

1910

HARRY S. KAUFMAN  
Contact  
Montana

Forest Ranger. Absaroka National Forest.

JULY.

30. Eyman and I came to Contact, where I met Lantry in the evening. Eyman and I receive orders to report to Missoula to fight fire, at once. We went to Livingston that night.
31. Sunday: Arrived at Missoula at noon and after receiving orders from Greely, I then went to Knoxon, near the Idaho line, arrived there at 9:00-P.M. The whole country is a fire. Eyman went to Paradise.

AUGUST.

1. Martin, Ellis and myself, fought fire around Noxon until train time, 2:00 P.M., we then came to the Contractors Spur, where we received provisions and tools and some men. We all walked to Martin Cr. on lookout for fire. Ellis went to camp.
2. Marten and I went to the fire camp and took men over on the ferry with us. Marten left again and went to Sneads. I had a crew of 42 men. I remain in camp and took charge.
3. Started men out and checked time and tools, then went across to meet 50 men on No.8, which did not stop. I went to see Marten at Vaughn's and there met 2 men out of the crew who stated that the remainder were at Tuscos Station; I then went up there and brought the entire outfit back to my camp and gave them their breakfast, after which. I again took them across the river and turned them over to Marten.
4. The night crew came in and stated that they held the fire line all OK. Ellis arrived after breakfast time, 5:30 A.M. after which he again returned to Marten's camp. In the afternoon, I made a tour of the entire fire line and found it all OK. and perfectly under control. Had a night crew out to patrol the burnt area. Supplies arrived on No.7.
5. Sent the men all out on the fire line and sent lunch out while I moved camp, had 2 teams to do the hauling. We moved camp about 6 miles up Swamp Cr. to Petersons clearing. One man quit me this A.M. but was lucky enough to get another and thus keep the crew at the same number.
6. Fighting fire and doing good. Went over the fire line and the burn, found things all OK. and the fire just the same as ours.
7. Sunday: Fighting fire and "praying for rain". We quit trenching and are now cutting the snags and putting out small pot fires. Nottingham brought up the beef.
8. Six men quit this morning, being as they were out of shoes and very near out of clothes. All hands on fire line. Sent Roy and crew of ten to the top of the divide to put out a few small fires burning high up. I sent 7 others up with provisions. In the afternoon I went out over the fire line, thence to Nottingham's after the supplies, but did not get them. I remained for the night.
9. Received the supplies and had Nottingham to haul them up to camp. I again went out over the fire line with the night crew.

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10. Fire pretty well out except the burning snags along the line. Roy and crew return at 2:00-P.M. after dinner, they again went out and started war on the snags.
11. Roy and I went back on top of the ridge to Dry Creek divide, over which the fire was coming with a vengeance. We then return to the crew. Roy remained with the crew, while I went to Nottingham's and Vaughn's ranches and sent in an order for supplies. I then return to camp and d--- tired too.
12. Nottingham arrived early with supplies and moved me and 5 men with a part of the outfit to the mouth of Swamp Cr. He then returned and moved the remainder of the outfit to the upper side of Swamp Cr. where we could get action on the Dry Cr. fire.
13. Roy came down after tobacco, which he obtained at the commissary at the Steam Shovel camp. The supplies also arrived which went up to the big camp. Roy and Nottingham took them up. I went out over the fire line and found it all OK. Newman came down after shoes as his were all in.
14. Ellis went to Noxon and I went over to the other camp and packed and started his pack outfit for him, during his absence. My small fire still burning.
15. Still fighting the small fire, we backfired this afternoon.
16. A very windy and smoky day. Fires burning every where, it seems the whole country is a-fire, judging by the smoke. Carney came down after a pair of shoes. Three men quit me today, were all in.
17. Eight men quit to day, some all in and others found the hill climbing a little to hard for them, I sent in their time and let them go.
18. My luck still prevails, as I was able to get back 2 men that had quit and also picked up 5 more. Country very smoky.
19. Took two men up to the main camp, found everything going smooth. I return again in the afternoon, and was informed by the flunky that the little fire above camp was getting away from my guards stationed there, after I had ate a lunch, I went up to the fire line, but every thing was all OK., but I kept the men out all the night, never the less.
20. Sent Nottingham and team to the other camp after a few supplies and 5 men, they arrived at 4:30-P.M. The fire across the river, that Ellis and crew were fighting broke out proper, which being whipped by a strong gale, came over the Marten Cr. divide like fury and put Vaughn's and Wilcox's ranches very much in danger. After supper I sent out the night crew and then went over to see if I could be of any help, when there, I found it a very serious affair. I immediately started back fireing, later on the sparks jumped the river thus compelling me to return to my camp and route the day crww out of their beds and take them to the small fires on the river, back above Nottingham's ranch. We finally got them under control at 1:00-A.M.

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AUGUST.

21. This morning the wind is still blowing furiously and further more, if this wind don't let up, there is no telling where the fire will go to or what it will do. Fitzpatrick, the packer, who I had sent to the other camp to bring out the other crew, returned and reported that he had gave the warning and went after a team, but was cut off on all sides, and by quitting his horse and going down into a well and thus saved himself. It was nip and tuck between us and the flames, all the day, to see which would have the Nottingham's buildings. At about 3:00-P.M., Ranger Clark arrived with a bunch of 10 men that had been run out of Stearns Cr. which crowd, he emmediately turned over to me and of course, made the world look a little brighter. This evening we have the fire under control but the other crew has not arrived and am, myself, a little doubtful as to whether they will ever arrive. Every body is working like beaver. The wind is terrific.
22. The wind let up a little this morning, so I went across the river and there met Ellis, with the supplies for me, which I needed very much. Vaughn's house still stands, but every thing else on the West Side of the river is gone, even the R.R. trestle and the Co. This morning there's a crew of about 400 men at work building a new, temporary, road around the trestle, before I could return to camp, Newman, one of my men came after me, stating that the other part of my crew were coming in, in ones and two's and crippled, and also that some were killed. I immediately return and found them in hard times, so I set all hands busy washing their eyes and dressing the wounds. Two were horribly burned. I then called for 6 men to accompany me out over the burn to get the rest of the boys that were lost. We struck out at a rather fast gait and took some milk and other necessary supplies along. We found my foreman and one man coming along the trail, all in and the man all burned. I sent two men back with them, and I then went on, went to the Ranger Station, up on Swamp Cr. but could not find any trace of the missing 9 men. I again return to camp and find Fitzpatrick's little horse alive and in rather hard times, as he was pretty well singed. On my arrival in camp I found 5 more men had arrived and the two wounded, I immediately started to give a bath and put some clean underwear on them and made them a good couch of hay. I also sent a man to Trout Cr. to telegraph for a Dr. I sat up all the night awaiting the arrival of the Dr. but he did not come. The boys, about midnight, seemed a little better.
23. No Docter arrived, so after starting the boys out, I dressed Anderson and started for Plaines, his home. I delivered him in good shape, then I sent the Dr. around, seen the Corner and left on a frieght train to Thompson Falls. Called upon Bushnell at his office, and met Clark, the Ranger there.
24. Brought a host of supplies and truck for the boys and returned to camp on 41. The dead had been brought in and again removed to Noxon for burriel.
25. Roy and I went out over the fire line, thence into Noxon, where I seen Clark and Ellis. I squared up every thing and made ready to leave, as I was ordered to Thompson with the crew. I tried to get the tickets on the trains, request, but nothing doing, I would have to use tickets on on day of issue, so Roy and I returned on a freight train.

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AUGUST:

26. Had Nottingham to sign up all the vouchers, and then I went to Noxon and took Jacobs along. I got the tickets (41) and returned to the spur on the Dinky, where I met the crew, all hands off for Thompson Falls. After dinner I "rounded up" the entire crew and started, after the wagons, to camp. Had a H---! of a time getting started, but I finally got into camp with all hands at 10:00-P.M.
27. Set up camp and also went out to the fire, in company with Roy and Ranger Brown. We found a ground fire and it burning its self out.. We then came down on the creek bottom.
28. All hands cutting trail, so as to be able to move camp to the fire. Roy returned at noon. In the evening, Johnson and I went to Thompson.
29. The crew finished cutting the trail. Johnson got excused from the jury, we returned in the evening. Roy reports very little fire.
30. Working on the fire line, very little fire. At 3:30-P.M. it started raining, not very fast, but fast enough to put a dampner on it.
31. All hands, again on the fire area, cutting down snags and putting trail around the fire where we found it. In the afternoon, it started raining for fair, all hands quit the fire line and came in, soaked to the hide.

SEPTEMBER.

1. Raining all the A.M. Roy and I came to Thompson after the wagons to move the camp. All hands went to Thompson and were paid off.. Cleared during the evening.
2. Roy and I came to Noxon on 41, then went to see Clark about the horses, which was OK.
3. Roy and I took an early start with the horses and went to Nottingham's ranch, where we crossed on the ferry, after dinner we went up Swamp Cr. in search of the stolen tools. We found one cache of 4 axes and 2 handles, the remainder, we could not find. We took the axes along and then left them at Nottingham's ranch. On our return, we were caught in a severe rain storm and were soaked to the hide.
4. Sunday:
5. Labor Day: Nothing doing, but rain at intervals.
6. Left Noxon and came on to Thompson, where I received my transportation request. I secured a ticket and started for Livingston Mont. on No.6. Snowing and raining enroute.
7. Arrived in Livingston OK. but tired and sleepy. Quite stormy. I phoned out to the Knight ranch for my horses. Horses arrived in the evening.
8. Had the horses shod in the A.M. Did not leave town, as it was very stormy and no sign of it letting up, so I remained in town.