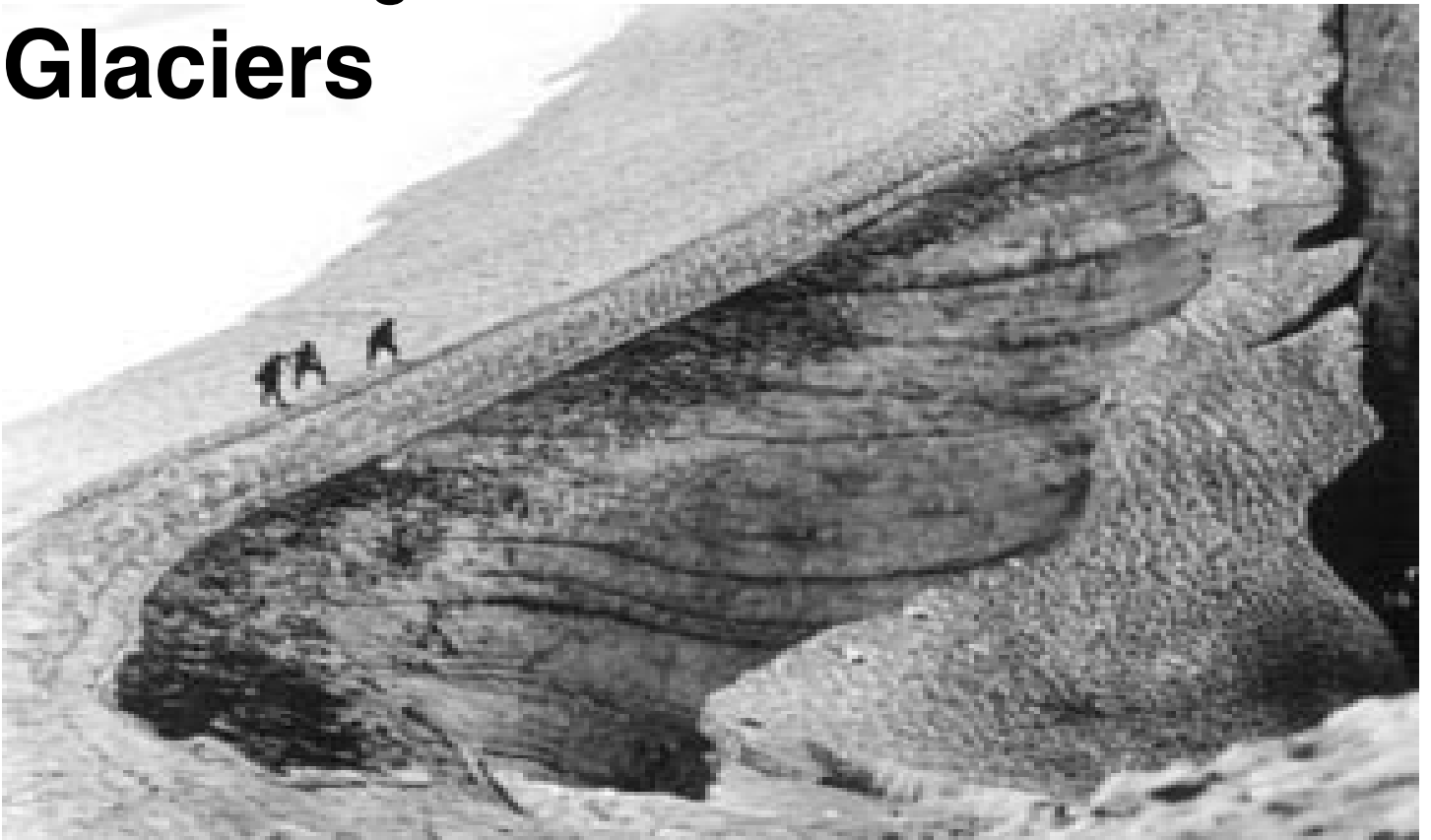

THE INSIDE TRAIL



Voice of the Glacier Park Foundation ■ Spring 2003 ■ Volume XVI, No. 1

Recession: The Melting of Glacier Park's Glaciers



Explorers on Grinnell Glacier, circa 1925. (T. J. Hileman photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society)

Also Inside: Stories of Sperry Glacier • Glacier Poetry • Blackie Dillon to the Rescue • Mrs. Rhody's Kitchen • Off-Trail Excursions with Gordon Edwards • I was Don Hummel's P.R. Man • Toots' Sweet Shop • "We Have Saved the Hotel" • I Saw Michelle Smile

Glacier Poetry Corner

CAMPSITE

We have packed in to beargrass country.
The beargrass is in bloom.
We share with the feathered and furry
An outdoor living room.

Sundown here comes early.
It will soon be chilly and damp
In this mountain surrounded valley
Where we have set up camp.

On the trail all day, we are weary.
Night is about to begin.
The silence here is eerie
As darkness settles in.

— Elsie Williams (circa 1950)



(Illustration by Tessie Bundick)

Glacier Park Foundation

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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.

Glacier Bulletin Board

The Inside Trail welcomes not only articles, but also brief letters, anecdotes and photos. Here are some that were sent to us recently.

Siamese Twins at the Roller Rink

I worked in 1947 at the front desk at the Entrance Lodge as the relief clerk (switchboard, cashier, and telegraph girl). Thinking back on that summer brings back a treasury of wonderful memories and faces. Julia Wades-in-the-Water, wife of the Blackfeet chief Wades-in-the-Water, made me a pair of moccasins. My friends then nicknamed me “Betsy Wades-through-the-Lobby.”

In August at East Glacier during that era there was always a costume party. It was held at the Roller Rink (now a restaurant). Two employees from the Entrance, Bill Treacy and Frank Delaney, came to the party as Siamese twins. They had built an outhouse on rollers with a lot of funny comments on it. Their antics were hilarious. The funniest one was when one would go into the outhouse and the other was left hanging out the door. How many unforgettable moments, special people and friends there were!

Elizabeth A. Roth (Entrance 1947, 59-60; Many Glacier, 1948, 58)

More Memories of Terrie Stewart

I was shocked to hear about Terrie Stewart’s death in the Fall Inside Trail. Little Mary Sunshine was one of my very favorite shows of all the years at Many G, and as many of you know, what made it so special was Terrie. The thoughts and memories of all the people involved in all those productions over the years still brings a warm glow to my heart, and people like Terrie are beyond words. I was so pleased to read about some of the highlights from the rest of her life and the thoughts she put together for the farewell. I was able to find this picture from Little Mary Sunshine as a remembrance of Terrie. What a special woman.

Roger L. Stephens (Assistant Manager and Musical Director at Many Glacier, 1962-73)



(Photo courtesy of Roger L. Stephens)

RECESSION

The Melting of Glacier Park's Glaciers

By John Hagen (Many Glacier
1970-80)

Glacier National Park's magnificent alpine glaciers are melting away. They may be gone completely within a matter of decades. The shrinkage has been proceeding since about 1850. Short-term trends ebb and flow and vary from glacier to glacier, but the long-term trend is one of steady recession.

The park now has 37 named glaciers. Their colorful names and dramatic appearance add much to the romance of Glacier's trails – Old Sun looming high on the crags of Mt. Merritt, Sexton with its web of blue crevasses above the Siyeh Pass trail, Thunderbird, Weasel Collar, Two Ocean.

This generation of glaciers is very young in geological terms. Most of them probably were formed in the "Little Ice Age," a cool period which extended from about 1400 to 1850 A.D. The rest date back to the woolly mammoth era, perhaps 12,000 years ago.

Glacier Park's geology, of course, reflects far older and longer ice ages, dating back hundreds of thousands of years. Some of these involved vast glaciers thousands of feet thick, which scoured out the great U-shaped valleys of the park. They carved knife-edge aretes like the Garden Wall and the Pinnacle Wall, and sculpted



Grinnell Glacier, circa 1930. (Howard Moon photo)



A 1936 hiking party on Grinnell Glacier. (Donald Wheeler photo)

horns like Mt. Reynolds and Mt. St. Nicholas.

At the end of the Little Ice Age, there were about 150 glaciers in what now is Glacier Park. The extent of the ice at that time can be measured in many cases by the moraines or heaps of loose rock pushed up by the glaciers. As the climate warmed, the ice shrank steadily back from the moraines.

When the park was established in 1910, it had about 90 active glaciers. The biggest was Blackfoot Glacier, including more than three square miles of ice. By 1939, this great ice sheet had split in half, with the western portion being renamed Jackson Glacier.

A similar split took place in Grinnell Glacier, overlooking the Swiftcurrent Valley. Its upper and lower parts divided in about 1926, with the upper mass being named The Salamander. As the lower portion receded during the

1930s, a meltwater pool formed beside the ice and became Upper Grinnell Lake.

From about 1920 to 1945, the glaciers shrank very rapidly. During this period, Grinnell and Sperry Glaciers both were receding around 50 feet per year. There was speculation that the glaciers would be gone by the year 2000. A huge boulder, “Elrod’s Rock” (named after the naturalist Morton Elrod) was near the foot of Grinnell Glacier in the 1920s,

but now lies a quarter mile away.

The 1960s and ‘70s were cooler decades when shrinkage slowed dramatically and some of the glaciers gained area. Recent years, however, have been very

warm. Many of the hottest years of the 20th century occurred in the 1990s. Under these thermal stresses, some landmarks (in particular Grinnell Glacier) have been visibly melting away.

Boulder Glacier, which once loomed dramatically over Boulder Pass, has shrunk to a bedraggled remnant. Other landmarks – The Salamander, Red Eagle, Logan, Carter – appear to have lost the characteristics of true glaciers (plasticity, ice flow, and crevasses)

and persist as stagnant ice masses.

The U.S. Geological Service (USGS) is intensively studying the glaciers in the park. USGS ecologist Daniel Fagre has spent about twelve years of research in Glacier. His team of re-

Many of the hottest years of the 20th century occurred in the 1990s. Under these thermal stresses, some landmarks (in particular Grinnell Glacier) have been visibly melting away.

Recession continued

searchers coordinates with 18 American universities and alpine scientists worldwide.

Fagre's team uses radar to measure the depth of glacial ice and to map the contours of the land beneath the glaciers. They analyze snow and ice and meltwater, study historical records, and gather precipitation and temperature data.

Fagre and a colleague, Myrna Hall, have developed a computer model projecting the future of glaciers in the park. Their model offers two projections based on different climatic assumptions. One is a sort of "worst-case scenario" of rapid warming caused in large part by pollution and deforestation. It assumes that atmospheric carbon dioxide will double in the next thirty years (as predicted by the federal Environmental Protection Agency), and that temperatures will rise 2.5 degrees Centigrade in the next half-century. Using this projection, the park's glaciers all would vanish by 2030.

The second projection is a "best case scenario." It assumes that there will be no significant human-caused increase in warming. Thus, it merely projects a continuation of the rate of warming recorded from 1850-1990, since the end of the Little Ice Age. Under this projection, melting would proceed much more slowly, and the glaciers would vanish by about the year 2277.

The real course of history very probably will fall between these projections. The most recent data is mixed. USGS has just released updated statistics on the size of the glaciers, based on an analysis of 1998



"A curious ice formation, Blackfoot Glacier," circa 1925. (T. J. Hileman photo, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society)

aerial photographs. Most of the glaciers have shrunk substantially since previous readings in 1966, 1979, or 1993. A few have been stable or have shown apparent increases, but several others appear to be on the verge of extinction.

The 1998 data shows Boulder Glacier, for instance, at a total area of 0.057 sq. km. (about 200' x 200'). Harris Glacier is even smaller, at 0.041 sq. km. Red Eagle Glacier apparently lost about a third of its mass (from .15 to .108 sq. km.) between

1993 and 1998.

Grinnell Glacier seems to be receding at close to the rate of the "worst-case scenario." Its shrinkage rate is faster than that of most glaciers because its terminus is submerged in the waters of Upper Grinnell Lake. This causes the phenomenon of "calving," where icebergs break frequently into the lake.

On the other hand, Harrison Glacier (the largest in the park) showed an apparent increase in size from 1.06 sq. km. in 1993 to 1.67 in 1998.

Grinnell Glacier's Recession: Comparative Photos



A comparison of Salamander and Grinnell Glaciers, and Grinnell Lake in years 1938, 1981 and 1994. (Photos courtesy of US Geological Service and Bob Zavadil)

Sperry showed an apparent increase from .87 sq. km. in 1993 to .95 in 1998. Pumpelly, Vulture, and Swiftcurrent also showed apparent increases.

Some of these figures may reflect a difference in accuracy of measurement from the time of previous readings. Snow cover often makes it difficult to measure glacial ice. Many of the glaciers actually consist

of several separate ice masses (Jackson Glacier has 15 glacierets besides its main body; Harrison has 13).

Some of the glaciers are much more resistant to melting because of their topography. Gem and Piegan Glaciers, for instance, sit in high northward-facing cirques which give them shade and insulation. These glaciers, though small, appear very stable, and

A comparison of Salamander and Grinnell Glaciers, and Grinnell Lake in years 1938, 1981 and 1994. (Photos courtesy of US Geological Service and Bob Zavadil)

may outlast much larger glaciers.

Though the data and short-term trends are complicated, the long-term trend in Glacier is one of steady recession. Mountain glaciers are shrinking all over the world, which is strong evidence of an ongoing trend to global warming. The extent to which human-caused “greenhouse gases” have driven this warming is uncertain. Such gases, however, very probably have played a significant role. The melting away of familiar landmarks in Glacier Park is a sobering incentive to work for effective measures to counteract air pollution and deforestation.

The Lore of Sperry Glacier



Great Northern Railway. Photo by T. J. Hileman (courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society)

By John Hagen (Many Glacier 1970-80)

Sperry Glacier is named for Dr. Lyman B. Sperry, who played a key role in creating the trail system in the McDonald Valley. Sperry, a science professor, visited the area in 1895 and 1896. He took part in bushwhacks to Avalanche Lake, to the Garden Wall, and to the glacier that was later to bear his name.

Sperry went to James J. Hill, the Great Northern Railway's president, to propose constructing trails east of Lake McDonald. Sperry offered to recruit a team of college students to build trails without pay. Hill agreed to transport them to Lake McDonald and to provide them with food and supplies.

In the summers of 1902 and 1903, Sperry brought groups of students from the University of Minnesota. They laid a trail from Lake McDonald up to the present site of Sperry Chalets and on over Gunsight Pass, with a spur trail to Sperry Glacier. The present system of trails largely follows Sperry's original route.

Tourists promptly began to visit

the glacier and explore it. A dramatic rescue took place around 1906, before Glacier became a national park. Frank Liebig, a Forest Service ranger, was patrolling the trail near the glacier when people ran up to tell him that someone had fallen into a crevasse.

Liebig scrambled out onto the glacier. In a deep crevasse, a woman lay unconscious some 30 feet down. Liebig roped himself up and dropped into the chasm. The woman's body was tightly wedged. In order to pull her loose, Liebig had to call for an axe and chop himself footholds. At last he wrenched her out of the ice and fastened a rope around her waist. Then they both were lifted from the crevasse

The woman never even said thank you for getting her out of the glacier.

The rescue had a comical aftermath. The victim was carried to a nearby camp with a roaring fire. There, Liebig related, "[s]ome men and women filled her up all night with hot brandy until she was glorious drunk. ... The woman never even said thank you for getting her out of the glacier."

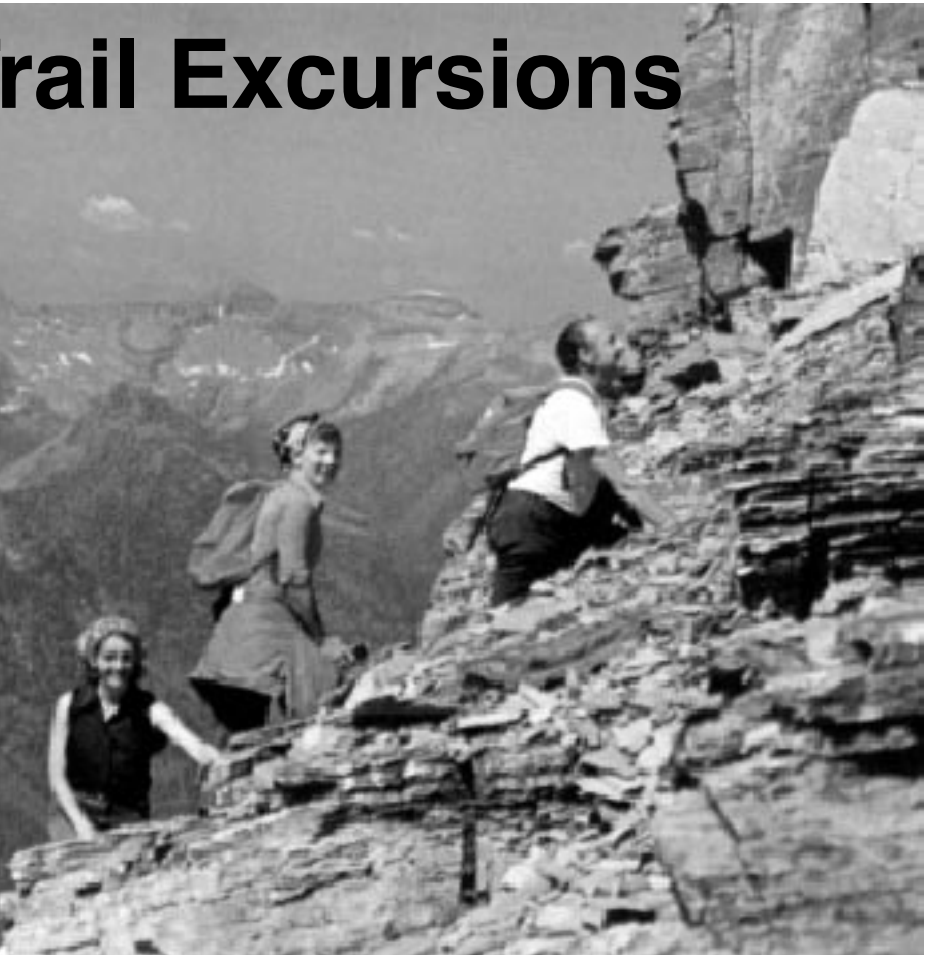
A similar episode ended tragically in 1971. A group of skiers from Whitefish, Montana hiked up to the glacier in mid-August, intending to ski down the long slopes of snow there. As they climbed the slopes, however, one of the party lost his footing. He slid several hundred feet and plunged into a 40-foot crevasse.

Urgent calls for help from Sperry Chalet brought a rescue team to the site by helicopter within about an hour. Two men made a daring descent by rope, despite the danger that unstable ice and snow would collapse on them. They lifted the victim out of the ice, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.

The victim's name was Ron Matthews. His death is poignant to me, because I met him on the day of his fatal fall. I was hiking down the trail from Sperry Chalet when I encountered Matthews and his companions hiking up. The skis crossed on their backs were striking. I recall their nonchalance about the prospect of skiing the glacier. The episode vividly impressed on me the perilous nature of these shifting, fractured rivers of ice.

Some Off-Trail Excursions in Glacier

by J. Gordon Edwards (National Park Service 1947; Author of "A Climber's Guide to Glacier National Park")



The Edwards crew - Gordon followed by Alice and Jane. This has been a common scene for many years during summers in Glacier. (Rolf Larson photo)

Herb Alberding and I once walked from Red Eagle Lake over Red Eagle Pass, down to Nyack River, then up to Pitamakan Pass and down to Two Medicine Lake. The trails had not been used since World War Two, and probably haven't been used again since Herb and I went over them. But I recommend the trip!

Herb had seven or eight keys because the Park didn't know which would open the Upper Nyack Trail Crew Cabin. When we got into that area, the cabin indicated on the 1936 topo map was not there. A few hundred feet higher we suddenly came upon a nice cabin. We didn't need a key. The

last person there had painted the floor white, then left the paintbrush in the white paint can, beside the door, and didn't even lock the door.

We had a good night and found some edible things under the cover in the middle of the floor.

We finally found a trail leading up a long ridge to the top of a high ridge that extends west from Pitamakan Pass.

Next day we found a trail sign in a place not indicated on the map. We finally found a trail leading up a long ridge to the top of a high ridge that extends west from Pitamakan Pass. What a relief!

I'd like to repeat that trip. I think it may have been almost the only time that I was "lost" in the park, even though I had a map.

Come to think of it, I was lost one other time. A student of mine drove up non-stop from Southern California and wanted

to go on a hike. I took him to Waterton and up to Cameron Lake. We loaned him Alice's backpack and sleeping bag. We
Some Off-Trail Excursions continued on page 30.

“We have saved the hotel!”

The Adventures of Chief Engineer Ray Sleeper



By Ray Djuff (*Prince of Wales 1973-75, 78*), co-author of “*View with a Room*” (See www.farcountrypress.com)

“We have saved the hotel.”

“Why?”

This exchange of cryptic telegrams in September 1936 between Omar Ellis, manager of Many Glacier Hotel, and Great Northern Railway president William P. Kenney is possibly the best known correspondence in history of Glacier National Park.

Ellis had just lived through the Heaven’s Peak forest fire. It was an inferno that, but for chance and the heroics of hotel staff, would have destroyed Many Glacier. Kenney, fed up with continued hotel company losses during the Depression, let down his usual reserve to send a telling, but flip-pant reply to Ellis’s boast.

At least that’s how the story goes.

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But there’s now reason to believe a third person was involved in this exchange of telegrams – Ray Sleeper – and that the tone of the telegrams is not quite as we’ve come to believe.

I first ran across Ray Sleeper’s name during research for my history book on the Prince of Wales Hotel. From Great Northern records in the archive of the Minnesota Historical Society, I learned Sleeper was the head of maintenance for the Glacier Park Hotel Company during the early to mid-1930s. His name shows up on reports relating to the Prince of Wales Hotel and other facilities belonging to the hotel company.

Other than that, I knew little about him. Where’d he come from? How old was he when he worked for the hotel company? Was he married? Were there any surviving relatives I might be able to track down to interview?

Despite further research for sub-

sequent books about Glacier, I learned practically nothing more about Ray Sleeper until the publication in 2001 of a book I co-authored with Chris Morrison of Lethbridge, *View With a Room – Glacier’s Historic Hotels and Chalets*. It came out in May 2002 and included a capsule retelling of



Ray Sleeper in his National Guard uniform, circa 1926. (Photo courtesy of Ray Djuff)

the “We saved the Hotel-Why?” story, but I had to wait until just after Christmas for the first inkling of the discoveries yet to come.

It started with an e-mail from Martha Davidge of Wisconsin — a side story in itself. Martha

Ray Sleeper was born in 1895 and raised in St. Paul, Minn. In 1914, at the age of 19, Sleeper went west, finding work as a timekeeper for the construction crew building Many Glacier Hotel.

and her husband, Geoff, subscribe to the St. Paul Pioneer Press, and it happened that he picked up a copy one Sunday containing a review of *View With a Room*. Geoff instantly perked up, as Martha had been on a Glacier Park kick of late. Although she'd never been to Glacier, her interest was sparked when she got to know her father's cousin, Ruth Sleeper, after the death of her father four years prior.

“I'm sure you recognize the Sleeper name,” Martha wrote to me, “Ruth's dad was Ray Sleeper. . . . Ruth died from breast cancer this past October. She never married and never had kids, and with our common interest in family history, I ended up with her family photo albums.”

Many of the photos in the Sleeper albums were of Glacier, but unidentified. Martha was anxious to learn more about them and Glacier. Her husband knew *View With a Room* would make a perfect Christmas present. Geoff was so anxious that Martha see the book, he encouraged her to open it Christmas Eve.

“I stayed up late reading your

book, when all of a sudden I read the name of (Many Glacier bellhop) Richard Rohleder, of St. Paul. . . . Believe it or not, Richard is my godfather,” she wrote.

When Martha phoned Rohleder

to tell him about seeing his name in the book, he urged her to contact me. I had just interviewed Richard Rohleder for a second time that summer.

Martha's e-mail started a raft of correspondence between Martha and me — I to learn more about Ray Sleeper and she to learn more about Glacier. It was through Martha's generous sharing of information and photographs that I learned, as the saying goes, the rest of the story about Ray Sleeper and the “We saved the hotel — Why?” telegrams.

Ray Sleeper was born in 1895 and raised in St. Paul, Minn. In 1914, at the age of 19, Sleeper went west, finding work as a timekeeper for the construction crew building Many Glacier Hotel.

Great Northern Railway, which had commissioned the hotel, was based in St. Paul and it may have been through some connection with the railway that Sleeper got the job.

Among Sleeper's possessions was an uncommon item: a camera. Photography was a relatively new hobby for the middle classes prior to the First World War. Few people owned cameras or took a lot of pictures. The least expensive Kodak was the Auto-graphic Junior, at \$23, almost two weeks wages at a time when the average worker made about \$2.50 a day. The next model up sold for \$41.50. Instead, people bought penny postcards when on vacation if they wanted a photographic memento. If they wanted a photo of themselves, they had it



Cutting Ice for use in kitchen iceboxes, probably at Two Medicine Lake. (Ray Sleeper photo)



Ramp used to transport logs harvested in the Grinnell Valley to the sawmill at the Many Glacier Hotel construction site, 1914. (Ray Sleeper photo)

taken by a professional.

Sleeper had a ready shutter finger and his photo albums provide a new look at the Many Glacier Hotel construction project. Overview pictures from mountains across Lake McDermott, as Swiftcurrent Lake was then known, show the size of the camp and the amount of lumber cut for the hotel. A huge log on a ramp used to remove harvested timber from the lake leaves no doubt as to the physical effort needed for such a construction project, where so much of the material (rocks and wood) was gathered locally.

Then there are pictures of construction workers, strapping men and lean men; some appearing slightly exotic, possibly recent immigrants who had not yet shed their “foreign” ways. There are also loggers with axes in forest

clearings and tinsmiths working on the lobby fireplace. All in all, a motley selection of men plying many trades.

Sleeper remained on the job at least through to the completion of the main hotel. His album contains no photos of the building of Annex 2 in 1916/17, which would appear to indicate he left during the construction hiatus, after the opening of the main block of the hotel in July 1915.

When the United States entered the First World War, like other young men Ray Sleeper joined the army National Guard. Again, Sleeper recorded his time in uniform on film. Before long, a new subject captured his eye: Cora Green. There are a rash of photos of their “courting” days, beginning in 1917, leading to their marriage in 1920.

Military records show Sleeper was appointed a second lieutenant in the Sixth Infantry of the Minnesota National Guard the following year. He was appointed a first lieutenant in 1923, and rose to captain in 1926.

On the work front, Sleeper settled into a job in the drafting/engineering department at Great Northern’s headquarters on Jackson Street in St. Paul. The post-war period was a busy time for the department. The federal government had returned the railways to private control after the First World War and railway executives were anxious to rebuild their passenger traffic business. For Great Northern, there were new depots to be constructed to replace older facilities (St. Paul Union Depot, 1919-20), hotels to be built (the Prince of Wales

in Waterton in 1926-27), and upgrades to the line, such as the new Cascade Tunnel (1927-29).

Just how Sleeper came to be selected for the job of head of maintenance/chief engineer for the Glacier Park Hotel Company is not known. The position was senior and required someone who could work alone most of the time, without direct supervision. He was also required to oversee a staff ranging from a half-dozen in the winter to as many as 50 in the summer at more than a dozen locations, co-ordinating all of their activities. He had to have a wide range of abilities, handling electrical, mechanical and construction/repair tasks.

Ray Sleeper was obviously a multi-talented and reasonably educated man. Sleeper was also an outgoing man, making and winning friends easily. Photos show him with numerous groups of friends picnicking and boating along the Mississippi River in St. Paul in the years prior to the war. His organizational and leadership abilities as a soldier would have been noted and the fact that he had past experience in Glacier Park with the hotels would also have helped in his selection.

Photos from 1916 show that Sleeper was among the chosen employees at the railway's headquarters to wear Hudson Bay blanket-style outfits to represent Great Northern in the St. Paul Winter Carnival parade. His sister, Esther, also received an outfit. Sleeper must have made some impression with senior officials at Great Northern's head office.

Ray Sleeper took over the job of chief engineer in 1929 from William (Otto) Thompson, who had been with the hotel company for 15 years but was now being relieved. Thompson was apparently not well, and died later that year, leaving a wife and two young adopted children as survivors.

Sleeper, Cora and their daughter Ruth, who had just turned six, arrived in Midvale (now East Glacier) in April 1929. They stayed in the cabin usually used by Glacier Park Transport Company president Howard Hays and his family until the Thompsons vacated their residence.

For the next seven years, the third cabin, at the north end of the row of houses in the bluff facing



Lumber piled for use in the construction of Many Glacier Hotel, 1914. (Ray Sleeper photo)



Construction of the hydroelectric power plant for Many Glacier, below Swiftcurrent Falls. (Ray Sleeper photo)



The Many Glacier construction camp, 1914. (Ray Sleeper photo)

the golf course, would be the Slegers' home. A place of respite, but never far removed from Ray's job.

The duties of head of maintenance/chief engineer for the hotel company were many and varied in 1929

Saved the Hotel continued . . .

– much as they are today. The photo albums that Martha Davidge inherited from Ruth Sleeper provide glimpses into the daily, seasonal and unusual occurrences that made up Ray Sleeper's job.

During the summer, much of the work was delegated to on-site staff, such as the young Cy Stevenson at Many Glacier Hotel. Stevenson's photo, and those of his many brothers and sisters, dot the Sleeper albums.

For other work, such as the instal-

lation of a power generating station for Many Glacier, Sleeper got personally involved. The process was documented thoroughly in his photo album. (It's possible Great Northern head office staff requested the photo evidence: similar photo records had been kept during construction of all the major hotels and related facilities.)

Winter is the hardest time of the year on the hotels and chalets. Also for the permanent or hotel company year-round staff. This, again, is evident in the Sleeper photo albums.

Snow drifting into and piling on hotel and chalet roofs were constant problems. However, only the Glacier Park and Many Glacier hotels warranted Sleeper's regular attention as they are the largest, most expensive and most vital to operation of the hotel company. Accessibility was also a problem, so the remote facilities were usually ignored until late spring.

Sleeper also faced winter chores unknown today. At both Many Glacier and Glacier Park Hotels, large supplies of ice were cut and stored during the winter to use in kitchen iceboxes (non-electric refrigerators to you and me) each summer. It was



A "Glacier Park" outfit worn by Great Northern Railway employees in the St. Paul Winter Carnival, circa 1916. (Ray Sleeper photo)

heavy work that went on for weeks.

The demands of the off-season gave way to different challenges during the summer tourist season. It was when plans and preparations were made with hotel and railway company executives for upgrades and repairs in the fall and spring.

Ray Sleeper's discussions and decisions with the likes of hotel general manager Adolph Aszmann



Snow drifted in the Grill (now the St. Moritz Room) at Many Glacier, circa 1930. (Ray Sleeper photo)



Clearing snow from the roof of Many Glacier Hotel. (Ray Sleeper photo)

and railway president William Kenney would have been a chance to renew acquaintances from his time at Great Northern's St. Paul headquarters. The talks were often detailed and protracted, for Sleeper's time as chief engineer was during the height of the Depression and railway officials were reluctant to spend any more than necessary on maintenance; they often tried to delay or defer work, where possible.

The slower pace of summer was also when Ray Sleeper and his family could entertain. After being isolated much of the winter, the opportunity to have relatives and friends from St. Paul visit was welcomed. While Ray couldn't stray too far from the telephone, Ruth and Cora often took visitors through the park, sometimes on saddle horse trips.

The summer of 1936, Ray Sleeper had been trying to take it easy.

That spring, he'd been to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN, for treatment of his high blood pressure, which was causing problems with the function of his kidneys. He had barely recovered from surgery when he was back in Glacier and on the job, weak and, according to Ruth, the worse for wear from the experience. The demands of Sleeper's job sapped his stamina and health.

Then came the Heaven's Peak forest fire in August. The fire has been covered at length in previous issues of *The Inside Trail*, especially in Rolf Larson's insightful article "Firestorm" (now posted on GPF's Web site) so I won't dwell on it at length here.

Briefly, the fire was likely caused by a lightning strike Aug. 18 that simmered for three days before smoke was spotted. Crews quickly had it under control and mostly extinguished by Aug. 24. Howev-

er, on Sunday, Aug. 30, a hot, dry wind fanned persistent and hidden embers missed by the crews and the fire was quickly whipped up, spreading across the valley and climbing the Garden Wall. By then, it was out of control.

The following evening, Monday, Aug. 31, Many Glacier Hotel night clerk Ray Kinley noticed "two ominous red spots, glowing like dragon eyes high on the Divide near Swiftcurrent Pass." The fire had jumped the Garden Wall and was headed down the Swiftcurrent Valley toward the hotel, "a racing sheet of flame."

All that night and through the early morning of Sept. 1, hotel staff manned hoses, dousing the hotel, chalets and the Swiftcurrent Auto Cabins complex. The staff was able to save the hotel, but most of the auto cabins and all but two of the old Many Glacier chalets were lost in the blaze. The hotel was saved because of its fireproof slate roof, the fact most trees near the building had previously been cleared, providing a firebreak, and due to the dedication of the staff.

I have not discovered what role, if any, Ray Sleeper played in the saving of Many Glacier Hotel. His job would have dictated his presence, but it's possible he might have missed the fire due to its rapid progress. He was certainly there shortly afterwards, probably Sept. 1. Photographs in his album show the still-smoldering destruction. **We Saved the Hotel** continued on page 29.

Blackie Dillon to the Rescue

by Bruce L. R. Smith (*Many Glacier, 1956-57*)

Blackie Dillon was the most romantic character I had ever met. With his salt and pepper beard, his black cowboy hat, the leather vest and wrangler chaps, he looked like a combination of Ernest Hemingway and Tommy Lee Jones as Captain Woodrow Call in *Lonesome Dove*. There was a certain sadness in his gray eyes which looked at you from under the wide-brimmed cowboy hat and caterpillar eyebrows. His eyes seemed sunk very deep in the crinkly, sun-baked skin, as if to suggest a deep disappointment he wanted to conceal from strangers. They say he was once engaged to a wealthy European woman who threw him to the winds because of his drinking. Another version was that the woman was an Indian princess who froze to death in the cruel winter storm that hit Montana in the last year of the war. The drinking only started then, and he vowed never to love another woman. Some said that Blackie himself was part Indian - that his mother was a Navajo. We all knew that he spoke several Indian languages. There were so many stories about Blackie that your imagination raced whenever you saw him.

Blackie's job when I knew him in the summers of 1956 and 1957 was to handle the horses for the tourists at Many Glacier Hotel in Glacier Park, Montana. He directed a crew of wranglers, drifters, and adventure-seeking kids who helped him with the horses. He spent his winters in jail in Butte; he would go there after having a good drinking spree when the tourist season ended at Many Glacier. He would be released from jail in the spring, have one more drinking spree, then would show up for his duties at Glacier. He remained sober for the rest of the summer. I was a bartender that last summer, and when he came into the bar we always gave him a chocolate milkshake the moment he sat down. I was the newest bartender, having just turned twenty-one, which made you eligible for the job. When business was slow, I'd sit down and chat with Blackie. Not that he talked much: He mostly listened. But he would put in a carefully chosen and pithy



Blackie Dillon with Many Glacier Hotel employees, circa 1955. (Photo courtesy of Tom Francis)

remark now and then that showed you he'd been listening carefully. Everybody loved to talk to Blackie, to tell him their problems and get his approval or wisdom - or just to be around him.

"Blackie," I said one afternoon. "I have something I want to discuss with you. It..um...concerns two of your guys...and...well...Here's the situation." I had the feeling I shouldn't have started into the subject. It was painful for me and must have been for him, too. But it was too late now. I plunged on, trying to be tactful. I told him about the two rather rough-and-ready wrangler assistants (I did not mention their names) who had tried to buy whiskey. I told him I said no. "I assumed you wouldn't want them drinking, not during the day anyway. Was that right?" He nodded. That was all. Didn't even speak. It didn't seem to surprise him or bother him particularly. He was a tolerant man. Worldly. Generous with people. Not given much to righteous indignation.

I didn't elaborate on what had actually happened. Vince was a tall, powerful-looking cowboy. He had a sun-baked face but was very good-looking except for a large scar across his cheek from his ear to his chin. He had come to the back door of the bar the previous afternoon with his sidekick, Taco, a short and heavysset man who incongruously wore a battered old Homburg instead of a cowboy hat.

"Hey, man," Vince said. "You got a bottle? We got a sick friend. Headache, real bad headache. We need somethin' for it...bourbon, man."

I said I was sorry, I couldn't sell him the whiskey. Vince gave a look to Taco. Taco pulled out a wad of bills and started peeling off tens. I shook my head and told Taco to put the money away. Vince noticed that I had paused for a nano-second before answering, and he had a contemptuous smile on his face as they walked off. He muttered something under his breath to his pal, and they both laughed.

The summer went along well enough. I saw a few of Blackie's wranglers with their horses from time to time but didn't see Vince or Taco. Blackie came into the bar nearly every afternoon. Toward the end of June, I began to feel restless. I'd had an attractive job offer in the Minnesota state government for that summer, and I began to feel that I should've taken it. I was making no progress in impressing a certain young woman I liked. I called my father and asked him to see if the position was still open. I also talked confidentially to Blackie, asking him what I should do. After a long and tortured explanation of the situation, I paused and waited for Blackie's answer. He looked at me with his sad, shrewd eyes, then looked down and made a new crease in his cowboy hat, and finally he returned his gaze to mine.

"You gotta do what you gotta do," said Blackie. I thought that pretty well summed up the matter.

So I went to Mr. Lloyd Sielset, the hotel manager, and told him I was considering leaving and wanted to give him notice, and I promised

to try to find a replacement. Mr. Sielset looked at me gravely.

"I never thought you were the kind to leave me in the middle of the summer." I felt bad and must have blushed, for I could feel my face burning. "Will you think it over carefully before you decide to do anything?" I promised I would.

As it turned out, my father called me later in the afternoon and told me to hang onto the job. He had talked to the man who offered me the job and there was no budget left and no job. The next day I went to see Mr. Sielset and told him I had thought it over and had decided I couldn't leave him. He jumped up from his chair and pumped my hand warmly.

"I knew I could count on you," he said.

I didn't feel so good the next day, when my dad called back and said that the Commissioner had

it. He was a very nice guy whom I'll call Fred Jones. He was a very serious-looking fellow with horn-rimmed glasses and a friendly manner. Fortunately, he had a fun-loving streak and was very impressed by the fact that Many Glacier Hotel had three female college-age employees to every college-age male employee. He had quite a prominent nose which I tried to avoid looking at.

"Well, Fred," I said, "as it happens I'm going to have to return to Minnesota and -."

"Please, Bruce," he interrupted. "Call me Hose-Nose. My friends call me Hose-Nose."

Had I offended him? Looked at his nose even though I tried not to? No, he seemed quite sincere, and I started again. "Well, ah, Hose-Nose, as I was saying. Unfortunately, I'm going to have to leave, but I'd like nothing better

Blackie Dillon was the most romantic character I had ever met. With his salt and pepper beard, his black cowboy hat, the leather vest and wrangler chaps, he looked like a combination of Ernest Hemingway and Tommy Lee Jones

made a special effort to find the funds and had a job for me after all. He was looking forward to seeing me the following Monday.

I wondered what Blackie would say to this but I supposed his previous answer was still valid. As luck would have it, one of my friends had a cousin visiting him who was old enough to be a bartender and might be able to take my job if I could talk him into

than to recommend you to take over my job." He didn't need much persuading, it seemed, once he'd heard the ratio of girls to guys on the staff.

My departure was set for the next Sunday afternoon by the train from the East Glacier station. I would get a ride to East Glacier with one of the "gear-jammers" who was scheduled to take one of

Blackie Dillon continued . . .

the guests to East Glacier Sunday morning. Some friends wanted to throw a party for me, and they teamed up with a group of gear-jammers who had decided to have a party for one of their guys who was also leaving. The movers and shakers decided to have the party at what was called the Half-Way House, an abandoned ranch about half-way to Babb, the nearest town. Babb was approximately twelve miles from the hotel, and the Half-Way House was about five or six miles from the hotel.

The gear-jammers' role was key since they could use one of the

gear-jammers and the rest of them would be leveled a bit.

In the planning of the party, the question had come up whether to invite Blackie and his crew. We could not invite Blackie because there would be drinking, and the temptation for him might be too much. Nobody could relax for worrying about Blackie, or so it was said. Perhaps his presence would be intimidating. None of us had actually seen Blackie in the evening; no one, in fact, knew where he spent his evenings. Probably alone in his cabin, it was assumed; for he certainly read a

their departing colleague, who looked composed, sober, and at ease the whole evening. He gave a hug and a kiss to each of the girls who came up to say goodbye. He shook my hand, and put his arm around my shoulder and wished me well. You couldn't help liking the guy. He was a decent person despite being rather full of himself.

Jerry was full of crackpot theories, though, that drove you crazy. He had one notion about boxer shorts versus jockey-type shorts that he kept harping on each time you saw him. He repeated it now, earnestly entreating me to follow doctor's orders.

A ghostly fog had swept in, covering the earth almost like a winter snow.

tour buses to transport the party guests from the hotel to the Half-Way House. We were, in general, jealous of the gear-jammers who were usually a little older than the rest of us; they had their own chalet instead of living in the employee dorm; and they were allowed to have their own cars. The party was mostly for the gear-jammer who was leaving, with me added as something of an afterthought. Most of my friends, though upset at my leaving, were delighted at this particular gear-jammer's departure, because he was an extremely good-looking guy, intelligent, articulate—and, to boot, was a med student. The girls were all in love with him, and the other guys figured that with him gone, the playing field between the

lot. Perhaps he reflected on the past and his lost princess. By a similar logic, Blackie's wranglers could not be invited, either. Some of them were known to be pretty tough and hard-drinking, and they could not be refused liquor if they were invited.

The party several evenings later was going in full force; there was much singing and dancing, shouting and loud talking, and of course a lot of drinking. It was hard to tell how much drinking was going on because some people pretended to be more drunk than they were, while others tried to appear more sober than they were. I tried to enjoy myself but somehow was not enjoying myself much. The gear-jammers were giving loud toasts for Jerry,

"Twenty years from now would you want that guy operating on you?" I said to Fred who was standing nearby. His eyes seemed to roll around like marbles from too many beers, and he didn't catch the intended wit in my remark. I'd had too many beers myself and felt a little sick to my stomach.

I went outside for fresh air and threw up behind a mesquite bush. I felt better immediately. It was a strange, almost eerie; night. A ghostly fog had swept in, covering the earth almost like a winter snow. This often happened at night in the mountains around Many Glacier. The Half-Way House seemed to fade in and out of view as the fog bank danced and drifted in the cool air. I started to walk toward the

Blackie Dillon continued . . .

hill that looked like a large dark hump ahead of me, picking my way carefully. Before long I had climbed a little, and all of a sudden the moon broke through the patch of fog. There was a clearing that was dazzling: the black sky, pin-pricked with bright stars and the shining moon, looked like a poor cover for a luminous brightness that sparkled behind the blackness and threatened at any moment to burst through the dark shroud. In the night air, the mountains across the valley were almost close enough to touch. Yet behind me the fog hung thickly and smudged out everything. I was in an unusual split universe, and I sat there entranced. I was overcome with nostalgia for the Glacier Park I'd soon be leaving. I wanted to pray, but I'd gotten out of the habit and couldn't find the right words.

It was then that I became conscious of the sound – it was coming, apparently, from the fog-bank. What was it? A horse, many horses – cowboys riding through the fog? Vaughn Monroe and his ghost riders in the sky? The sounds died away. The fog muffled them, apparently, and they just sank into the wet sand. This was all very strange; for some reason I wasn't curious enough to dwell on the sounds. My mind was still caught up in the starry, split heavens, and in what lay ahead for my life.

Then came other noises in the distance. The party at the Half-

Way House had gotten noticeably louder; there were shouts and banging noises from the direction of the house. This brought me back to the moment, and I made my way down the hill and back toward the noise, back into the fog. The fog would mysteriously lift here and there, and I then moved quickly, only to be then plunged back again into the gray wetness. The fog seemed to cling to your clothes and to your skin. I still couldn't see the lights of the house, and just headed toward the noise. Suddenly the house was visible, all lit up like an ocean liner in the fog. Only something was wrong. People seemed to be running in all directions.

I came closer, hurrying now, and saw Jerry the gear-jammer standing near his bus shouting directions, hurrying people along like a general ordering his troops.

I ran over to him. "Jerry, what's this? What's happening?"

He pushed me aside and practically threw two girls who looked terrified into the bus. "Okay,

fast, fast. Get in there!" He turned to me. "How'd you get here?"

"With Fred Jones. His old truck."

"Check the house one more time. I think I got everybody. But check. For girls especially. Then get the hell out of here. I'm heading out." He jumped into the bus, which was already idling. The gears ground and the bus jerked forward into the fog.

Fred appeared from somewhere looking very sober and scared. "Fred, what –." I didn't even get out my question.

"Blackie's guys," he said.

"Blackie's? But they —"

Blackie Dillon continued on page 31.



Blackie Dillon at Many Glacier Hotel, circa 1950. (Photo courtesy of Dolores Rose Bryce)

Mrs. Rhody's Kitchen



Mrs. Rhody and her cooks in a Many Glacier Hotel staff photo, circa 1955. (Photo courtesy of

By Dolores Rose Bryce (Many Glacier 1946, 50)

Mrs. Rhody was queen of the kitchen. She presided over her wide domain from a corner throne-desk where she planned menus and kept her recipe file. In her starched white dress, white nurse's shoes, and white hairnet over silver hair, she kept a sharp eye on her crew of summer college escapees and older cooks and waitresses. The former were a constant source of pranks, the latter her serious backups.

The heart of gold peeped through occasionally as she pretended not to see the watermelon or pie leaving the kitchen in the laundry cart. It was a small price to pay for a relatively happy crew who both feared and adored her.

Her throne was a high stool from which she could see the entire kitchen, from the girls turning out the day's total of trail lunch boxes – a sandwich, a fruit and

a dessert – to the long bank of ranges across the way. The ranges were nearly always covered with large pots, pans, and roasters, tended by their women “range riders,” as we called them.

The “pearl divers” had their own enclave, with steam rising from their primitive automatic dishwashers. The huge wooden trays of dishes and silver came out properly scalded to be wiped and stacked on shelves and in drawers that accommodated settings for the

three or sometimes four hundred guests we served at a meal.

The salad pantry was my area, where we squeezed crates of oranges on a devilish machine whose electrical cone whirled around while we pressed each half orange down. We regarded this as liquid gold because of the ache in our arms and wrists it took to produce it. We chopped cabbage for cole slaw, sectioned grapefruit and avocado, quartered and requartered lettuce heads, and



Mrs. Rhody with 1946 Kitchen workers. (Photo courtesy of Dolores Rose Bryce, at far right)

after each meal scrubbed down the counters and work tables until they were properly antiseptic by Mrs. Rhody's standards.

Each meal when we finished the salads, we would make up the plates of dessert. Everything was

homemade, from the luscious huckleberry to the dainty Boston Cream pies, with cakes and puddings for variety. Occasionally a stubborn piece of pie or cake would not come out of the pan in perfect shape, or would be

accidentally dropped and hidden behind the counter. Life in the salad pantry did have its temptations and satisfactions. If caught, we hoped Mrs. Rhody would understand.

Mrs. Rhody and Edward R. Murrow

By Michael Buck (Many Glacier and Glacier Park Transport, 1960-68, 2001-02)

The photograph which illustrates this article shows Mrs. Rhody in her 36th season in Glacier Park. With her is Edward R. Murrow, the famous World War II and mid-century journalist. The time is 1960. The place is the veranda outside the lobby at Many Glacier Hotel. The occasion is the National Governors' Conference, hosted by the National Park Service and the State of Montana.

Mrs. Rhody was a person of uncompromising quality in service, steadfast dedication to duty and unwavering commitment to her position. No one would dare, ever, to invade her domain, her realm, her "sovereign state," if not working there. If you did and escaped, you did so only once, and never did so again. She had created for her an elevated, glass-enclosed perch at the end of the kitchen. From there she would position herself behind a desk, and oversee the efficient operation of the fiefdom. It was like the

bridge, above the flight deck of an aircraft carrier.

I was a part-time dishwasher in the kitchen when not handling responsibilities as a houseman in the hotel. I was never quite sure just who the "officers of the day" were who could approach, let alone climb to Mrs.

Rhody's command post. Occasionally she would descend to the "drafted" level and direct her movements to the Dining Room and confirm that all was in order.

During a meal at the Governor's Conference she strolled into the Dining Room on just such a mission. One of the journalists covering the dinner, Mr. Murrow, caught sight of her and did the unthinkable – he trailed her back into the kitchen. There he asked if he could have a picture of them taken together,

for remembrance's sake. (He, the celebrity, made the request of her – it was not the other way around.) It seems that Mrs. Rhody had been the cook in Murrow's college fraternity house, and that he had not seen her since.



(Photo courtesy of Michael Buck)

I Was Don Hummel's P.R. Man



Glacier Park Lodge employee photo, 1962. Don Hummel is uncharacteristically situated on the far left. John Dobbertin is on the far right. (photo courtesy of John Dobbertin)

By John Dobbertin (Glacier Park Lodge 1962-63)

Summer of '62 started out as a real bummer. Wrapping up my sophomore year at the University of Michigan the good news was I had been named editor of Gargoyle, the campus humor magazine. The bad news: My summer job — it would have been the third year — as a cub reporter for the Battle Creek Enquirer & News (Battle Creek, Michigan) vanished in the depths of the Kennedy Recession.

What is a 19-year-old guy to do? Well, load up a station wagon with two fraternity brothers, a large tent, canoe, something to eat and drink and take off on the brand new Trans-Canada Highway. We headed for Banff & Jasper and the third week of June cruised down toward Glacier Park.

Whoa! Who are those two good looking ladies hitchhiking! Of course we gave them a lift. Turned out they were coeds working for Glacier Park, Inc.

"Hey, you guys should go on down to East (we soon learned this was code for Glacier Park Lodge) and you can work here for the summer," the ladies told us ... adding: "A lot of kids they hired either never showed

up, or when they got here found out it was darn hard work and left."

And so we went to East. Two of us — yours truly and Doug Piper — took employment with Glacier Park, Inc., and George drove the car back to Michigan. Piper scrubbed pots & pans in the kitchen at East, preparing him for his future job building nuclear power plants.

I started out in the laundry. It was a happy enough place to work. However, the hours grew longer every day. What did those housekeeping people do with the endless hamper loads of linen & towels??? Six days a week, eight full hours a day wasn't cutting it. We were asked — for no additional pay — to return to the laundry for evening hours. The issue

— mostly coeds. So two of them and yours truly were elected to go see The Man Himself, Glacier Park, Inc. President Don Hummel. He was most gracious, and the evening hours were eliminated.

It could not have been more than two weeks after I started in the laundry, and shortly after the laundry revolt, that the public relations director for Glacier Park, Inc. was summarily fired for some major infraction of the rules. Upon hearing this, I immediately made my second visit to Don Hummel's office.

"I understand the public relations position is now available," I said. "That is true," Hummel said. "Well, sir, I can do that job," I said.

Hummel looked me up and down, smiled and said:
"The job is yours."

really wasn't about money ... it was about our "free" time! And that's where this ditty started:

"We work in the dark in Glacier Park For Hum-mel, Hum-mel, H-U double M E-L!"

After about a week of this, there was a general rising of the laundry troops

I explained to him I was a journalism major and had two summers' experience as a reporter, and several years before that working on a weekly teen page for the Battle Creek Enquirer & News.

Hummel looked me up and down, smiled and said: "The job is yours."

Hummel's P.R. Man, continued. . . .

I telephoned home for some dress shirts and suits, and the adventure began. During the summer of '62 I spent a lot of time looking through old files, photos — all of the work the Great Northern Railway had done to attempt to keep the name Glacier Park — and the lodges — in the public eye. The summer was so far gone, there wasn't much I could do to gear up the publicity. We did all we could.

By the time I returned for the same job in '63, I had taken the one course in public relations (one-half credit!) offered by the University of Michigan. The presenter was Mike Radock, VP of public relations for the University of Michigan and a member of the Board of Regents. His opening line for the class: "Hi, I'm Mike Radock. I worked at Ford in public relations ... on the Edsel."

Good news upon arriving at East in early June: My digs would be a private room in the Chalet overlooking the brand new swimming pool.

George Plumer had taken the job with Glacier Park, Inc. to both manage the Glacier Park Lodge and head up advertising and public relations. George warmly greeted me and immediately said: "I don't know a blooming thing about advertising or public relations. I hope you do!" And that was the beginning of a great working relationship. George and I shared a very capable secretary, Donna Wilcox — who, if I recall correctly was a coed from Texas.

I had thought a lot about what should be done to start moving Glacier Park, Inc.'s public relations program forward. First, communications with the Glacier Park, Inc.

employees needed to improve and Hummel agreed to a weekly newsletter. So we started "PEN" or "Park Employee Newsletter." We published every Tuesday. It wasn't fancy, but we made every attempt to keep it interesting. In addition to items from the hotels, we included a page of what was happening in the world. It was amazing how fast we all disconnected from world events with no television, radio or newspapers!

Then we made it a point to connect with all convention coordinators upon their arrival at their Glacier Park, Inc. headquarters hotel. First thing I would do is volunteer to be certain their important speeches were written up for press releases — including, of course, the fact of where they were meeting! We established terrific working relationships with United Press International and Associated Press and would telephone the releases to them (no faxes in the Dark Ages!). The result

was a steady flow of news stories all datelined "Glacier Park." All of them moved in the western states — and several made the national wires. All of them were great publicity for the Glacier Park hotels. The convention coordinators also loved the publicity for their organizations. It was great public relations working at its best. Good publicity, happy customers!

One of the best parts of my job was when I traveled up to Many to work on a convention, I stayed in one of the Crow's Nest rooms way up-top overlooking the main lobby. I also used the offices (and typewriter) in the vortex of Ian Tippet's management operation. The Many office scene had to be the source for today's TV drama "West Wing." Nobody ever sat down for very long — especially Ian Tippet!

One of the major conventions of the summer of '63 was the Regional Seminar of State Trial Judges held at



Famed Blackfeet artist John L. Clark. (photo courtesy of John Dobbertin)

Hummel's P.R. Man, continued. . . .

Many July 18-20. Keynote speaker was U.S. Supreme Court Justice Tom C. Clark. Justice Clark really appreciated the article I drafted on his speech to the group. The press release — and several others on this convention made the national wires of UPI and AP. It also didn't hurt that Justice Clark was inducted into the Blackfeet Tribe at a special ceremony at Many. I received a very nice, handwritten "thank-you" on U.S. Supreme Court letterhead from Justice Clark, and that now hangs in the Davenport, Iowa law office of my daughter, Judy.

I started looking for good feature stories with photos that we could also put out to UPI and AP. Blackfeet Indian Artist John L. Clarke was a fixture just up the road from Glacier Park Lodge. Over the two summers, I really got to know John and took bundles of photos of him. He was 82 in '63 (died in 1970). The release (with photos) on John appeared all over the country.

I also was smart enough to purchase one of John Clarke's hand-carved mountain goats — one I watched John carve. I think I paid \$15 for the signed piece in 1963. Last time I heard, it had a collector's value approaching \$10,000. I still am upset I did not rob a bank and purchase the incredible, very large carving of a mountaineer attempting to swing his rifle by the barrel to fend off a charging grizzly. I believe that piece — and several others of great value — were destroyed when John's old house/workshop was destroyed in a fire.

We toured the park, checking in with all of the hotel managers to see what we might do to be of service. One memorable visit was to the Prince of Wales on a very stormy,
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very windy day and night. Over cocktails (my "Shirley Temple") the manager (whose name is gone from my feeble brain) said: "John, the only problem with the Prince of Wales Hotel is that when the wind comes up, we have whitecaps in the toilet bowls."

And suddenly it was past mid-August. Evenings became downright cold. You could feel the pulse of the hotels slowing. And there was a 500-mile Model-T race leaving from the front door of East Glacier Lodge and they wanted someone to crank up some publicity for them. Just too tempting. So off I went. We crossed the Continental Divide three times, ending up on the far eastern side of Montana in a dot-of-a-place by the name of Circle. I filed daily reports with both UPI and AP and the coverage was terrific.

After the Model-T race, I still had 10 days before I had to be back in Ann Arbor for my senior year at the University of Michigan — and my second year editing the Gargoyle. So we headed for the West Coast — Se-

attle and then San Francisco.

Director of Montana State Highway Advertising Doris Stalker had become a "good friend" of Glacier Park Lodge Manager George Plumer, and by reference an acquaintance of mine. She provided me with an open door to the best public relations and advertising agencies in San Francisco. I took full advantage and spent three full days talking with some of the top people in the business to see how I might direct my career.

My one great regret is losing touch with the Glacier Park Lodge employees from the summers of '62 and '63. I can't recall any repeats — other than the central office staff and higher-up maintenance crews.

There are some names I do recall! Does anyone out there from Glacier Park Lodge in '62 know what became of Price (everyone called him by his last name, and I sure don't remember his first name). Price knew everyone in the place by name. And

Hummel's P.R. Man continued on page 30.



The author on Swiftcurrent Lake before outboard motors were banned. (photo courtesy of John Dobbertin)

I Saw Michelle Smile

By Les Davison (*Gearjammer 2001-02*) (Reprinted with permission of GPIs staff publication, "The Glacier Grizzlette".)

It was threatening rain, but Rich Bond had us pulling away from Glacier Park Lodge right on schedule. We were seven rookie drivers in four vans following Rich on our first driving assignment; we were heading to Izaak Walton Lodge to take part in Montana Project Hope. I was Tail-End Charlie as we drove toward Marias Pass. Amid the beautiful scenery, I daydreamed a bit as to how I had come to be here.

It had been only four days since I had arrived from Virginia. The mountains were even more beautiful than I had remembered from my first visit seven years ago. After filling out several reams of paper forms for HR, Deb Murtaugh logged me in to the Transportation Department. Then she showed me the EDR, pointed me to the Jammer Dorm, and said, "See you tomorrow." I found the dorm, brought in my stuff, and then checked my AAA Guidebook to see how many stars the Jammer Dorm rated. Sadly, it apparently has an unlisted rating. But it seemed comfortable enough.

Most of the time since then had been taken up by orientation and classroom instruction. We've gotten a lot of good information, and it's been a great opportunity to get to know the other new drivers - but I can't say the classroom stuff has been a highlight. When we were able to drive up to Logan Pass on the first day it opened for the season - that was a highlight. So I was really enjoying myself as we headed out: this is why I came to Glacier. The drive

was uneventful, and we parked at Izaak Walton Inn.

Montana Project Hope is an organization that arranges special events for seriously ill and/or disabled children and their families. Among the events planned for the kids today were motorcycle rides, highway patrol cruiser rides, tours to Logan Pass (our contribution to the day), helicopter rides, and a cookout at day's end. These are special kids; this would be their special day.

There was the usual milling around at the start, as some children were being suited up for motorcycle rides and other families were on their way to our vans. Wouldn't you know, just then it started to rain. No problem - rain gear seemed to appear from everywhere. I don't think a single child changed his/her mind and got off a motorcycle because of the rain. Big burly bikers swathed in rain gear led

Nearing the summit at Logan Pass, there was quite a lot of snow. I turned to Michelle and asked her, "When we get to the top, how about if you and I throw some snowballs at your brother?"

off, each one carrying a small clump of rain gear clutched to his back. If we could have seen inside, I'd bet a lot of money there was a big smile inside each of those little clumps. We followed the motorcycles in our vans.

A family of four from Billings were my passengers for the day, a young couple with their son Ryan and daughter Michelle. Michelle is a beautiful young lady who just last week graduated from elementary school. She is severely handicapped, and has trouble speaking, and she's

a little shy - but she's sharp as a tack. My heart went out for her.

As we climbed toward Logan Pass, the mountain peaks played hide-and-seek among swirling clouds. We talked a little, but mostly it was "ooh" and "aaah." I tried to think of things to say to Michelle, and it had been pretty dumb stuff. She didn't know me, so she was holding back like kids do. Then, with a little help from her Dad, she told me that her friends at school call her "Cute Brat" - because she is one. She laughed when she said that, and maybe blushed a little, too, and that seemed to break some ice. We talked some more. Just little stuff, but she was warming. Nearing the summit at Logan Pass, there was quite a lot of snow. I turned to Michelle and asked her, "When we get to the top, how about if you and I throw some snowballs at your brother?" It started

kind of slow, but then Michelle's face just seemed to light up. That's got to be the biggest and bestest smile I've ever seen! The whole interior of the van seemed to be aglow. Wow!

After that, the rest of the day is kind of a blur. The van ride was uneventful, the kids absolutely loved the helicopter rides, everyone posed for pictures, and the cookout at the end of the day was great fun and great food for all. Just a fantastic day, for some very special children. Thanks to Rich and GPI for letting us be part of that. I'm looking forward to

Toots' Sweet Shop 1970



by John Hagen (*Many Glacier*
1970-80)

Many Glacier Hotel's St. Moritz Room long has had a fast food operation tucked away along its northern wall. For the past 20 years or so, it has gone by the name of "Heidi's," and has resembled a Quick Stop convenience store, with all manner of snacks wrapped in plastic packages, self-serve ice cream, hot dogs, coffee, and a solitary cashier.

In earlier decades, the St. Moritz held a bustling snack counter, much more labor-intensive than the "Heidi's" form. At one time, it was known as "the Grill," had a hamburger menu, and sent clouds of greasy blue smoke wafting up to the lobby. The Grill drew business away from the dining room, and was replaced in the '60s and '70s by a soda-fountain format with hand-scooped ice cream, milk shakes, sandwiches, and baked goods produced in Many Glacier's own bakery. The

counter lay behind a panel in the wall which was raised on counterweights during hours of operation.

I had the good fortune to spend my first two summers at Many Glacier working in this agreeable little shop. It offered the best work schedule at Many, free food, independence of older supervi-

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sors, and constant socializing with other members of the staff. Employees from all departments flocked to the counter for milk shakes, cookies, and pie to supplement the cafeteria fare.

In 1970, my first summer, the counter was run by Mary Tudor, a descendant of the English monarchical family of that name. Mary went by the nickname of "Toots."

She named her operation "Toots' Sweet Shop."

The Sweet Shop had a crew of four: Toots, Melissa Johnson, Chris Vick, and me. We all were college undergraduates, and (except for Toots) we all were in our first season at the hotel. Chris and I returned for many summers, and Chris became a legendary figure in the history of Many Glacier under the nickname "Wizard."

Chris's sobriquet was derived from "Mr. Wizard," who was the host of an early television show.

The association arose from a mishap involving the snack counter's ancient and highly dysfunctional milkshake-making machines.

One of them had a short circuit which occasionally dealt out a stinging electric shock through the steel mixing can.

In retrospect, it was appallingly dangerous for us to have used

that machine. But those were the days before OSHA regulations, and Glacier's hotels had a vast amount of antiquated equipment. We simply held the can with one hand when using the dangerous machine, to avoid the risk of electrocution. We posted a scoreboard on the wall (entitled "The Zap Sheet") to record the number of shocks which each of

the counterhands absorbed in the course of the summer.

One morning during a rush, Chris and Toots were making milkshakes side by side. They happened to brush hip to hip at the moment that Chris received a nasty shock from the defective mixing machine. I was standing behind them, and was startled to see Toots' pony tail suddenly go flying into the air as the jolt passed from his body into hers. Toots had to sit down for half an hour to collect her jangled nerves. Upon returning, she shakily told Chris, "I have a name for you! Remember the man who did electrical experiments on TV? We're going to call you 'Mr. Wizard!'"

The nickname stuck in part because Chris was an relentless practical joker. Few shifts in Toots' Sweet Shop passed without some sort of Wizardian adventure. Chris sometimes would cut small holes in the paper cups that were used to serve soft drinks, so that the cups would spring spectacular leaks as they were being filled. He also would sometimes slip scoops of ice cream into the pockets of Toots' apron.

The whole crew took part in formalized practical joking through the game of "Freeze!" Each counterhand was allowed two "Freeze!" commands in the course of an afternoon. When the word was

crawled in under the counter. We then made elaborate revisions of the menu which was posted overhead with removable letters. We added elaborate breakfast items — omelets, waffles, and the like

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uttered, the rest of the crew were required to stop dead still in whatever they were doing for 10 seconds. We took great delight in forcing each other to overflow fountain Cokes or suddenly to fall into a trance while waiting on an impatient tourist.

The biggest practical joke of the summer arose after Chris and I discovered a removable panel under the counter in the front wall of the shop. It was evidently meant to give maintenance personnel access to the plumbing. When the panel was off, it was possible to wriggle under pipes and gain after-hours access to the shop.

One night, when the shop was closed, we removed the panel and

— to the usual list of donuts and Danish rolls.

The next day, Toots had the morning shift. As she related it, "A flock of tourists walked up to the counter and started talking among themselves. I thought, 'Hm'm! These peeps are even more confused than usual. They're looking right at the menu and talking about all sorts of things that aren't listed there!' So I stepped up and said condescendingly, 'I'm sorry; we don't have any of those things.' Then they pointed at the menu. I gasped. And the lobby porters [who were in on the joke, and were lurking expectantly nearby] collapsed on the floor in a fit of laughter."

Toots' Tales

(John Hagen photos)

Sweet Shop staff. Chris Vick, Mary Tudor, John Hagen, Melissa Johnson



Happy campers.

Hagen and Vick serve a hungry public



Peace and harmony abound. . . but

Sweet Shop workers in action behind the lethal milkshake mixer.



There is a sinister undercurrent of mischief.

Toot's Sweet Shop, continued. . . .

The whole crew took part in formalized practical joking through the game of "Freeze!" Each counterhand was allowed two "Freeze!" commands in the course of an afternoon. When the word was uttered, the rest of the crew were required to stop dead still in whatever they were doing for 10 seconds.

Tourists were a source of fascination to us, since we met a great variety over the course of the summer. One who especially stood out was The Cookie Lady, a character who visited Many Glacier every year. I was on duty with Toots one quiet afternoon when the telephone rang in the back room behind the counter. Toots answered, then rushed back with an air of breathless excitement. "That was the front desk! The Cookie Lady has just checked in!" she exclaimed.

Moments later, an elderly lady appeared, her fingers gripping the countertop. She was well-dressed, in an old-fashioned manner that included a little hat. Despite her advanced age, she wore no glasses, and her eyes were bright and intense. "Are your cookies

fresh today?" she piped at us, in a shrill and suspicious tone. "Here, bring them over and let me feel them!" Toots picked up a baker's tray of sugar, molasses, chocolate chip, and oatmeal cookies, and brought them over for inspection. The Cookie Lady then felt each cookie, patting and poking them obsessively, like a miser fondling coins, before finally purchasing a few.

Another guest I recall was a cranky man who abusively complained to me that the coffee was too weak. I went into the back room of the shop, ostensibly "to brew another pot." In fact, I took a packet of Sanka instant coffee and stirred it into the cranky man's original cup. The result must have been an absolute witch's brew, like a cup of coffee

filtered through a rancid old cigar. But the cranky man took a seat and drank it down without any further complaint.

Although work at the Sweet Shop was great fun, it was not an uninterrupted frolic. It brought my first experience of death. One afternoon, we served an elderly couple hot dogs and they sat down to eat them at a table nearby. Suddenly, the wife collapsed on the floor. She had suffered a massive heart attack. A group of us immediately began to give cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

We continued the effort to resuscitate her for about an hour. Park rangers were long delayed in arriving (probably due to emergencies elsewhere) and the hotel nurse was away. Boy Scout first-aid courses served us well, but I was amazed at how squalid and messy the CPR experience was compared to sanitized training sessions. The poor old woman's ribs were cracking audibly as we pressed on her sternum, her stomach inflated grotesquely with



Toot's Sweet Shop, continued. . . .

air, and gastric juice belched up into her mouth. We began to rinse our own mouths with Coke to purge them of the gruesome taste. We felt completely helpless and wretched with the grieving husband close by. At last a doctor arrived with a portable electroencephalograph. It showed a flat reading, and he instructed us to stop the CPR.

At about the same time, two fellow Many Glacier employees were killed when their car spun off a rain-slicked mountain highway coming back from Kalispell. The

two (Dennis Dunne and Jerrilyn Johnson) were bar employees who worked next to us in the old St. Moritz bar. We held an aching memorial service for them in the St. Moritz Room, in front of the stage where we showed the care-free musical "Little Mary Sunshine." The summer's memories are a poignant combination of joys and sorrows.

Thirty-three years later, I still find delight in thinking of Toots' Sweet Shop — the Zap Sheet, the "Freeze!" commands, the Cookie

Lady and other colorful guests, and the idyllic shifts behind the counter. Many Glacier Hotel in the Tippet Era was full of Dickensian charm, and we were like the waiters in a Dickensian inn, full of merriment and rollicking good fun.

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tion.

It was in the aftermath of the fire that the "We saved the hotel" telegram was sent. While the telegram may have had hotel manager Omar Ellis's name on it, it was almost certainly the idea of Ray Sleeper and sent at his suggestion. Of all the people on site, they were the only two who would have had the familiarity with headquarters staff, William Kenney in particular, to feel comfortable in addressing someone so high up in railway management in such a manner.

What makes Ray Sleeper the likely inspiration for sending the telegram is the fact he'd sent nearly the same message a year earlier and gotten the same response. It had happened during the 1935 Boundary Creek fire that threatened the townsite of Waterton Park. As the fire neared

the townsite, Great Northern dispatched Sleeper and five other hotel company men to protect "our property" — namely, the Prince of Wales Hotel.

Sleeper's "I saved the hotel!" telegram remained a private company matter until 1939 when, just days after William Kenney's death, an article appeared in a St. Paul newspaper containing humorous recollections about Kenney, including a reference to Sleeper's telegram and Kenney's "Why?" response.

Great Northern Railway president Frank Gavin wanted to know the truth of the story and had a staff member dig through the files, confirming that the infamous "Why" telegram had been sent August 11, 1935. "It is hard to understand how this gets out to the newspaper men at this time," the memo to Gavin stated.

When Kenney sent the "Why?" reply in 1935, however, he was not joking. The Depression had seen Glacier rail passenger arrivals, both individuals and tours, plummet. The effect was immediate and most pronounced on hotel bookings and saddle horse trips. Business was so slow at the Prince of Wales Hotel that Great Northern did not bother to open it for three summers: 1933, 1934 and 1935. Added to that was the repeal of Prohibition in the United States. "With the removal of Prohibition, there is not the reason for this hotel, nor will there be any possibility of making it of any particular value," Kenney groused in a July 1935 letter.

Just two weeks before the Boundary Creek fire, a hotel company executive had suggested to Ken-

Saved the Hotel continued

Hummel's P.R. Man, continued from page 24

then there was B-B-B Bob (worked in the laundry) from the Bay Area, a guy who never let a slight speech impediment slow him down! Bob had made a quick departure from Yellowstone employment in '61 after he and a friend pulled a memorable stunt. They found a length of pipe and attached an old steering wheel to it. Bob drove it in the ground near the Old Faithful viewing area and his pal stood about 100 feet away. When they knew Old Faithful was about to blow, the friend hollered to Bob: "OK, Bob, let her go!" And there was a football player from Washington State (bellman) and his "steady" who was also an employee (laundry).

We also had a "famous-by-association" employee — waitress in the dining room whose older sister was married to a U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

The experience in the two summers working for Glacier Park, Inc., were a super boost for my career. How lucky can one guy be?

Life after Glacier: Fulfilled a University of Michigan Journalism Department internship as a reporter/sub-editor at the Beirut Daily Star, Beirut, Lebanon (1964-66); taught English-as-a-second-language at Hagazian College, Beirut; freelanced

in Asia Minor and Western Europe for Copley News Agency; briefly a reporter for the Kalamazoo Gazette, Kalamazoo, MI; was in public relations for Johnson Outboard Motors, then Zenith Radio Corp.; directed the Chicago Boat Show and a large trade show for the marine industry; co-founded Professional Exposition Management Company, Inc, producing trade shows and public events, which I sold to Capital Cities/American Broadcasting Companies, Inc., allowing me to take my "I Quit Money" and quit in 1987 at the ripe age of 45.

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walked halfway around the northwest side of the lake, then found a faint trail up to a peak overlooking the lake. A monument there said that it was Forum Peak (at the junction of Montana, Alberta, and British Columbia).

We looked down long scree slopes southwest of that peak, and it looked easy. We ran down scree to a small stream (we later found that it was the headwaters of Kintla Creek). A faint game trail angled up a hillside south of the creek, and we walked up it until we reached a waterfall. We climbed a cliff by the waterfall and entered a weird flat basin filled with alpine larch around two small ponds. Most of the ground was still snow-covered. We camped there, with no idea of where we were (we had no map, as was usual for me at that time).

We found that dead alpine larch branches burn up faster than cardboard.

We got a good sleep, had breakfast, and then packed up and headed to a notch in the wall southwest of us. We walked through that notch and suddenly there was a human trail! We were

before reaching the game trail to Forum Peak. Alice and Jane and I hiked up a major trail to the Alberta/British Columbia border two years ago, and followed a very crummy trail from there to Forum Peak. It was an interesting hike, but I can't recommend it.

I'm eager to repeat the short,

I've never repeated that trip, but would like to.

on Boulder Pass! Needless to say, we walked the trail to Goat Haunt and took the launch to Waterton. Norman didn't complain, but he drove back to California the next morning, while I led my hike to Grinnell Glacier.

I've never repeated that trip, but would like to. The trail around the lakeshore is now blocked

fast route from the lakeshore to Forum Peak. Canada is so "eco-friendly" now that we might be arrested if we went beyond the "trail closed" marker beside the lake. However, if we quickly continued into the Kintla Valley they would not capture us. But I have too many dreams!

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“Mad as hell they weren’t invited. They were already drunk when they arrived. Things got ugly fast.”

A mattress flew out of the upper story window and landed at our feet. A whiskey bottle sailed over our heads and I ducked instinctively, pulling Fred down with me. Another object whistled by. Something, perhaps a rock, clanged against the side of the bus as it ground its way along the bumpy road.

“Get your truck started, Fred. I’ll check the house. We’d better get out of here fast.”

When I got to the house, several wranglers were banging on the old piano in the corner of the living room and singing. Two others were wrestling, or dancing, in the middle of the room, barely able to stand. A waitress, Betty, was slumped on the battered old couch in a stupor. I shook her and dragged her to her feet. The wrangler with her was Vince. “Hey, man, what are you –.” He made a grab for Betty but I had her out the door before he could react. I practically carried her along to Fred’s old delivery truck and pushed her into the back of the truck. She was wide awake now. There were three other people crouching in the truck. I jumped inside and shouted for Fred to take off.

“What?” Fred turned his head and was looking through the partition at us.

“Get going!” But just then the

back door was yanked open and someone had a grip on Betty’s ankle and was dragging her out of the truck. “Wait, Fred,” I yelled. “Hold it.”

I got out of the vehicle and saw Betty being dragged across the sand by Vince and Taco. Taco was still wearing his Homburg hat. Both were very drunk.

“What the –.” Fred came running around the side of the truck. He and I and Charlie, the other guy in the back of the truck, started after Vince and Taco.

“Let her go, Vince.” I said.

Vince dropped her leg and squinted at me. A patch of fog came between us and then slid away. I advanced a few steps. Fred and Charlie took Betty back to the truck. She was shaking and unable to speak. Vince crouched down like a wrestler, moving his arms and circling. There was a knife in his right hand, the blade held so that about two inches stuck out below the knuckles.

“Put it down, Vince.” I said.

Vince continued circling, still in his crouch. I picked up a rock and held it in both hands in front of me, circling away from Vince. And then both of us seemed to hear it at the same time. We froze in some kind of insane still-life pageant in the fog. The sound was still distant but it came more distinctly: Clap-clip-clip-clap-pity-clap-clip-clip...

We looked at the fog-bank and

could make out a single figure on a horse. The horse slowed from a trot to a walk, and we could make out the black hat and a poncho wrapped around the shoulders against the night air. The white horse snorted out little foggy, steamy breaths as it came to a stop near the group of six or seven wranglers standing behind Vince.

“Boys, get on your horses,” Blackie said.

The wranglers moved around like ghosts of Hamlet’s father in the fog. They seemed rather meek all of a sudden. They mounted and formed a procession of black mounds against the gray fog. Blackie wheeled his horse around and dismounted; he walked slowly to where Vince was standing – as it were, frozen. He said something that I couldn’t hear and took the knife from Vince, who just seemed to droop. I noticed, maybe for the first time, that Blackie was very short. Blackie carefully put the knife back into the leather holster on Vince’s belt, fastening the strap over the handle. He helped Vince, who was staggering now and having difficulty standing, onto his horse. He may have tied him somehow, for Vince seemed to slump forward against the horse’s neck, his arms appearing to embrace the animal. Blackie took the reins of Vince’s horse and led him slowly to the head of the ghostly procession. They began to clap-clap into

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ney that “it might be possible to dispose of it (the Prince of Wales Hotel) to other interests. . . . It can only operate at a heavy loss.”

Such was not Kenney’s thinking regarding Many Glacier Hotel. Many was vital to the railway’s hotel operations in Glacier, its backbone. Kenney revealed as much just days after the Heaven’s Peak fire when he said that the “only worry I had about the Many Glacier Hotel is that it is the key to the whole thing and if we did not lose the other hotels, it would be a serious loss to us.”

It seems obvious that Sleeper and Ellis were toying with Kenney’s emotions when they fired off the “We saved the hotel!” telegram, recalling the earlier incident. And Kenney recognized it as a practical joke, fulfilling his role with the “Why?” reply.

The telegram was Ray Sleeper’s last hurrah in Glacier. By October, Sleeper was hospitalized at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., with complications from his high blood pressure. He died Oct. 12, 1936, three days after suffering a stroke and just a month and a half after the Heaven’s Peak fire.

Cora and Ruth Sleeper moved back to St. Paul following Ray’s death and remained there for the rest of their lives, Ruth eventually getting a job in the Immigration Service and looking after Cora, who lived to be 100. Cora died in 1991; Ruth in 2001.

Ray Sleeper’s death would open the door for a young understudy, Cy Stevenson, to take over the job. Stevenson remained as chief engineer of the hotel company until the 1980s, by then under new management.

Even the Thompsons came out okay, despite the tragedy of Otto’s death that marred their initial departure from Glacier. Otto Thompson’s wife, Margaret Thompson, went on to write the book *High Trails of Glacier National Park* (1936) – one of four books she would author – and became superintendent of the Benton County School System (1950-1963) in Washington state. She died in 1969. Of her adopted children, William went on to live a full life. He died in 1984; his children live in California. I’ve yet

Blackie Dillon continued from page 31.

the mist. Then Blackie dropped the reins of Vince’s horse and held up his arm. The line of dark figures halted, and Blackie wheeled his horse slowly around and came over to where we were standing. He appeared to recognize me and leaned forward in the saddle.

“I want you boys here the first thing tomorrow morning. You clean up.” He motioned with his head toward the house. “Take tools from my work shed. Fix anything that needs fixin’. Anything you can’t fix that needs fixin’, you tell me. Is that clear?”

“Yes, sir,” I said.

to learn Peggy’s fate.

While there’s more research to be done on Ray Sleeper and Otto Thompson, I’m extremely grateful for Martha Davidge sharing her information with me. Now we all better understand the circumstances behind that most famous Glacier incident, “We’ve saved the hotel! – Why?”

Blackie turned his horse and rejoined the procession. They disappeared into the fog, and we heard the strange mournful clatter of the horses’ hooves dying away in the night air.

So ended the encounter and my summer. I never saw Blackie after that summer. Yet I do see him still, these many years later, disappearing into the fog at the head of his ghostly procession.

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