

The Jerry Chronicle
A horse, a mule, and a kid

By Richard Crandall

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1. Jerry meets the Kid

This is the story of a mule. Officially he was named Jerome, and like the rest of us when in trouble it was the full name Jerome Carlson, but simply Jerry to all that knew him. Though more words usually came with it when you were talking to him, most of them were descriptive and colorful if not unkind depending on the situation at hand.

Jerry was just white. He was almost albino except for his bright blue eyes and one black spot on his unmentionables when they were extended. Unlike most mules there was the look of mayhem in the eyes, and I never saw an animal that could smile in such a way to let you know it was time to look for something to happen, or the smile that said it just did.

This is also the story of a twelve year old boy from Los Angeles who having been raised much of his younger years living with grandparents who were hard working and wrought with common sense in a railroad house in the iron country of northern Minnesota. His mother was of the same stock. A new father as well from just plain folks out of Kansas and Oklahoma. The kid never fit the city. He would grow up here.

The story starts when the Assistant District Ranger for the Pomeroy District of the Umatilla National Forest traded out two mules he had no use of, especially since one was showing signs of being a little hard to handle. Ellis Carlson was a barrel of a man of whom it was once said that when they put a two way radio in his car it was a

waste of the tax payers money, he did better yelling out the window. He could handle the mules, he just didn't need them. He traded them for two jugs of moonshine.

As he explained it, once the trade was made he took a couple of shots off the moonshine and passed out next to a river. Waking up hours later he poured the rest in the river, and announced "There were some happy fish that day."

Jerry and his brother were used to pack by their new owner, but not for long. On the trail Jerry had a tendency to want to do what he wanted, resulting in his brother falling off a short cliff breaking a leg. Thus the owner having made no better deal than Ellis, gave Jerry back with never so much as a word of thanks.

Ellis being a man of sound mind and good heart gave Jerry to the government. The circle was complete, and Ellis would have the last laugh.

Thus, Jerry was a government mule.

In the corral with him was his best friend in the world, and the only one he ever respected or cared for much, a horse with the name of Smokey. Smokey was a dapple grey with a dark mane and tale. The kid would ride him for four summers. Smokey had the demeanor of someone who was your best friend, the one who was always there and asked no more of you than you come along. Sitting him was like riding a rocking chair, with one exception. He had one pigeon toed front hoof on the left that made him have to snap his knee going down hill. The first time you saw it or felt it you thought he was falling. He never did and you soon found that you could shift your weight a little to help him out.

There was a Rhone named Red who was the third wheel, and like Smokey he had the temperament that said I would rather being going somewhere and let's get it done.

That first year had two others for a while, the huge Palomino by the name of Charlie who could carry anything and required a rock or fence to get on if riding him. Charlie had the disposition of a horse consigned to his fate. His emotion said simply, "What ever". It was almost like Eeyore in Winnie the Pooh. There was also for while a maniac of a Morgan that belonged to Ellis and only Ellis could comfortably approach much less ride.

Add to that the twelve year old kid from Los Angeles and you have the makings of adventure.

The first week there my dad had to go to fire camp in Pendleton, the Umatilla National Forest Head Quarters office leaving my mother, brother and I to learn the station and the daily stuff of splitting wood for the stove, caring for the horses and mule, and getting things open.

My mother fit right in. She had been raise in Minnesota on a wood stove in a railroad house. The same one I had. She was looking forward to cooking on a wood stove like she had as a railroad kid in Minnesota. She would soon learn to bake with the oven door open a little. If the men were on a fire she often learned over the hand crank phone they were almost done and it was time to crank up the stove, it heated a tank of water for hot water that would accommodate two baths for the three who would need one.

When we moved to Altadena, which is the town running up the hill you see when they show the mountains from the Rose Bowl, it still had a few dirt streets up near the mountains. I had taken care of the neighbor's horse at the Kellogg estate when I was nine and ten, so I knew how to groom and feed. On the way home from school I used to stop to see the Los Angeles County Sheriff's horses until one of them bit a chunk out

of my shoulder. I had to learn a one mule is different and you had better watch yourself, and Ellis' stallion was crazy and not to approach him.

But this is the story of a kid and a mule, and a new found friend named Smokey he had just found to tie the three together. But it is as much of family and growing up at a time now gone. They world of Norman Rockwell is now said by some to never have existed, and this will serve to prove them wrong.

1953 seems a long time ago when you look at how things were done back then. On a fire my brother and I could go along and work the fire beside the men. Our station, Clearwater was the main station for the Pomeroy District of the Umatilla, in that it was the only one with two men working it. With only two permanent employees, District Ranger Spike Armstrong and Assistant Ranger Ellis Carlson the rest of the total of seven were summer. I understand there are now more than seven at Clearwater alone.

There were two jobs first on the list for the district. Fix the damage winter had done to the phone system was first. Second would be to take the individual who would be the lookout in the Oregon Butte where he would live all summer.

The phones were simple. There was a wire that ran between each station. At each station was a crank phone. Numbers were easy, we were two logs and two shorts, which was the difference in how long you cranked the thing. Each individual had their own style, sort of like knowing who knocks at the door by the knock. Any call anyone could listen too, it was the ultimate party line. Crank something that made no sense and everyone would answer, making it something of a conference call.

The job was to get the wire back up. Snow, falling trees, and occasionally hunters wanting wire for something broke it down. The process was again simple. Find

both ends and slice them by clamping a led sleeve on it, and putting it back in the tree by tying a two piece ceramic insulator around it with more of the same number 9 wire.

For a twelve year old it was great adventure, but the issue of climbing the tree with spikes around your ankles and a strap around your waist to put the insulator on the tree would take most of the year to accomplish. It is both a skill and a test on city legs to walk bull legged while swinging the strap up as you go, then locking your legs and trusting the strap while you did the insulator. Lose the lock on the knee and you slide down the tree face first.

But it was the second job, the one to Oregon Butte that would prove the task that would bring me to the mountains, and to a lifestyle reading about does not do justice. Once done, it is in you forever.

Spike Armstrong was not only the District Ranger, he was a scout master. The trip to Oregon Butte would be one of their outings. He also never traveled without his dog Daisy, a large golden Labrador who never met anyone she didn't like. She was on her own when they were in the woods. He never brought food along for her, making her an excellent hunter. Spike was skinny as a rail, always moving, and a lot tougher than he seemed.

The issue was to take the horses and Jerry cross country to meet at the end of the road to use them to pack a summers provisions and a Journalism major from Sacramento State University to a lookout where he would be all summer watching for fire. Oregon Butte was also the most isolated spot in the district, and it consisted of a box of a house sixteen feet square tied to the top of a rock ridge with cables. It was exposed to everything Mother Nature could throw at it, and a few other things to be learned later. His only communication all summer would be a two way radio, and once

in a while someone to bring more food. The outhouse was a hundred yards away tucked in the nearest trees.

Spike asked my brother and I to go along, and my parents were as glad to have us get the opportunity as we were. We would meet the scouts, do the day long task of packing the lookout, and ride back the third day.

I rode Smokey for the first time, my brother had Red, and Spike using Ellis's attitude of, "we are going to do this Mr. Horse so you better get used to it", to ride his stallion. We also had to lead Jerry and Charlie. It was an all day ride down the valley into the Tucannon River and up the other side. It was also immediately apparent Spike had all he could do to handle the half wild horse, so I was given Jerry to lead, and my brother let the compliant Charlie.

We were mountain men that day riding in a row up trails that had not been cleared for the year. And it was going to rain. There is a picture of me in chaps that were too large, the straw hat already looking used, and the kid from Los Angeles looking somewhere between an old hand, and a rube in cowboy get up. The rube part would be gone in three days.

It was a long ride, raining off and on most of the time. Spike had particular trouble getting the wild stallion to go around a downed tree or up a rocky grade. He had to remind me a few times to watch how I held the rope, it seemed Jerry liked to pull people off their horse now and then if he saw you wrap it around your wrist.

It was late afternoon when we finally arrived at the site where the parents had brought the Boy Scouts. It was also raining harder than I had ever seen it, and they were trying to keep warm around a large bond fire. I assumed that a bond fire meant you stood around and bonded after that.

It ran over a mile up to the lookout, and a few hundred yards from the end of the road was a meadow where the scouts started to pitch their large military tent the mule had transported from the truck. It was also soon learned that there would not be room for my brother and I in the tent, and there was no way we were going to allow the damn Boy Scouts know we had very little idea how we were going to sleep in the rain.

But we were an inventive pair, and my brother had been a Boy Scout for about six months. We decided to use our ingenuity, and take from things we had seen over our dozen or so years, and build a lean-to with some canvas from the packs on the mule and Charlie. We got the structure built quickly enough with poles from downed trees, and found we had to use cross pieces to hold it up which also allowed us to have a taller back side for our heads. We then had a brilliant observation. There was a large dead standing Ponderosa Pine at the edge of the meadow, and the bark was coming off in large slabs. We used them to cover the structure first starting at the back and sides and then the roof just like dad overlaid shingles, then the canvas, and we going to be as dry as possible. We were done just in time as the rain returned.

The Scouts were amazed. Spike was amazed. Jerry untied his rope from the tree and came over to see what we had done and I believe he was amazed. We were amazed.

That night we slept well despite the off and on heavy rain, it had been a long day.

The night was also the source of the first story we have bringing the full essence of what it was to be Jerry. In the morning Spike had a tale to tell.

Spine found just enough room to sleep in the big tent with the Scouts with his feet at the door. He was laying on his back when sometime around three in the morning he felt someone breathing on him. He opened his eyes and lit his flashlight to

find Jerry in the tent, two feet on either side of him sleeping. Jerry it would seem had had enough of being out in the rain. He had dropped his head as he fell asleep causing his breath to be right in Spike's face.

There is a word for his immediate reaction, but he was more afraid of suddenly waking Jerry and causing him to start jumping around inside the tent floor completely covered in Scouts. He reached up with one finger the six inches or so above his face and gave the nose one poke. Not enough. He poked it several times and Jerry slowly raised his head and looked down as much as to ask, "There is a problem here?"

Spike decided to take the harness and while remaining under the mule work their way back out the door. He managed to accomplish it without waking any of the Scouts. In the morning we found Jerry on a very tightly bound short rope.

As usual, someone would pay in the mind of a mule who only wanted to get out of the rail like any civilized creature. Scouts would learn to give him lots of room. Spike asked us to guide him as we took the provisions up to the lookout. It seemed he knew his time would come.

The weather was beautiful the next day, and the truck with the supplies for the lookout arrived with Ellis.

For some reason Jerry decided he would let me do it. My brother being four years older was larger, and I guess he sensed he had been a Boy Scout at one time.

Later that day the kid from Sacramento came. He was small, thin, pale, and clearly the Journalism major he said he was. He had come here to be alone and write his novel. We never heard what it was, he never got it written that summer. But he did have an experience.

When we got to Clearwater Spike was there to make sure the radio was working, and was clearly waiting for something he would find quite funny. Just after dark it happened.

There was a yelling of pure panic on the radio. It seemed the sixteen by sixteen building that was both home and lookout was shaking on top of the pointed ridge, and there were strange growling noises. The kid from Sacramento was terrified.

Spike calmly said for him to go out with his flashlight and see if it was a bear or an elk that was scratching his back on the cables holding the building to the mountain.

"What?"

"See if it is a bear or an elk?"

"Then what?" asked the terrified voice.

"Tell him to get the hell out of there."

"What if he won't go? What if it is a bear?"

"Throw a rock at him."

"What?"

"Throw a rock at him. Keep a few by the door, they come every night."

There was a long silence.

"It was a bear!"

"What did you do?" Spike asked barely able to contain his laughter.

"I threw a rock at him and ran back in."

"Is he gone?"

"Yes."

"It will take them a while to realize someone is there and you will get less of it,"

Spike said with a laugh.

That summer the kid from Sacramento had things to do. He had to repair a small corral for when the horses were there. It took him forever until we found out he was using a carpenter's saw to cut the trees, and suggested he use the larger whip saw. He went the yards to the outhouse until he realized a month later since he could not see anyone for a few hundred miles in any direction he could go just out the door unless it was to sit a spell. Even then we missed him at check in one morning and were planning to make the trip the next day if we could not raise him only to find a bear came when he was sitting and he was stuck in the outhouse for half a day. He also painted the floor, and then laid newspaper on it so he could get back inside. It took him over a month to scrape up the paper and paint the floor in pieces.

But we now have to get back to Clearwater. The second night while the scouts slept in their tent we retired to our lean-to, now improved with good weather and a couple of lessons learned.

Spike took the truck back and it was Ellis who had to work the stallion back to Clearwater. This time the Stallion knew who was boss, this was a much larger man, and certainly more willing to express his opinion.

Here is where we first learned Ellis never swore. The worst you ever got, and it could be adjusted by volume and emphasis as it worked in all situations was the colorful, "By thee holly gemaneeze."

By the time we were riding back to Clearwater several things had occurred. Two boys from Los Angeles had made a reputation they could cut it. And, there was a difference in the personalities of the two boys.

My brother was my dad's son. I was my mother's. Both had been married before. My brother was born and raised in the city, I in Minnesota. To my brother it was an adventure, he was along for the ride and would do what you told him to. I was living

it, and when I saw something that needed doing I did it. It would be a difference that would grow over the years coming to a head when we both worked a construction job in Hawaii after I graduated from High School and he from College.

Simply said, by the time we reached Clearwater I had bought completely into the new life in the mountains. My brother was about to turn sixteen and would not return the last two years.

That difference started something that would effect the family as well.

My dad was a school teacher, and in the year of our Lord 1953 teachers were unemployed in the summer and had to take a second job. He had worked at the Boys Club and other things over the years, but finding another teacher had worked for the Forest Service it was a chance to take the two boys and go live away from the city. It was a good job, if not a little hard for an art teacher. But he had lived with his uncle Harrison at the base of the Grand Tetons when he was eighteen, back in 1928. He had had a bear cub for a pet, had a scar on his nose from a fight at a dance over a girl in Jackson Hole, and lived a life all but a very few would ever know of him now.

I didn't know this man, at least not yet. I just knew him as the art teacher, and man who could do anything from build the house they lived in to make a piece of jewelry for his wife.

He was just my dad, the only one I ever knew. Working hard and keeping up was what men did in 1953. I would make the mistake of comparing him to the men of the mountains I would meet over the next four summers. He would be a step behind, and I would only learn years later he had volunteered for military service during World War II three times and failed the physical because one leg was an inch shorter than the other. It gave him a bad back which he hid from us all his life. I realized later that despite it he kept moving, he was always there if maybe a step behind. When he had a

heart attack and we could no longer work the forest service he was highly disappointed. I also learned they offered him the Assistant Ranger job when Ellis retired, and he almost took it.

The misperception was mine. Just as he had in Jackson's Hole, in the Umatilla of Washington State I became the man dad had been sent to Wyoming to become. I also became an art teacher in his mold years later. Now that I have a bad back and can't pass a physical, I understand a lot more than a twelve year old could ever.

2. Getting to Work and Meeting People

Once back at Clearwater we would settle in to dad's work schedule. Fixing the phone would take a week or more. It also meant the phone at our lookout tower.

Unlike the sixteen by sixteen box that was Oregon Butte, the lookout at Clearwater was a half mile away on top of the rise. It was the classic 110 foot tower with an eight foot box at the top with the range finder to tell us where the fires were when we did spot one, and a small stool with glass insulators screwed on to them to sit in if you were trapped there in a lightning storm and the tower was availing itself of every lightning strike to come along. It was a long climb, which became easier as the summer and the years came along. Only from here, with the aid of strong binoculars could anyone see if the kid at Oregon Butte went outside the door to relieve himself. We could also make sure he was there as some thought he would never last the summer.

The Clearwater station itself sat on seven cleared acres, half a hill and half a flat field filled with white daisies year round. In the mornings and afternoons deer and elk would come to the salt lick and to run in the daisies much to the joy of all of us. In time they ignored us altogether. There were several out buildings from the days of the CCC camps during the depression when most of the roads and stations were built. The main house was a two story rather grand building that had once been the district office. There was a crews quarters where the second man stayed. There was the wood shed

and attached garage, a small hand pump service station with a ramp for a lift, and large equipment barn, and the barn and corals for the horses.

Once the phone was in, the main job would be to replace one section of the coral.

The process was simple. Cut a lodge pole pine the size of the rail, and immediately skin a strip off a stripe the bark the full length. Then you could use the edge of the ax to get under the bark you could skin the rest of it easily. You had to work quickly while the sap was wet. Let them dry and the bark was glued to the pole. Cut larger for posts, and do the same.

Once you had enough there were two ways to do it. One was a double post with the rails between separated by a piece the size of the rail. The second was to simply put a post and nail the rail with huge spikes. In places we would do both.

There were two corals to put the horses and mule in if you wanted to do a whole section, but as Jerry liked to watch and Smokey, Red and the Charlie could care less we did one at a time putting the stallion in the other until Ellis sold him.

We finished one whole side under the inspection of Jerry, and sat back to appreciate what we had done. Jerry made one more inspection, chose his post, and pushed two sections over. He stepped back and looked at us like he had made a point.

We had to laugh, and do it again. He had made his point and didn't do it again.

It was also at this time another war started. Once in a while we let them out to run the seven acres and feed on the green grass and daisies. My mother had made pancakes that morning and tossed one out to the dog, a small black and tan female named Trouble.

But Jerry standing nearby on the lawn decided he wanted it and came for it. Now Trouble took exception to that act and bit him on the nose drawing blood.

After the immediate look of shock on Jerry's face Trouble realized a mule is bigger than a dog, and with a mule at her tail ran for the steps and safety. When he was in the yard from that day on, she was relegated to the steps. It took him four years, but she made a mistake and he kicked her a few feet across the lawn. Luck would have it she was close and was not hurt by the kick itself, just hitting the ground again.

Again, we saw the Jerry smile. But there was another reaction there as well. By then Trouble was old and had slowed a great deal, and Jerry had given her a level of respect.

We also soon learned Jerry loved to have his picture taken. If he saw someone with a camera he would run over and sniff it. If they raised it he would run back about twenty feet and turn to strike a pose. It was always the same pose, head to the left held high, standing at a slight angle with his front feet together and his hind legs slightly one in front. I think he saw it in a magazine or something.

Once he heard the click of the camera he was over to smell it again. He would then allow a close up once in a while. I wonder how many people have pictures of his nose though.

When my dad was taking a picture of him with my mother Jerry obliged with his most stately stance and attitude. When the camera clicked he reached down and bit off a chunk of her hair and again smiled before going over to see if my dad wanted to take a close up.

Jerry also didn't like too much company of the horse variety. Three times a year the trail crew came in. Three men, three riding and four pack horses would ride out and clear or rebuild trails for ten days and have four off. Each station had a corral for when they were in. These were also horses accustomed to work, and to travel. When they came in it was like looking back a hundred years as they came down the drive and

passed the house to the corals. They usually had someone pick them up to go home for the days off, and we only saw them for an hour and cup of coffee each way.

Except for the first year.

The boss of the trail crew was a man in his early seventies who was straight out of the days of the mountain man. Pete Knott looked as weathered as his years both in his appearance and when his form was fitted to a saddle. He also had a reputation for working his two assistants in to the ground ten days a week. Only the young and strong could keep up with him, and we never met one that would trade the life for any other job. They felt it was an honor to work with the man. Pete also spent the first night at Clearwater, and came back the night before they left again. He was in person as colorful and his appearance and personality and could tell a story that would stand up to the best of Mark Twain or Will Rogers.

What was the most interesting was that all tales are true. And as they reach the end his great bushes of eyebrows would start to rise. You also learn that what seems a slight half a percent exaggeration at the end of the story was also based on truth. If the bear is standing screaming in your face his teeth do seem that long. Same with the claws of a mountain lion, or the size of a rattle snake if you wake up and you see him at his level.

Pete lost all the hair on top of his head when he was in his late twenties or early thirties when he woke up and jerked his head because something had rubbed up against it one night. It was a porcupine and it filled his head with quills. He had a job to do, and stayed in the hills to do it for another week. By the time he got back to civilization his whole head was infected, and the skin on the top served as proof of the whole story.

Though there was room, he always slept in the crew cabin. It was his place he said.

He also told a story of his days in the mountains at age fifteen with another mountain man about ten years his senior. I later did the math, when he was fifteen it was the early 1890's when there were still some of the Nez Perce Indians around the Blue Hills. He told of a finger ridge coming off the ridge leading to where they had once had a lookout at Diamond Peak. Down the ridge toward the Tucannon River about a third of the way down his partner had showed him a circle of stones shaped like chairs where Joseph had met with the Chiefs to decide whether to go with the white man to the Wenatchee reservation, or make a run to meet their cousins the Sioux on the plains and head for the land they called Canada. It was a split decision. Some went to the reservation and Joseph made his famous run over the Lolo trail and into what was already Yellowstone National Park, and tried to make it north to Canada to meet up with Sitting Bull. He got within twenty miles or so before they caught him.

He described the site in detail, and how they felt it was an almost holy place so they went around it. He also told us the other man was still alive and living in Dayton. My dad called and he was there, he told the same story and said he was too old to go back there, but that he could point it out on a map for us. But it was late in the summer and it was decided we would go talk to him the next summer and try to find it. The next summer came and a time was set on my dad's next day off to go down the Tucannon to Dayton and meet the man. The day before my dad called to confirm and he had died the night before.

We never got a chance to look for it. I kept it to myself all these years thinking some day to go back and look. I guess I must admit I will never make it, and I should call the University in Spokane to tell them about it.

Pete Knott had lost his wife years before, and lived with a daughter as I recall. He had no other relatives so to speak, except he asked us one night if we had heard of his cousin who lived down Los Angeles way. He smiled when he asked as though someone would know someone else in a place the size of Los Angeles. But none the less he asked, "I don't know if you know him. His name is Walter and I hear he did pretty well for himself raising berries or something. I hear he had a restaurant too."

Yes, we had heard of Knott's Berry Farm. We assured him he had done quite well for himself.

The second man at Clearwater that first year was Lonnie Eller. Lonnie was just eighteen and a farm kid from Asotin County, which is the extreme bottom east of Washington bordering both Oregon and Idaho. He grew up on a farm outside Anatone, and there is no farther in the corner of the state than Anatone. Lonnie was himself colorful in that he also had stories to tell of farm life, growing up poor and asking how it was in the city. Lewiston Idaho was the biggest he had ever seen before going through Walla Walla to Pendleton for fire camp. Maybe he lacked some book smarts, but he could fix anything given some tape or bailing wire, a screw driver or stick to poke, and a hammer or rock to pound with.

One night we were all amazed as Lonnie was leaning back in his chair against the door jamb and had nothing to say. Suddenly he dropped his feet and the chair flat to the floor and said proudly, "There ain't no railroads in 'Sotin County", and walked out the door.

We all looked at each other and my mother finally said, "I guess there ain't no railroads in Asotin County."

Lonnie had another habit. There were no Forest Service vehicles beyond two pickups for the two permanent employees, Spike and Ellis. We used our personal cars

and were paid mileage. Lonnie had a real nice 1939 Chevrolet four door humpback. It would have stood up to any street rod of the day in any city. It had moons with flippers on them which he loved to watch go round. So, as he drove he opened the door and hung out to watch the wheels go around everywhere he went. From there he could follow the track in the gravel road as he watched the front wheel go around and didn't have to look up for miles.

It was the summer my brother and I learned to drive, and he offered to help teach us. My parents declined.

My brother had a hard time learning to drive. It took him all summer to get the hang of it. Much to the dismay of both my dad and brother I got behind the wheel and simply drove. By the end of the summer I had driven not only the family car, but Spikes pickup, the district had an old flatbed they could get a hold of, and had made one trip across the district when one of the road crew members showed he how to drive the dump truck with the five-speed and brownie.

We made another trip to Oregon Butte that summer to pack in supplies. With Spike and Daisy we took off cross country like we had before.

I was on Smokey who was now my constant ride. My brother was on Red and Spike was on Charlie. He had to lead Charlie to a rock or stump each time to get on. We packed Jerry for the days ride to meet the pickup with the supplies. When we reached the end of the road and the truck we packed them all and lead them to the lookout to the welcome smiles of a kid from Sacramento who had not seen anyone for a month and a half.

It was here I made what could have been a costly mistake. We tied the horses to the wires holding the house on the mountain and I tied Smokey on too long a line.

He tripped over the line and tumbled down the rocky hillside scraping up his legs and causing a deep cut on the front side of his left shoulder.

Spike was immediately down the hill to calm him and help him up. Nothing was broken, and for some reason the deep cut, about six inches long and laid open about two inches was not bleeding much.

It took Smokey a half hour to calm down while I got a lesson on tying a horse on a shorter tether which was administered with professionalism. Spike could see I was crushed already. It took Jerry longer to get over it, and to forgive me. Leading him back down the hill he let me know by trying to pull the rope out of my hand every hundred yards or so.

I was given the task of caring for the wound which meant applying liniment twice a day and keeping it clean. No horse ever got better care.

Smokey healed, but there was a scar that reminded me every time I saw him.

That summer was also the first time Jerry got out on his own, and it took us a while to figure out how. In the outer coral there was an outlet where water from the coral ran down to the creek. At that spot there was an extra rail at the bottom. Jerry had kicked it out, and taken it away from the spot so we would not see it was gone. Every night for almost a week he was running around the yard when we woke up in the morning, or waiting by the coral next to Smokey waiting to be let back in and fed.

He had quite a time at night, and as Spike said with a laugh, "There will be some funny looking elk next year." At the time I didn't know mules are sterile, and I didn't see any funny looking elk the next year.

We have two pictures of him he did not pose for. Jerry was tired from his night out, and fell asleep during the day. He fell on one side and left a skid mark where his nose dragged on the ground as he went down. He was snoring, and had the largest

crooked smile on his face we ever saw as he was dreaming and kicking his feet like a dog does when dreaming.

We also learned Jerry could take the cattle guard at the gate to the station at a dead run. It didn't bother him at all.

But the great surprise was to come at five in the morning. It also demonstrated the depth of Jerry's sense of humor.

It was warm for the Umatilla that week. It came near to eighty degrees and my parents were sleeping with the window next to the bed open. Jerry discovered the fact and stuck his head in the window and looked in the early light of day at my parents, and gave example of the best Hee and Haw he could.

There only revenge was that he hit his head when their reaction was a little more than he had anticipated.

3. Another Year

By the second year the Crandall's were old hands at the Forest Service business. Clearwater took on the aura of a second home.

When we arrived we found the horses and Jerry were in a fenced meadow just inside the forest boundary. They spend winters on a farm to get out of the high country snow and away from a place where no one was most of the winter. When the snow was gone they were moved up to Able's Ridge, and now it was time to bring them back to Clearwater.

That had my brother and I riding Smokey and Red back to Clearwater. For some reason Jerry and Charlie were left there we assumed for another day. Jerry was livid and chased and heeded and hawed all the way to the end of the fence. I will never forget the forlorn look he gave us as we disappeared.

It was a great ride to start the summer. We found out Smokey was as fast as Red even though he had the one pigeon foot. They were ready to run as well and I think had more fun than we did.

But Pete Knott had not returned, and we learned he owned most of the horses they had been using. Charlie and Jerry were now trail crew, and they would take off the next day with the two who had worked with Pete the year before and one new one.

We got a call the following day to look for Jerry.

It seemed he didn't like being on the trail crew, and after just one day he decided he had had enough. Though hobbled, he had ran off in the night, and with good

riddance from the trail crew. He had fussed with them all day, kicked one of them, banged his packs against trees, and had made their lives a misery of mule management with very little trail work.

Two days later we woke to find him standing by the coral next to Smokey with both front legs bleeding from the hobbles and a smile on his face. He had traveled over twenty miles wearing hobbles. As with the cut on Smokey I was given the task of applying the liniment and caring for the wounds until they healed.

Clearwater was not the same without Jerry.

After the phones it was to fix a part of the outer coral the second year. We double posted the low spot since Jerry had supervised the job and it was his rail to get out of.

He also supervised a job that was a wonderment to me that early summer. I had no idea my dad knew how to do such things. We had to rebuild one of the gates.

We cut and skinned the logs we would need, one long one for the pivot end and another for the triangulation. We dug out the old portions of the hinge which was a buried piece of large log about three feet long placed sideways just under the surface, and drilled with a two inch auger to put a wood peg coming up about a foot and a half. It was soaked in creosote and tarred except for the peg which only got the creosote. Another top cross piece was put in place with a new peg as well.

He then used the auger to drill a hole in the end following the center of the pivot log used to swing the gate, and another at the top. The pegs and holes were greased and the base was swung into place and buried. On that we built the rest of the gate with the other long pole from the base of the outside to the top of the pivot pole for support, and a new slide latch was put on.

It took all day, even with Jerry supervising, and was a marvel at the time. The old ways work, and they last for years. It also held up to the Jerry test as soon as we walked away.

We learned another skill that day. During a break for lunch my dad taught us how to roll a cigarette. I don't know how he knew, he never smoked that I knew of. It must have been Wyoming.

This second year I had the joyous experience of using Jerry on the first fire where there was no water and we needed it as the fire was deep in the duff. He had a special pack that held four ten gallon square cans. And he hated it since the cans rattled. Now all of thirteen, a ten gallon can of water is about as much weight as I wanted to lift to near shoulder height and chase him to drop it on. Where we were by a small wooded creek he had little room to move, and I had to duck under him a time or two, then hand lead him up the side of the mountain to the fire. Once it was out at the ground we were left with the lightning struck tree smoldering at the top to cut down with the whipsaw and put it out. Standing with full rattling cans when the tree hit the ground was enough for Jerry. It took a while to calm him down to get the cans off.

But down with empty cans rattling was worse and it was a very long day. He also wanted no part of the horse trailer. He didn't speak to me for days.

This was also the summer Spike decided he wanted to ride Jerry. He had handled Ellis' wild stallion for a day, this would be easy.

Wrong.

It was a valiant effort, but five minutes convinced him this would not work.

We also saw another side to Jerry at mid summer.

A family with three kids came in, and the kids of course wanted to see the horses and the mule. One of the kids had cerebral palsy and was thrilled at the mule. Jerry

came directly to him. He knew this kid was different and waited for the mother to pick the child up to see the mule.

In a moment the child had one of Jerry's ears in his hand, and as dictated by his disability and compounded by the excitement of the moment the child was pulling and jerking on Jerry's ear. Jerry moved his head with it, and when the kid finally let go reached his nose out and sniffed the boy. When a moving hand came down on his soft nose with the aid of the mother Jerry stood motionless and smiled at the soft touch.

He let his head follow as the mother stepped back.

Next to them was the older boy, who also grabbed an ear. He learned quickly that was a mistake as he jumped for the ground.

Spike and Ellis used Jerry and Smokey a few times each summer to go check on the trails and see how the trail crew was doing. On one occasion during the third year Spike had all three to take Forest Service Dignitaries from Pendleton on a tour which ran into us working a fire just up the Wanaha River from the isolated town of Troy in the heart of Nez Perce traditional land. It raised a few eyebrows when the horses wanted to see us, especially Jerry and I had to calm them down. It was also noted that my dad had a fourteen year old kid working the fire which they decided to pretend wasn't happening and move on. Since I was his kid, they just decided it was his problem if I got hurt and moved on with the tour.

Try that in today's world.

That second year the second man at Clearwater was a teacher who worked with my dad, Dick Lund. Dick Lund came two years and solidified a name which sticks to me to this day.

I was known as Dick, or when by grandfather was around also going by the name Dick, he was Daddy Dick and I was Dickie, or even Little Dickie. With an adult

around Little Dick or Little Dickie was how we were separated when called or spoken of. It was fun and I embraced it for the fun that was in it.

Years later I had a place near Yosemite and none of the neighbors had phones. We used CB radios to call each other, and Little Dickie was my handle. But by then the joke had grown, I was six foot five and weighed around two hundred forty pounds. It became something akin to never laughing at a man they call Tiny.

This second year also was a divider between my brother and I, and in the family. He was sixteen now and would not return the last two years. This had an effect on my relationship with my dad, as I was now the son working side by side with him, and learning more from him than I realized at the time. But his eye was always at the horizon so to speak, looking for my brother to return as the prodigal son.

He never did.

4. The Years of Transition and Change

The third year was a different year. My brother didn't come with us, and I was now being treated as simply another member of the crew. I was climbing trees to fix the phone line as easily as anyone, better than some. This was hard as hunters had torn out almost two miles of the line.

It was not uncommon for Spike to just tell me to take his truck and get something, and using the chain saw the district now had was something they were a little squeamish about before but not now.

And there was another change. Ellis Carlson had retired and was replaced with a college kid from Pennsylvania.

Lead Orvis, yes it is a real name, had been the man at the Wenatchee station the year before. As Ellis had been a man of the mountains and resembled a bull in a china shop, Lead was a quiet unassuming man of academic forest management. He had married his college sweetheart and was settling into his new career easily. He also knew the Crandall family from the year before, and that I was apart of the workforce.

Lead also marked a change in several things of the Forest Service variety. It was clear logging was coming on a grander scale than it had previously. He was to be the manager. It was also a time of realization for some in the Forest Service that decades of putting fires out meant the woods were covered in fuel and fires would in time be larger and harder to stop. It would not take long to prove true.

But at least for this year it would prove to be much the same.

On several occasions I was also allowed to pack Jerry and work by myself, I guess I was trusted by then.

Dick Lund came back to Clearwater as well, and another teacher my dad knew was at the Wenatchee station where Lead had been. That put virtually all of the fire fighters teachers from Pasadena schools. It was the English teacher at the Tucannon station that had been first and told my dad about it.

Mr. Lund also brought his son Bob along that summer. He was a big kid for his age, which like me was fourteen. He was also all about city. He had nothing to do with the horses, he was a little afraid of them. He went on the few fires we had that year, but worked at his own pace which was slower than the rest of us. Like my brother, this clearly was not a life he intended for himself.

Jerry pretended he wasn't there most of the time, and when we did go for a ride Red with his even temper just went along.

But there was one memorable moment. The trail crew was in and the coral was full of horses. We were sitting on the top rail of the fence when a stallion decided that he would have his way with one of the ladies.

This was new to me as well, and sitting not twenty feet away we had front row seats. To a couple of kids this is not a pretty process, and I had to laugh a little. But Bob was totally shocked and fell backwards off the six foot fence. He had to brush himself off and headed for the house without a word.

We also brought with us a kid from down the street, Tommy Johnson. Tommy was a year younger than I was, shorter and stocky and the son of a purely military man. Tommy also fell out of every tree he ever climbed, tripped over every curb he came to, and was a personal test facility for Band Aid. That summer he stayed fairly safe, but we had to watch him constantly.

He went on a couple of small fires. As luck would have it he had planted the ax in his tennis shoe cutting firewood one day, cutting his shoe wide open and his bit toe and had to stay home on the only big fire event we had. There were six small fires in a row. They were close to each other, and small. Jerry was brought along for water, which was my job. It became complicated when after a rough line was made I was given two of the fires to tend alone for a day while the three others went to do the other four.

Jerry seemed to realize we were alone and I didn't need any of his antics that day, but he picked it up the next.

Tommy did however account for one of the great moments between Jerry and I. Tommy decided we needed to ride Jerry. It took a family decision, we knew better but after some discussion it was decided we had known Jerry long enough, and of course you have to give it at least one try. I saddled Jerry and brought him to the lawn in front of the front door.

On his insistence, and against better judgment knowing his ability to get hurt, Tommy climbed on first.

It was a short rodeo experience. Tommy hit his male parts on the horn of the saddle on the first kick and the ground on the second. It took two to get him to the couch where he stayed for a couple of miserable hours and walked funny for a day.

We can't have this, and who better to teach the mule a lesson than me.

The rodeo part lasted about ten minutes. Mules don't do that as well as a horse. We covered most of the immediate yard, kicking and twisting both left and right. It didn't work, I was still there.

But now Jerry decided that force never did get him anywhere, he had only used of for fun before. It would be intelligence that would get me off so we took off at a trot around the house and yard looking for something.

He slowed and looked back at me. He had found it and the clothesline seemed just the ticket. Poles strung with the number nine wire used for the phone system would do the trick, so trot became run under the clothesline.

Not a problem. As he crossed under I rolled to the right holding the saddle low knowing the horn would catch the last line. It stopped Jerry in his tracks and having tested the strength of the clothesline he had to backup for me to clear the line before moving on with a kick to try to get me off as I pulled back onto the saddle.

Back to that trot to search some more.

At the edge of the yard where the trees started he found his next opportunity. A tree with a low branch coming out the side with clear space behind it solved his problem. It had a top and a side. Back to a run we skimmed the tree on the side I had slid to, only I simply slid to the other side. We tried the tree three times using both sides and he soon realized it was not going to work.

Back to a thoughtful trot.

The woodshed door. A top and two sides.

We hit the path to the woodshed at a dead run, and when we got close I shoved off the saddle behind the cantle and shoved again to come off the back as he stormed through the door. As I slid to a stop I could hear wood flying in every direction as he hit the pile, first the uncut pile at the back and then the cut pile on the side.

Out came the head to look down at me sitting on the ground laughing, and then a shared look between us of respect for a good time had by all. I could see all the

scrapes and some blood on his shins from the woodpile, but he could see me sitting on the ground and that was the game after all.

He waited for me to get up just as my parents came running, and after he let me lead him out of the woodshed I pulled the saddle and let him run the yard for the rest of the day.

The fourth year would be different again, and in many ways the best of all of them. But it was also a year of change away from the Clearwater that had been, to the one it was going to be. The difference would end on a clear note and a couple of fires.

I was no longer just the kid. I had spent the winter out of school with a kidney infection, and this was my outing to get back to the physical strength I had the year before. Now fifteen, I was also now six foot one and weighed one hundred ninety pounds. That meant I was as big as the men, and even bigger than some.

We had a new man at Clearwater. Bob was a combination of farm and cowboy. Hard working, always moving, and in a rough sort of way he had the gruff personality of Ellis Carlson.

Another was at Wenatchee who resembled a bear and was another school teacher from Idaho. There was also a new man at Tucannon, so my dad was the last of the Pasadena schools set.

As a rule horses were there for being horses. With me they only took on Forest Service tasks twice that summer.

The first involved not Jerry but Charlie, the huge Palomino. There was an old lookout tower at Saddle Butte that had been abandoned for years. It was of the third kind like the active one on the other side of the district at Big Butte where someone lived all summer in a sixteen by sixteen like Oregon Butte, but sixty feet up to see over the trees. It was a log structure with a walkway all the way round. Like Big Butte is was

designed to have someone living there all summer. While Big Butte had a road leading to it and the summer resident could come to town if the weather had been good, Saddle Butte was off the road a quarter mile or so.

The job was to cut it down. And it was to Charlie to haul out the contents that had been left there.

The first part was emptying the place, which meant mostly getting the cast iron wood stove down the steps from platform to platform. It took all four of us with Spike giving instruction along the way.

My dad brought his movie camera to record what was a dramatic exit for a very solid structure. We used the chain saw, and old McCulloch which weighed 46 pounds. It took some doing, and we had to use the ax to keep it open all the way through. The tower never moved. We cut the second leg the same, and the tower still stood.

It was decided cutting a third leg would be too dangerous, and we could not control where it went. It then became another job for Charlie. Keeping as far away as we could at the length of a rope we talked about tying it to the pole and to Charlie's pack saddle and I had him pull. When the leg finally dropped our way we could pull the slip knot and free Charlie. As we discussed it the tower started to creak, and one leg dropped off and took one step, then the second we had cut took a step followed by a third from the first leg as the whole wood structure, a sixteen foot home on top of a log sixty foot tower walked its way to the ground.

We were all amazed except Charlie who looked back as much to say. "That was interesting."

Now to load him, and balance the load. On one side was the cast iron stove, on the other the entire contents of the station from plates and silverware, to the fire finder and chairs. It came no where near to balancing. We had to take a pile of rocks to add

to that side to get it close enough to even so he could take it the half mile down the trail to the truck.

That was the load that told me why we had not taken Jerry, and the true strength of one very large Palomino.

It also had one more lesson. It was early summer, and as I said I was still getting in shape from the kidney incident. It was also a steep climb up the trail to the lookout tower. So, I used an old trick I had learned from Ellis the first year. Grab the horse's tail and he will pull you up the hill. Don't do it to a mule named Jerry. But there is a side effect if you are using a tail to pull your weight, and that involves the contents of the horse in question, and the reason they raise their tail in the first place. I had a lesson in the volume of the contents both solid and gaseous of one very large Palomino. I believe it is called "Ode de Barnyarda".

There would be but one more great outing with Jerry and Smokey. We had a fire about a mile off the end of a road that overlooked the lower Tucannon somewhere beyond Huckleberry Butte. It was at a lower elevation than most, and in an area that had not burned in decades. It was also the only fire we ever worked with the man from Tucannon.

The first jump on it showed two problems. The fire was in the duff, and there was a complex of down trees that made working the line difficult at best. Lead Orvis brought in the chain saw, and in two trips Jerry to haul things, and Smokey to make the mile back and forth with equipment and water easier. Needless to say, but this time I was given the three day job of hauling in water and whatever was needed.

The end of the road was a flat area where hunters camped. It was wooded, and lined on one side by a huge rock outcrop rising as something of a barrier to a large meadow about three hundred yards long leading to a deer trail that followed the open

side of the rock ridge to where the fire was fifty to a hundred yards into the heavy wooded area. My job was to keep the water, food, tools and necessities moving from camp to fire, and bring out what was done. If possible, stay for a while and work the fire as well, but there was little of that the first day.

This meant two things. One I would be packing Jerry and riding Smokey the almost mile long trip alone from sun up to sun down. And spending the night with them. Second, I had almost two days to try to load the water cans on Jerry. As I mentioned, by this summer at age fifteen I was over six feet and one hundred ninety pounds, making the ten gallon cans easier to handle, but not Jerry. He hated the cans, and he was going to find the game we would play.

Unlike the other fire when we used the cans where he had little room to move, here it was open. I would tie him to the tree closest to the water source which was a shallow spring. This also meant they didn't fill more than about seven or eight gallons. The trick was then to lift them to about face level and start the chase.

At first he would run around the tree until his short halter rope was tight. At that moment I could toss the can on and duck under him as he came back the other way. He was furious. Two cans on either side, two trips each way around the tree.

It only took a while before he quit running back on me. He also started to wait until I started to toss the cans to move. He then tried coming at me when I tossed, but found that hurt him worse than it did me and the cans hit with a thud. We tried making me chose sides, but he soon learned that two cans on one side unbalanced him so he bought into the one on each side before the second. Late in the day, and after a new half hearted try the next morning and he decided it was going to happen, he better go with it except for once in a while to keep me on my toes.

The fire was out late afternoon of the second day, though someone would have to check it for a week or so. It was time for equipment to start coming out, and Jerry could see the difference and somehow knew this was the last trip for the three of us alone. The deer trail was by now an established trail by usage and went over a series of four small rises before it hit the long meadow to the rocks and camp. I was also exhausted.

As we reached the first rise I made the mistake. I wrapped Jerry's rope around my hand and we started for the camp with Jerry loaded with the chain saw, shovels, water packs and other things. We had not gone far before Jerry tested the rope pulling me off the horse just enough that I had to swing around and drop on my feet to the ground.

Expletive deleted, back on Smokey and on our way.

Another pull, less effective.

Next a cross over to the back side and a pull and the rope came out of my hand, more effective but unsuccessful in pulling me off.

One more pull, only this time I threw the rope in his face and said something to the effect that, "You know where we are going, take yourself." At which time I rode over the rise and stopped on the other side. I waited a couple of minutes and saw two ears come over the rise, they eyes, and he popped back down.

Smokey and I took off over the next rise and stopped again. We could hear him coming, but this time it took almost five minutes to see ears. When they went back we took off over the next rise and the process was repeated. But that was the last rise before the long meadow and he was taking his time so I took off at a run the length of the meadow and pulled behind the rocks to wait him out. And, by this time Smokey seemed to be in on it with me.

It was over five minutes before we could hear pack saddles and cans rattling as he came running across the meadow thinking he had been abandoned. As he passed to the back of the rocks he saw us waiting and put on the skids to stop with a look on his face that said he was worried we had left him altogether. I rode up next to him and asked, "Are you done?"

Jerry pulled his head up and slid the rope into my hand and we moved on.

But we were not done. One more trip to bring everyone else out with the last few things they had. My dad, older than the rest and limping on his short leg rode Smokey out while I walked and led Jerry on foot. Crossing the meadow I put the rope coming from the halter in my left hand and reached up to put my right in the halter and to thank Jerry for a job well done. I had my hand resting in the halter when suddenly Jerry jerked back with both his head and a step. He pulled me off the ground and back to his other side, but before I could say anything we heard it.

The sound of a rattlesnake is unmistakable. As we surrounded it we could see in the grass the next step I would have taken would be right on top of it. Jerry had seen it, had done what he had to, and saved me in the process.

As we backed off it started down a gopher hole, and Bob, the second at Clearwater decided he wanted it.

A month before he had been out with Spike and had almost stepped on one. Spike had laughed at him and Bob was going to use this snake to get revenge of some kind. He caught the snake and slipped it into an empty one gallon official government issue canteen. Jerry was having none of the canteen coming back on his pack, so Bob carried it out.

When we reached the camp we were ready to leave when another problem arrived, and Jerry saw it too. We had a one horse trailer, and a horse and a mule.

Spike decided to trailer Smokey and knowing Jerry and Smokey were almost inseparable drive back slow enough for Jerry to follow the eight to ten miles back to Clearwater.

Needless to say Jerry was having a fit following and eating dust most of the way. That went away when he saw the Clearwater tower and knew he was a half mile from home. He cut off to the tower rather than follow to the station.

We never did catch him up there. He would let me get close, but not close enough to get hold of his halter. We could tell he was coming down at night to be outside the coral with Smokey, but back up in the morning. Three days later I guess he got tired of grass and let me feed him inside the coral and take the halter off.

There is one more aside to the story however. When we got to the station we had pretty well talked Bob out of putting the snake in Spikes tool box. But when we went to the back of the pickup there were seven identical official government issue one gallon canteens in the back. Identical except for one thing.

5. Closing the story out.

The years at Clearwater are several stories. Another chronicle will deal with fire and changing times. But it was the people and the relationship between kid and animal that formed much of my life. I wear cowboy boots to this day, and have always hated the city. Jerry, Smokey and the people I met there had a level of honesty and a sense of what is right about being a man and having a work ethic I have spent my life emulating. My word is my bond, my handshake is a contract. My friends and colleagues have always thought me a little out of place and time, and I admit to it. When I had five acres outside Yosemite and built my home there I put a trough and rail by the front door for the neighbors to tie to until someday maybe I could have my own horse. My dad brought a bucket of horse manure to dump properly in front of the rail for the proper effect.

I have seldom ridden a horse since that time, and when I have it has been an absolute Joy. One tourist ride near Yosemite we took with out of town guests proved the lead on the ride had no idea what she was doing, and her horse had swelled when she saddled him making it lose. After almost falling off when the loose saddle slipped a couple of times, and her horse not wanting to do what she wanted I had to fix the saddle. I also told her some horses lead, some follow, hers was a follower and the former cutting horse I was on could lead if she would tell me where we were going. The rest of the trip went fine with me leading, her following with the rest of the tour, and her saddle secure. The horse I was on also had no business working trails. He was quick

and responded to even the slightest movement of my legs or a lying over of the reins. Once we came to a split in the trail and she shouted I had to take the right trail after we had taken a step to the left. With a simple layover of the reins and a slight twist in the saddle he simply rose up and jumped his front legs over the rocks and started calmly down the proper trail.

Another involved a large buckskin when I first met my wife Jane. He was an easy ride on her grandmother's ranch, and I had an opportunity to take my children for a ride on the back of the saddle.

I replaced the desire to get out into the back county and camp with a jeep. I tried to use it to teach my children some of what I had learned living with a horse and mule during the Clearwater years as a kid, but it just isn't quite the same. The horse and mule were too much a part of it. I always wanted to pack animals again, but never had them, and wondering how my bad back would take it. The trail ride proved my back improved riding a horse. After that ride I was pain free for the rest of the day. The Jeep won't do that.

However, I have had a Jeep for over forty years, and that too is no doubt related to Jerry. As the car and truck replaced the horse, the Jeep replace the mule in our society. As such, it has an attitude. Don't tell a Jeep it can't go somewhere. It also seems that putting on Mozart for music is improper, and I have always wondered if a Jeep would stop if you did. I listen to every kind of music in my truck, but somehow Mozart is not for Jeep. Maybe Beethoven on top of a mountain at sunset is one you could get away with, or the Grand Canyon Suite, but not Mozart. You are pretty much relegated to country most of the time. But another characteristic learned from the mule, it is better in a Jeep to turn the damned radio off and enjoy where it is taking you. The noise you hear going over loose rock is almost like what you hear on a horse.

And one more thing, I found in a Jeep people tend to lean out and watch the front wheels go around. Odd behavior isn't it.

Many years later after my father had passed Spike sent a newspaper article from the Pomeroy paper. Jerry had died and the people who had worked with him had all gathered for a picnic to tell stories and honor a white government mule. At one point those of the forty plus participants that had a gun with them all went to their pickups and got their guns to have a nineteen gun salute as they buried him. They had considered firing two of them twice to make it twenty one, but decided somehow nineteen better fit the character of the mule. My mother and I hoped we could have known about it, we could have been there in a couple of days. It also said something about a monument of some sorts with a plaque and everything.

I would like to see that, but I am content to tell my story as they did at the picnic.