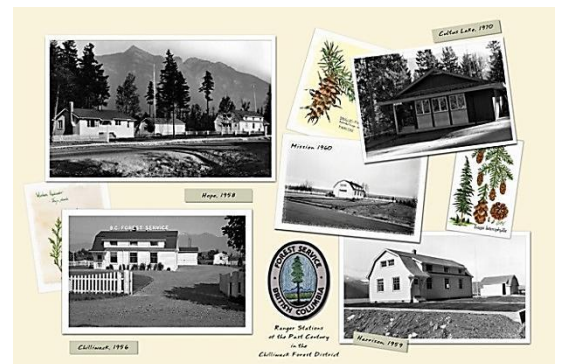
For much of the last 100 years, ranger stations were an integral part of the British Columbia Forest Service (BCFS). Because life on the ranger station and life in the Forest Service were so intermingled, they cannot be discussed separately. Thus this talk covers both the working conditions and the everyday lives of ranger station staff during the late 1960s and early 1970s;

most of this information is applicable throughout the province. Note that I often refer to the Prince George Forest District, which is now called the Prince George Region. *[Editor's note: the Region has evolved. According to the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations (<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/mof/regdis.htm>), it is now called the Omineca Region and includes the Northern Interior Forest Region and several Districts, one being the Prince George District].*

First, what is a Ranger District? The Ranger Districts were the field level of Forest Service operations. Most of the government forest fieldwork was based in these Districts. The role was primarily inspectional, and although staff had little or no input into making policy, they were expected to implement and enforce existing policy. There were approximately 98 Ranger Districts within the province overseen by six Forest District offices. In the Prince George District, there were 16 Ranger Districts; three of them based in Prince George and one each in McBride, Valemount, Fort St. James, Dawson Creek, Aleza Lake, Vanderhoof, Fort St. John, Fort Fraser, Summit Lake, Fort Nelson, Hixon, Chetwynd, and Mackenzie. At one time, there were also three Ranger Districts in Quesnel, but these were amalgamated into the Cariboo Forest District in the early 70's. Each Ranger District had a ranger station. Some Districts had assistant ranger stations that were in a location other than the main ranger station (such as Dawson Creek or Stoney Lake). These were usually staffed only in the summer.

Although they were not recognized as such, ranger stations could be roughly sorted into three categories depending on the community they were located in:

- Rural stations such as Summit Lake and Aleza Lake were in small, non-regulated communities and usually provided their own water and sewer and street maintenance. The station property consisted of the office, warehouse, and auxiliary buildings such as fuel sheds, and staff housing.
- Semi-rural stations were in villages or towns (such as Valemount, Fort Fraser and Chetwynd) and used municipal infrastructure. The station property usually had the same facilities as the rural locations. Housing was sometimes located within



the town as well as on the station.

- Urban stations such as Prince George and Dawson Creek had the usual office and warehouse structures, but no housing was supplied.

There were exceptions, but the warehouse on most stations was usually a hip-roofed, barn-like building. In the earlier days, this building often contained the office as well as the warehouse until staff outgrew the space. Offices were then built on the same property. This type of building is synonymous with a ranger station and, to me, is a Forest Service icon.

I have been posted to all three categories of stations. I began my BCFS career as a summer hire at Summit Lake (a rural station) in 1968 and returned to a fulltime appointment there in 1969 with a salary of \$365/mo. + \$10 special living allowance (SLA). In June of 1970, I was posted to my first Assistant Ranger posting in Fort St. John (an urban station) with a salary of \$475/mo. + \$20 SLA. The only BCFS housing provided there was for the Ranger, but for a short time, I was provided with a BCFS camp trailer in a trailer park. In 1972, I was transferred to R.D. 4, one of the Prince George Ranger Districts (also an urban station). After a few years, I was transferred again, this time to a timber technician job in Prince George Forest District (Headquarters). In 1977, I successfully transferred back to Summit Lake. My salary was now \$1485 + \$67.20 SLA. Although some of this increase was due to annual merit increase, a large portion was due to union negotiations. In 1979, I bid on a job at Sayward in the Vancouver Forest District. Sayward was categorized as semi-rural, meaning I had now worked in all three categories of Ranger Districts. By 1980 my salary was \$1604 + 72.10 SLA.

In the rural and semi-rural Districts, the Forest Service was often the only government in the area. As such, the Ranger, staff and families were accepted into the local community and were, in fact, expected to be part of the local community. They were prominent community figures. On these stations, staff worked together and played together. Staff often formed ball and curling teams and entered community leagues. As well, staff were often active on community associations and committees. These rural stations were tremendously influential in developing the esprit de corps and the feeling of being in one big family that was so common with Forest Service staff for many years. Friendships and brotherhood flourished and lasted for many years.

People worked together helping each other with personal projects such as fixing cars, hunting, and babysitting. Young, single people often had a surrogate home in the more senior staff homes and were welcomed for meals and visiting. Every now and then, the odd button was even sewn on to a young fellow's clothes by the senior staff's wife. The perennial job of snow removal from building roofs was also shared by all.

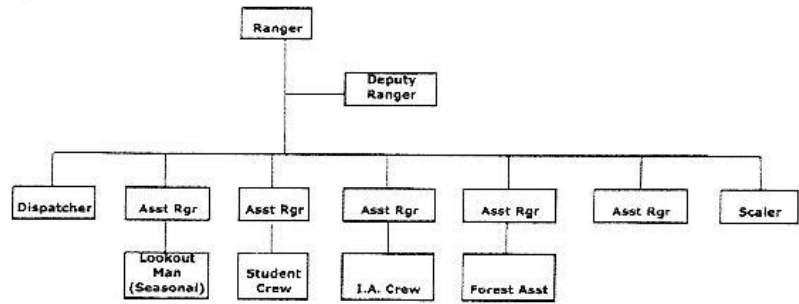
Many staff and family functions were organized and included visits, seasonal parties, sports teams, and farewell parties for those being transferred. Staff looked after their colleagues' houses and lawns if someone was away on holiday. As a social outlet, and to satisfy their staff's constant need to enjoy a cool one, most rural Districts organized a beer fund in the summer months. Seed money would be pooled; then beer would be bought and cooled and made available on an honour system for 50 cents a bottle. The fund was usually based in the staff house for single staff. A quick beer after work often resulted in the married men getting home late for supper. On the downside, non-working incidents involving neighbourhood conflict between staff members' children, pets, and spouses that would have gone unnoticed in larger communities could sometimes cause hard feelings in the office.

You were always on duty on these types of stations. Although not on a regular basis, the public often knocked on your door after hours or on weekends for a burning permit or to obtain information regarding some forestry issue.

In the urban ranger stations, staff were scattered throughout the community and lived in their own housing. They still worked together and helped each other at work, but the urban setting presented the opportunity of having friendships and activities beyond those with co-workers. As well, wives often had jobs outside the home. This situation was not common in the rural and semi-rural Districts. This other group of friends and co-workers

introduced more people into the circle of BCFS friends. Staff functions were still common but often included a few non-staffers. The esprit de corps that existed in urban stations was usually a carryover of the spirit and friendships that had developed in the rural stations.

Depending on the workload, ranger station staff employed from three or four to ten people. The Forest Ranger was in charge of the station, staff, and the field operations. A Deputy Ranger was often second in charge and filled in for the Ranger during his absences. Assistant Rangers carried out the fieldwork required in inspecting forest operations (such as logging, tree planting, road building). The Assistant Rangers' field reports would be reviewed by the Ranger or deputy Ranger and forwarded to the District Forester's office. Forest assistants were junior staff not yet qualified or experienced to be Assistant Rangers. Dispatchers (who were also classified as Forest Assistants) took care of answering phones and radios, did the typing and filing, janitorial work, weather observations and made the coffee. Seasonal scalers and lookout men were also part of most ranger staffs.



The Forest Ranger was considered to be the king pin of the forest industry and the Forest Service, and most field staff wanted to be a Ranger someday. Most people in the Forest Service usually started by working on the Headquarters' cruising crew or marking crew. Others started as District Forest Assistants or Dispatchers. These people were all classified as Forest Assistants. Forest Assistants and the general public were qualified to write the Technical Forest Officer 1 (TFO-1) exam if they were 21 years old in the year of writing. Depending on Assistant Ranger vacancies, successful completion of the TFO-1 exam could result in an Assistant Ranger posting in any Ranger District. After 2 years of experience and upon reaching 23 years, TFO-1's could write the TFO-2 exam to become a senior Assistant Ranger. This reclassification was usually automatic upon passing the exam.

After a few years of experience and upon receiving favourable PSC8s (which was a government-wide staff performance report), Assistant Rangers were selected to attend basic and then advanced training courses at the Forest Service Training School at Green Timbers in Surrey. Successful completion of the advanced course usually resulted immediately in appointment as a Deputy Ranger (TFO-3) anywhere in the province. Experienced Deputies eventually became Rangers (TFO-4) and then Ranger Supervisors, Scaling Supervisors, Cruising Supervisors or even deployed to the Protection Office as TFO-5's.

Here are a few details about our "Life in the BCFS". Good or bad, these situations helped shape our character—a way of being that followed us through our careers in the Forest Service.

Transfers: For many years, ranger staff had little or no opportunity for input on transfers. Assistant Rangers were usually transferred every two years at the discretion of the Assistant District Forester and Ranger Supervisors at the Forest District Office. Transfers took place in April and October. Assistant Rangers were usually transferred between Ranger Districts within their own Forest Districts, but the dreaded possibility of a transfer to the Forest District Headquarters as a timber technician always existed. Deputies and Rangers were usually transferred every three to five years, often transferred anywhere in the province. As an Assistant Ranger, I was transferred four times with no input, although not all transfers involved a change in location. I later bid on several of my transfers.

Household effects were moved in the back of a Forest Service truck—either in a tarp-covered freight truck or a horse trailer—or if you were lucky, an enclosed van. After unionization (about 1975), staff were allowed to bid on transfers, and very few "forced" transfers were imposed. At the same time, household effects began to be moved by commercial movers.

Housing: Housing was usually supplied at a nominal charge in the rural and semi-rural ranger stations. Rent depended on the age and size of the house. I paid \$82.50/month at Summit Lake in 1977 for a 2-bedroom house and \$102/month in Sayward in 1979 for a 3-bedroom house. Accommodation for single staff was provided free of charge for bachelor-type housing.

Vehicles: Most Districts had enough vehicles to assign one to each Assistant Ranger. Often there was only one 4x4 in the District, so the operator of the 4x4 was expected to share with other staff members as the need arose. None of these vehicles were equipped with air conditioning or an entertainment radio. Most staff would salvage a radio from an auto wrecker and bolt it under the dash for as long as they were assigned the vehicle. A wooden box was often designed as a consul to fit over the transmission hump and contained miscellaneous papers, maps, mitts, lunches, and other items that always seem to end up in a field vehicle. The radio and the consul box would move along with the operator as he changed vehicles or transferred to another location.



Some personal use of vehicles was condoned or at least tolerated. Staff in semi-rural and urban Districts drove back and forth for lunch and took their vehicles home at night. In one of my urban Districts, the trip home on Friday afternoon was sometimes interrupted by a stop at the local watering hole. Every now and then, a few green machines would be still parked near the establishment early the next morning—they never made it home with their assigned driver. Moving household effects and hauling firewood were also common activities. Plus, some staff carried rifles and fishing rods, using them during work hours if the opportunity arose. In some areas, and in some eras, the vehicles were used for almost all private purposes.

Bush Lunch: We were reimbursed for any lunch that was eaten in the field. In 1968, this reimbursement was 75 cents/lunch, rising to \$1.50 by 1975 when this “perk” was discontinued. Many wives were not aware of this reimbursement; their husbands often used it as mad money or beer money. There was no compensation for lunches eaten at home or in the office.

The Uniform: When the Forest Service was first formed; it was recommended that the uniform be along military lines. The uniform may have originated shortly after WW I and was likely consisted of a breeks-type of pant and a Monty-style jacket. The uniform I wore for the BCFS 100 talk was the Eisenhower-type jacket that was the last one in use; issuance of uniforms was discontinued a few years after I received mine in 1970. This style had been in use at least since 1964. Previous to that date, the “dress” uniform was of similar cut, material and colour, but the jacket was hip length. At the same time as this previous dress uniform was in use, field staff wore a khaki uniform for field work. This khaki version featured a jacket with a pouch in the back for photos, gear and lunch.

In the 1970s, the policy as to uniform use was quite informal. The Ranger and Deputy would often wear theirs for meetings at District Office, and always for the annual Ranger meeting. Other field staff sometimes wore uniforms two or three times a month when they had an office day planned. It seemed like the main reason to have a uniform was for the shirts. The issuance of two new shirts and one tie every year fulfilled most people’s need for work shirts. Most field staff used the shirts on a daily basis whether in the office or in the field. A pair of jeans and a BCFS shirt was my working wardrobe well into the 1990s.

Forest Service Oval: It is believed the BCFS oval first appeared just after the First World War. There were various revisions to the lettering and wording but the 1933 version is much like the one we know today. The oval

was incorporated into our identification badge. With the present Ministry of Lands, Forests and Natural Resource Operations, I believe the oval has disappeared.

Forest Service Branding: For years, a stamp was used to identify BCFS property. Originally when the Forest Service was the Forest Branch of the Department of Lands, the brand appeared as F-broad-arrow-B. The broad arrow was a British designator of crown property. When we became a Service in the Department of Lands and Forest, the brand was changed to F-broad-arrow-S. I don't believe the brand has been used for many years now.

Unionization: Clerical and technical field staff became unionized in 1975. All new staff were required to join the union. Existing staff did not have to join but had to pay union dues. Therefore most people eventually joined. Many of the old hands were not in favour of unionization because they perceived that belonging would restrict the freedom and flexibility of the work life they had chosen. Most staff thought unions were somewhat militant. At that time, the personality of most BCFS staff was anything but militant. These restrictions did not really materialize, and improved conditions around transfers, career path, wages, holidays and working conditions have evolved over the years.

Work Day and Overtime: Prior to 1970, the normal workday was 8 hours. However, field days usually exceeded 8 hours, especially when fires or silviculture project work was involved. No one recorded longer hours, and overtime was not paid—not even on fires. The Ranger often quietly gave a few days or a week off at the end of the summer in recognition of extra hours incurred throughout the year, especially during the summer. No one minded putting in these extra hours because the time was often clawed back by staff taking time during the day to get a haircut, or going to the bank to deposit a paycheque. Using those fishing poles and rifles was also part of the claw-back. In 1970, payment of fire overtime was introduced. Many people did not claim their overtime in the beginning, saying they didn't join the Forest Service to punch a time clock. Most of these people eventually came around when they realized it was nice to have a few extra dollars to spend. Sometime in 1973, the workday was reduced to 7.5 hours; then to 7 hours around 1975. Other than fire overtime, there was still no recording of hours incurred over the regular hours of work. Around 1976, flex days were introduced which allowed for recording of hours worked. Plus, staff now worked 70 hours in a 2-week period.

Females on Field Staff: Traditionally there were no females on ranger station staff. (The professional ranks in the District forestry office were all male as well.) As mentioned earlier, a male dispatcher handled the clerical functions on a ranger station. In 1971, female clerks began taking over most of the dispatcher duties. Fort St. John was one of the first Ranger Districts in the area to do so. With the increase of new hires coming from technical schools, female field staff began to appear approximately in 1973-74 and proved their field abilities by progressing through the ranks with their male counterparts.

Job Responsibilities: I have not spoken much of the actual work we did, and I have said that almost everyone wanted to be a Forest Ranger. But I have to say the job of Assistant Ranger was the best job in the Forest Service, bar none. As long as your fieldwork was up to date, and reports were submitted on time, you had absolute freedom for planning which days were field or office. Field days were quite plentiful too. Some of the basic training was a bit lacking, but there were always mentors to help out. There was an abundance of fresh air, exercise, wildlife, scenery, new places, and action on field days. You were usually well respected both for who you were and what you were. Many field staff who had gone on to higher classifications and professional staff from the District Office envied the job of Assistant Ranger.

End of an Era: I consider myself fortunate to have seen the end of a few eras. Along with many others, I have seen arch trucks in operation; I have also seen falling snippers come and go. I didn't see the log drive but saw logs being decked along the Crooked River for a river drive to Kerry Lake and along the Fraser for a drive to Prince George. I did not see "a sawmill behind every stump" but saw a number of larger bush mills located within

a Ranger District. In 1970, when I left Summit Lake Ranger District, there were at least eight good-sized stationary mills in the District, all with their own camp; some with family housing. In the winter, the parking lots at these camps had an abundance of Alberta and Saskatchewan license plates because farmers had come west to work during their off-season. When I moved back to Prince George in the fall of 1972, all of these mills and camps were gone, replaced by two larger mills, or by the hauling of logs to mills in Prince George. As mentioned before, I saw the end of non-union days and working long days with no reimbursement. I have also seen the end of “off the street” hiring; most new field staff now have either a tech diploma or a university degree.

I'm glad I was here for some of that old stuff.

With the 1980 reorganization of the Forest Service, staff functions and roles were significantly changed, and the titles of Ranger, Deputy Ranger and Assistant Ranger disappeared. Multiple Ranger Districts were amalgamated into one Forest District, usually headquartered in larger urban areas. The ranger stations were all closed. The property and buildings were sold or given to local municipalities.

As you travel around the province you can still pick out the old ranger stations with their distinctive offices, houses, and barn-style warehouses. The legacy of these stations remains today; they exist as art galleries, private residences, day cares, libraries, and municipal offices.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SUMMIT LAKE RANGER STATION

As part of my preparation for the BCFS 100 Year Project, I did some research into the Summit Lake Ranger Station and learned a few things of interest.

- 1915 Land was set aside on the lakeshore for construction of a permanent cache and guard shelter
- 1923 Funds in the amount of \$320 were requested to build a 16 x 20 log cabin to provide a suitable place for patrol headquarters and storage for tools and equipment. Because Summit Lake was the head of navigation to the Peace River country, it was considered very essential to have a patrolman there.
- 1952 Application for a land clearance to construct a new station to be known as Crooked River Ranger Station
- 1953 Construction of an office and living quarters completed
- 1954 June—Pacific Great Eastern Railway (PGE) advised that the buildings were directly on the proposed railroad right-of-way
July—new site proposed to be known again as the Summit Lake Ranger Station
- 1955 Buildings moved from PGE site to new site
- 1957 – 1969 More buildings were added
- 1981 Forest Service reorganized. Station was closed and sold in entirety to Floyd and Hilary Crowley from Summit Lake
- ± 2007 Property sold to West Moberly First Nation



BOOKS

The Legendary Betty Frank: The Cariboo's Alpine Queen; Betty Frank as told to Sage Birchwater, Caitlin Press, 2011:

Just the first few sentences of the publisher's description—“She grew up playing on log booms and living in float houses” (<http://www.harbourpublishing.com/title/LegendaryBettyFrank>)—should make this book interesting to FHABC members: Betty went from growing up in coastal logging camps to becoming a guiding legend in the Cariboo. Presented as a series of anecdotes, this biography of one the most fascinating individuals that the

Cariboo has ever produced is an easy-to-read, hard-to-put-down account of one person following her dreams.

Vladimir J. Krajina: World War II Hero and Ecology Pioneer, Jan Drabek; Ronsdale Press, 2012:

Editor's Comment: At last it's here. Ever since I first chatted via email with Jan Drabek over a year ago about his book on Vladimir Krajina, I have been waiting for this book to arrive. More than a few foresters reading this newsletter will have their own memories of Krajina. He taught many of them dendrology at UBC. But I bet at that time they had only a superficial idea of the courage and integrity of their professor. Well now thanks to Drabek, they can read all about Krajina's bravery and honour under fire. The first half of the book concentrates on Krajina's time as an Allied spy and as General Secretary for the Czech official opposition, the National Socialist Party. The second half follows Krajina's path through the forests of BC and the academic halls of UBC—developing his ecosystem concepts and founding the Ecoreserve program. Most poignant though is the account of the Krajina family's return to Czechoslovakia in 1990, 42 years after fleeing for their lives. No one but Jan Drabek could have written this book. Krajina was a family friend; like Krajina, Drabek's father was in the Czech resistance. Hero is not a word to be bandied about lightly; in Krajina's case Drabek has done a great job of shouting it from the treetops. Drabek has generously provided the Introduction and Chapter 15 of his book to the Friends of Ecological Reserves. You can find these sections at their website:

<http://ecoreserves.bc.ca/2012/10/04/vladimir-j-krajina-hero-of-european-resistance-and-canadian-wilderness/>.

I highly recommend this book—any writing that keeps a reader glued to the page until 2:00 AM is well worth the price of purchase.



BC FOREST SERVICE CENTENARY

The BC Forest Centenary is still in full swing. The Centenary Committee has many events planned throughout the province. Please check out the Calendar of Events at <http://www.bcfs100.ca/bcripts/calendar.asp>. And then while you are at the website, take a gander through the timelines and stories. Here you will find much of BC's forestry heritage to contemplate upon and to learn about. Plus check out the BCFS Centenary's Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/BCFS-Centenary/314510618593180>.



This newsletter is the official publication of the Forest History Association of British Columbia. Please submit any comments, newsletter material, or changes of address to the Editor: Barbara Coupé, 4824 Wade Place, Prince George B.C. V2M 6C8 Phone: (250) 562-1051; E-mail: bjcoupe@telus.net.

Membership is \$15 yearly or \$40 for three years. Please send dues to the Treasurer: Art Walker, 564 Oliver Street, Victoria B.C. V8S 4W3; Phone: (250) 598-4455; E-mail: jaws564@telus.net. **NOTE:** Cheques **must** be made out to **The Forest History Association of B.C.** NOT the FHABC, Forest History Association, etc.

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Pervious issues of the newsletter (1-91/92) can be found on our website at <http://www.fhabc.org/publications/past-newsletters>.