



# National Museum of Forest Service History Newsletter

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## One Perspective of a Forest Service Career as a Woman Forester

By Suzanne C. Rainville

I retired from the Forest Service in 2011 after a 33-year career. I began my Forest Service career in 1978, during the two decades (1970s and 1980s) in which women were hired in substantial numbers to fill positions outside of the clerical classification. For the first time, women entered the Forest Service as foresters, biologists, soil scientists, hydrologists, landscape architects, firefighters, and trail workers. I was one of those women, in a time when few women had professional jobs in forestry.

I realized, as a young forester, I was entering a culture with many excellent traditions and a track record of getting things done. Granted, during those early years, I wondered if women were welcomed. At times, the agency seemed paternalistic and authoritarian. Sometimes I wondered if my ideas were being heard.

However as I look back today, I am grateful to have had a job with the Forest Service. Throughout my career, I had many mentors, both men and women, albeit more men, that taught me how to be a good leader and supervisor. It was their mentoring that allowed me to have an incredible and fulfilling career with the Forest Service.

My journey began in 1972. I started college pursuing a Medical Technology degree. At that time, most women were studying to be teachers or nurses. After two years in college, I knew I wanted something different. I left college and volunteered at an Audubon Nature Center. I became interested in environmental education, but was told that jobs in that field were sparse. The Center Directors suggested I would be more successful if I pursued a Forestry degree.

I applied to forestry school in 1974. I met with the Assistant Dean who questioned my pursuit of a Forestry Degree. Either he was discouraging me or wanted to make sure I wanted to be a forester; however, his questions did not deter me. I graduated in 1976 with a forestry/natural



Suzanne Rainville Facilitating Meeting  
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest  
Fall 1992

resource degree.

My first job, in the fall of 1976, was as a timber buyer for a hardwood mill in the upper Midwest. My co-workers treated me well, but deep down I knew they thought the mill owner was crazy for hiring me. My job was to secure timber for the mill by convincing farmers to manage their woodlots. I am sure I was the first woman in the area buying timber. Since I was a novelty, I believe I was able to win the trust of several farmers where other timber buyers before me could not. Some farmers would show me the stack of business cards from others that came before me. One farmer even offered his hand in marriage. He just could not understand why I was working; I was definitely in a non-traditional role in his eyes. I ended up working with him on his woodlot, an untouched hardwood stand. As a forester, I had never seen such a beautiful stand of trees. It was worth all the door knocking.

The timber buying job was challenging. I had to work

**National Museum of Forest Service History**

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**Membership Dues**

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# Museum News

By Dave Stack, Executive Director

I am pleased to report continued development of Museum programs since our last newsletter in August. Our efforts, supported by our members, are saving and sharing forest and grassland conservation history with people across the country.

The Museum's **2013 Annual Report** was published recently and is available on the Museum website. <http://forestservicemuseum.org/news/reports.html>

**Museum Exhibit at Salt Lake City** at the joint convention of the Society of

American Foresters / Canadian Institute of Forestry / International Union of Forest Resource Organizations. The exhibit was open October 8 to October 11.

Approximately 4,000 people attended. We were able to talk with many people about our Museum

programs and future plans.

**The Annual Membership Meeting** was held October 7 in Salt Lake City.

**Social Media** is a new effort in 2014 to reach a younger audience and people outside the Forest Service. Communication Director Scott Hawk is managing this program.

**Facebook** -- 231 likes and has increased 84% since March 2014; Audience is 56% women and 43% men. Most Successful Posts: August 31, 2014 Bitterroot National Forest firefighters rescue mountain lion kittens under flaming log, 533 people were reached. August 7, 2014 Pre-Smokey Bear poster by artist James Montgomery Flagg features Uncle Sam, 256 people were reached.

**Twitter** -- 146 followers and increase of 265% since March 2014. Most Successful Post: August 20, 2014 Museum Artifact – Forest Fire Emergency Ration One Man Day Bag, c. 1940.

**Mineral Traveling Exhibit** --- Has moved from North Carolina to the National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum in Leadville, Colorado. The exhibit will remain in Leadville through summer 2015.

**Corporate Partner program** is a new program recruiting corporate organizations to donate annually to help support current museum operations and programs. Thank you Arch Coal for becoming the first Corporate Partner. Sierra Pacific Forest Industries has agreed to become a Corporate Partner.



Board Members Lynn Sprague (left to right) and Jim LaBau talk with R-2 Retiree Steve Ambrose

## Firefighter Headstones Dedicated

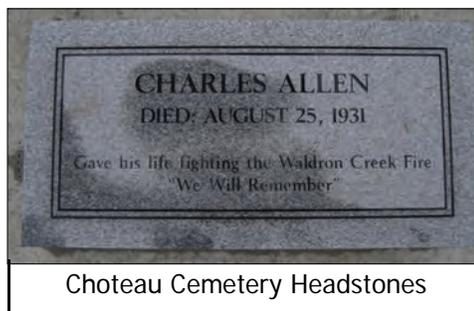
A ceremony on August 24th dedicated two headstones at the Choteau Montana Cemetery for the unmarked graves of Forest Service firefighters Hjalmer “Harry” Gunnarson, 39, and Charles Allen, about 37, who died on the 1931 Waldron Creek Fire in the Lewis and Clark National Forest, west of Choteau. Ottis Bryan, retired pastor of the Choteau Baptist Church, conducted a short service.

Charles Palmer, Associate Professor at the University of Montana and a former smokejumper spearheaded the effort to mark the graves of these firefighters. Financial support for the headstones were contributed by Charles Palmer, Chris Sorensen, the National Smokejumpers Association, and the National Museum of Forest Service History.

Executive Director Dave Stack represented the Museum at the ceremony. Forest Supervisor Bill Avey, Lewis & Clark - Helena National Forests and District Ranger Mike Munoz, Rocky Mountain District attended for the Forest Service.

Charles Palmer plans to write a book about the Waldron Creek fire. He wants to explore the human factors that contributed to the men’s tragic decision to run uphill, and how one operates under stress. He wants to determine what happened because he has studied past forest fire fatalities and has concluded that it’s way too easy to blame the victims.

“They made mistakes, they got themselves killed; that is my sense of this, they got blamed for their own deaths, but it might not be accurate; it is way more complex,” Palmer said, adding



that he hopes to ferret out the “upstream factors.”

“I see them as deaths in the line of duty, similar to a veteran’s death. They were working for their country. That is important,” he said.

*Charles Palmer quotes from the Choteau Acantha Newspaper, August 20, 2014*

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## Virtual Exhibits

Virtual exhibits will reach people across America. The internet permits the museum to share the legacy of Forest Service History with people who never visit Missoula.

We are beginning with a prototype virtual exhibit on one subject: The August 17, 1959 Madison River Canyon Earthquake near Yellowstone National Park that left 28 people dead and left its mark on the landscape of the Gallatin National Forest in southwestern Montana.

The quake triggered a massive landslide sending a mountain of rock down onto unsuspecting tourists in the campground below. Within moments the slide had completely cut off the Madison River, forming Quake Lake. Upstream, the quake created gigantic waves in Hebgen Lake that rocked from one shore to the other. Huge swells of water rushed downstream, flooding cabins, destroying homes and sweeping away survivors.



Madison Earthquake Fault Scarp

U.S. Forest Service Photograph

Link to virtual exhibit: <http://exhibits.forestservicemuseum.org/>

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alone, be a salesperson (not something I learned in forestry school), trudge through deep snow and learn all my hardwoods by their bark. During blizzards, I had the opportunity to pull lumber off the green chain. I learned a lot, but knew I needed to find something else.

I applied for a job with the Forest Service in 1976. Job selection was different than today; applicants were selected off national rosters. It had been over a year and I had not heard anything from the Forest Service. To my surprise, in October 1977, I was offered a position with the Forest Service in two different locations. I called on both jobs and talked with supervisors. The individuals in Eureka, Montana were very encouraging. They actually made me feel welcome before I got there. Although I realize now that hiring a female forester may have been a “feather in their cap”, I did not feel that way when they talked to me. Yes, I may have been naïve, but I was moving to Montana to be a forester! I was very excited. I did talk with the other Forest in a different Region. They did not paint a very welcoming picture; expensive, hard to find a place to live, etc. All could have been true, but I wonder to this day if it was their way of discouraging me to accept the position. I must admit, I was never interested in applying for jobs in that Region; the first impression stuck with me.

As a forester trainee for the first year, I was exposed to all aspects of the Forest Service. I worked with forestry technicians and other professionals who taught me how to practice forestry. They did not resent me and were very accepting. In one situation, I was tromping through the snow with them, laying out thinning units. I fell and got up all on my own. I never thought much about that. Later, they told me that they weren’t sure what to do if I fell. They said they were happy to see that I got up on my own because if I was going to be a forester, I had to be able to work in the woods and manage on my own. I will always remember those excellent words of advice.

In Eureka, I rented a one room mountain cabin. It had no running water, wood heat and outhouse. I had an adventurous spirit. I knew the guys did not think I would make it through the winter, but I did. It was the cows eating my home grown broccoli that I religiously watered by hand that made me move. It had nothing to do with proving I could do something out of the ordinary for a woman. I was living the dream. I was working outdoors, had a job in Montana, and working in a profession I loved!

In my first year, I was encouraged to get involved in fire. At that time, everyone participated in fire. My first training was in Missoula. We all stayed at the training center. Well, that was a bit of a challenge for me since there was not a women’s bathroom. My Ranger happened



Suzanne Rainville  
Reviewing Silvicultural Prescription  
Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Summer 1984

to be teaching at the session. After talking with him, he wanted me to use the cook’s bathroom, but the cook was not too keen on that idea. In the end, they had to set aside an entire bathroom for me. Was I the first woman to attend training and sleep there? I guess I will never know.

One area that surprised me was being treated differently by the clerical staff. They felt that I should do my own typing (that was before computers). This did not last long because this was also about the same time when Environmental Assessments were required. All the foresters in the office had to start doing their own typing, since each of us was assigned an Assessment to write.

I met my husband in the Forest Service. Dual career couples were an up and coming change for the Forest Service. Initially, the agency grappled with this concept. This was evident when I wanted to apply for a Ranger job on the Forest. The Forest Supervisor indicated that I could not be selected if I applied since my husband was a Staff Officer. I was disappointed and a bit in shock and sought advice from the Civil Rights Director. I applied for the job anyway and was selected. Change is hard, and when the Forest Service diversified the workforce, the leadership had to change with the times. I think they have done well.

While in the Forest Service, I never felt any barriers as a

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Pacific Northwest Region (R 6) Employees  
Fall 1990

In reflection, I believe an agency must adapt to cultural changes to sustain a creative and motivated workforce. However with those changes, I think it is important for employees to reflect on the work of the past. Many before us made mistakes so that we didn't have to. They provided us insight and collective wisdom on doing right by the resource. During my career, I worked hard to understand the history of an issue, apply what was applicable to the current day and hoped that it led to positive changes for the future.



woman forester. I was able to spend quality time in the field and learn from great supervisors, forestry technicians, foresters, fisheries and wildlife biologists, researchers, certified silviculturists and other women in the field. In other people's eyes, they may have felt that I was getting special treatment. At times, I had coworkers and supervisors struggle with the changes occurring within the Forest Service, including women rising in the ranks. I just didn't acknowledge the negativity. I kept forging ahead; I was dedicated to doing the right things for the resource.

With the passage of the National Forest Management Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, etc., the Forest Service had larger cultural changes to make. The public started engaging in Forest Service decisions. More analysis was needed to make resource decisions. We had to engage the public at a much higher level than before. I could go on, but you all know the story.

During my career, the Forest Service was being challenged on several fronts to the point where much work was halted for many reasons. I found a role in bringing people together and looking for positive outcomes. I was still a forester at heart, but wanted to find acceptable ways to manage the land while meeting other resource needs. I look back and am thankful for my supervisors, coworkers, retirees, communities and people willing to find common ground. I thrived on finding solutions. As I said before, I was the lucky one. I never felt that I did not belong. I was welcomed the first day and until the day I left the agency.

**Author Suzanne C. Rainville**

*Suzanne worked for the Forest Service for over 33 years and retired as Forest Supervisor of the Payette National Forest. Her career covered three Regions and six National Forests as Forest Supervisor, Deputy Forest Supervisor, District Ranger, Staff Officer, Certified Silviculturist and Forester.*

*During her Forest Service tenure, she found ways to address critical problems, tested innovative approaches, integrated new technologies while balancing national, state and local interests. Her background includes working in congressionally designated areas such as National Recreation Area, Roadless and Wilderness Areas and Wild and Scenic Rivers.*

*She received a BS in Natural Resources/Forestry from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in 1976 and a MS Degree-Forestry from the University of Idaho in 1986.*

*When working for the Forest Service, she was a trained facilitator and instructor; designed, developed and implemented NEPA/NFMA Forest Plan Implementation Course for the Forest Service, trained employees in Building High Performing Teams, and was recognized with the Regional Land Stewardship Award.*

**New Museum Addresses**  
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## 2015 National Forest Service Reunion

October 11-16—Albuquerque, New Mexico



The site of the Forest Service 2015 National Reunion will be in Albuquerque, New Mexico at the Marriott Pyramid. The reunion is the week after the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta! This is a wonderful facility and if you come early the skies will be filled with hot air balloons.

We are anticipating over 1,000 retirees from all over the United States to attend. Reunion events will feature cultural and historic presentations about the U.S. Forest Service. This is an opportunity for attendees to renew friendships.

**Reunion registration and hotel reservations are now Open!**

Reunion website: <http://www.2015.fsreunions.org/>

# Repository News

## Charles A. Wellner Collection

Chuck Wellner was a silvicultural researcher from 1933 until retirement in 1973. His work assignments included the Priest River Experimental Forest, Idaho, Northern Rocky Mountain Forest Experiment Station, Missoula, MT, and Intermountain Experiment Station, Moscow, ID. Chuck worked with Harry Gisborne, pioneer forest fire researcher, and saved some of Gisborne's historical files. After retirement and until 1991, he worked as a Forest Service volunteer to establish Research Natural Areas throughout Idaho.

The Wellner family donated his papers to the museum this past summer. The papers have a high historical value. 241 items were cataloged. Some examples of archived photographs and papers are:

- Raphael Zon's History of the Forest Movement in the United States, 1908. 2014.30.209
- Harry Gisborne Lecture on Forest Research, University of Idaho, 1927. 2014.30.217
- Western White Pine Yield Study, 1912 – 1935. 2014.30.18
- Western White Pine Growth and Cutting Practices, 1934-1952. 2014.30.34
- District 1 Investigative Committee and Investigation Projects, 1912-1924. 2014.30.53
- Harry Gisborne authored articles on fire for the popular media to publicize the effort to control wild-fires and increase public support for funding fire control. The file includes handwritten stories, outlines and notes. Articles included: "New machine to help predict fires"; Saturday Evening Post article on moving the Forest Service to the Department of Interior; Readers Digest articles "Smokejumpers to the Rescue" and the "Johnson Flying Service of Missoula, 1934-1948". 2014.30.109 and 126
- Bob Marshall's Letters from Wiseman, Alaska -- Seven letters (95 pages) sent to his friends during the winter of 1930-1931. Marshall with partner Al Retzlaf returned to Wiseman after a four week exploration trip to the Arctic Divide. Marshall planned to study tree growth at the northern timberline and explore the upper North Fork of the Koyukuk, 1,000 square mile area. The letters contain a list of accomplishments during the Arctic Divide trip — mountains climbed, miles traveled, creeks prospected, and animals seen and harvested, etc. 2014.41.



Bob Marshall, 1927  
Assistant Silviculturist  
N. Rocky Mtn. Experiment Station  
Kaniksu National Forest  
Forest Service Photograph — 2014.30.16



G. Lloyd & Louise Hayes, 1941  
Priest River Experimental Forest  
Later Assistant Director  
Intermountain Research Station  
2014.30.154



Alice Gisborne, 1951  
Ceremony Dedicating Memorial  
Plaque to Harry Gisborne,  
1893-1949  
Priest River Experimental Forest  
Forest Service Photograph — 2014.30.183



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<b>Contributing</b>	<b>\$150 or more</b>		



### Information Needed

Clack backpacks were small, flat, lightweight wooden frames to which cargo could be tied, usually covered with a canvas tarp. Named for Jack Clack, an early Flathead National Forest ranger.

**Questions:** Was this style of pack frames used in other Regions? Was the Clack name used? Was there a commercial manufacturer of these pack frames? Email answers to the Museum Office.