

*Dr. H. K.*  
Hsun:

Afternoon of August 20th, 1910, until after the fire.

The afternoon of August 20, I went to Borax to get 40 men from Breen to move to Big Creek. On the way up, I remarked to Breen that we were going to have a thunder shower -- there were black clouds rising in the west; and when we got to Borax we were informed that the fire had got away on Pine creek and that was the thunder clouds we saw. So I made arrangements with the forty men to be moved to Big creek the next day, and returned to Saltest that evening. I went to bed about 10 o'clock, and at 11 o'clock one of the patrolmen came to me and told me that the fire was at Borax. I got up and telephoned Wallace, and the wire went down; then I got Mullan on the line and was informed that the fire was all around there at that time, and they were going to leave the telephone. Then I tried to get Missoula, and got Hamilton instead, and all they knew was that there was a big fire; and about ten minutes afterward, that line went out. I went down town and sent messages to all the crews I knew of -- Phillips' and Breen's crews, and told them either to stay where they were, if I considered it safe, or to move to some safe place which I designated; and they did. About that time Breen <sup>came</sup> ~~phoned~~ in and informed me that it was impossible to hold the camp at Borax, and that they were going to come down. I told him to go back and try to hold Borax camp as it was in a big burn and it was safe, I thought, there. Just as he got to the Borax bridge, he met 50 soldiers and about 70 other men starting out.

He had some time trying to induce them to go back and try to hold the camp. However, they all went back and held the camp and drove the fire around it.

After things had quieted down at Borax, Breen came to Taft and the fire had just got there, so they gathered up what men they could and tried to keep the lumber at the ranger station from burning and some of the buildings at Taft. They drove the fire around Taft and saved one or two buildings, besides most of the lumber at the ranger station.

In the meantime, a relief train from Wallace arrived from Saltese, and there were several empty box cars at Saltese, and we gathered up all the women and children and sent them on toward Missoula, keeping all the men that would stay to fight fire at Saltese. The fire did not arrive at Saltese until the evening of August 21, although it had been smoky all day and we had to pack lanterns around there the same as night.

On the evening of the 21st, Silcox sent down 100 buckets and 40 men by the N.P. relief train. They got in Saltese and decided that it was no place for them and started to pull out. However, the fire had jumped over Saltese and burned the bridges out ahead of them, so when they came back we gathered up the men and strung them out along the fire line. And from about 9:30 in the evening until 11 o'clock that night, with about 70 men in Saltese, we succeeded in driving the fire around the town by backfiring and whipping it out as it came in. We had water and water pails on every building, and ladders on every building.

(Got ahead of my story.)

One the 21st -- during the day of the 21st here, there had been one man at Taft drunk in a building, and he was burned pretty bad, but not seriously. Mr. Breen brought him to Saltese and the doctor wrapped him in absorbent cotton and we put him in a box car and put two men to look after him. Along came a friend of his, and it being dark in the car, he lit a match. The match ignited the absorbent cotton at once and the man jumped up and knocked one of the guards down and ran out on the railroad track. He came running down toward Breen, waving his arms and jumping, all ablaze. We ran up to him and grabbed him and threw him down and put the fire out. We took him back to the box car, and he died in a few minutes.

Shortly after that a reporter came up from Missoula and asked me if I could n't give him some dope about the fire. He stayed around there a few minutes, and I went over to the north part of town, and when I came back he was crawling into the N. P. water tank. I guess that is the reason there was n't much dope written about the Saltese fire in the Missoulian.

About 11 o'clock the wind changed to the north, and we completed the fire line around the town, and dismissed everybody, except twenty-five patrolmen.

The Borax crew had not been heard from, and two other men and myself were detailed to go over and find them - over at the head of \*\*\* (?) creek on the St. Joe. On our way over,

we met them coming out and came back to Saltese with them.\*

Other crews were handled as follows:

Camp, Middle Fork of Big creek with 40 men; These men were in charge of Forest Assistant Clifford, and they all piled on the relief train and went in to Missoula.

Beyer - Gilt Edge creek - 30 men; ordered to stay there.

Hayes, Monitor Mine, 35 men; order to come to head of Gilt Edge creek. These were the only crews that were in any danger, outside of two where Breen was.

Phillips had one crew - 50 soldiers - at Borax.

The big problem after the fire<sup>s</sup> was to rig up some place to feed the men and get supplies in. All the store-keepers and butcher-shop men had left town, so we had no difficulty in getting all the supplies there were in Saltese.

Out of the whole 1910 fire fighting there was n't a man hurt enough to lay him up temporarily for a day or two, except young Polleys who was killed early in July by a falling tree. Hayes, at the Monitor Mine, was a deputy supervisor on the Gallatin. He took his men right with him; told them he had authority to use a six-shooter, and there were only two or three of them that rebelled.\*\* I sent a messenger, but succeeded in getting Hayes on the telephone before he arrived. Sent a messenger up Big Creek and he got there all right; traveled two miles but had lots of time to make it. Messenger knew the way all right and guided them. This messenger was a good live kid: the minute he heard of the fire he rushed over and woke me up.

Saved the bunch. I just picked him up. He was beating his way on a freight train, and I asked the conductor if there were any hobos on there, and he was amongst the bunch. Had five of them and they proved to be good workers. -- Twenty bridges and twenty-one trestles were burned out.

Notes for preceding page.

\* I wonder if this could have been Halm's crew. *no CR*

\*\* As I remember it, these men wished to seek shelter in a nearby tunnel.