

THE INSIDE TRAIL

Voice of the Glacier Park Foundation ■ Fall 2003 ■ Volume XVII,

The Fires of 2003:

An Anthology

*Smoke shrouds
Glacier's landscape.
A foreboding wind
brings threat of
annihilation to the
Glacier Park we have
known. (? Photo)*

Also Inside: •
Lake McDonald
Lodge in the '40s •
Renovating Many
Glacier in the 50s
• Wrangler Tales
• Jammer Tales
• A Memorial to
David Paulus

The Fires of 2003

Six major fires burned more than 135,000 acres of forest in Glacier National Park in the summer of 2003. This is roughly 13% of Glacier's total area (including bare rock, water, ice, and snow).

The destruction could have been much worse. Lives might have been lost when the fires made sudden runs toward populated areas and Going-to-the-Sun Road. Fires came very close to burning Apgar, West Glacier, Park Headquarters, and irreplaceable historic lodges.

Such disasters were averted by the hard and skillful work of inter-agency firefighting crews. Backfires and other tactical maneuvers were conducted with great skill. Many hundreds of firefighters labored for weeks on end in withering heat. The Glacier Park Foundation salutes these determined crews for preserving lives and minimizing damage to the Park.

Glacier Park Foundation

P.O. Box 15641
Minneapolis, MN 55415
www.glacierparkfoundation.org

Board of Directors:

Tessie Bundick
Laura Chihara
Janet Eisner Cornish
Carol Repulski Dahle
Joyce Daugaard
Glen Elvig
David Gilbertson
John Hagen
Einar Hanson
Paul Hoff
Mark Hufstetler
Jeff Kuhn
Linda Young Kuhn
Rolf Larson
Leroy Lott
Greg Notess
Mac Willemsen

Einar Hanson, First Vice President
Carol Dahle, Vice President - Membership
Mac Willemsen, Secretary
Tessie Bundick, Historian
Jim Lees, Treasurer

The **Glacier Park Foundation** was formed by Glacier Park employees and visitors who have a deep love for this special place. The Foundation is committed both to the importance of wilderness preservation and to the importance of places like Glacier as classrooms where people can experience wilderness in intense meaningful ways, learning not only a love for the land, but also a respect that nurtures the skills necessary to preserve that land. The Foundation has a special interest in Glacier Park's history, traditions and visitor facilities.

The Inside Trail takes its name from the famous old trail which connected Glacier Park Lodge with the vanished chalets at Two Medicine, Cut Bank, and St. Mary. The name thus emphasizes the publication's focus on the lore and history of Glacier National Park. We invite submission of historical, scientific, or anecdotal articles, commentary, poetry, or artwork for publication in future issues.

THE FIRES OF 2003:

A Synopsis

Grinnell Point brooding like Mt. Vesuvius above Many Glacier Hotel, enshrouded by the smoke of the Trapper Fire. (John Hagen Photo)

500-foot flames raging into the night sky on the shores of Lake McDonald. Fire blazing on Swiftcurrent Pass, endangering the Many Glacier Valley. Diners abandoning half-eaten meals to evacuate Lake McDonald Lodge. Helicopters dropping incendiary “ping-pong balls” to set off tactical backfires. These are some of the enduring images of Glacier Park’s 2003 fire season.

The fires began in the middle of July, with moisture levels in vegetation at record lows. Lightning strikes on July 16 touched off several fires which would grow to huge proportions. These included the Trapper Creek fire in the upper McDonald Valley, the Wedge Creek Fire just outside Glacier in the North Fork, and the Wolf Gun Fire in the Livingston Range.

The Trapper Creek Fire spread steadily over West Flattop Mountain, sending smoke over much of the Park. On July 23, it exploded dramatically, overrunning the Loop on Going-to-the-Sun Road and then racing uphill to Swiftcurrent Pass. Next morning the Many Glacier

Valley was evacuated and hundreds of lodge employees were sent to East Glacier.

Meanwhile, the Robert Fire was threatening the west entrance to the Park. Robert started through human activity southwest of Glacier Park on July 23. It quickly spread into Glacier, burning over much of the Apgar Mountains. The McDonald Valley was evacuated. On July 28, 500 residents fled the town of West Glacier.

Backfires were set outside West Glacier and Apgar to interdict the fire. The enormous updraft of the Robert Fire sucked the backfires westward into the main conflagration. This process created a burned-out fire-break protecting the two towns. Helicopters and air tankers dropped retardant and water to buffer them from the backfires.

During early August, the fires smoldered. Then, on August 10, high winds blew up the Robert Fire again. Within a matter of hours, it ran up the western shore of Lake McDonald, generating enormous flames. As night fell, the McDonald Valley was hastily evacuated again. The valley remained full of smoke for weeks as the fire continued to expand.

Meanwhile, more lightning strikes touched off large fires along the Park’s south side. For nearly two months, from mid-July to early September, there was no significant rain. At last, on September 8, heavy rains drew the most destructive fire season in the Glacier’s history toward a close.

500-foot flames raging into the night sky on the shores of Lake McDonald. Fire blazing on Swiftcurrent Pass, endangering the Many Glacier Valley. Diners abandoning half-eaten meals to evacuate Lake McDonald Lodge.

The Explosion of the Trapper Fire



An interior panorama of the Swiftcurrent Mountain Lookout wreathed

A Lookout's View

By Christine Baker

Back at the Swiftcurrent Fire Lookout after a 10-year hiatus at Huckleberry Lookout was like heaven in 2001. Oh, I loved my time at Huckleberry—the bears, the North Fork, the fire challenges—but I almost felt like it was retirement for me to be back at Swiftly. Let the North Fork lookouts do all the heavy work—I'd just look out over all this beautiful, nonflammable scenery all summer and interpret for visitors.

Wrong. 2003 would set me right. It would prove to be one for the history books, and would show us all once more just why those hard-bitten old park planners had decided back in 1936 to build a lookout atop—of all places—Swiftcurrent Mountain.

I drove home for lieu days that hot July weekend, all the while trying to ignore the nagging feeling in the pit of my stomach that I really shouldn't be taking leave. Conditions were heat-

ing up in Glacier. Temps were high and fuel moistures were abysmally low. I had this wild card hunch that I might not be home again for a long, long time. Nothing I could put into words or even share with my husband Bob, but I found myself boxing up double rations for my next pack trip. I didn't really know why – I just did it. As it turned out, those would prove to be the last four days off I would have for the rest of the summer.

When I arrived back at Swiftcurrent, Flattop Mountain was puffing here and there, but the smokes just weren't that impressive. The lightning storm had planted its seeds, but nothing much was showing yet. I settled in, put a little extra care into my afternoon scans, and turned my attention to my revised lesson plans for Beowulf.

There was no mistaking it when

Trapper decided to make its move. I was looking right at it when it did. That wimpy white column suddenly grew tall, turned to brown, then black. Then it was wider ... and moving. I remember calling the Fire Cache and trying to sound calm, controlled — but feeling that this was pretty darn outrageous and that they'd better get on the stick and DO something. "It's crowning!" I remember saying, and it was ... and moving fast.

Now, a crowning fire is a big concern—kind of like that magic number "7" on the California earthquake scales. I kept telling myself not to panic. After all, this was in the middle of Flattop Mountain—there's just not as much that a fire can really hurt there. Granite Park was a concern, but the fire movement was toward the northeast, and Granite looked okay—at first. My real concern was Swiftcurrent Valley, and making sure nothing remotely resembling a spark would ever touch an east side fir tree. What

was happening on Flattop was huge, but that fire had lots of bare rock and a couple of glaciers here and there to cross before it could even touch the east side. Surely it couldn't cross the Divide ...?

I can remember using the word "surreal" a lot in my journal that afternoon. It didn't take too long before my vista towards the west was nothing but amber billows of smoke and embers. Visibility deteriorated to nothing, and I began coughing from the intense smoke. I wasn't sure whether I should be concerned about that or not, so I soaked a bandanna in water and took to breathing through it to filter some of the soot. That got old fast, so I discarded the bandanna and just coughed and took my chances.

By this time I figured the fire could be anywhere below me. I knew Chris Burke down at the Chalet was moving fast to get hoses and sprinklers operating and that meant the fire was probably also moving southeast. I could only imagine what kind of chaos was going on down at Granite right now.

Sun Road was being evacuated, and I remember thinking, "YES – finally!" Then out of the blue, I thought of my car parked down at the Loop. If the fire plowed across McDonald Creek and onward, my car would be smack dab in its path. Toast. Almost simultaneously, ranger

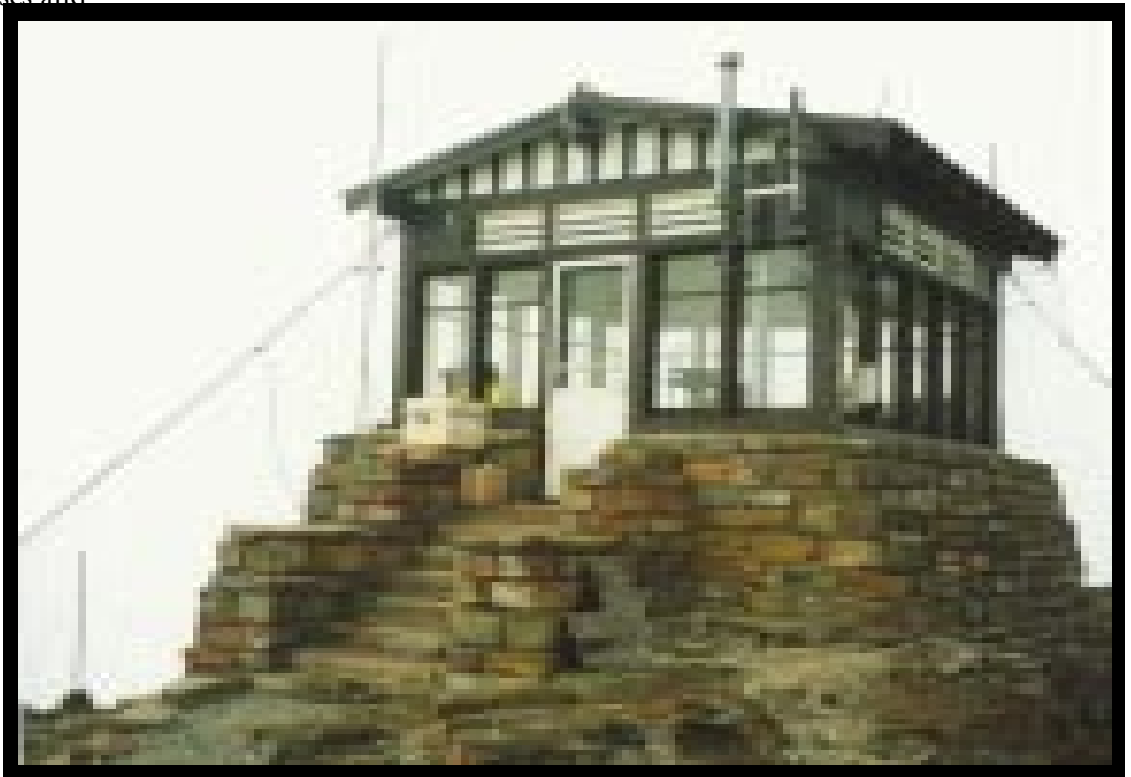
Michael Ober called on the radio and asked if that was my car parked there at the Loop. I told him where my spare keys were hidden, thinking, "They can't do anything—they're just booking trying to get visitors out of there. I wonder if we're paid up on our insurance?" At this point I called Bob on the cell and told him to get used to the idea of not having the car we had just purchased a month before.

Many Glacier personnel were all ears as they listened to west side radio traffic. They needed to know just where the fire was and what was the potential threat to the valley. Time for them was crucial. Once the fire was on their side of the rock, the clock would be ticking. I couldn't tell them a whole lot because I was in a sea of smoke and flying debris. Bob Adams and Rachel Jenkins hunkered down to monitor their radios at Many Glacier Ranger Station all

night, should an evacuation become necessary.

Night fell, and finally I could see the fire appear through the smoke as a thousand points of flame and torching trees. It was like looking at the Milky Way from Babb on a clear evening. So humbling. The sheer area of land that the fire had traveled over since that small white puff of smoke at 2 P.M. the afternoon before was enough to inspire awe. I remember just staring a lot in disbelief. Sleep wasn't even an option. This was history, and I was privileged to have a front row seat. I cradled my head on and off on my pillow just marveling at what was before me. My beautiful Glacier was growing, changing, undergoing those epochal upheavals that we so blithely spout are natural and destined, but to actually have them happen on our watch are so — difficult and foreign.

Suddenly I caught sight of orange



Swiftcurrent Lookout found itself in the middle of the action this past summer. (Christine Baker Photo)

Explosion of the Trapper Fire continued

below me and to the south. Even in the dark, I knew that the fire now was on the switchbacks to the lookout. And once it was there, it could jump over almost anytime. Down at Many, Bob and Rachel, too, could see the dragon's eyes peeking over the pass. The firs below me were scrub, no taller than eight feet or so, but each one that torched was like a match igniting, sending an initial plume of flame high into the air. I couldn't help myself. I stepped out and took a picture in the dark, hoping I'd get some sort of image of the fire to remember the moment.

Later on the fire spread east along the mountain, but because I was on top, I couldn't see just where it was. The higher cliffs and ledges of the mountain hid it from me. But along about two in the morning I could see an orange glow from below me and to the southeast. I figured it had traveled through the fir stand across the base of the mountain, but I felt confident it hadn't gotten beyond Devil's Elbow.

All night I watched that glow. At times I wrestled with whether I should call Many, but the glow didn't travel, and I knew the wee hours and higher humidities of the morning would calm the beast of the Trapper Fire.

At about 2:30 A.M. I saw four distinct spot fires north of me and east of the Divide. They were pinpoints, but they were there—fires on the east side. Still, their location was so remote, and they would have huge distances of rock to cross before they could ever ignite anything flammable. I sat glued to them until at last they disappeared. Gone? I couldn't be sure. But by 5 A.M. I felt more

secure.

A month later, after weeks of watching Trapper have its way with my memories of Flattop Mountain and the Highline Trail, I hiked down from my lookout for the season, heading for a way-too-soon end to my summer and a begrudging beginning of another school year. I regaled in the switchbacks down to the treeline, gazing out over the pristine beauty of the Divide that we all have come to love no matter from what perspective we view it.

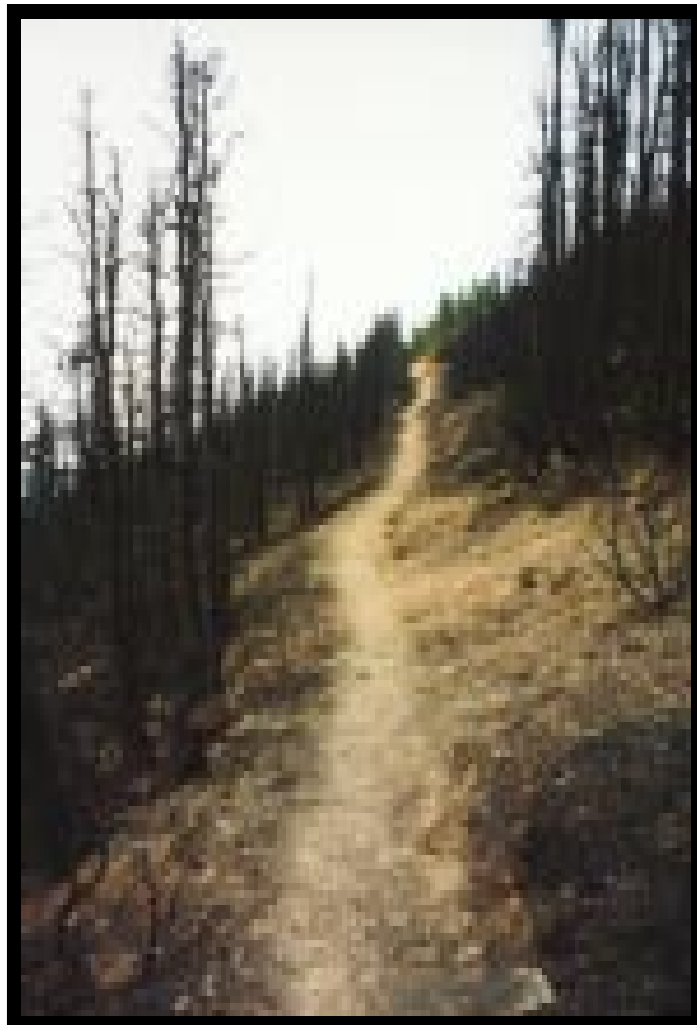
But then I came to the trees—those beautiful firs I have come to love—my friends and companions on my ascents and descents of Swiftcurrent Mountain—the ones that frame Heaven's Peak in all my photos and that my kids have learned to take for

granted. They weren't there. Instead I saw blackened ghosts and charred ground cover. I hiked through a lunar landscape that I knew was both natural order and devastation. I thrilled and mourned all at once. I don't think I will ever feel that again.

Next spring there will be glacier lilies there, and Glacier will go on, as it has these many years before we came to love it so. And God will show us anew how permanent, how unpredictable, and how beautiful this special place in Montana really is.

(Christine Baker has worked in Glacier since 1970 as a Rising Sun employee, park ranger, and fire lookout)

Burned trees on the flanks of Swiftcurrent Mountain. (Christine Baker Photo)



The Trapper Fire Overruns the Loop: A Ranger's View

By Michael J. Ober

Four till midnight shift. Wednesday, July 23. Only thing different on this shift is that I pick up a ride-along partner and fellow law enforcement ranger, Angie Rutherford, our Bowman Lake Ranger, down from the North Fork for eight hours of road patrol duties. Get the patrol car, check the lights, radio, trunk gear, check each other's gear, load the shotgun, prepare the shift report and head up to the Pass from Apgar. Apart from the relentless columns of smoke from the Wedge and Trapper fires, the evening is calm with lots of summer traffic and otherwise clear sky. Angie and I settle in with easy conversation, catching up on each other's summer events.

By the time we reach the Loop it is clear that something is not right with the Trapper Fire. Angry and restless, brooding for some kind of noteworthy run after slowly chewing up ground fuels for days, whole groups of trees are beginning to torch, black clouds of smoke are arising from the Upper McDonald Valley in huge volumes. Visibility is deteriorating. Our Comm Center calls and informs us that the Trapper Incident Command has declared that the road must be closed immediately because of imminent runs near the Loop and we begin communication with other patrol units to shut the road down.

Donna from the east side swings the gate at Big Bend and Cory from our side closes the gate at Avalanche. Angie and I, in our vehicle, and our supervisor, Gary, in his vehicle, start

conducting the sweep of cars in between, sending them east or west to clear the road of visitors in the path of the fire. We've done this before. We know the routine. Then came the unexpected twist. Folks we had sent DOWN the road from above the Loop were coming back to our position at Crystal Point explaining, with wide eyes and incredulous looks, that they couldn't get through because the fire was right next to the Loop!

This can't be happening. We had just been there and, while we were obliged to eat smoke, the passage appeared safe for visitors. Angie and I quickly proceed down towards the Loop. It takes only a few curves in the road and less than one quarter of a mile to recognize that something is terribly awry with the Trapper Fire. And worse, now we are trapped above the Loop with no way down along with several cars of east bound visitors emerging from the wall of smoke who are whizzing by us flashing their lights and shaking their heads at us with the silent message "you don't want to go down there".

Meanwhile, our radio is bursting with traffic. Swiftcurrent Lookout Chris Baker is reporting that her lookout is engulfed in thick dark smoke and that just before the view closed in on her, it was clear that the fire was making a run uphill from Mineral Creek. Our maintenance personnel at Granite Park Chalet radio that they are trying desperately to collect hikers and guests at the chalet while starting the pumps for structural protection.

Meanwhile, Gary, who is below us at the West Tunnel, radios that he is "inching my way up to the Loop to see if I can get through". Angie and I are stopped in the middle of the road when, moments later, Gary's Ford Expedition emerges from the black and orange inferno that has swallowed up the entire Loop area. "It's not too bad," he reports, "I think we can make it back down." We roll up the windows, Angie shifts into gear and we follow him cautiously downhill into the fire zone.

Of concern to all of us is the accounting of people and vehicles at the Loop so that we can be certain that everyone was evacuated and away from the threat. Gary radios us that there are two vehicles left at the Loop but that he cannot ascertain where the occupants are. There is also a lone bicycle resting against the rock wall of the upper parking lot. If they are up on the Loop Trail ... well, there is simply nothing any of us can do.

When we arrive at the Loop it is dark, eerily dark. Fire is on both sides of the road licking at anything combustible with a hungry, calm crackle. Short canopy runs are happening both below and above the parking lot; brush and ground fuels are burning steadily and burning branches, large and small, are falling all around, debris is everywhere, layers of burned pine needles like thousands of fallen soldiers litter the road surface.

When you jump out of an air-conditioned patrol vehicle into such a

A Ranger's View continued

scene, the sensation that embraces you the most is the heat. Heat just pours off the road surface, the nearby rocks, even the trees themselves that are pulsing smoke or flames and sending hot air everywhere. Gary stops his Expedition and races toward the bicycle. I follow and we literally throw the bike into the back of his vehicle. I jump back in the passenger seat of the patrol car and Angie follows Gary around the swirling arc of the Loop. As Gary had reported to us, there are two cars left at the upper and lower parking lots, but that they both appear to be locked and there is clearly no time to attempt to save them, no time to linger. The Trapper is really blowing up around us.

As we speed by the second car, a Chevy Tahoe with Idaho plates, it strikes Angie and me at the same moment, "Oh, no! That's Chris Baker's car." She's one of our own. Our Swiftcurrent lookout. I get on the radio and call her and explain, "Chris, I need to know exactly where your keys are...there won't be much time." She knows what I mean and describes the secret hiding place. Angie already has the patrol car turned around and is heading back to the Loop. When we arrive at the lower parking lot, I spring from the air-conditioned car into the heat again and tell Angie to get turned downhill in preparation for a quick exit.

Chris' Tahoe is facing uphill and alongside a burning hillside with flames just three feet from her rear bumper. I try to steady myself by placing my hand on the rear panel of the car to retrieve the hidden keys but it is just too hot to touch. With

keys finally in hand, I race to the door, unlock it, start up and shove the pedal down. Nothing. Oh, no! Parking brake! Where is the release?

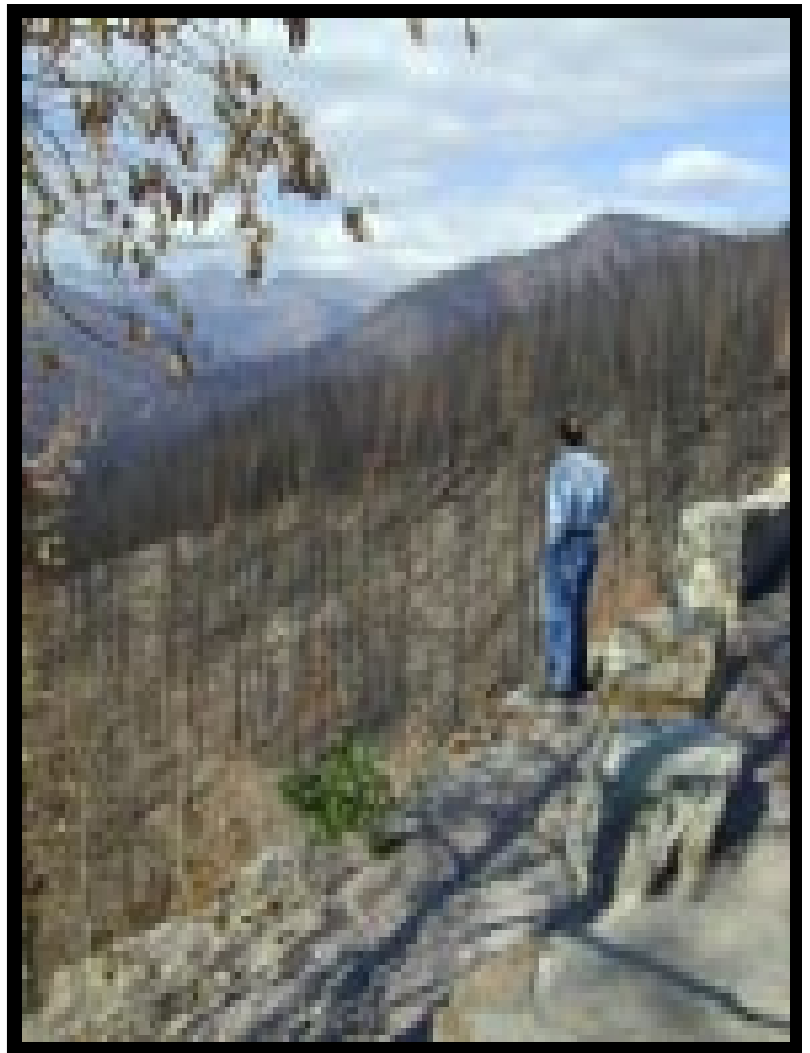
Look. Look. Got it. Roar out of there and swing in behind the waiting patrol vehicle. Go Angie, I whisper. Then out loud, "Go Angie!" But she's already gone, streaking downhill from the fire zone emerging soon into the daylight cool of the highway near the West Tunnel. And as I accelerate away from heat and fire, I glance out of the window to see two of the porta-potties on fire and see that a third one has melted and collapsed into the slope, a molten heap of bubbling, smoking

green-gray plastic.

Postscript: Two Incident Command overhead personnel performed a daring walk in the dark up the Loop Trail immediately after the fire swept through. We thought we had hikers trapped on the trail and they were sure they were looking for fatalities. Fortunately, the hikers did turn back or they would certainly have died on the trail that got nuked in less than two hours.

(Michael J. Ober is a Glacier Park Ranger based at the Lake McDonald Ranger Station)

A stark landscape greets Joe Haugestuen of Shelby Montana in late September. (Rolf Larson Photo)



Reconnoitering in the Smoke: A Many Glacier Ranger's View

by Bob Adams

We knew there was trouble ahead. The sky was dark. Swiftcurrent Pass and Swiftcurrent Peak were both obscured. Wilbur was seen but dimly. Darkness at noon.

By late July, we had been getting used to “two packs a day” for particulate. But on the afternoon of July 23, charred pine bark larger than a Texas license plate came pinwheeling down into the Many Glacier parking lot, followed by burned out sticks larger than your thumb's diameter.

Chris Baker, the Swiftcurrent lookout, just three and one-half miles west of us, had zero visibility. From the Many Glacier Ranger Station, we had, at most, one and one-half miles of sight. Where's the fire? The wind was steady at 20-25 mph, gusting to 40 out of the west. From the darkened pass.

No one at MG could get any definite word about our situation. So Ranger Naturalist Dave Benson and I decided, “We'd better find out.” In an effort to determine if the fire were spotting into the Swiftcurrent Valley, we set out on foot with radios (but no fire shelters). We hiked up toward Redrock Lake to get a vantage point to give early warning to the station, should the fire actually be bearing down on us all.

Dave and I placed ourselves on the high rocks above and just west of Redrock Lake. There we watched. Soot, smoke, wind, anxiety. Waiting. Dave, accomplished ornithologist, allowed that the wind was ramped up enough to see goats fly. Hmmm. Maybe we ought to fly... back to Many.

There was no way for us to see what was dropping into the valley ahead of us. A visually impenetrable wall of smoke was about 3/4 mile ahead. We still couldn't

see the divide or Chris Baker. Radio contact with Chris established that she could see nothing on our side of the pass, either. Helicopters could see nothing, due to smoke.

There was concern whether fire was spotting into the adjacent Iceberg cirque, north of Wilbur. No “visual” from the helo there, either. Your seasonal rangers decided to bail. We had no more info than when we started. Just more apprehension, and day's end deepening the gloom.

Back at Many Glacier Ranger Station, seasonal law enforcement ranger Paul Unterbrinck was advising the gathered community of an impending evacuation. My Bear Management partner Rachel Jenkins was chewing me out for reckless, unthinking behavior. “Well,” said I, “we could have run down into Redrock Lake.” “Yeah, right, Bob!” And she was right. Rachel knows wildland fire behavior.

Later that night, several of us were on “Sheep Curve” just downroad from the Many Glacier Hotel junction. We were watching the fire spotting into Swiftcurrent Pass as well as burning up toward Chris Baker at the lookout. Would it drop into the head of the valley? At least we could see without the afternoon's pall of smoke. Although no fire entered our valley, we all evacuated MG in the morning. No prompting was necessary.

Some further reflections: I remember these details, these feelings. Trying to find drivers for three cars and having only two family drivers available. Getting to St. Mary and not being able to find a toothbrush or underwear for several days despite having dumped everything out of those cars in the style of a giant garage sale. The generosity of Paul Downey, Eastside Backcountry Su-

pervisor and director of homeless shelter operations for Bob Adams, Abigail Adams, Clay Rubano and Rachel Jenkins. All of us checking in at the St. Mary Visitor Center for post-evac instructions and wondering if we'd ever see our “homes” again as we had left them. 12-hour shifts for days on end, punctuated by “free lunch” on the Park's tab. Good food. Little sleep. Returning to Many Glacier days later — untouched but for the trail crew “brush hogs” and chain saws. Many Glacier as a shorn poodle. “Best of Show,” however, was returning to an intact, uncharred Many Glacier!

(Bob Adams has worked as a seasonal ranger naturalist at Many Glacier for 29 years)

Granite Park: A Hungry Horse News View

?

Evacuating the Lodges: A General Manager's Diary

By Cindy Ognjanov

July 23 – 10:00PM

The phone is ringing – must be an emergency; otherwise they wouldn't be calling me this late. It's Colin Burrows, the manager at Many Glacier. He says, "There's a ranger in the lobby telling everyone we are under a voluntary evacuation order." I tell him I'll find out what's going on and call him back. I hang up, and before I can dial the phone is ringing again. This time it's Clint Davis from Swiftcurrent telling the same story.

I hang up and call the East Side District Ranger. Sure enough, the Trapper Creek Fire has come across Swiftcurrent Pass. If it decides to run ... well, anything could happen. I call Colin and Clint back and tell them to notify each guest individually that there is no immediate danger, but you never know. A handful of guests decide to leave.

July 23 – 11:00PM

After numerous phone calls between my hotel managers and the Park Service, I call each of my Division Directors and tell them to come to my house immediately for a meeting. Within ten minutes they are all there. While sitting around the dining room table we formulate an evacuation plan.

July 24 – 1:00AM

I try to get a couple hours sleep. We will all meet at 4:00 AM so that we can be at Many and Swift by daylight. I call both hotel managers and tell them to do complimentary continental breakfasts in the lobby in the morning and be prepared to evacuate.

July 24 – 4:00AM

Two warehouse trucks, four vans, a pickup truck and two cars head for the Many Glacier Valley.

July 24 – 5:30AM

We arrive and everyone knows where to go and what to do. I go to the front desk at Many and try to help with the checkout that is already in progress. The warehouse trucks have backed to the kitchen and the crews are loading all of the perishable food from the walk-ins and freezers. The gift shop crew is methodically putting all the t-shirts and stuffed animals into plastic bags and removing all of the high cost jewelry, statues and pottery – as soon as they are done loading the food we will put all this in the truck as well. The maintenance guys have been asked to take down all of the paintings; they are going too.

July 24 – 6:30AM

I go to Swiftcurrent. The exact same process is happening there. These two groups of people are a very efficient team.

July 24 – 8:00AM

I go to the Ranger Station to receive an update on the status of the fire. It's not good. It is still moving, albeit slowly, but with these hot dry conditions they keep saying anything could happen. I heard references to Heavens Peak – scary!

July 24 – 9:00AM

All of the guests at Many and Swift have gone. I have called an all-employee meeting at Many. I give them the latest report on the fire and ask them to please go to their rooms and pack their belongings, then proceed immediately to East Glacier. I give them a time deadline to report to East. I know if we lose them now we might never get them back. We insist they sign out when they leave the room and then sign back in when they get to East. My HR team is waiting for them in the Moccasin Room at East.

July 24 – 9:30AM

Same meeting at Swiftcurrent. Everyone is leaving – as we leave Swift we can see the fire in the Pass. I am very pleased we have gotten everyone out safely.

July 24 – 11:00AM

My cell phone has a message on it, so I stop on the top of a hill on my way back to East and call my office. Unbelievable — the Robert Fire on the west side has exploded. We have until 3:00 this afternoon to evacuate Village Inn and Lake McDonald Lodge.

July 24 – 11:45AM

I have notified everyone about what is happening on the west side. We unload one of the warehouse trucks, grab three more vans and off we go to Lake McDonald. Thank goodness for cell phones. While my husband is driving, I am on the phone trying to find out exactly what is happening. No one seems to know too much – only that there are fires out of control and on the move.

July 24 – 1:30PM

I arrive at Village Inn. Thank heaven Lynn seems to have everything under control. I leave her to finish and go to Lake McDonald Lodge. When I arrive there most of the guests are gone and all of the employees have started to pack. All of the Directors start loading the truck with all of the food, retail items and paintings. I call another all-employee meeting.

July 24 – 2:30PM

I ask all of the Lake employees to do the same procedure as I asked of the Many and Swift folks. Even as I am talking to them, I am asking myself where in the world we are going to put all these people.

July 24 – 3:30PM

We are past our deadline but are not quite done – we have a couple more buses of employees to load. We also have five red buses with no drivers and we can't find the keys. A bit of panic sets in but we find the keys (in the trunk of my car). We split up so that we have enough drivers and by 4:00PM we are leaving Lake McDonald. As we leave ash is falling like snow. Once again I say a little prayer of thanks knowing that everyone has gotten away safely.

July 24 – 6:00PM

We have arrived back at East Glacier and what a sight – there are employees everywhere. The cafeteria is overflowing, but what a beautiful spread the chefs have put out for all of these “fire refugees”. The HR gals have done an amazing job of finding space for everyone to sleep. The Moccasin Room is fast filling up with mattresses. A tent city has sprung up over by the Jammer Dorm. The back lawn has its share of sleeping bags. Unbelievably, every single employee showed up and now they are all anxious to know what is going on.

July 24 – 7:00PM

One more all-employee meeting. There are probably 500 people at this meeting. I report what I know (which isn't much) and then answer many, many questions.

July 24 – 10:00PM

I am finally at home and can't believe what has happened today. I am sure that never before have four hotels (on two sides of the Park) had to be evacuated in the same day because of two different forest fires.

Over the next few days emotions were running high. It took the Park Service a few days to put together their fire team and information was a bit tough to come by. Nevertheless, we had twice daily meetings to answer questions and

keep everyone informed. We had a big outdoor party and bar-b-que on the front lawn at East Glacier. We did everything we could to keep them happy and occupied. I knew we would get to reopen soon and I didn't want to lose them. Sure enough, two days later we were able to go back to Many and Swift and we did so without losing a single employee. For them it became a really nice break in the middle of the season.

The Lake McDonald and Village Inn folks weren't as lucky. It took twelve days before we could reopen, but we were ever happy when we were able to do so. For all the employees it was like going “home”. Unfortunately, five days later the Robert Fire burned its way the entire length of the lake in a matter of a few hours and we started the evacuation process all over again.

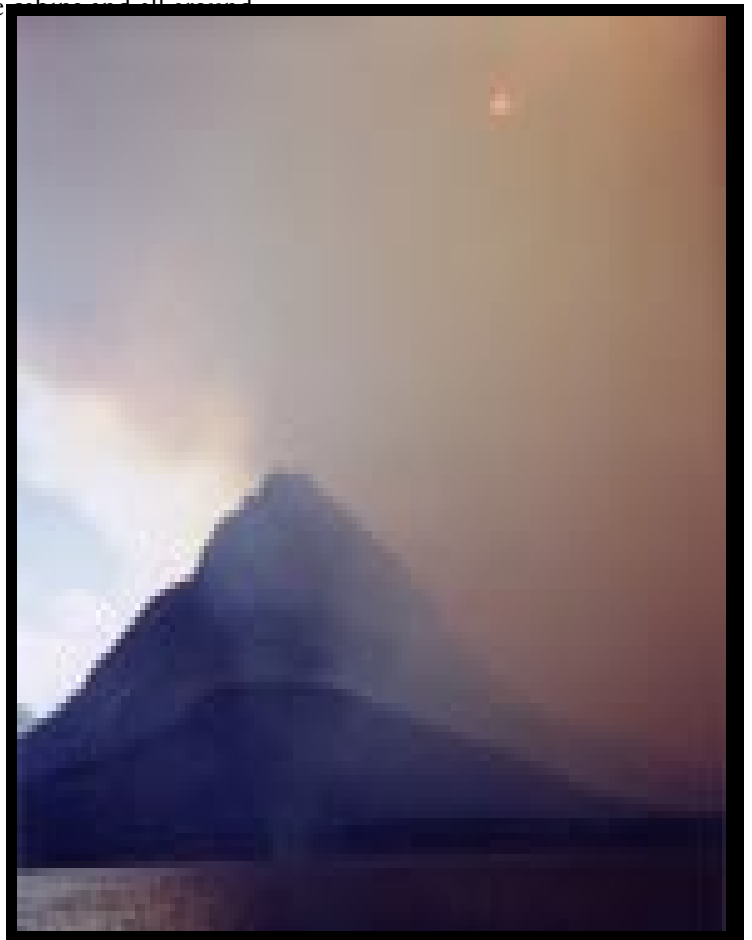
What a gut wrenching time this was. As the Park Service was installing sprinklers on the roofs of the parking and all around

the perimeter of the Lodge, it looked as if we might not get open again this summer. Once again, I called another all-employee meeting. This time I had to tell them that choices had to be made. Anyone who wanted to work could go to one of the other hotels. It was a difficult time to say the least.

When we reopened Lake and Village ten days later we did so with 1/3 the normal staff. Many of the young people decided to stay where they were rather than go back and take the chance of another evacuation. It was okay. The heavy smoke kept occupancy at an all time low for the next four weeks so we managed with our small group of employees – God bless them all!

(Cindy Ognjanov is President and General Manager of Glacier Park, Inc.)

Grinnell Point brooding above Many Glacier Hotel, is threatened by the smoke of the Trapper Fire. (John Hagen Photo)



The Evacuation of the McDonald Valley: A Homeowner's View

by Mary Grace Severson Galvin

On July 24, a Glacier Park ranger came knocking on the door of our inholder's cabin just north of Lake McDonald Lodge. We were told that the valley was being evacuated. The Robert Fire was threatening West Glacier and the western entrance to Going-to-the-Sun Road.

When the ranger came, I was at the cabin with my daughter and two grandchildren. My husband Jim and my son-in-law were away on a hike in another part of the Park. The evacuation order was mandatory and urgent, however, and we had to leave the valley without them.

We filled our small car with as many keepsakes as we could pack in it – not many, since we had to transport four people and a dog. Our

neighbors, Mark and Linda Kuhr, were just leaving also, and they graciously shared some room in their bigger vehicle. Then we drove away to refuge in our home in Kalispell.

Two hours later, Jim and our son-in-law returned from their hike to find the road blocked at West Glacier. A ranger told them that we had evacuated safely. Jim called with his cell phone to make sure that we had the dog. He described the scene beyond the gate as “very, very scary – just black and red.”

While we were in Kalispell, we volunteered at Flathead County's Emergency Coordination Center. There, the United Way provided evacuees with food and shelter. We were glad to be able to help some of the hundreds of travelers far from home who were displaced by the fires.

have the evacuation order lifted. We found sprinklers pouring water over our cabin. Glacier's Superintendent Mick Holm had instructed district ranger Charlie Logan to sprinkle the inholders' homes. We were deeply grateful.

Two weeks later, on August 10, the Robert Fire blew up again. That night we were in bed when the evacuation order arrived with a knocking at our door. With no time to spare, we grabbed what we could and flew down the road. To our horror, we could see the fire raging down Howe Ridge toward our end of the lake. In some locations, the fire was cascading down the ridge wiping out every tree in its path, with the lake the only reason it was stopped.

Kelly's Camp, across the lake from us, was greatly at risk. The fire fight-



The Robert Fire boils along Howe Ridge in mid-August. (LS Photo)

A Homeowner's View continued

ers did burnouts there to save the camp. More burnouts stabilized the fire. Deo Gratias! On August 16, Jim and I were able to return to our cabin to stay. Needless to say, we did not bring back any of the treasures we had removed in the evacuation.... only food and my lap top.

At that point, only the cabins right around the Lodge were safe to inhabit. Things were still too spooky to allow the folks at the head of the lake or at Kelly's Camp to return. It was very smoky, and we did not go outside any more than we had to.

The DeSmet (the launch on the lake) had been hired to carry firemen to Kelly's Camp each day. On the first day, the smoke on the lake was so thick that the DeSmet got lost in a white out. Later they obtained a compass, so that they could make the trip without getting lost.

By early September, the fire had burned down to Trout Lake and all around the west flank of Mt. Stanton. The fear was that it would climb between Stanton and Mt.

Vaught, and then sweep down across the Going-to-the-Sun Road. On September 8, however, the miracle that we had all been praying for arrived in the form of RAIN. We had about five hours of steady showers and accumulated 3/4 of an inch. It doesn't sound like much, but it had me dancing barefoot in the grass! The rain, though not a "season ending event," decisively slowed the advance of the fire.

We unwrapped our boat from the space blankets it had been bundled into since the fires had started, and charged up the lake to see the big burn near Apgar. It was a devastating sight. It looked like a war zone.

Miles of destroyed forest ran right down to the lake. It was the saddest boat trip we have ever taken. After that we pulled our boat out of the lake and stored it for the winter. That was truly a "season ending event"! Join us in sending up prayers of thanksgiving for the timely rain.

(Mary Grace Galvin is Vice President of the Glacier Natural History Association)

The DeSmet had been hired to carry firemen to Kelly's Camp each day. On the first day, the smoke on the lake was so thick that the DeSmet got lost in a white out.

Photo taken of the DeSmet during the Robert Fire.



The Evacuation of the Fish Creek Campground: A Ranger Family's Perspective

by Zig Steele

This is an account of the Robert Fire and the ensuing Fish Creek Campground evacuation as it involved the Steele family. My wife Harry (Harriet) Steele is the campground supervisor. Our fourteen-year-old daughter Maggie and I also live at the Fish Creek Ranger Station.

Thursday, July 24, was Harry's day off. With the temperatures expected to be over 100 degrees again, the family was making a beeline for Hungry Horse Reservoir for a day of fun and sun in the water. Just as we were about to leave the ranger station, Dave Duncan, one of the morning rangers on duty, knocked on our door and advised Harry to get in her uniform because Fish Creek was being evacuated.

We weren't completely surprised, because the night before many park employees had congregated at the "watering hole" in West Glacier to mull the situation over. It was a consensus that this was serious and that the "Blankenship Fire" (as we called it before it became known as the Robert Fire) was going to have a major impact on Glacier. Somebody had mounted a map on the wall in Freda's showing the progress of the fire. For most of us, it was a carnival-like atmosphere, a chance to share concerns, swap stories, and speculate on what might be, without being in any "real," imminent danger.

The only ones not in a festive mood were the local merchants, who, while under the blanket of smoke that had engulfed West Glacier, quickly sized up the situation and realized that the summer might be shot and that it very well could be a long, cold winter. As the evening drew to an end and people ranger in charge of the park's evacua-

tion, and told him we were set to go. He was at Fish Creek in an instant and asked if we were sure everyone was out. Maggie handed over her color-coded map and Harry hopped in his truck. They did a final drive-through inspection and left evacuation notices at the handful of sites where camping gear still remained.

During the rushed drive through the campground, Gary confided to Harry that he feared this was "Yellowstone all over again." Gary had been a ranger at Yellowstone National Park during the firestorm of 1988 and had a bad feeling about the situation now unfolding in Glacier. When the duo finished their rounds, Gary told all of us, "You guys did a great job!" We much appreciated his praise as we had just spent a tense and stress-filled couple of hours.

During the campers' evacuation we did not have time to pack up our own belongings in our residence at the ranger station. Gary told us not to take much time. We threw our things haphazardly into our vehicles. With signs of the huge smoke plume getting ever bigger and blacker around us, we beat a

*Lingering
smoke
conceals the
far shoreline
from Fish
Creek
Campground.
(Rolf Larson
Photo)*

hasty retreat out of Fish Creek Campground.

Leaving the park, we had an eerie feeling as we passed through the unmanned entrance station and fully realized the seriousness of the situation. Stopping at Headquarters for further directions and information, we found only a few essential staffers still remaining. We left the park that day not realizing that we had just spent our last "normal" night of the summer at Fish Creek.

Afterthoughts: you never know how people are going to react in emergency situations. I am so proud of our daughter Maggie, who acted with courage. It would have been understandable for someone her age to panic or get hysterical. Instead, she bravely did what was necessary.



Views from the Sun Road

by Karen Heller

Another former Glacier employee, Melissa Jacoby Rickert, and I drove up to Glacier on August 6. Sun Road was open, but we had to be across Logan Pass by 6 PM. No stopping was allowed between Avalanche and about the Haystack Creek area. The area west of the Loop was totally blackened. The Loop Trail entrance is burnt out, and I hear that the bridge is gone there. I also heard that the porta-potties melted and had to be cleaned up and hauled away. All the side areas were roped off. Fire had gone across pretty close to the point of the Loop, and trees were scorched back about as far as the parking area. Lots of smoking areas were visible.

We drove back through westbound on Sunday the 10th (the day the Robert Fire ran up Lake McDonald). It was hot, dry, and very windy. We could see the fires all kicking up and lots of open flames visible west and south of the Loop. As we passed Lake McDonald, the fire across the lake was sending up huge plumes of smoke. It was clearly out of control, and we couldn't believe that they still had the road open. It was very crowded, and we figured all the locals were up to check out the blazes.

The smoke was bad in West Glacier, and we went into Columbia Falls, where it got worse from fires southwest of Kalispell. We stayed at Lake Five and watched a huge cumulus-type smoke cloud form northeast of there, which turned out to be over the west shore of

Lake McDonald. Late that evening they evacuated Lake McDonald Lodge by just turning out all the guests to their cars!

I heard later from some Lake McDonald Lodge employees that they were sitting on the shore watching the fire across the lake as it turned dark. They were trying to see who could catch the biggest piece of ash falling out of the cloud of smoke over them. Then some burning pieces three feet long with branches on them starting landing a few feet from them, and they became concerned! They were evacuated very quickly after that.

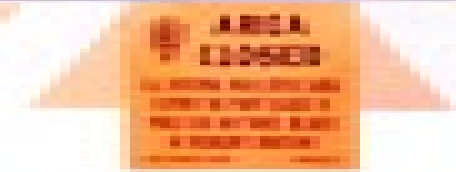
(Karen Heller was the nurse at Many Glacier Hotel in 1970-71 and in 2000-2001)

Fire Signs in West Glacier

by Lois Ann Smith

My summer home is in West Glacier. That meant that this summer I had a front row seat for the Robert Fire, which at times seemed to be in my back yard! Each evening the Incident Command Team held a Fire Information Meeting at the local school to bring us all the current data: weather predictions, fire progress, evacuation possibilities, etc. There were maps and printouts for all and patient and complete answers to all questions (no matter how stupid or repetitive!).

One night the final announcement was, "When the siren blows three times, with 30 second intervals, you will know an evacuation has been ordered." We had been forewarned to gather our important papers, precious pictures, and some personal items, and "be ready." Late the next afternoon, the siren blew, and within an hour, I was "out of there."



My car had already been packed with the important and needed things. As I left my little log cabin, I was greatly comforted by the two fire engines, a water "pumpkin" and several volunteer fire fighters who had taken their position directly across the street from my home! Their duty was to watch over the houses on Glacier Avenue in case the fire, burning then about a mile and a half away, blew up and moved quickly

in our direction.

I went off to stay at the home of a daughter in Kalispell. In a week the evacuation was lifted, and we were all back and businesses opened up. But the rest of the summer was to be a smoke-filled marathon of lightning strikes and subsequent fires in and around us in every direction!

For six weeks, signs of fire were everywhere around Glacier – the haze and smell of smoke in the air, the sun looking like an eerie red orb in the sky, white plumes rising ever higher, men and women in yellow shirts and hard hats,

"When the siren blows three times, with 30 second intervals, you will know an evacuation has been ordered."

helicopters dragging buckets for dipping water, fire engines in unexpected places busses and vans full of guys and girls with tired, sooty faces. But there were other signs that caught my interest in and around the west side of the Park, and they, too, tell the fire story.

There were warnings and closures, information and directions, and fire sales. The signs I liked best, however, were thank-yous to the courageous, hard-working fire fighters. Their tireless efforts in record-breaking heat and far

from ideal living and working conditions helped save our precious Glacier Park from near disaster.

The good news came on September 17th as I boarded the Amtrak train for St. Paul. We traveled along the south edge of the Park through a Christmas card fairyland of snow-covered trees, bushes, fence-posts – even the blackened burned areas were transformed. The “fire-season ending event” had come during the

night before. Four to six inches of snow had fallen! Unusual for September, but HOW WELCOME!

(Lois Ann Smith worked at Lake McDonald Lodge in 1946 and at Fish Creek Campground from 1952-64)



Efforts were Appreciated!



Photo for collage courtesy of LS.

An Incident Commander's View

by Steve Frye

The 2003 wildfire season presented a unique and very personal perspective on the less prominent, more obscure effects of large, complex fire management operations. As one of 16 National Incident Commanders charged with managing large complex wildland fires where ever they occur in the United States, I was assigned, along with my Incident Management Team, to a complex of fires in the Bitterroot, Beaverhead-Deerlodge, and Salmon Challis National Forests, while the Robert Fire in Northwest Montana threatened my own home, in West Glacier.

For the first time in a wildland fire career that has spanned more than 30 years I found myself, actually my family and my home, in a situation that I had agonized and empathized with others through as an Incident Commander charged with keeping them and their homes safe from a large fire. And... I was experiencing the worry, concern, and uncertainty from more than 200 miles away while making every effort to keep the fire we were assigned to from entering a small Idaho town and many scattered rural residences.

This juxtaposition of circumstances created a host of enduring memories; among them, the incredible support and accomplishment that is possible when neighbors come together to help neighbors in a time of need, the unfailing commitment and expertise that Incident Management Teams demonstrate when confronted with extraordinarily dangerous and complex challenges, the surprising number of things that, as a homeowner...and fire manager, I should have done but hadn't quite gotten around to, and most importantly the unbelievable energy, tenacity, patience, and resourcefulness that my wife unwaveringly exhibited throughout the entire ordeal.

Despite the fact that I experienced the

entire event vicariously, it provided a renewed appreciation and understanding for the very personal and emotional effect that threats from natural emergencies, events that in large measure are completely outside of all but the smallest amount of human control, produce. As an Incident Commander I was reminded of how crucial it is to recognize and acknowledge the intensely personal impact caused by large natural "disasters" and how important it is to take whatever action is possible and feasible to alleviate that angst.

The most enduring memories of my fire fighting career are of the people that I have had the opportunity to work with and for and of the individuals and communities that I have seen drawn together by shared risk and the selfless commitment of neighbors helping neighbors and communities helping communities. At the end of the day this business is all about relationships — whether it's the relationships among fuels, weather, and topography that effect fire behavior

or the relationships between agencies, communities, individuals, and Incident Management Teams that really determines how the fire will be fought and in the end how communities and individuals will be cared for.

The Incident Management Teams, Communities, and individuals assigned to and/or affected by the fires in around Glacier this past summer have every reason to very proud of themselves individually, but most importantly they should be proud of the way they came together to help each other when confronted by the most significant fire season in Northwest Montana since 1910.

This past summer reminded all of us once again, that regardless of our technical skill, the number and type of resources we commit to the fight, and/or the ability of those resources, that in a fire dependent ecosystem ... Mother Nature always bats last.

(Steve Frye is Chief Ranger of Glacier National Park)

The Role of An Incident Commander

by Beth Blacker

Reflecting on the forest fires of last summer brings many thoughts to mind but by far the strongest memory I have was watching the Type I incident commanders competently handle the many facets of their demanding jobs. Of course, I have a biased interest in ICs. For nine months out the year I live with Steve Frye, one of the best ICs in the nation. The other three months of the year he travels, as do other Incident Commanders, with their team of specialists, from fire to fire until winter settles in to our parched forests.

The relative calm presented by Incident Commanders at daily community meetings is nothing short of miraculous considering the stress involved in managing a raging inferno. I attended many community meetings during the summer of 2003. The most memorable was

when Incident Commander Joe Stam detailed the plan to burn out the south side of Apgar Mountain and the east side of the Camas Road in an effort to save the communities of West Glacier, Apgar and Lake McDonald.

After listening to the strategies developed by the team to direct the fires away from the communities, I honestly believe I was more worried about the stress I saw on Joe's face as he was leaving the meeting than about the fate of our new house located at the base of Apgar Mountain. In Joe, I could see Steve calmly assuring a community of their safety, while privately running dozens of scenarios through his mind. The burnout of Apgar Mountain was successful and awesome to witness. The IC was right — but I never doubted that for a minute!

(Beth Blacker is a Budget Analyst for Glacier National Park)

A Student's View

by Megan Frye

As a high school student, I found the entire fire situation a great learning experience. It will be fun to look back on this summer and think that I was part of something historic.

When the evacuation order came on July 27, I was shocked. We were on a voluntary evacuation order (with rumors of a mandatory evacuation coming) for several days, and I was looking forward to something exciting happening. We received a call at about 6:00 p.m. from a local friend informing us that a mandatory evacuation order was being discussed. It was almost like a surprise birthday party.

I can honestly say that I was not expecting the rumor of evacuation to come true. Of course, my friends and I had been discussing how awesome it would be to be told to leave our homes. We spent hours discussing what we would bring along and what would happen if our homes were lost. We were thrilled to think that something exciting might actually happen in our same town. However, when the signal {3 sirens} came for evacuation, we were dumbfounded.

Of course, I called my best friend, Danielle, and we had our moment of panic and excitement. There wasn't much that could be said though; a single "Keep in touch, OK?" was all we had to say. I was full of mixed emotions. How exciting was it that we were being sent away from our homes? How many teenagers

get to live through this? But once the reality hit, I ended up living with knots in my stomach for the week we were displaced.

It's always exciting for me to look back on the summer events and remember all the different emotions. I believe that fire is extremely interesting and although dangerous, it is a fabulous show. When the time came for me to return to Columbia Falls High School, we were asked, in English, to write a descriptive paragraph about our summer. I am happy to report that mine was the most exciting!

(Megan Frye is the daughter of Steve Frye and Beth Blacker)



The aftermath of the Robert fire in late September is a souvenir mosaic of burn scars along the West slope of Apgar Mountain. (Rolf Larson Photo)

A View from Park Headquarters

by Tony Clark

I didn't know what to expect when I arrived at Glacier National Park at the end of May. I'd never worked for the Park Service and I'd never been in public affairs. This summer was going to be a whole new adventure for me — and what an adventure it was.

Early on, my boss Amy Vanderbilt pointed up to snow on one of the mountains and said folks say that snow is a gauge for the fire season. If the snow is still there on the Fourth of July, it will be a mild fire season. If it is gone before the Fourth — well, it was gone long before the Fourth.

I'll remember the fires, not so much for the long hours, smoky air and moving from hotel to hotel during the evacuation, but for people I had the great fortune to work with each day.

I was allowed to sit in on management sessions during the fires and to see first hand the skill and professionalism of the park staff, as well as the understanding and generosity of people in the surrounding communities.

I will long remember talking with visitors whose vacation plans had been altered by the fires; giving them new vacation alternatives in the park and at times trying to re-instill the excitement of their vacation.

By mid-September the smoke that had shrouded the park was gone and the air was cool and crisp. I drove the length of the Sun Road that day and it was clear to see why everyone had worked so hard during the fires. The answer was stretched out before me; the beauty and wonder that is Glacier National Park.

(Tony Clark is Public Affairs Assistant for Glacier National Park)

On the Trail with DAVID

PAULUS:



David Paulus on the summit of Mt. Siyeh (photo by Kathy Stapleton Renno)

David Paulus, one of the most talented employeemusicians to work at Many Glacier Hotel in the Ian Tippet era, died in June, 2003. David was stricken with congestive heart failure while playing piano professionally on a Caribbean cruise ship. He was 51 years old.

David worked at Many Glacier from 1970 to 1973, as a busboy and later as a waiter in the Ptarmigan Dining Room. He played piano brilliantly for nightly performances by the dining room choir, for Thursday Serenades in the lobby, and for Sunday evening concerts.

David had striking versatility as a pianist. Friends will remember him in two poses – as a polished classical artist, and as a player of informal show tunes and ragtimes, leaning back on the piano bench with one foot cocked over his knee. In either role, he played with enormous verve and energy. Ian Tippet, a connoisseur of piano music, would often pay tribute to “Mr. Paulus, with his marvelous glissandos!”

Not all musicians are avid hikers. David, however, was a rugged and enthusiastic outdoorsman. He went on dozens of expeditions over Glacier’s trails and peaks, once covering 50 miles in a day. He characteristically wore a blue shirt, scarlet knee socks, and the heavy “waffle stomper” hiking boots which were standard equipment in the ‘70s.

David practiced law in Chicago for 20 years, and then returned to his first love of playing piano professionally. He remained very close to his mother Patte and brothers Terry and Stephen (a noted classical composer) and to their families. His passing is mourned by many friends from his days in Glacier, some of whom contributed the following stories.

The Saturday Hiking Club

By Joyce Daugaard (*Many Glacier Hotel 1970-73*)

My fondest memories of Dave Paulus revolve around the summer of 1973. It was an idyllic summer, filled with music, hikes, and the privilege that comes from being a park veteran. For the dining room staff, Dave's rendition of Scott Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag would summon us to the piano to sing. If we were lucky, there was a dessert or two to scavenge behind the piano. Grasshopper pie was a favorite. Dining room remembrances could fill a volume.

More importantly, however, Dave was a founding member of the Saturday Hiking Club. It was an exclusive group of five: Kathy Stapleton, Becky Oehlerking, John Hagen, Dave Paulus, and me. No

hike was too long or too arduous. In the words of our dorm matron Thelma Thompson, we were "hiking fools", also known as "bear bait". With thanks to John Hagen for his journals and Kathy Stapleton for her slide show, here are some highlights:

(1) While Dave, Becky, Kathy and John climbed Mt. Siyeh, Joyce wrote letters for five hours on Siyeh Pass. She was chilled a bit by the cool breeze on the 8,080 ft. pass, and was pleased when the others finally came down. There was lots of snow on the trail descending past Sexton Glacier (it was June 30th), and we skied much of the way down.

We caught a ride to St. Mary, and had a hearty dinner at Johnson's Cafe. A generous family offered to give us all a ride back to Many Glacier. However, with five members

of the SHC crammed into the back seat, the driveshaft was scraping the Blackfeet Highway. Dave and John chivalrously volunteered to hitch another ride.

(2) We were attacked by swarms of mosquitoes en route to Triple Divide Pass in the Red Eagle Valley. For over an hour, our conversation consisted entirely of instructions to the preceding hiker in line for swatting mosquitoes: "Left thigh! Inside right knee!" On the pass, we encountered a cold rainy wind. The women changed from shorts into long pants while attempting to maintain some modesty under wildly flapping ponchos.

(3) Our most spectacular hike was to Boulder Pass. We took the launch International to Goat Haunt, hiked six miles to Lake Frances, and



*The Saturday Hiking Club boarding the launch International en route to Boulder Pass (Front: David Paulus, Jim Erickson, John Hagen; Back: Lynn Wallace, Becky Oehlerking, Melinda Bourne, Joyce Daugaard, Kathy Stapleton)
(photo by Kathy Stapleton Renno)*

ground there. Then we trekked nine miles up the steep trail to Brown Pass and Boulder Pass, enjoying dramatic views of Thunderbird Mountain, Bowman Lake, and Kintla Lake on a gorgeous midsummer day. We returned to Lake Frances at early evening, ate dinner, and went to sleep under the stars to the lovely murmuring of the waterfall that drops down into the lake.

Next morning, the first thing that we saw upon awakening was a huge bag of food suspended from the low boughs of a tree about six feet in the air and no more than ten feet away. The novices camping in the next tent had grasped the principle that they were supposed to hang their food in a tree, but otherwise clearly didn't know a grizzly bear from a koala. We were aghast, and scolded them for having jeopardized us all.

(4) The worst hike in anyone's memory was Park Creek in the southern part of the park. No one had ever been there before, and the Saturday Hiking Club soon found out why. It was a solemn trudge through the trees with absolutely no views. As we neared the trailhead on Highway 2, our spirits lightened. We were almost out! Unfortunately, the bridge across the river was out and there was an arrow to hike six more miles. Joyce burst into tears, but was quickly reassured by Dave that "it's not that far".

After hiking 30-some miles, we endured a frightening hitchhike back to Many Glacier, crammed into a little hatchback with a perfect maniac at the wheel. He careened around the mountainous curves on Highway 2 at 80 mph, apologizing to us for going too SLOWLY ("I'd

step on it, but the road's not that great"). Kathy, in the front seat, vigorously assured him that we weren't in a hurry.

(5) We took many other glorious hikes. We climbed over Redgap Pass, admired Ruggles of Redgap and Old Sun Glacier, and lolled on the shores of Lake Elizabeth watching the sundrenched waves roll in. We slept on the luxurious fine-pebbled beach at Cosley Lake en route to Stoney Indian Pass and the Waterton Valley.

It was an ideal group of hiking companions and an ideal summer.



The Saturday Hiking Club bedded down for the night at Lake Frances (Lynne Wallace, Joyce Daugaard, Melinda Bourne, David Paulus, Kathy Stapleton, John Hagen) (photo by Kathy Stapleton Renno)



A MACHETE ON THE HIGHLINE

By Hank Overturf (Many Glacier 1970-72)

I was deeply saddened to hear of Dave Paulus' death this last summer. It is ironic that I was hiking Stoney Indian Pass this summer and thought of Dave and his tremendous skill and musicianship. When I camped for the night I pulled out a bottle of wine and a CD player and listened to Chopin while I pitched my tent and boiled water for my dinner of freeze dried.

I recall one trip in June of 1970 when Dave, another friend and I decided to do the Highline before it was open. We were assembling our gear the night before when Dave suggested that

we should take knives just in case we needed them. When we left the next morning I strapped on my Buck knife and met Dave in the hall of the upper dorm.

We ran up the valley and nearly ran up to Granite Park. As we gingerly crossed the snowfields of the closed Highline trail we stopped for a picture. It was then that I noticed that Dave didn't have a knife, but a machete. My Buck knife seemed rather small in comparison, but Dave insisted that we brandish our weapons and look macho. "Men of the wilderness!"

We laughed, slid across and down snowfields, and joked all the way across the Garden Wall. We obviously survived

the trip and had an adventure that still brings back a smile to my face. I know my life has been much richer for having met Dave and had a chance to enjoy his sense of humor and listen to his wonderful artistry on the piano. I'll miss you, Dave.

The Summer of '42



Happy Days at Lake McDonald Lodge on the Brink of the Second World War

Mr. Green, transport agent at Lake McDonald Lodge. (Oscar Jorstad photo)

By Oscar Jorstad (Lake McDonald Lodge, 1942)

In the summer of 1941 I stopped at Lake McDonald Lodge. There were two familiar faces dressed in white standing in front of the hotel. Would you believe two classmates from St. Olaf College? After a few minutes of visiting, I knew in my heart – next year, this place is for me!

The following summer I was night clerk at Lake McDonald. Mrs. Barley was the manager of the hotel. Cy Mavickas was the fellow in charge of the business end. Faith Dugan was the greeter at the dining room. Shirley Smith was the early morning lobby maid.

My hours were 10pm to 7am. Those were perfect hours for hiking in the daytime (the matter of sleep came second). My first hike, of course, was to Sperry Chalet. It was June 15, and I had to wade through waist-deep snow to get to the porch.

The night watchman at Lake McDonald made rounds around the compound, punching his timeclock at various stations. This was required by the insurance company. To make sure that I stayed awake, the routine required that the watchman give his clock to me each hour

to visit four stations inside the lodge (two on the top floor and two on the bottom level, at each end of the building). Often after hiking, I would be sound asleep at the fireplace, and my friend the watchman did my stations for me.

One night a message came that a car had gone off Going-to-the-Sun Road. I awakened Cy Mavickas who had a bedroom next to the night clerk's office. He gave me the keys to his car, and took my place as I drove off to be of help. Fortunately, it was



Dave and Ray, two McDonald porters, refueling. (Oscar Jorstad photo)

not too serious, and I was happy to find that a ranger had taken charge.

I was at McDonald throughout the summer of 1942. In 1943, the Park itself was closed for obvious reasons. My draft number would soon be up, but I wanted to go back. The Park Service was active at maintaining trails and fighting fire. I applied for Park Service work, and was hired to be the lookout at Mt. Brown. But after just two weeks, I received a tele-

gram from my dad to come home because Uncle Sam was calling.

My two children, Janet Jorstad Edwards and David Jorstad, both worked at Many Glacier during the 1970s. I have made eleven trips to the Park from 1941 to the present. I am planning to go back again and make it an even dozen!



A fellow Norwegian! Emil Korstad, the gardener (Oscar Jorstad photo)



Mrs. Barley, manager of Lake McDonald Lodge (Oscar Jorstad photo)



Looking northward from the girls' dormitory: The chief engineer's home, the camp store, and the post office, with Mt. Brown in the background (Oscar Jorstad photo)



Mrs. Barley and the dining room staff (Oscar Jorstad photo)

Backing out of an Avalanche: Just Between Me and No. 95

By Tom I. McFarling (Jammer 1950)

GPT Co. had rules. One was that no new Jammer could carry passengers over Logan Pass until he had first dead-headed over empty. I was at Many Glacier when I was told to deadhead over to McDonald. It was a beautiful morning — sunshine, not too hot, shirt sleeve weather. I put the top down on No. 95 before I left.

At St. Marys I turned into the park and went right through the entrance station gate without stopping. I was enjoying the trip up, especially because there was absolutely no traffic either way. About where the Motor Inn is now, it started to rain. I got out to put up the top and got a jacket out of the back. Before long, the rain turned into snow. Still no traffic either way! We had Going-to-the-Sun road all to ourselves!

By the time I got to the Logan Pass parking lot on top, it was a real snow storm. I couldn't see much, but then there wasn't much to see - just snow everywhere. According to GPT Co. rule, I was letting No. 95 have its cool-down idle run when the Ranger came out of his building to inquire what the hell I thought I was doing. I replied I was deadheading over to McDonald Hotel. He said the road had been closed since daylight and he was getting ready to go down himself; but now he was going to try to reach the entrance by radio to make sure they let no one else come up. It seems that late snows had been extra heavy and there was still a very deep snow pack. It had been snowing all night and morning. With fresh snow on top of the old, there was an extreme danger of new snow sliding and even of avalanche.

When he came back, he said the entrance gate had reported they had not let anyone through all morning! I guess they had not even seen me come through. He suggested I turn around and he would follow me back down

to St. Mary. I thought about that, but decided that I had set out to deadhead over to McDonald and that's just exactly what I was going to do. With that, I got into No. 95 and headed out of the parking lot going west.

Clouds and fog were so thick you could hardly see anything at all. After a short distance the clouds and fog seemed to thin a bit and you could almost see into the valley off to the left. Quite a sight! I stopped, reached for my camera, took a picture and rolled the window back up. Then I heard it.

It sounded like a freight train right in the front seat beside me. I feared what it was, held my foot on the brake and waited. All of a sudden, there was the flying, tumbling, sliding snowmass right in front. I honestly thought the force of the slide would cover us up or push us over the side. I do not know how long it took but finally the snow stopped sliding down and across. Then silence -- nothing but the rumble and echo from down below.

The snow covered the road ahead and over the front bumper, the radiator and the hood back to just where No. 95's windshield was. I didn't

*Tom I. McFarling,
driver of No. 95, also
former school teacher
and former judge.
(Photo courtesy of
author)*

know what to do but I knew I did not want to stay where I was. There was only one way I could go and I was not about to abandon No. 95. I slipped into reverse, said a prayer that by moving back I would not dislodge or disturb the snow again, and eased back about 5 feet. I was afraid to back any further without knowing exactly where the back wheels were so I opened my door and looked back and down to the side of the road. The haze and returning fog and clouds were so dense I couldn't even see the back of the bus. All I could do was to look straight down to the side of the road at those two layers of rock stacked there as a guard rail.

I thought I could judge where I was on the road by whether those rocks moved away from me or closer to me as I backed. I tried it and, soon found that by backing 8 to 10 feet at a time I could judge pretty well if the rear wheels were in about the middle of the road. Strangely, I did not really have any fear for myself. My whole thought was "How can I keep No. 95 safe from I being knocked over the side by a new slide." Only by trial and error, luck and

Continued from page 27.





A Wrangler's Memories of Glacier

by Robert Wellman

E.G. Wellman, Dalton Wellman, and I bought and took over the Park Saddle Horse Concession when the Park reopened after World War II. Noffsingers had been the previous operators.

Getting paid to take people packing and fishing was like a paid holiday. There were long hours and hard work. I really enjoyed most of the people I met, and hard work is needed if you are to be successful at anything. I spent time at all of our locations in the Park, at times taking day rides to Sperry Chalet and overnight trips to Granite Park Chalet.

It was a pleasure to work with our many employees. One of my favorites was Virgil (Blackie) Dillon, who we employed at Many Glacier. He was very humorous with a quick wit, and drew a crowd wherever he was.

I remember one trip when there was a large party, so two of us, Blackie and myself, took them. We had just gone through the Ptarmigan Tunnel to come out on a narrow trail looking straight down about 1,000 feet to a shimmering mirror named Lake Elizabeth, reflecting the land of the big sky. A lady, spooked by the view, shouted, "Guide, guide, do people fall from here often?" After a long pause, Blackie replied, "No ma'am. Just once."

Blackie spent his winters in Cut Bank, and I lived in East Glacier, until I

started ranching on the Two Medicine River near Browning. He would call me occasionally from Cut Bank to bail him out of jail. One time he said he was in for crossing the street against a red light. I replied, "They can't do that." He said, "Well, I was on my hands and knees."

He stayed in the bunkhouse at the ranch and was good help. My boys, about eight and ten years old, knew Blackie had a drinking problem. They would go in the bunkhouse, tie his shoelaces together, then holler at him to watch him wreck when he jumped up.

I always looked forward to meeting the new people and sharing the deer, elk, moose, goats, marmots, ground squirrels, and all the other wildlife, flora, fauna, and scenery of Glacier National Park.

He loved my children and probably just laughed. When I heard what they were doing, I told them that was no way to treat a friend, and they stopped.

We assisted him in finding a job at Knott's Berry Farm in California where he worked in the wintertime and was doing well. The next thing I knew, he was gone. I read in the paper that he had come up in the winter, had fallen down drunk outside a bar, and had frozen to death. It was a very sad day for me, my family, and his many friends. I still miss him today.

The first day of the North Circle Trip, my guests would assemble at our corrals at Many Glacier. I would saddle all the pack and riding horses and many up all their personal packs, groceries, tent, dishes, pots and pans, and other necessities. Then I'd load the packs on the horses, get my guests mounted, and hit the trail. We would go up past Ptarmigan Lake and through Ptarmigan Tunnel, coming out on a narrow trail. That trail passed over the sheer 1,000 foot drop to Lake Elizabeth.

We would continue down the trail,

steadily losing altitude, and set up camp by Lake Elizabeth. Here we could catch Arctic Grayling, then cook them over a campfire with potatoes, carrots, and onions. The guests seemed to really like this, and for the first couple days we would have fresh fruit: pears, peaches, apples, and bananas.

I would set up our tent every night because weather can change quickly in the mountains. I would help everyone blow up their air mattresses, and show them how to get the rocks and sticks out of the area where they would make their bed. It was nice to sleep under the stars,

but we could retreat to the tent if it got too tough outside.

I would hang all our groceries up in a tree and then sleep under them to keep bears from getting our supplies. In the morning, I would get up about 4:30, gather more wood for the fire, put on water to boil for coffee, and get things ready for breakfast. I would call the guests, tell them coffee was on, and start breakfast. I would generally make hotcakes, bacon, and eggs.

While the guests were eating, I would haul water from the creek and put it on the fire for dishes. I'd gather all personal possessions, get them ready to manly and pack on the horses, and then gather my hobbled horses. I always put a bell on one, so I could find them easily.

Saddling the packhorses and getting them ready to go was next. While the dudes were finishing their coffee, I would wash dishes, pack the groceries, etc., put the packs on the horses, get my guests mounted up, and start down the trail to the next campsite. This was the routine from camp to camp on the ten-day trip.

The second day we would camp on Belly River, in a beautiful level valley with lush grass. The next day we would go to Crossley [now Cosley] Lake and catch trout surrounded by gorgeous scenery. The fourth day, we would move on to Glenn's Lake, a great spot with good fish, which the guests would enjoy catching and cooking over the campfire.

Stoney Indian Pass was a high place where you could see a long ways, and people were impressed with the view in every direction. We would then drop down to the Waterton Valley and Kootenai Lakes. I always packed a small rubber raft with me, which we used for fishing and swimming. We caught brook trout in Kootenai Lakes, which are smaller than most trout, but are considered the tastiest.

One time, I had two guests with me

fishing on Kootenai Lake where there was a large bull moose grazing. Moose put their heads under water and eat moss and things on the bottom of the lake, then lift their heads up to get air, chew, and back under again to graze.

These people asked if I could get close to the moose so they could get a better picture. I asked them how close they would like to get. They replied, "As close as you can."

I started moving closer, and as soon as the moose put his head down, I rowed as fast as I could and was within ten feet of the big bull when he lifted his head out of the lake. With water running off the shovels of his horns, he looked awesome and fierce. They shouted, "Get us out of here!" I had already started rowing away as I knew I was closer then it was safe to be. After all that, they didn't even get their picture, as they had dropped their camera.

The next day, we got on the International which ferried us across Waterton Lake to the Prince of Wales Hotel. Here we got to sleep in a regular bed and take a bath that wasn't in a cold lake. We also enjoyed the cuisine, especially me, as I didn't have to cook it or wash the dishes.

In the morning, we would get back on the International, cross Waterton

Lake, get off at Goat Haunt, saddle and load up, then go on to Fifty Mountain Camp. The name Fifty Mountain came from the unique setting. You could see fifty peaks from that campsite.

Cooking breakfast in the morning, the guests would see me pick up the frying pan and flip the hotcakes in the air to turn them over. The next thing, they all wanted to try it, and there would be hotcakes hanging from the trees. The Canada Jays (camp robbers) sure enjoyed the treat. Everyone had a good time.

The ninth day we proceeded to Granite Park Chalet, which is in a high mountain setting and is a gorgeous place. The last day, we would saddle up and go down Swiftcurrent Pass and back to Many Glacier.

At Many Glacier, my new friends would be ready to go on with their travels. Generally there would be a new group ready to go out. I always looked forward to meeting the new people and sharing the deer, elk, moose, goats, marmots, ground squirrels, and all the other wildlife, flora, fauna, and scenery of Glacier National Park.



Photo credits for both pictures

?

50th Wedding Anniversary in Glacier

By Joe N. Piggott (Gearjammer 1948)

To celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary, my wife and I spent a week in Glacier National Park last August. Our three children, their spouses, and four grandsons accompanied us on the trip. In 1948, I drove red jammer bus # 105, and have extolled the beauty of the park to my family. Here are some impressions from our trip.

The Forest Fires

On July 23rd, five forest fires were burning on 50,000 acres west of the continental divide, threatening West Glacier, Apgar, and Lake McDonald Hotel. Sixteen hundred fire fighters with helicopters, air tankers, and bulldozers were trying to control the fires. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad sent a fire team with 68,000 gallons of water in five tank cars. The fire fighters were successful in setting and controlling backfires to reduce the combustible condition.

St. Mary Junction

In 1948, St. Mary Junction had only a café, with rest rooms, good coffee, delicious huckleberry pie, and two stingy slot machines. Now St. Mary Resort and Cabins with restaurant, gift shop, grocery and gas station occupy the intersection. Nearby the Park Café enjoys a well-deserved reputation for good food and quick service.

Many Glacier Hotel

After three days' evacuation because of the fires, Many Glacier Hotel was reopened. We were able to visit the beautiful Swiftcurrent area and see the shrinking Grinnell Glacier. Many Glacier Hotel was undergoing a considerable exterior restoration. Later inside all of the carpet will be replaced and the walls redecorated.

Waterton

Waterton village has grown into an interesting destination with good cafes, lodging and shops. The Prince of Wales Hotel remains in its breathtaking, majestic setting, unaffected by the last 55 years. The launch trip on Waterton Lake down to Goat Haunt is still

popular. Hiking, fishing and canoeing at Cameron Lake was high point, while an anniversary dinner at the Prince of Wales dining room was a memorable finale for our visit.

Prices

A 1948 brochure that I have kept revealed the greatest changes in Glacier. Hotel rooms were \$7.50 a day single occupancy; breakfast \$1.00; lunch \$1.25; and dinner \$1.75. In our present economy, rates are considerably different, but the same beauty and hospitality can be enjoyed.

The Buses

I had chartered my 1948 bus, no. 105, with an excellent driver who took us from St. Mary's Junction to Logan Pass and return. The Going-to-the-Sun Highway seemed reasonably well maintained, but the visitor's center at the Pass is beautiful. The splendor of St. Mary Lake and the surrounding mountains remains untouched.

"My old bus" appears the better for 55
Continued on next page.

Joe Piggott (red hat) standing next to his wife and family at St. Mary Junction after their ride to Logan Pass. (Photo courtesy of the family)



Backing out of an Avalanche continued from page 27.

Divine guidance did I manage to get No. 95 up that west side of Going To The Sun in reverse!

I don't know how many hairpin turns to the right or to the left there were before I saw some growth on the outside of the guard rail rocks! I have now, and I had then, absolutely no concept of how much time it took. I was concentrating only on what I was trying to do. Even though the snow on the hood and windshield was not melting, I was ringing wet with sweat and totally out of breath when I heard the horn of the Ranger's Pickup truck behind me. I heard him call to inquire if I was OK. He walked up and asked if I knew there had been this big snow slide. I told him I knew it as I had been in it. He didn't believe me and walked down the road to see where it was and what damage, if any it had done to the road. He was gone a pretty good while and finally came back. He said he could see where the front of the bus had left its mark in the side of the snow bank and asked how I got from down there to where I was. I told him I had backed up the road. He said he would never have believed it if he had not seen where I had been.

He said he needed to go back to report what had happened. and that there was

a snowplow on the way up to open the road. He suggested I should leave No. 95 there and come back up with him until the road was opened as there was no place to turn around where I was. Then, after the road was opened we could get some more help to guide me back to where I could turn around. I said No thanks, I will stay right here with No 95. If you need us you know where we'll be. He left muttering to himself

I wrapped one of the blankets around my shoulders as I was getting pretty cold. Soon I heard a sound from down the road. I figured it was the snowplow working from the other side. I waited a bit, cleaned the snow off of the hood and windshield so I could see and started down again. You can't guess how slow I went and how I listened for another freight train. When I could see the deep snow on the road I waited for the plow to break through. The driver made several passes through the snow bank, wide enough for me to get No. 95 through. In a few minutes I was on my way down again. After all, GPTCo. had its rules.

When I got down to flat ground I started to breath a bit easier. When I

pulled into McDonald Hotel it was late in the afternoon and there were people hanging around to see No 9S pull in with that squeaky horn going full blast. I had done what I had been told to do.

I never told a soul how far I backed No 95 up that road. Only it's Jammer and that Ranger, whoever he was, know for sure. I don't know if he ever told anyone. I hope not as I always wanted to keep that as our secret -- just between

50th Anniversary,

years. Ford Motor Company completely restored it by placing underneath a new Ford truck powered by liquid petroleum gas with power steering, power brakes, automatic transmission and bucket seats for the driver and his front-seat passenger. The outward appearance and convertible top appear the same. No other vehicle inspires such confidence in its comfort and safety. Glacier Park measured up to the glowing promises I had made and will attract a return by our children and grandsons in the future.

JOIN THE GLACIER PARK FOUNDATION

All friends of Glacier Park are invited to join the Glacier Park Foundation. Membership includes a subscription to The Inside Trail and the right to vote for directors. Please download a membership form from our Web Site (www.glacierparkfoundation.org) or send your name, address, phone number, and park experience to Glacier Park Foundation, Box 15641, Minneapolis, MN 55415.

An annual membership in the Foundation costs \$10. A "Friend of the Park" membership costs \$25 annually, cumulating to a Lifetime membership in five installments. A Lifetime membership paid in one installment costs \$100.

The Glacier Park Foundation is a § 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

